

President Akufo-Addo’s Ministerial Reshuffle

By John Osae-Kwapong

President Akufo-Addo has been different from his predecessors when it comes to government reshuffles. He appears to have a contrary philosophy on when and how often reshuffles must be done, if at all. The President in his last year of office without a major reshuffle until this morning. The President reinforced his philosophy with this reported statement in an interview on North Star radio, Tamale in August 2023. In response to the calls for a reshuffle, he reportedly said – *“many of them for me have done outstanding work. Their output has been considerable, and that is what I look at. If the output measures expectations, then I don’t have any strong reasons to heed the call.”*

To have expressed this kind of confidence in his team was a clear indication to Ghanaians not to expect any major government reshuffle. And when he made this statement, his administration only had about sixteen months left in office. It was unusual though to have expressed this confidence and satisfaction with the output of his ministers. Why?

Table 1 – Ghanaian perceptions of the Akufo-Addo Administration

Rating of government performance as fairly well/very well on selected indicators	2017	2022	Change
Managing the economy	71%	18%	-53%
Creating jobs	50%	16%	-34%
Addressing education needs	82%	38%	-44%
Improving basic health services	63%	40%	-23%
Fighting corruption	67%	15%	-52%
Rating of The President			
Approve/strongly approve of the President’s performance	82%	29%	-53%
Trust the President “a lot”	48%	14%	-34%
Source: Source: Afrobarometer Data, [Ghana], [Round 7, 9], [2017, 2022], available at http://www.afrobarometer.org .			

The table above paints a different picture from what the President perceived to be true about the output of his government. These ratings of government performance, in key policy domains, comparing Round 9 (2022) of the Afrobarometer survey to Round 7 (2017) shows

- a) abysmal ratings in 2022 and
- b) a sharp decline from the high ratings enjoyed in 2017.

At the end of the day though, he is the appointing authority and the power to appoint or remove from office is constitutionally, his prerogative.

The president has finally reshuffled his government. It goes without saying that, one name will dominate the public discourse - Finance Minister, Ken Ofori-Atta. The Minister has come under intense public criticism, faced a censor motion in Parliament, and even faced calls from members of his own party in Parliament to either resign or be fired during the famous “Ken Must Go” saga.

Reshuffling, in principle, is a good administrative practice. It allows a president or an appointing authority to periodically assess his or her team and make changes where necessary. The changes can be in the form of retaining, reassigning, or bringing on new team members. How and when it is done, again is a matter generally left to the discretion of the appointing authority, the President. However, an appointing authority may face calls from both within and outside of government to reshuffle. And there were calls on this President to reshuffle but he managed to deflect those calls until today.

There are two central questions emerging from this reshuffle –

- 1) Why now? and
- 2) What impact will it have?

Why now? The simple answer is “because *the president decided this is the time to finally do a reshuffle.*” However, there have been reports of mounted pressure on him to do a reshuffle. Recall that during the party’s annual thanksgiving last December, the General Secretary of the party said this - “*It is time for some changes in the government, so we get some new faces to continue. We believe that if we get new appointments, we will be able to retain power in the next election.*”

Whatever the motivation in terms of the timing, it is a bit unusual to see a major reshuffle with only about eleven months left in office. Politically, if this had been done a year or two ago, it may have allowed the administration to win back some of the good graces it once enjoyed at a high level from Ghanaians as seen in Afrobarometer Round 7, 2017.

Additionally, I was asked in an interview this morning if this is designed to help the Vice-President and NPP Flagbearer Dr. Bawumia win the 2024 presidential election. I do not believe so even though the statement I shared earlier reportedly made by the General Secretary of the party suggests he believed a reshuffle will help the party retain power. I also do not believe that this is an issue on which voters will make their decision come the December elections.

What impact will it have? I do not anticipate any major policy decisions being undertaken by this government in the remaining months left in office. Coupled with the timing I believe, on substantive matters of governance, this reshuffle will not have any impact. I will note one expectation – it will have no impact if the appointees through their actions and inactions do not further create governance headaches for the president. They have one task – guide the ship to a safe berth on January 7, 2025, before a new administration takes over, whether it is a Bawumia or John Mahama administration.



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