

A Lexico-Semantic Analysis of Ghana's 68th Independence Day Speech by President John Dramani Mahama

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ABSTRACT: This qualitative study explored the sense relations of Ghana's 68th Independence Day Speech by President John Dramani Mahama. The objective is to examine the stored meanings in the lexical relations – synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, hypernymy among others identified in the speech. Hinged on Wittgenstein's (2009) Use of Meaning theory and content analytical design, the study unravelled the existence of paradigmatic and syntagmatic sense relations. The study employed the purposive sampling technique and the most recent Independence Day Speech was selected and downloaded from the WhatsApp page of Hohoe Municipal Assembly. The findings uncovered evidence of synonymy, antonymy (including gradable, complementary, relational, and reversive types), hyponymy/hypernymy, collocations, and phrasal/prepositional verbs. This exposure has contributed to the available literature by showcasing how President Mahama effectively deployed these lexical relations to recognize Ghana's struggles and aspirations while calling on all and sundry to embrace the reset agenda of his government.

KEYWORD: Independence Day Speech, Sense Relations, Contextual Analysis, President John Dramani Mahama

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Ghana, then Gold Coast, became a British colony in 1874 after the Portuguese, Dutch, and Danes, respectively, had their stint. Although colonization brought several positive developments such as Western education and new economic structures, it also came with adversaries-oppressive policies, forced labour, and economic exploitation leading to a riot in 1948. Prior to the 1948 riot were mainly resisted by nationalist movements led by the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and later the Convention People's Party (CPP), which demanded independence immediately. Eventually, after having won three elections in 1951, 1954, and 1956, Ghana won her independence on the 6 March 1957. Since then, this date has become a special commemorative day observed yearly. Therefore, on 6 March, 2025, the newly elected president, President John Dramani Mahama (PJDM), commemorated the day and delivered the Independence Day Speech. This speech becomes very special as this year marks the beginning of his final one-term in office according to the constitution of Ghana, having made the biggest historical comeback in the December, 2024 general elections.

Often, the meaning of a word is characterized by historical, political, and economic contexts rather than fixed dictionary definitions. And since political discourse is often strategically used to evoke emotional and ideological responses, it is imperative for a language user to be able to determine which meaning is appropriate for the context in which a word occurs and to juxtapose its relation with other related words. It is to this end that this study seeks to unravel the stored meanings in the 68 Presidential Independence speech of PJDM of Ghana.

2.0 RESEARCH QUESTION

This study sets out to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What types of lexical relations did President John Dramani Mahama deploy in his 68th Independence Day Speech?
2. How effective did the lexical relations contribute in achieving his communicative purposes?

3.0 POLITICAL DISCOURSE

As Aristotle (1991) notes 'Man is by nature a political animal' and so politics and political discourse have become very crucial in human society since the totality of human existence is engrained in it. As such, the study of political discourse has received considerable attention from researchers over the years. For instance, Van Dijk (2011) states that political discourse is a discourse produced by politicians which is usually determined by context. Wilson (1990) takes a linguistic-pragmatic view of this, suggesting

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that the terms 'political discourse' or 'political language' should be narrowed down to what politicians actually say and where it is said. McNair (1995) argues that political discourse should not be restricted to 'verbal or written statements', rather, it should expand its contexts and purposes. From the foregoing, one can view political discourse to be involving, including all the elements in political communication, the construction of a political image/identity which are characterized by historical, political and economic contexts rather than fixed dictionary definitions.

In political discourse, language plays a crucial role. Every political action is prepared, accompanied, influenced and played by language. Hence, politicians use language to shape the political thoughts of the citizens with the aim of selling their ideologies to them, persuade their audience about the validity of their political claims, and influence the beliefs and behaviour of others (Israel & 2017, Ugoala, 2020). To achieve these successfully, politicians interrogate meaning and meaning-making devices to the maximum. Thus, political discourse is summed up as the use of language by political actors in any political environment such as political debates, inaugural addresses and Independence Day speeches which enables them to engage in tasks, corroborate with oppositions, exert powers, disseminate information when necessary and control leadership.

