The Constraint of a Rhetorical Invention: Kwame Nkrumah and the Organization of African Unity

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Abstract
Rhetorical constraints have the potential to inhibit a successful communication transaction. How they do that sometimes practically remains unclear, especially within the study of rhetoric in the African context. This paper examines Kwame Nkrumah's rhetorical urgency as an argumentative tool for the establishment of an organization which would direct the political, economic and military directions of Africa. Employing Bitzer's Situation (1968) and Meyer's Composite Audience (1999) as analytical framework, the paper takes a critical look at Nkrumah's rhetorical invention to locate the inherent constraints and how they (constraints) eclipsed the total success of Nkrumah's invention. This study therefore has implications for the episteme of the different contexts within which rhetorical inventions are created and performed within the pan African liberation sphere.

Keywords: Nkrumah, rhetoric, OAU, pan Africanism, colonialism

Introduction

The conceptualisation, formation and birth of the Organization for African Unity (OAU) were arguably through the rhetorical invention of *Osagyefo* Kwame Nkrumah within a complex political context. The OAU was formed on the 25th of May 1963 at a Conference of Independent African Heads of State at Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. On the eve of the formation of the OAU, Kwame Nkrumah gave a speech at this conference. This speech is the central concern of this paper. Winding the clock back between the period of 1958 and 1961, three meetings of the new African leaders were held to discuss the establishment of a Union of the newly independent African nations.

Kwame Nkrumah, on the eve of Ghana's independence on the 6th of March 1957, had declared that Ghana's independence was meaningless until there was a total decolonisation of the rest of Africa. A year later in 1958, he called for the first ever meeting to discuss issues on African unity and to develop new strategies for the decolonization of the rest of the dependent African territories. By this time, Ghana had become the first black Sub-Saharan African territory to gain her independence. This became refreshing news for blacks both within the continent and in the diaspora.

The first conference was held in Accra. It was attended by the heads of the eight newly independent African States from 15th to 22nd April, 1958. It was an important conference since it marked the first ever meeting of black African leaders after their countries had gained independence from western colonial rule. In the same year, the Ghana, Guinea, Mali Union was formed (Rooney, 2007). This was a hopeful sign of the possibility of Nkrumah's greatest agenda: the political union of Africa. The success of the Accra conference sent positive signals of hope to the rest of the African countries still struggling under colonial rule (Rooney, 2007). The Accra Conference was followed by the 1960 Addis Ababa Conference. It was attended by nine independent heads of State. This conference carried further the initial agenda which was discussed at the 1958 conference but failed to embrace Nkrumah's rhetoric of African political union. At the end of the ten-day meeting, Nkrumah's key agenda, the political unification of independent African countries was deferred for consideration at the next conference which was scheduled two years after the Addis Ababa conference. It was agreed among the new African leaders that during the next meeting, the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) should be formed. Earlier on in 1961, a conference had been held in Casablanca, Morocco which had been attended by Ghana, Morocco, United Arab Republic, Guinea and Mali. Using the Casablanca platform, Nkrumah continued to press for African political unity.

I posit that the support given to Nkrumah's ideas at the Casablanca conference was, perhaps, the greatest support Nkrumah ever received in Africa in his quest for a continental political union. David Rooney (2007) argues that "no other conference of African powers during Nkrumah's lifetime was to give so much support to African Union" (p. 290). Since the Ghana, Guinea, Mali Union had been formed three years prior to the Casablanca meeting, Nkrumah

enjoyed great support from these West African countries which were duly represented by their leaders at the conference. However, the positive signal which Nkrumah received in Casablanca was going to be put into a crucible during the 1963 OAU meeting in Addis Ababa. Addis Ababa conference was attended by more than thirty independent countries in Africa. This was more than three times the number of attendants of any previous meetings of independent African leaders. It was going to be the biggest platform for Nkrumah's rhetoric on Africa's political unity.

For a proper discussion of this study, I ask these pertinent questions: What constituted the essence of Nkrumah's Addis Ababa invention? What was the object of the speech? Did it find space within the uncertain rhetorical discourse of African unity? Did the speech address the composite audience and what was their response? I contend that the success of Nkrumah's invention at Addis Ababa was largely hindered by major constraints within the rhetorical situation (Bitzer, 1968). These constraints were born out of political developments which occurred before the conference. Nkrumah's failure to adequately address these constraints before and at Addis Ababa allowed them to finally eclipse the effectiveness of his rhetorical invention.

I intend, therefore, to do a number of things in this paper. First, I will examine Nkrumah's rhetorical arguments in his 1963 Addis Ababa speech. In so doing, I will look at his application of fear and urgency as rhetorical tools; secondly, I will look at the argument of including the parts in the whole (Perelman & Olbrects –Tyteca, 1969), within his invention. In the second part of this paper, I will attempt to look at the composite audience and Nkrumah's strategy in addressing them. In the last section, I will examine the key constraints which confronted Nkrumah's invention within the rhetorical situation. I will conclude with responses of Nkrumah's audience and the overall effect(s) of his OAU speech.

The 1964 Addis Ababa address, I argue, marks a climactic point of Nkrumah's rhetoric on African unity. It forms a key part of Nkrumah's political rhetorical tradition which spans nearly two decades. A rhetorical analysis of the Addis Ababa speech will, perhaps, not be complete if it is not perceived within the larger context of Nkrumah's invention on African political unity. Salazar (2002), in his *African Athens*, is right when he remarks that a speech never comes

alone. This assertion is corroborated by Warnick (1996), who further indicates that "discourse never occurs in a vacuum; it occurs in a situation comprised of other text [and that] rhetors construct text with other text in mind" (p. 191). Nkrumah's rhetoric of continental unity emerged on the international scene from 1957 and had gained significant momentum after a period of six year in Addis Ababa. For the audience at Addis Ababa, they had become, in the words of Myers (1999), "a continuous audience" (p. 55) of Nkrumah. They were aware that African political unity had for some time become part of Nkrumah's rhetorical commonplace. The major challenge for Nkrumah was how to appeal to an audience with the same message albeit with the purpose of causing their adherence, as the entire African leaders on the continent were at the deliberative point of deciding on the fate or the possibility of a continental unity. I discuss Nkrumah's invention by first, looking at how he employed fear and urgency in his speech.

