Ghana in 2006

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There were encouraging signs that economic growth was gathering momentum. The International Development Association of the World Bank was among those that saw Ghana as the emerging success story in Africa, stating that the country was on track to achieve middle-income status by 2015. The government actively continued to offer inducements to the private sector and solicited additional aid from East Asia, specifically China, for telecommunications and infrastructural development. On the political front, all eyes were fixed on the campaign for leadership of the two leading parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), as the 2008 elections loomed. The main parties traded accusations about their respective records of involvement in corruption and drug trafficking, while the smaller parties struggled to set an agenda of their own.

Domestic Politics

There were five issues that dominated politics over the course of the year. The most hotly debated in the early months was the passage of the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act or ROPAA. The government maintained that Ghanaians in the diaspora, who contributed so much through remittances (allegedly 14.4% of GDP in 2005), should enjoy the right to vote with effect from 2008. The NDC was opposed, for the reason that the NPP had its greatest concentration of support in the Akan areas that accounted for the greater part of the Ghanaian community
abroad. It therefore seemed as if the NPP was seeking to alter the rules of the game to its advantage. The minority leader in parliament, Alban Bagbin, avoided making this point on the floor of the house on 2 February, resorting instead to a catalogue of inconsistencies in the government case. He highlighted the difficulties the electoral commission would face in verifying who had the right to vote. However, his deputy’s attempts to secure a legal writ restraining the Speaker from permitting further readings failed on 6 February. Three days later, the NDC started a boycott of parliament. The other opposition parties were divided. Within the People’s National Convention (PNC), John Ndebugre supported ROPAA and was suspended from the vice-chairmanship of the party for doing so. On 14 February, the parties opposed to the legislation, united under the banner of Concerned Citizens, took to the streets of Accra to demonstrate in the first of a series of rolling protests. However, the government passed ROPAA on 23 February. Having lost this battle, the NDC returned to parliament on 2 March, hoping that it might still win the war.

The second salient issue was that of corruption, which had become a matter of concern during the previous year. The president reiterated his stance of ‘zero tolerance’ and on 27 July the Whistleblower Bill was finally passed, enabling individuals to disclose malpractices in the public interest. Nevertheless, the opposition and some newspapers alleged that graft was endemic at all levels of government. The annual Transparency International ratings placed Ghana 70th out of 163 countries in terms of perceptions of corruption. The country-specific index indicated that such perceptions had returned to where they had been in the last year of the NDC administration. To impartial observers, that sounded about right. The allegations that had been levelled in 2005 against Dr. Richard Anane, the roads transport minister, were investigated by the Commission on Human Rights and