4.0 THE CONCEPT OF SEMANTICS

Between 1850 and 1930, historical-philological semantics wrapped as a diachronic approach to lexical semantics characterized the study of meaning. Its objects were changes in meaning in terms of semantic change such as metaphor, metonymy, generalization, and specialization. The period beyond 1930 saw the emergence of structuralist semantics. This approach was influenced by De Saussure. The structuralist approach diverted from the separate element approach of the historical-philology to a more systemic approach in which collective meaning forms the root of the semantic analysis. Different approaches within structuralist semantics include lexical field theory, relational semantics, and componential analysis (Geeraert, 2009:5). 1960 saw the integration of structuralist semantics into generative semantics. This period was considered important because of its attempt to register semantics as part of formal grammar. Then came cognitive semantics. Its approach blends psychology and cognitive insights. Due to the innovative approach, it introduced other elements of cognitive semantics such as prototype theory, conceptual metaphors, and frame semantics. According to Geeraert (2009: 6), this is by far the most productive framework in present-day lexical semantics due to the volume of publication it attracted.

The historical exercise above notwithstanding, lexical semantics, according to Carita (2013), is concerned with what words mean, how they are represented in the speakers' minds, and how they are used in text and discourse.

4.1 Empirical Review

Many empirical studies have deployed the use of semantic analysis in many forms and shapes. Alhassan et al. (2023), for instance, investigates the most used modal verbs and their semantic implications on the COVID-19 addresses delivered by President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo, the immediate past president of Ghana. The study used AntConc corpus software to establish five modal auxiliaries which were epistemic and non-epistemic, out of 96,784 words. They conclude that the five themes that hosted the modal verbs-willingness, possibility, prediction, ability, and probability are an indication of the president's pledge to deal with the pandemic.

In order to analyse and carry out a comparative communicative semantic regularities across presidential speeches in the USA, Zernetska & Zernetskyi, (2023) used a concept called the Major Rhetorical Macro-topical Cycle (MRMC) to arrive at domestic issues, international issues, American traditions, and other references, such as to the audience, God, and personal application, as those macro-topics that appear frequently in the inaugural speeches of USA presidents in the 21st century. A computational semantic analysis of the presidential candidates' speeches in the two major political parties in the USA shows that the 2016 US presidential nominees had distinct conceptual representations from those of previous election years, and these patterns did not necessarily align with their respective political parties' average representation of the key political concepts (Li et al., 2017, Ugoala, 2017).

This paper investigated diachronic change in a specialized corpus of seventeen American presidential debates from 2000 to 2020 and found that domains reflecting truth evaluations and matters of credibility increased alongside a more people-oriented discourse, as evidenced by increases in personal pronouns (Hayes & Poole, 2022).

Other empirical studies Mensah et al., 2023-Semantics analysis of the word "go" in relation to its usage in Ghanaian languages. Nartey 2014-A Semantic Investigation into the Use of Modal Auxiliary Verbs in the Manifesto of a Ghanaian Political Party; Amoakohene & Afful 2021-A Cross-Cultural Study of Semantic Ties in the Abstracts of Conference Proceedings; and Asante et al.-Lexico-Syntactic Analysis of Antonyms in Some Speeches of John Dramani Mahama-shall be expanded.

5.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The data of this study was analysed based on Wittgenstein's (2009) Use of Meaning theory. This framework emerged out of his signature study, Philosophical Investigations. He posits that the meaning of a word is arrived at by its use in a particular language. His position diverges from the earlier held traditional view that meaning is attached to its reference or inherent properties. Wittgenstein's (2009) holds the view that meaning is affected by the way language is used in different "language games." In essence,

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this framework foregrounds that understanding language goes beyond the meaning of the individual words and accounts for how words function in different and specific contexts. The choice of this theory is rekindled by Ifechelobo, (2012) on the fact that meanings of words are affected in the context of use and that meaning lies on the interpreter and not on the user of the language.

6.0 METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study and the research design employed in this study is descriptive context analysis. Due to the descriptive, analytical, and interpretive nature of the dataset of the study, the study employed the purposive sampling method. The study investigated lexical relations that are embedded in the Independence Day Speech for the Ghanaian populace's easy comprehension. A case is made for this instrument based on the fact that the speech is meant for the consumption of the public and their understanding of the speech goes a long way to influence how they shape their opinions on the matters raised in the speech. On permission from the Municipal Assembly, the text was downloaded from the Hohoe Municipal Assembly's official WhatsApp platform and various lexical/sense relations were identified, marked and analysed based on the chosen theory.

7.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section offers a semantic analysis of some identified lexical relations in the speech. The focus is to assess their occurrence and how they have been used to re-echo the reset agenda of President Mahama to the Ghanaian people.