The Sense of Urgency and Creation of Fear
As part of the opening remarks, Nkrumah sets out in a tone of urgency which tends to arouse a sense of fear within the audience. If the speech were to be music, it could have passed for an allegro. This kind of tempo sets the appropriate mood for the main focus of the speech. The sense of urgency is going to underlie the central message in the address. Nkrumah begins, "[o]ur objective is African Union now. There is no time to waste. We must unite now or perish." At this beginning point, Nkrumah establishes a central issue in his invention: the need to act quickly as a result of the looming danger. The essence of persuasion, notes Perelman (1982), is to "incite action" (p. 12) in order to bring about change. But the change which is needed by Nkrumah involves a sense of urgency. The sense of fear created by the opening words of the speech, further invokes a feeling of imminent destruction amongst the audience which serves as a catalyst for urgent action. At this moment, fear and urgency turn to reinforce each other in the audience. In the Book Two of his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle (2007) defines fear as:

> a sort of pain and agitation derived from the imagination of a future destructive or painful evil … only what has the potential for great pains or

> destruction, and these only if they do not appear far
> off but near, so that they are about to happen; for
> what is far off is not feared (p. [1382a]).

Looking at the on-going discussion, two things are to be noted from Aristotle's (2007) definition of fear. The first is the "potential" of the danger causing "destruction"; second, when the supposed danger seems imminent.

Nkrumah further goes on to narrate how the momentum in the fight for independence on the continent has resulted in a dramatic swell of the number of independent states from eight to thirty-one within a period of five years. He therefore acknowledged this positive change in fortune by praises as he described it as an "open testimony to the indomitable and irresistible surge of our people's quest for independence." In an epidictic posture, Nkrumah extols the admirable virtues of Africans in the fight for independence. It is a way by which Nkrumah informed the audience that each of the individuals constituting the immediate audience of the speech, had in some way, made substantial sacrifices beyond their personal interest for their countries. This is part of what Aristotle (2007) refers to as "honourable" (75-78).

In extolling the noble deeds of his audience, Nkrumah is quick to note his unique contribution and pioneering role in the freedom movement in Africa. He remarked, "[at] the first gathering of African Heads of State, to which I had the honour of playing host, there were representatives of eight independent State (sic) only." Though the audience are not ignorant of Nkrumah's efforts towards liberation movements in Africa, the reminder perhaps increases his ethos and places him in a unique position which gives him deliberative legitimacy to be able to show the way for the future direction of Africa's liberation. If there was the need to highlight the honourable deeds and unique contributions of freedom fighters in Africa, then Nkrumah reserved for himself a double honour. He had been the first African to bring the newly independent countries to deliberate on continental unity in Accra. Nkrumah had written his name in memory as a doyen of Pan-Africanism by the late 1950's. Thus, from the onset of his speech, Nkrumah asserted his authority and ethos as a leader who understood the rudiments of African liberation struggle and possessed the knowledge needed to overcome the trappings of neo-

colonialism in Africa. The noble deeds of Africans which Nkrumah extolled had been characterised by the "revolutionary speed" of the freedom fighters which had brought about freedom to the millions of people in Africa. This same "speed" is what is needed in Africa to in order to shape the future. He remarked:

> In the task which is before us of unifying our continent we must fall in with that pace or be left behind. The task cannot be attacked in the tempo of any other age than our own. To stall behind the unprecedented momentum of actions and events in our time will be to court failure and our own undoing.

According to Perelman (1969), "the values eulogiz[ed] by the speaker must be ones deemed worthy of guiding our action for otherwise" (p. 52). Nkrumah brought to the deliberation table two basic propositions, which were that either we maintained the "tempo" by working to unite ourselves or we slowed down and ended up in failure. By doing this, the speech thus provides the audience with only two deliberative options. In other words, the "debate is limited to the thesis that has been offered" (Perelman, 1969, p. 239). He created a presence in the minds of his audience which would be reinforced many times in the course of the address. The success of the "tempo" or "momentum" which Nkrumah delineated is quite significant in terms of its practical effects. In the year 1960, three years preceding Nkrumah's address at Addis Ababa, as many as seventeen dependent African countries became free from colonial rule. Guinea became independent in 1958, a year after Ghana's; between 1961 and 1963 six more countries also became independent.

Thus, a steady momentum had been maintained which produced indubitably, the fruits of independence. In a logical sense, if a method had produced concrete results, then it needs replicating it, knowing its efficacy as a sure means of achieving the end results. Since choices are based upon the "end", the deliberative speaker should not be ignorant of it (Aristotle, 2007, p. 49 [1358b]). Nkrumah thus showed a way to unity to justify the end.

What is the reason for Nkrumah's urgency? What stimulates it? The urgency is the need to "lay the foundation" of a union

government "here and now." This is because the agents of colonialism pose a major threat to African countries after independence. Nkrumah asserted:

> On this continent it has not taken us long to discover that the struggle against colonialism does not end with the attainment of national independence. Independence is only the prelude to a new and more involved struggle for the right to conduct our own economic and social affairs, to construct our society according to our aspirations, unhampered by crushing and humiliating neo-colonialist controls and interference.