7.1 Research Question 1: What types of lexical relations did President John Dramani Mahama deploy in his 68th Independence Day Speech?

The study finds evidence of synonymy, antonymy (including gradable, complementary, relational, and reversive types), hyponymy/hypernymy, collocations, and phrasal/prepositional verbs. The lexical relations are thematized under paradigmatic and syntagmatic sense relations.

7.1.1 Paradigmatic Lexical Relations

Paradigmatic lexical relations refer to the relation of words that can be used as substitutes in specific contexts without changing the meaning of the sentence (Taher & Salih, 2023).

(a) Synonym

According to Murphy (2018), although synonymy is the basic concept in lexical semantics, defining and identifying synonyms is difficult, subject to divergent views on whether true or "complete" synonymy exists. This notwithstanding, synonymy is considered as "similarity of meaning" or, specifically, an "identity of meaning" (Murphy, 2018). Murphy (2018) further adds that when there is an expression that can replace another in a sentence without altering the meaning, they become synonyms through the application of the "substitution test." However, Gan et al., (2007) and Omar, (2000) posit that the "substitution test" is ridden with limitations because perfect substitutions are rare owing to differences in connotation, register, or usage. The challenges that characterized the "substitution test" brought about "complete synonymy" and "near-synonymy" (Omar, 2000, Ugoala, 2024). There is complete synonymy when sameness of meaning remains the same in all contexts—a stance considered rare. On the other hand, near synonymy looks at words that have likeness of meaning within a specific semantic domain, each having specific connotations. Omar (2000). Below are samples of synonyms extracted from the speech text.

(i) Scaled-down/reducing

Excerpt 1:

.....we are constrained to interrupt the celebration's rotation in the regions and hold it in a *scaled-down* version here at the presidency's forecourt... Paragraph 5, Line 2

Excerpt 2:

By *reducing* the scale of the event.... Para. 7(1)

(ii) Significance/importance

Excerpt 3:

Nonetheless, this scaled-down celebration does not diminish the *importance* and *significance* of this occasion in any way.

(iii) Reforms/Initiatives

Excerpt 4:

.....we implemented *reforms* to the annual Independence Day parade. Para 1, (1)

Excerpt 5:

.....an *initiative* intended to bring the celebration closer to all our people. Para 4, Line 1

(iv) Economic Crisis/Severe Economic Crisis

Excerpt 6:

This is a necessary step considering the *economic crisis* our nation is currently experiencing. Para 5, Line 3

Excerpt 7:

Fiscal prudence has become imperative for navigating the *severe economic crisis* that has recently confronted our country. Para 8, Line 1

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(v) Sacrifice/Fiscal Prudence

Excerpt 8:

In a year when we call on everyone to *sacrifice*, including workers who have accepted a base pay adjustment far below the inflation rate..... Para 11, Line 1

Excerpt 9:

Fiscal prudence has become imperative for navigating the severe economic crisis that has recently confronted our country. Para 8, Line 1

(vi) Dampening Our Spirits/Despair

Excerpt 10:

Losing hope or enthusiasm Para 31(1), Line 1 &

Excerpt 11:

This stark reality, far from *dampening our spirits*, must spur us on to strive for rapid development. Para 31(1)

Excerpt 12:

.....how can we, their progenies, armed with far more, *despair* in the face of these challenges? Para 32

(vii) Struggle/Fight

Excerpt 13:

.....and carried the burdens of our *struggles*, but never have we given up. Para 64, Line 2

Excerpt 14:

From Africa's liberation movements to the *fight* for civil rights... Para 68, Line 1

It can be deduced from the synonyms used that the president has clearly communicated to the general Ghanaian populace about the state of the country. He used synonyms to communicate the need to cut a lot of expenditure as a result of the state of the country's economy, hence the idea of hosting the 68th independence at the presidency's forecourt. This set the tone for his much-touted 'reset agenda' trumpeted prior to the 2024 general elections. Meanwhile, he was, however, quick to assure the populace that although minimal, it still hasn't diminished the value and essence of the independence celebration.

Excerpt 15:

"Nonetheless, this scaled-down celebration does not diminish the importance and significance of this occasion in any way. Ghana's independence is the single most important event in our history, as it set us on the path to nationhood. It is even more significant because it lit the flames of independence in sub-Saharan Africa by inspiring other countries, yoked to colonial exploitation, to seek self-determination."