Nkrumah created a presence (Perelman, 1979, p. 17) before the audience by revealing in concrete terms colonialism which had metamorphosed into a more hideous form, neo-colonialism. This new form of colonialism, according to Nkrumah, is "a new and a more involved struggled" which requires the old zeal, a tool that was employed for the attainment of independence in Africa. Nkrumah set the stage therefore for a paradigm shift, that is, from momentum for the attainment of independence from colonialism to momentum for African unity against neo - colonialism. In other words, nationalists movements in their separate African countries fought for their independence, but with the "new and a more involved struggle" against neo-colonialism, Africans need to unite our forces. By highlighting the new form of colonialism and the strategy needed, Nkrumah "draw[s] the attention of the audience to them and thereby gives them a presence that prevents them from being neglected" (Perelman, 1982, p. 35). Up to this point in the speech, there is a conscious repetition of an imperative which appears in a correlative structure to achieve forceful effect.

> [w]e must unite now or perish.
> We must fall into that pace or be left behind.
> We must unite or sink.

These imperatives, in each case, accentuate in a similar fashion the two options given by the speaker which rhetorically limit the audience in

their deliberative choice. In fact, the audience can only choose the good, that is, Nkrumah's desire for Africa's political unity which holds the key to the continent's economic development. On the other hand, they can choose the bad. This option presents a picture of Africa being left behind to be destroyed by the agents of neo-colonialism as a result of disunity.

The ominous schemes of the colonialists are brought closer to the audience through direct and indirect references. He described how Africans "have been threatened with frustration where rapid change is imperative and with instability where sustained effort and ordered rule are indispensable." The sense of "frustration" and "instability" witnessed in Africa reminds the audience of examples of neo-colonial influence in places such as the Congo and Algeria which, as individual countries, could not stand the might of colonialism thereby capitulating under such circumstances. A direct rhetorical example to deepen the argument is the speech's reference to the situation in South America:

> We have already reached the stage where we must unite or sink into that condition which has made Latin-America the unwilling and distressed prey of imperialism after one-and-a-half centuries of political independence.

Words such as "perish," "prey," "threatened," "ruthless," and "dangerous" create a picture of a formidable opponent ready to hunt down Africa. The words together present the danger of the forces of neo-colonialism. To Perelman (1979):

> things present, things near to us in space and time, act directly on our sensibility. The orator's endeavors often consist, however, in bringing to mind things that are not immediately present…to make "things future and remote appear as present (p. 17).

Since the supposed enemy, neo-colonialism, seems stronger in might and its tactics appear daunting enough for any single African territory, it becomes not only imperative for Africans to unite but a matter of

survival which needs all the urgency it deserves. The creation of presence by Nkrumah calls for the immediate action of African leaders to act "by crushing and humiliating neo-colonialist controls and interference" in Africa.

In view of this clear and present danger that neo-colonialists pose to Africa's political and economic freedom, the speech prescribes a continuous "tempo" in action. That is, African freedom fighters should move in a similar pace just as before to politically unite the continent in order to successfully combat the agents of neo-colonialism. Invoking fear through the creating of presence, becomes a necessary catalyst for action.

African Unity: Inclusion of the Parts within the Whole
Nkrumah's proclamation on the need for Africa's unity which he made on Ghana's Independence Day was to become his mantra, a rhetorical commonplace, within his liberation discourse of Africa. At Addis Ababa in 1963, African unity was his watchword. The deliberative spotlight was thrown on the continent without any emphasis on individual states within Africa. He noted:

> But just as we understood that the shaping of our national destinies required of each of us our political independence and bent all our strength to this attainment, so we must recognise that our economic independence resides in our African union and requires the same concentration upon the political achievement.

Nkrumah drew from the quasi logical argument of inclusion of the parts in the whole. According to Perelman and Olbrects -Tyteca (1969), "the whole is treated as similar to each one of its parts" (p. 231). They further explain that "what is true of the whole is true of the part" (p. 231). Nkrumah projected the argument from the species to the genus. By so doing, he literally threw his audience into the bigger argument to enable them perceive the extent of the African problem in view of the imminent threat of neo-colonialism to Africa. In effect, he filled the deliberative space with the bigger African problem (genus), in whose solution laid the ultimate salvation of separate African territories (species). Nkrumah continued:

> The social and economic development of Africa
> will come only within the political kingdom, not
> the other way round.

Africa, as a continent, becomes the focal point of discussion in the speech, not the limited interests of the individual states. The suppression of the challenges facing individual states in the speech allows a projection of the whole in the minds of the audience, thus allowing the parts to remain only at the background. For when the whole becomes weak, the parts cannot stand on their own. This direction of the argumentation remodels what the audience must regard as most important. By this argument, Nkrumah succeeded in bringing Africa to the fore. He pointed to some remarkable examples of the 'whole':

> The United States of America, the Union of Soviet
> Socialist Republics, were the political decisions of
> revolutionary peoples before they became mighty
> realities of social power and material wealth.

These rhetorical examples are appropriate for Nkrumah's invention. By analogy, they fit into the exact frame of Nkrumah's vision for Africa. The examples tend to serve two important purposes. Firstly, by logically projecting the whole over its parts implies that any supposed prosperity of a single African territory cannot be fully realised or complete without the prosperity of the bigger whole, in this case, Africa. Secondly, through the unity of the parts, the strength of the whole is maximised.