Furthermore, President Mahama, through the use of synonyms, credits both governments for their effort—'reforms'/'initiative towards improving the Independence Day celebrations. There were also some nuances of allusion to the struggle of our forebears towards attainment of independence and the need for those experiences to catapult the nation into self-reliance.

(b) Antonymy

Antonyms denote the opposite of another word. According to Paradis & Willners, (2011), antonymy is the relationship between words that are opposite in meaning. These opposing relationships play a crucial role in how we understand and use language (Kotzor, 2021). They mentioned that there have been empirical studies that seek to investigate antonymy as a mode of thought in language use and meaning-making relative to their degree of opposition. As a lexico-semantic relation, antonymy is word pairs that have opposite meanings (Paradis et al., 2009). Furthermore, Paradis et al. (2009) established that there are two contrasting (opposite) models, and according to research, they are the lexical categorial model and the cognitive prototype model. Among the two contrasting models, Paradis et al. (2009) credited the cognitive prototype model as being a better explainer of antonymy, showcasing that different pairings have changing levels of lexico-semantic relations.

(1) Gradable Antonyms

These are opposition words that are considered in terms of scale but allow for degrees of differences (Koptjevskaja-Tamm et al., 2024).

(i) Large-scale Celebrations/Scaled-down Version

Excerpt 16:

..... hold it in a *scaled-down version* here at the presidency's forecourt instead of the traditional Black Star Square. Para 5, Line 2

(ii) Moments of Triumph/Moments of Anguish

Excerpt 17:

We have had *moments of triumph* and *moments of anguish*. Para 22, Line 1

(iii) Biggest Opportunity/Serious Challenges

Excerpt 18:

Agriculture remains our *biggest opportunity* to reduce import dependence. With over US\$2 billion spent annually on food imports..... Paragraph 43, Line 1

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Excerpt 19:

.....policy choices have stunted our prospects and left us reeling from *serious challenges*. Paragraph 31, Line 2

Over here, while still on his call for financial prudence, he acknowledges that the country has experienced some moments of good and bad. Although the president admitted to challenges there are in the future, he remained optimistic about a better life for the people of Ghana.

(2) Complementary Antonymy

This is when there is the presence of binary opposition. To put it simply, it suggests that when one is true, it cannot be false, and vice versa. There is no middle line of acceptance (Koptjevskaja-Tamm et al., 2024; Vdovychenko, 2022).

(i) Freedom/Colonial Exploitation

Excerpt 20:

.....Independence Day celebrations serve as an opportunity to remember our nation's struggle for *freedom*.... Para 15, Line 1

Excerpt 21:

.....yoked to *colonial exploitation*, to seek self-determination. Para 13, Line 1

(ii) Self-reliance/Dependence

Excerpt 22:

Proclaiming *self-reliance* while marching straight to the doors of donor agencies.... Para 39, Line 1

Excerpt 23:

Discussions about our independence often highlight our reliance on imports, donor aid, and IMF bailouts as signs of continued *dependence*. Para 37, Line 1

(iii) Success/Failure

Excerpt 24:

The *success* of these policies depends on active citizen participation..... Paragraph 45, Line 1

Excerpt 25:

Rather than perpetually decrying our *failures*.... Paragraph 33, Line 1

(iv) Independence/Dependence

Excerpt 26:

As your president, I am taking the necessary actions to create growth opportunities and enhance our economic *independence*.

Excerpt 27:

Agriculture remains our biggest opportunity to reduce import *dependence*.

From the extract above, the president used antonyms to call for the country's self-reliance. He argues that since Ghana's independence, the country has depended on external financial support and importation, which has brought the country to its current state. In lieu of this, the antonyms present the two options available to the country: to either continue to rely on external support or become self-sufficient. To chart the path of self-reliance, the President itemized 'fiscal discipline,' '24-hour economy,' 'increase our export capacity,' and 'Feed Ghana, among others, as policies he hopes to implement in order for the country to attain the self-reliance status independently.

(3) Relational Antonymy

Relational antonymy, sometimes also referred to as reciprocal or converse antonymy, considers opposition in such a way that where one word qualifies a relationship from one point of view, the other qualifies the same relationship from the opposite point of view. This, (Koptjevskaja-Tamm et al. (2024) believe, is in contrast with gradable antonyms (e.g., "tall" vs. "short") and complementary antonyms (e.g., "alive" vs. "dead").

(i) President/Ghanaian/Son/Brother

Excerpt 28:

I do not speak as *president* but as your *son* and *brother*, in whose hands you have entrusted a solemn duty. It is time for lasting peace.

Excerpt 29:

As *president*, I am committed to providing the bold leadership and clarity of vision needed to navigate the turbulent economic waters while safeguarding our future.

(ii) Forebearers/Progenies

Excerpt 30:

For, if our *forebears*, armed with far less, did not permit their backs to be broken by a repressive and exploitative colonial administration representing an imperial power, how can we, their *progenies*, armed with far more, despair in the face of these challenges? Para 32

(iii) Custodians/Inheritors

Excerpt 31:

We, of this generation, are merely *custodians* of their country and resources..... *Para 34, Line 1*

Excerpt 32:

..... but on how well we have stewarded national assets for those who will *inherit* them... 35(2)

The antonyms used showcase the cordial relationship that exists between the president and his followers. It also speaks about the unity and oneness enjoyed in the country no matter the status. The president sees himself as a son, brother, and fellow countryman.

(c) Hyponymy & Hypernymy

Hyponymy and hypernymy are lexical relations that are considered in terms of class or hierarchy. This implies that one is higher than the other. In this regard, hypernymy is higher and hyponymy is lower. Stated differently, hyponymy is a specific instance of hypernym (e.g., "dog" is a hyponym of "animal"), while hypernymy is the inverse relation, indicating a broader category (Ren et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2019).

(i) Hypernym (general term) → Hyponym (specific term):

Excerpt 33:

"Resources" (*Para 28, Line 2*) → "oil and gas" (*Para 29, Line 3*)

Excerpt 34:

"Governance" (*Para 49, Line 1*) → "constitutional democracy" (*Para 49, Line 2*), "rule of law 54(4)", "constitutional review 51(2)", "democracy 54(2),

Excerpt 35:

"Agriculture" (*Para 43, Line 1*) → "Poultry Farm-to-Table Initiative" (*Para 44, Line 2*)

(ii) Hypernym

Excerpt 36:

"celebration" (*Paragraph 5, Line 1*)

(b) Hyponyms

Excerpt 37:

"parade (1, Line 2), "march-past (3(1)), "hosting (4(1)), "acknowledgment (3(1)) (*Paragraph*

These lexical relations are deployed to add more information about specific fields or sectors being discussed in the speech.

7.1.2 Syntagmatic Relations

Syntagmatic relation refers to the orderly occurrence of linguistic elements and how they combine to form larger structures such as phrases, clauses, and sentences (Wojcik & Kandhadai, 2020). While these relations ascertain the suitability of words and their semantic context within a text (Kornev & Dedova, 2019), their occurrence and formation come as a temporal arrangement of elements to show how they work in a specific order to create meaning (Gatkowska & Arias, 2022).

(a) Collocations

Collocations, which are sometimes referred to as habitual word pairings, look at the predisposition of words to occur together in expected blends (Yu et al., 2008).

(i) Collocates (lexical items)

Excerpt 38:

Fiscal prudence (Para 8, Line 1), economic transformation (Para 30, Line 2), economic crisis (Paragraph 5, Line 2), "Food security" (Para 27, Line 2)

Excerpt 39:

Democratic spirit (Para 25, Line 5), constitutional democracy (Paragraph 49, Line 2), national identity" (Paragraph 16, Line 1)

These collocations are combined together perfectly to drive home the call for a reset in all spheres of the country.

(b) Phrasal Verbs/Prepositional Verbs

Fauzi, (2021) and DEMÍREZEN, (2021) identified phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs as one of the difficult verb constructions in English that pose a peculiar challenge for English language learners. Whereas a phrasal verb is made up of a verb and particle (adverb or preposition) combination that creates a meaning considered idiomatic and not inferred from the individual words, a prepositional phrase, on the other hand, consists of a verb followed by a preposition.

Excerpt 40:

That moment sparked a series of historical events that have *set us back* and significantly delayed our attainment of the objectives of nationhood. (*Para 21, Line 1*)

Excerpt 41:

Young Ghanaians must *step up*, seize these opportunities, and contribute to building a self-sufficient nation (*Para 48, Line 1*).

Excerpt 42:

... actions that *break the chains* of dependency, not just the empty rhetoric of Africa Beyond Aid (*para. 38, line 2*).