In the speech, the argument of the 'parts within the whole' is not only applied to the African situation but to the neo-colonialists as well. Nkrumah further revealed the complex schemes of the neo-colonialists which worked perfectly to achieve a singular purpose. He noted, "we would be deceiving ourselves in the most cruel way were we to regard their individual actions as separate and unrelated." He reminded the audience of the old schemes of the neo-colonialist by tapping into the long tradition of colonial exploitation in Africa which is shared by the audience. Murphy (1997) posits that "rhetorical traditions organise the 'social knowledge' of communities and make

available symbolic resources for the invention of arguments aimed at authoritative public judgments" (p. 72). Thus, with the seemingly united actions of neo-colonialists, Nkrumah gave more credence to African unity in the face of the continent's search for economic development and security to mitigate the subtle Western neo-colonial influences. Africa needs to become 'whole' in order to become economically and militarily powerful, instead of remaining poor and weak in its separate 'parts.'

Unity, in view of Nkrumah's arguments, does not become an option, but a crucial necessity. Thus, Africans cannot fail to unite if the agents of neo-colonialism are united in their singular purpose. In a series of rhetorical questions, Nkrumah rhetorically defended his deliberative proposition of Africa's unity in his effort to cause adherence to his thesis by the audience:

> Do we have any other weapon against this design but our unity? Is not our unity essential to guard our own freedom as well as to win freedom for our oppressed brothers, the Freedom Fighters? Is it not unity alone that can weld us into an effective force, capable of creating our own progress and Making our valuable contribution to world, peace? Which independent African State, which of you here will claim that its financial structure and banking institutions are fully harnessed to its national development? Which will claim that its material resources and human energies are available for its own national aspirations? Which will disclaim substantial measure of disappointment and disillusionment in its agricultural and urban development?

With these six rhetorical questions, the forcefulness of Nkrumah's position becomes apparent. In the face of the 'presence' which he had created, he reiterated in a rhetorical manner the absence of a better choice aside his thesis on African unity. In a sense, Nkrumah had argued and concluded that the thesis which he had presented for the audience's assent is the best deliberative choice they could ever make

in view of the given situation. Perelman and Olbrects –Tyteca (1969) note:

> This appeal, known classically as the *argumentum ad ignorantiam*, derives it force essentially from its very urgency, for it excludes the possibility of pausing for thought: the debate is limited to the thesis that has been offered and to what might possibly be opposed to it immediately (pp. 238-239).

Nkrumah had succeeded in creating a sense of urgency which needed immediate deliberative answer. Knowing the differing opinions of African leaders on African political unity (which will be examined in detail in the next section of the discussion), he had forcefully reminded them of the real, imminent but hidden dangers Africa faced as more countries fought to become free from colonial rule. As a *rhetor*, he exuded what Aristotle (2007) refers to as "practical wisdom" (p. 112) as he showed insight into the hidden strategies of the neo-colonialists. Nkrumah further reveals startling statistics of the colonialists' exploits:

> Our continent is probably the richest in the world for minerals and industrial and agricultural primary materials. From the Congo alone, Western firms exported copper, rubber, cotton, and other goods to the value of 2,773 million dollars in the ten years between 1945 and 1955, and from South Africa, Western gold mining companies have drawn a profit, in the six years between 1947 to 1951, of 814 million dollars.

He reminded the audience of what George Padmore (1953) refers to as Africa's continuous "rape" (p. 17) by the West and the tremendous resources which are still available for the economic development of the continent. At this point, the speech applies the rhetorical concepts of "association and dissociation." Perelman and Olbrects –Tyteca (1969), in defining these terms indicate:

> By process of association we understand schemes which bring separate elements together and allow us to establish a unity among them, positively or negatively, by means of one another. By processes of dissociation, we mean techniques of separation which have the purpose of dissociating, separating, disuniting elements which are regarded as forming a whole or at least a unified group within some system of thought (p. 190).

Nkrumah noted, among other things, that "[o]ur continent certainly exceeds all the others in potential hydro-electric power which some experts assess as 42 per cent of the world's total." By the use of the pronoun "our" he associated all the resources belonging to the individual countries in Africa as a unified whole whilst, at the same time, dissociating the rest of the world, "others", which, for him, comprised an entirely separate entity from Africa. Through the means of association, he had identified Africans with one another breaking the artificial walls of the imperialists which have separated people of similar historical and cultural heritage. Nkrumah had presented a vivid picture of African unity. The argument further speaks to correct the wrong ties which still existed between France and her former colonies in Africa. Indirectly, Nkrumah had reiterated the idea that Africa, as a single whole, has a natural heritage and destiny entirely separated from the rest of the world. Perelman and Olbrects –Tyteca (1969) continue to say that, "all association implies dissociation … the two techniques are complimentary and are always working at the same time" (p. 190). Throughout the speech, Nkrumah constantly chose the first person plural, in both the subject "we" and object "our" forms to rhetorically associate Africans with one another. The repetition of the pronouns is purposely done to achieve a rhetorical effect: that we are one people with a common destiny. It is a reminder of the uniqueness of Africans and the interconnectedness of their destinies in the realisation of their full potential as a people.

Addressing the Composite Audience
At Addis Ababa, Nkrumah was clearly presented with a composite audience. A speaker is confronted with a composite audience when the speaker confronted with a heterogeneous audience representing different interests (Myers, 1999). This was a major challenge to his

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invention since there seemed to be differing interests among the audience. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) put it clearly when they say:

> It often happens that an orator must persuade a composite audience, embracing people differing in character, loyalties, and functions. To win over the different elements in his audience, the orator will have to use a multiplicity of arguments (pp. 21-22).