Excerpt 43:

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This stark reality, far from dampening our spirits, must *spur us* on to strive for rapid development (Para 31, Line 2).

Excerpt 44:

...this year, we are constrained to interrupt the celebration's rotation in the regions and hold it in a *scaled down* version here at the Presidency's forecourt instead of the traditional Black Star Square (Paragraph 5, Line 2)

Based on the extract teased from the Independence Day speech, it can be argued that the speech deployed effective use of phrasal verbs to drive home the call for action. The phrasal verbs as cited evoke emotions. The cited examples not only arouse action but also portray the vitality of the English verb system. Although (Fauzi, 2021; Demirezen (2021) postulated that this kind of construction poses a serious challenge to second language learners as a result of its idiomaticity, it enhances the texture of the discourse.

Research Question 2: How effective did the lexical relations contribute in achieving his communicative purposes?

The presence of lexical relations in the speech analysed aids the interpretation and understanding of the meaning of words. The meanings of these words did not occur in isolation, rather they were in convergence with other words in a particular context. The deployment of lexical relations such as antonymy, synonymy, collocation, hypernymy, and phrasal verbs in the speech advances and re-echoes John Dramani Mahama's reset agenda to the citizens of Ghana and the international world.

Per the analysis, antonyms are concluded to be widely used. The use of antonyms in varied forms shows contrast, which depicts the country's current situations and where it aspires to be in the future; hence the call for reforms. In second place is synonymy, which divests the speech of redundancy as a result of the use of alternatives. This revelation is supported by Murphy's (2018) and Omar's (2000) substitute theory. They posit that near-synonyms in the speech uphold meaning without compromising coherence. Following closely are collocations. These examples, "*fiscal prudence*," "*economic transformation*," and "*democratic spirit*," cited in the analysis, do not only collocate but also indicate institutional and national aspirations. Just as Yu et al. (2008) have established, such habitual pairings do not only deepen reader comprehension but also memorability, which is evident in the analysis. Following closely are hyponymy and phrasal verbs. Hypernyms and hyponyms show word structure of specificity. Equally, the phrasal verbs call for urgency in action.

8.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, this study therefore concludes that President Mahama has effectively deployed these lexical relations to recognize Ghana's struggles and aspirations while calling on all and sundry to embrace the reset agenda of his government. This study has the implication of theory, codification and standardization of an ESL variety of English – Ghanaian English. It also has implication of the non-native varieties of English often referred to as World Englishes. Most importantly, linguists who have interest in codifying and, in the long round, standardizing Ghanaian English can leverage on this study because language codification and standardization begin with lexis and semantics; and syntax and grammar of a language can only be described and implemented through the lexical items and their meanings.

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Appendix

68TH INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECH

H.E. President John Dramani Mahama

Your Excellency Vice President Professor Jane Naana

Opoku-Agyemang

Rt. Honourable Speaker of Parliament

Your Ladyship the Chief Justice

Your Excellency, former President John Agyekum Kufuor

Your Excellency, former President Nana Akufo-Addo

Ministers of State

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Honourable Members of Parliament

Nii Mei, Naa Mei

Service Chiefs

Our gallant men and women on parade

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good people of Ghana,

I wish you a Happy Independence Day.

Ten years ago, during Ghana's 58th Independence Anniversary, we implemented reforms to the annual Independence Day parade.

This eased the burden on thousands of school children who march, sparing them from hours of standing in the scorching sun.

They formed up on the parade ground only when it was time for their march-past and presidential acknowledgment.

A few years ago, the previous administration decided to rotate the hosting of Independence Day celebrations among the regions of our country, an initiative intended to bring the celebration closer to all our people.

Unfortunately, this year, we are constrained to interrupt the celebration's rotation in the regions and hold it in a scaled down version here at the Presidency's forecourt instead of the traditional Black Star Square. This is a necessary step considering the economic crisis our nation is currently experiencing.

Large-scale celebrations often come with significant logistics, security, and public infrastructure costs, which strain the national budget.

By reducing the scale of the event, we wish to demonstrate a commitment to fiscal responsibility and efficient use of limited resources.

Fiscal prudence has become imperative for navigating the severe economic crisis that has recently confronted our country.

The state spent GHS 15 million on last year's celebration in Koforidua and GHS 13.7 million on the previous year's celebration in Ho.

We received estimates of at least GHS 20 million for holding the event at Independence Square this year on the same scale as previous years.