Since the beginning of Nkrumah's call for African unity, more than a decade before the Addis Ababa conference, the new African leaders together with other freedom fighters had become a key audience for Nkrumah's rhetoric. The African leaders, in Edwin Black's terms as cited by Myers (1999), formed a "public that is 'clustered about' a set of defining commonplaces that relate to a subject of discussion" (p. 57). In other words, they had become an indispensable audience of Nkrumah's rhetorical invention on his African unity project. At Addis Ababa, the African leaders formed Nkrumah's immediate and most important audience. If African unity was ever going to become a reality, Nkrumah needed to get this crucial section of his audience on board because they constituted the delegates who had the mandate to vote on the proposal for continental political unity. In sum, the delegates, so to speak, formed a rhetorical audience (Bitzer, 1968) for Nkrumah's invention.

From the Accra conference in 1958, several groups began to emerge with differing opinions on African unity. The first category of groupings was the Casablanca and the Monrovia groups. The Casablanca group comprised Morocco, Ghana, the United Arab Republic (Egypt), Guinea and Mali. Whilst the Monrovia group was made of Liberia, Togo, Senegal and Nigeria (Rooney, 2007, pp. 90-91). Nkrumah was the key mouthpiece of the Casablanca group which argued for a radical approach to continental unity. The Monrovia group, which was led by Nigeria, favoured a moderate view. Their view, in essence, expressed a rather gradual approach to African unity.

The other groupings were those which advocated for regional associations in place of continental unity. Two of these major groups were the Union Afrique et Malgache (UAM) and the East African Federation. The Union *Afrique et Malgache* (UAM) was an association

of former French colonies in Africa with membership of twelve countries. The main purpose of the group was to ensure close economic and political ties among members and with France. The East African Federation was formed by Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania. The other member countries were Kenya and Uganda (Thompson, 1969, pp. 329-332).

Nkrumah was then confronted with these three major power blocs with varying interests at Addis Ababa. As a *rhetor* he needed to address them adequately to get them on board. To Perelman and Olbrects –Tyteca (1969), "a great orator is one who possesses the art of taking into consideration, in his argumentation, the composite nature of his audience" (pp. 21-22). The fate of Nkrumah's rhetoric on African unity largely depended on these different African groups present at Addis Ababa.

In terms of deliberative end, the immediate rhetorical audience could be narrowed down to two main groups: those who favoured continental political unity and those who favoured gradualism through regional groupings (Thompson, 1969). It should be noted, however, that those who favoured gradualism were not necessarily in favour of regional groupings but the two groups stood on one side of the argument: Africans are not ready for a political union now. They simply were not interested in an immediate political unity of Africa. At this point, it became obvious that Nkrumah was seemingly fighting from a weaker position in terms of numbers since the other groups (the moderate and regional groupings) relatively had the majority of African leaders within their fold.

First, Nkrumah addressed the Monrovia group. He began by noting their view, "[i]t has been suggested that our approach to unity should be gradual, that it should be piece-meal." The reference to "gradual" and "piecemeal" perhaps, immediately drew the attention of the members of the Monrovia group to Nkrumah's argument as a response to their argumentative position. Next, Nkrumah placed the moderate position within the whole context of the African problem. He continued:

> This point of view conceives of Africa as a static entity with "frozen" problems which can be eliminated one by one and when all have been cleared then we can come together and say: 'Now

all is well. Let us now unite.' This view takes no account of the impact of external pressures. Nor does it take cognisance of the danger that delay can deepen our isolations and exclusiveness; that it can enlarge our differences and set us drifting further and further apart into the net of neo-colonialism, so that our union will become nothing but a fading hope, and the great design of Africa's full redemption will be lost, perhaps, forever.

Nkrumah ridiculed the position of the group which he considered as untenable in the face of the present challenges in Africa. Perelman and Olbrechts –Tyteca (1969) observed that, "a statement is ridiculous as soon as it conflicts, without justification, with an accepted opinion" (p. 206). In the earlier part of the address, Nkrumah treated the audience with a vivid narration of the complex and evolving nature of Africa's challenges which the audience are perhaps "blind" to in view of their professed position on Africa's unity. Perelman and Olbrechts -Tyteca further remark that that "ridicule is the penalty for blindness and is apparent only to those for whom this blindness is obvious" (p. 206).

Through the metaphor of "drifting … into the net of neo-colonialism" Nkrumah revealed a hidden danger and its consequence on Africa if the new leaders were to see the moderate position as the solution to the present challenge of neo-colonialism. Nkrumah made the moderate position to rhetorically appear weak and rendered it ineffective as a means of salvaging Africans from the "net of neo-colonialism."

Immediately after addressing the Monrovia group, Nkrumah turned to speak to the section of the audience which fundamentally believed in regional integration in place of continental unity. He spoke particularly to the French group in West Africa and the East African group. He observed, "[t]he view is also expressed that our difficulties can be resolved simply by a greater collaboration through co-operative association in our inter-territorial relationships." After reminding the audience of the position of the French and Eastern African groups, Nkrumah moved on quickly to show the weakness of this deliberative position by again invoking the quasi-logical argument of the inclusion of the parts into the whole. He remarked that:

> This way of looking at our problems denies a
> proper conception of their inter-relationship and
> mutuality. It denies faith in a future for African
> advancement in African independence. It betrays a
> sense of solution only in continued reliance upon
> external sources through bilateral agreements for
> economic and other forms of aid.

In this response, Nkrumah subjected the argument of regional groups as being narrow which only looked at the parts without taking into full cognizance of the bigger whole. Nkrumah had demonstrated an understanding of the bigger problem devoid of temporal solution of the challenge of neo-colonialism. For Nkrumah, the solution of the African problem was located within a continental solution. For purposes of deliberation, he closed the argument of regional groupings by pointing to the huge economic potential of the "whole" which will be far more than what the "parts" (regional groupings) can attract.

> There is the far more compelling advantage which this
> arrangement offers, in that aid will come from anywhere to a united
> Africa because our bargaining power would become infinitely greater.
> We shall no longer be dependent upon aid from restricted sources.

> With this statement, Nkrumah concluded his address of the
> regional groups and all possible delegates who saw regional groupings
> as the viable option concerning African unity. Nkrumah had made an
> effort in addressing the composite audience. By his invention, he had
> advanced his arguments for African political unity which was
> generally shared by the Casablanca group. For them, Nkrumah's
> rhetoric of unity was an advancement of the groups' own position.
> With the two other groups, the moderate and the regional groups,
> Nkrumah had, to some extent, made strides to win them by addressing
> them separately. Myers (1999) observed that, "the speaker does not
> write off any of his significant audiences, but attempts to ingratiate
> himself with all of them" (p. 67). For a moment, the speech seemed to
> have addressed some of the core issues standing in the way of
> continental political unity. This approach seemed rhetorically
> effective. Myers further concludes that "the ability [for a speaker] to
> formulate statements that communicate distinct, and perhaps even
> incompatible, messages simultaneously to diverse audiences is,

therefore, crucial to political success" (p. 55). The effectiveness of this approach in Addis Ababa is discussed in the last section of this paper.

After addressing the composite audience, Nkrumah made a climactic move as the speech gradually got to the end. He pulled up a perfect rhetorical example to bring his argument to that climactic point. Nkrumah created an emotional presence by drawing from the example of the United States of America which he likened to the African situation. By this connection, he enacted in the minds of the audience, the historical formation of the United States of America. He allowed his audience to see in a flash, a vision of the Africa that he had rhetorically envisaged. This moment marked a highpoint in the Addis Ababa address. Nkrumah declared:

> When the first Congress of the United States met many years ago in Philadelphia one of the delegates sounded the first chord of unity by declaring that they had met in "a state of nature." In other words, they were not in Philadelphia as Virginians, or Pensylvanians, but simply as Americans. This reference to themselves as Americans was in those days a new and strange experience. May I dare to assert equally on this occasion Your Excellencies, that we meet here today not as Ghanaians, Guineans, Egyptians, Algerians, Moroccans, Malians, Liberians, Congolese or Nigerians but as Africans. Africans united in our resolve to remain here until we have agreed on the basic principles of a new compact of unity among ourselves which guarantees for us and our future a new arrangement of continental government.

The vision created in the speech, in a way hallows Addis Ababa. Nkrumah had reminded the delegates of their place within this historical epoch in the destiny of Africa. A landmark event akin to what happened in Philadelphia. The new vision presented by Nkrumah had the potential to cause the audience to re-evaluate their stance. It allows them to argue within themselves simultaneously as Nkrumah presents his arguments (Perelman & Olbrechts –Tyteca, 1969),

awakening in them to see their unique place in the shaping of the destiny of a continent in which they are called to become major actors. Through Nkrumah's words, he had renewed the audience from being separate parts into forming a single whole so that each member can now see himself as part of the other forming a uniquely whole, totally independent of their former parts. In effect, Nkrumah was, in a rhetorical move, trying to reconstitute the gathering in the minds of the audience within the light of what happened in Philadelphia. By so doing, he created in the audience for a moment, a new sense of a single African community in which all the audience have a new kind of citizenship as proud Africans.

In marking the peroration, Nkrumah made another decisive move. He invoked what seemed as the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem in John chapter 12, verses 9 to 11. He declared:

> We shall thus begin the triumphant march to the kingdom of the African Personality, and to a continent of prosperity, and progress, of equality and justice and of work and happiness.

Thus, when African unity is achieved, Africans shall reign supreme in Africa. This is an expression of a deep hope in the destiny of Africa. It will not be the victorious march of an individual hero but a "triumphant march" of all the freedom fighters to the kingdom" Nkrumah had already envisioned through his rhetoric. The freedom fighters who formed Nkrumah's immediate audience are what Farrell (1993) refers to as "the rhetorical audience (the "one who decides") that functions as the efficient cause of the enactment of rhetoric as practical art" (p. 68). Nkrumah had made a call for Africa's political unity in order to bring forth the African political kingdom. Through argumentation, he had created in his audience "a disposition to act" (Perelman, 1982, p. 12).

The speech ends with "Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God." Though it is a reference to Psalm 68 verse 31, it is particularly an invocation of Marcus Garvey's call for the United States of Africa (www.black-king.net). It is a call for Africans to reclaim their past glory. In a rhetorical sense, Nkrumah had tapped into the social knowledge of the audience. I borrow from Murphy (1997) when he says that, "rhetorical traditions organise the 'social

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knowledge' of communities and make available symbolic resources for the invention of arguments aimed at authoritative public judgments" (p. 72). By ending the address with Garvey's words, Nkrumah had partly invented his authority by appropriating unto himself the authority of Garvey and other Pan Africanists in whose tradition he operated. Murphy further notes that "invention as orchestration views rhetorical creativity as an effort to engage other voices and illuminate our circumstance by bringing their wisdom to bear" (p. 74). Through identification, Nkrumah had "reinforced commonality between [himself] and audience" (Endres, 2011, p. 6) and had to invoke the noble ideals cherished and shared by the forebears of Pan-Africanism. In terms of Nkrumah's rhetorical invention, invoking the authority of Garvey has not constituted his only proof, but had rounded off a well-developed argumentation (Perelman & Olbrechts -Tyteca, 1969). The speech ends with a call to the audience to fulfil the historical mandate of African liberation in Ethiopia, the spiritual land of African emancipation.