In a year when we call on everyone to sacrifice, including workers who have accepted a base pay adjustment far below the inflation rate, it is unconscionable to spend that much money on a few hours of celebration. Today's event would save us 95% of the estimated cost.

Nonetheless, this scaled-down celebration does not diminish the importance and significance of this occasion in any way. Ghana's independence is the single most important event in our history, as it set us on the path to nationhood.

It is even more significant because it lit the flames of independence in sub-Saharan Africa by inspiring other countries, yoked to colonial exploitation, to seek self-determination.

This day must always be commemorated, but when reality calls for a different approach, we must heed it and act accordingly. Moreover, hosting the celebration here at the Presidency preserves the symbolic essence of Independence Day while demystifying the seat of government.

Fellow compatriots, Independence Day celebrations serve as an opportunity to remember our nation's struggle for freedom and to honor the sacrifices of our forbearers who led that struggle for self-rule.

It reinforces our national identity, unity, and patriotism while offering a moment for reflection on our progress and the challenges ahead.

It presents an opportunity to recount our history, pick the lessons it teaches, and forge a new path for progress and development.

Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah—the Founder of our nation—envisioned an industrialized, self-reliant Ghana, whose citizens have the highest standard of economic life and the greatest sense of self-esteem—rooted in Pan African unity.

But on February 24, 1966, a joint military and police coup shattered that dream, plunging Ghana into decades of instability and military takeovers—the verdict of history is now loud and clear: declassified documents from the US archives reveal that it was a coup inspired and engineered by the CIA.

This remains the most regrettable and darkest moment in our nation's journey.

That moment sparked a series of historical events that have set us back and significantly delayed our attainment of the objectives of nationhood.

We have had moments of triumph and moments of anguish. We have blossomed into a fully-fledged democracy with a healthy culture of peaceful power transfers.

We must, however, remind ourselves that democratic participation transcends the act of voting; it is fundamentally about accountability and the security needed to demand it.

It is about safeguarding the people's freedoms and rights and fulfilling the promises of socioeconomic prosperity enshrined in our founding document.

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Our history is complex, marked by struggle, resilience, and renewal. But through it all, one truth stands firm: the unbreakable will of the Ghanaian people has ensured that no matter the detours, our democratic spirit endures and our destiny remains in our own hands.

While we reflect on our journey, we must also review our standing today. We must assess our economic outlook, education and human resource development, natural resource management, national security, and governance arrangements.

A thorough review of our healthcare system, agriculture and food security, infrastructure and urban development, and the role of science, technology, and innovation is essential.

In this era of green transition, we must recognize our unique circumstances—a nation rich in natural resources yet vulnerable to climate change—and chart a path that balances sustainability with economic growth.

Eighteen years ago, as we marked our Golden Jubilee—50 years of independence—we celebrated offshore oil and gas discovery.

It was a moment of great optimism, promising a new era of economic transformation and attracting significant investment into Ghana's petroleum sector

However, in recent years, poor governance and policy choices have stunted our prospects and left us reeling from serious challenges. This stark reality, far from dampening our spirits, must spur us on to strive for rapid development.

For if our forebears, armed with far less, did not permit their backs to be broken by a repressive and exploitative colonial administration representing an imperial power, how can we, their progenies, armed with far more, despair in the face of these challenges?

Rather than perpetually decrying our failures, every anniversary of our independence must present an opportunity to account for the legacy we are building for the next generation.

We, of this generation, are merely custodians of their country and resources, entrusted with managing them wisely, today.

These independence anniversaries should be moments of reflection—not on what we have done for ourselves, but on how well we have stewarded national assets for those who will inherit them

Our story cannot be one of missed opportunities; it must be one of continued effort to achieve far more than we can boast of now. Posterity will not accept our failures or take kindly to them.

As President, I am committed to providing the bold leadership and clarity of vision needed to navigate the turbulent economic waters while safeguarding our future. Discussions about our independence often highlight our reliance on imports, donor aid, and IMF bailouts as signs of continued dependence. This reminder is repeated so often that, while undeniably real, it risks becoming a cliché. Yet the entire efficacy of this reminder lies not in its repetition but in our willingness to take decisive action—actions that break the chains of dependency, not just the empty rhetoric of Africa Beyond Aid. Proclaiming self-reliance while marching straight to the doors of donor agencies, begging bowl in hand, is meaningless.