Limitations of the Address
A rhetorical speech is summoned into existence by a rhetorical situation. Without a situation, there cannot be a rhetorical speech (Bitzer, 1968). Bitzer notes three essential features of every rhetorical situation. These are the rhetorical exigency, rhetorical audience and constraints (pp. 6-8). He defines rhetorical exigency as any "imperfection marked by urgency" which needs to be addressed by discourse within a situation (p. 6-8). In Addis Ababa, the dominant exigency was essentially the urgent need for a continental political unity. Rhetorical audience, as explained earlier, "consists only of those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and being mediators of change" (p. 7).

Since the delegates which were present in Addis Ababa were voting delegates and therefore possessed the mandate to bring African political unity into reality, they can be appropriately regarded as a rhetorical audience in view of Bitzer's explanation. Bitzer concludes that rhetorical situations comprise a number of "constraints made up of persons, events, objects and relations" that form part and parcel of the rhetorical situation since "they have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence" (p. 8). Several constraints confronted Nkrumah within the rhetorical situation at the

Addis Ababa conference. An attempt will be made to examine some key constraints which confronted Nkrumah's address.

In Addis Ababa, it became absolutely clear that Nkrumah did not fully understand the complexity of the rhetorical situation. Before attending the conference, Nkrumah had, in the words of Scott Thompson (1969), "a most imprecise view of the African situation" (p. 319). He could not analyse therefore critically the challenges which the situation presented to his address. Nkrumah had never spoken at a conference with such a high number of African heads of states in attendance (Thompson, 1969, p. 312) and it was never going to happen after the Addis Ababa's experience. At the conference, the dynamics were different in terms of the audience's position in relation to Nkrumah. He had had past experiences of speaking on behalf of Africa at the United Nations and other international platforms where the audience were predominantly Western leaders. Whenever he had spoken to Africans in Africa, the audience had taken inspiration from him. This was partly because most of them still laboured under colonialism in their own countries and needed a sense of direction. However, this time, quite a number of these African leaders had travelled to Addis Ababa as leaders of their newly independent countries. In terms of structure, Nkrumah had found himself in what Bitzer (1969) refers to as a complex and a less structured rhetorical situation (Bitzer, 1969, pp. 11-12). It was not going to be an easy task connecting all the different constraints to achieve the most appropriate rhetorical effect within the given situation. In other words, such a given situation as presented to Nkrumah in Addis Ababa, will pose tremendous challenges to the most experienced rhetor. I will try to examine the rhetorical constraints, their complexity and their relation to the rhetorical audience and how they affected the audience's response to Nkrumah's address.

Roughly three years preceding the Addis Ababa conference, a number of events were working to shape what was going to unveil later at the conference. Perhaps, the outcomes of these events, with Nkrumah as a major actor, were going to serve as major constraints to Nkrumah's rhetoric at the conference. Perelman and Olbrects –Tyteca (1969) argue "that the speaker's life, insofar as it is public, forms a long prelude to his speech" (p. 320). This was just the case for Nkrumah at Addis Ababa.

One of the major constraints to Nkrumah's rhetoric had to do with questions with regard to his personal credibility among the audience. Rooney (2007) reports that Nkrumah had a number of unresolved conflicts with his neighbours within West Africa. The first related to issues on territorial dispute(s) with Ghana's immediate neighbours, Ivory Coast, led by Houphouet-Boigny and Togo, under the leadership of Sylvester Olympio. These unfortunate developments, Rooney argues, led the Togolese leader in "reject[ing] Nkrumah's views on African unity and quickly turned to the francophone states for allies" (p. 282).

Beyond these conflicts, there were reports of strong antagonism of Nkrumah towards Nigeria, to the extent that Nkrumah had broken away from a joint airline board between Ghana and Nigeria which had been inherited from the British colonial administration. Nigeria had seen the common airline as a source of a viable economic co-operation between two neighbours in West Africa (Rooney, 2007). To a large extent, Nkrumah had, perhaps, lost his trust and credibility when it came to co-operation even within the sub region of West Africa. He had lost the confidence and trust of three strategic leaders who should have been his immediate source of support in Africa. These three leaders should have formed part of a crucial supporting audience for him in Addis Ababa. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Prime Minister of Nigeria, was a leading voice at the time within the Moderate group of countries; he had emerged as an African statesman and also represented a strong voice for African unity. Ivory Coast and Togo were important constituencies within the French group in West Africa. Losing the Nigerian and two other sub-regional leaders was going to haunt Nkrumah at Addis Ababa. Certainly, these situations represented obvious constraints in Addis Ababa for Nkrumah. Aristotle (2007) asserts that "character is almost, so to speak, the most authoritative form of persuasion" (p. 39 [1356a]) but Nkrumah had, at this point, lost this quintessential element in his rhetoric.

Connected to Nkrumah's antagonism of some West African leaders, was also a second constraint. He overtly and constantly criticised the regional groupings: the *Union Afrique et Malgache* and the East African Federation. His criticisms naturally attracted strong opposition to his ideas from members of these groupings, especially from Julius Nyerere (Thompson, 1969) who seemed to have become a strong force in the East African liberation movement. Nkrumah's

criticism of these groups is made obvious even in Addis Ababa. With his biting rhetoric, Nkrumah had further deepened the apparent crack which only needed time to cave in. The right moment was at Addis Ababa. In as much as Nkrumah seemed oblivious of the extent of the animosity he had already generated towards himself and his rhetoric, his invention at the conference further deteriorated the already precarious situation. Bitzer (1968) further observed that the speaker's invention to address given constraints within a rhetorical situation can bring into the situation "additional important constraints" such as "his logical proof, and style" (p. 8). Perhaps, if Nkrumah were aware of the simmering antagonism towards his rhetoric, he probably should have modified his rhetorical posture. If he were truly aware, then it was quite suicidal for him to have entirely ignored such pertinent concerns. It seems surprising however, knowing who Nkrumah was, at least, in terms of rhetoric, to have totally avoided a defence of his personal integrity in his address if he had really been on top of issues concern his audience perception about himself.