My administration is formulating policies based on fiscal discipline and living within our means to break this cycle of dependence and reset our economy. We are also striving to expand our economy to yield prosperity for all. We are working to implement the 24-hour economy program to ensure that our economy never sleeps. This will allow us to create the necessary job expansion, boost productivity, increase our export capacity and trade footprint, and reduce our need for foreign aid. The US\$10 billion Big Push Initiative will also modernize infrastructure, create jobs, and stimulate local industries, ensuring that our development is driven from within rather than funded from outside.

Agriculture remains our biggest opportunity to reduce import dependence. With over US\$2 billion spent annually on food imports, the Agriculture for Economic Transformation Agenda (AETA) is structured to strengthen local agribusiness and ensure food security. The Feed Ghana Programme will drive mass food production and stabilize prices. At the same time, the Poultry Farm-to-Table Initiative will boost domestic production and processing to directly address our 95% reliance on imported poultry.

The success of these policies depends on active citizen participation, particularly from young people. The AgriNext Programme will equip 30,000 youth with land, training, and agribusiness opportunities.

Farmer Service Centres in every district will provide access to mechanization, quality seeds, and fertilizers to boost local food production.

This is a defining moment, but policies alone, no matter how well-couched, will not change our reality—action will. As your president, I am taking the necessary actions to create growth opportunities and enhance our economic independence.

Young Ghanaians must step up, seize these opportunities, and contribute to building a self-sufficient nation. Ghana's economic future is in your hands.

Fellow Ghanaians, the 1992 Constitution has provided a stable framework for governance and delivered the most extended period of constitutional democracy in our nation's history.

However, like any enduring legal and political framework, it has flaws and loopholes.

Recognizing the need for refinement, the late President John Evans Atta Mills initiated a constitutional review process in 2010, leading to the establishment of the Constitution Review Commission

My previous administration took steps toward implementing its recommendations, but legal challenges interrupted the process.

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Considering evolving national and global dynamics, I have constituted a new review committee to undertake a comprehensive and inclusive reassessment of our Constitution.

This endeavor is essential, as the strength of our democracy, the integrity of our constitutional order, and the rule of law require continuous renewal.

We must not allow weaknesses in our governance framework to fester until they threaten national stability. Instead, we must take proactive steps to reinforce the very foundation of our democracy.

I urge all Ghanaians to participate in this process by submitting their recommendations to the committee. This is an opportunity to ensure that our constitutional framework truly reflects the collective aspirations of the Ghanaian people and serves as a robust instrument for national progress

Fellow Ghanaians, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah understood the essence of unity—not only in Ghana but on the entire African continent, when he said, “The forces that unite us are inherent and far greater than the divisions imposed upon us.”

In the spirit of unity and brotherhood that independence represents, I wish to speak directly to you, my brothers and sisters in Bawku and everywhere else in our land where conflict rages.

I do not speak as president but as your son and brother, in whose hands you have entrusted a solemn duty. It is time for lasting peace. Our children deserve to inherit a land where dreams are nurtured, not nightmares relived, where markets bustle with trade, not tension, and where schools echo in learning, not melancholy.

Let us not be swayed by division, mistrust, or the weight of past injuries.

Let us give renewal of friendship a chance.

This is not an invitation to simply forget the past—far from it. It is an invitation to live above it.

My brothers and sisters, this is our moment in history. We have endured trials, faced challenges, and carried the burdens of our struggles, but never have we given up. Through every storm and shadow, we have kept the flame of hope alive. And now, at this critical juncture, we must rise with courage, determination, and the unwavering belief that a brighter future is within our grasp. Let us reflect on the great movements that have transformed the world, the movements that liberated us from the bonds of colonialism and the voices that shaped our path to democratic rule.

It was ordinary people—workers, dreamers, farmers, students, the young and the old—who refused to accept the way things were. They marched, spoke out, struggled, and they prevailed.

From Africa's liberation movements to the fight for civil rights, from the pursuit of democracy to the battle against poverty and inequality, one lesson stands clear. When people unite with a common purpose, nothing can stand in their way.

As I said before parliament, we shall live the dreams of our forebears in our lifetime.

This is not just a promise; it is a call to action. Let this be our mission: to rise above fear, to silence the voices of doubt, and to harness the strength within us to create a future that is fair, prosperous, and inclusive.

Let us move forward together, side by side, knowing that every sacrifice we make today will prepare the way for future generations.

Thank you very much, and I wish you a happy Independence Day



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