Another constraint connected to Nkrumah's deteriorated credibility even before Addis Ababa was the accusations of subversive activities in which he was implicated. Fingers pointed at Nkrumah with assassination attempts on both Sylvester Olympio (Rooney, 2007) and Houphouet-Boigny (Thompson, 1969). The worst accusation of Nkrumah was the assassination of President Olympio on the 13th January 1963, just three months before the Addis Ababa conference. He needed to extricate himself convincingly from these accusations but this never happened. If he did, it was not forceful enough to silence the overwhelmingly negative publicity which was all over in Africa. Some rhetorical situations can mature and decay over time (Bitzer, 1969) but this was not the case. Especially with the Addis Ababa conference around the corner, the situation was gradually building momentum, waiting for an appropriate response in Addis Ababa (Bitzer, 1969).

At a conference in Lagos, the Moderate group publicly accused Nkrumah of the assassination (Thompson, 1969). As a result of bad blood towards Nkrumah, Guinea went further to declare the late Olympio as a hero (Thompson, 1969). Thompson (1969) reports that, "a revulsion against Nkrumah spread across Africa, at a critical time for Ghanaian diplomacy" (p. 311). These incidents, to a large extent, deeply and permanently affected Nkrumah's credibility even after

1963. In the meantime, they presented an insurmountable constraint for Nkrumah to negotiate. In effect, in the eyes of the audience in Addis Ababa, Nkrumah had no credibility. They had an entirely different perception about him.

Moreover, the Congo crises became another source of constraint for Nkrumah. Nkrumah had demonstrated an unflinching support for Patrice Lumumba. The Congo crisis had brought divisions amongst countries in the Central Africa region. The division was marked by those who were on the sides of Lumumba and those who supported Kasavubu (Rooney, 2007). Arguably, Nkrumah provided the strongest voice of defence for Lumumba both within and outside Africa. Nkrumah's rhetoric and actions in the Congo crises naturally attracted the enemies of Lumumba towards him. At this moment, he had lost important rhetorical audiences in almost every part of Africa. It becomes apparent therefore that Nkrumah had very few loyal supporters just before the Addis Ababa conference. In argumentation, it is the audience that have the ultimate power to judge the speaker's discourse (Farell, 1993). This would be daunting when the speaker is bound to face seemingly opposing rhetorical audience such as was going to be present at Addis Ababa. To a large extent, Nkrumah's rhetoric at the Conference never had a good chance to thrive in view of the constraints which loomed ominously ahead of his invention.

Lastly, the new African leaders whose country had just emerged from colonial rule were not ready for African political unity for politically obvious reasons. By 1963, thirty-two African countries were independent in Africa. As many as twenty-three of these countries had emerged out of colonial rule within a space of three years before the Addis Ababa conference. For most of these leaders, it was politically untenable to relinquish their new found political authority just after their independence to a single united political government of Africa. So far, as these new leaders were concern, Nkrumah's rhetorical position seemed overly ambitious. While Nkrumah pressed on for African political unity, his invention, perhaps, began to generate an internal argument within this new breed of African leaders. Perelman and Olbrechts –Tyteca (1969) give insight about a kind of argumentation that ensues whilst the speaker argues. They explain:

While the speaker is arguing, the hearer in turn tends to argue on his own account about the speech in order to take his own stand, to determine the credibility he ought to attach to it. The hearer who listens

to the arguments not only understands them in his own way, but also creates new arguments of his own, which are usually unexpressed but which nevertheless intervene to modify the final results of the argumentation (p. 189).

If such a situation was the case, then the new African leaders rationalised their own political situations in the light of Nkrumah's deliberative proposal. Faced with the difficult sacrifice they would certainly have to make, most, if not all, of them might refrain from given their accent to the thesis which has been "presented for their consent" (Perelman, 1982, p. 9). In effect, as new leaders, they were being summoned, as it were, by Nkrumah to sacrifice their political interest on the altar of African unity. This, certainly, seemed a huge price for any new leader to be called upon to pay given the circumstances.

At the end of the conference, most of the proposals that were put forward by Nkrumah were unanimously voted down by the delegates (Rooney, 2007). Nkrumah's main proposal of an immediate continental political unity was postponed for discussion at the next OAU conference which was to occur two years later in Accra. His plea for at least, a more effective form of unity only gained the support of President Obote from Uganda and Youlou from Congo Brazzaville (Poe, 2003). This was not unexpected, in the light of the enumerated constraints above. Nkrumah's invention had been eclipsed by constraints born out of his own actions and inactions as a political actor. His dream of continental unity had been deferred. Perhaps, this was going to be forever. African unity was finally given birth to in Addis Ababa, but never in the total sense of Nkrumah's rhetorical imagination. Though its formation did not reflect Nkrumah's vision in its entirety, the long deliberation on African unity had been and would continue to be, to a great extent, shaped by Nkrumah's rhetorical invention.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to demonstrate some ways through which major rhetorical constraints can inhibit a successful rhetorical performance and also, how effectively a *rhetor* can deploy the relevant tools in addressing a composite audience. Though, a look at Nkrumah's speech, independent of the context provided by Addis Ababa, reveals the qualities of a great speech, yet, the potency of the

constraints inherent in the situation undoubtedly minimized largely the cumulative effect of his rhetorical performance. Therefore, the success of any good speech cannot be independent of the situation (Bitzer, 1968) within which a rhetoric transaction occurs. Rhetors' understanding of nuances of a situation is quintessential for a successful rhetorical transaction.

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