"Did You See What Happened to the Market Women?"
Legacies of Military Rule for Women's Political Leadership in Ghana?

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Abstract

In the first 35 years of independence, Ghana experienced long periods of military rule - from 1966 to1969, from 1972 to 1979 and from 1981to 1992. Under military rule, neither women nor men are elected to political office and because the military is generally a male-dominated institution women have few opportunities for leadership. In Ghana, market women were a particular target of military rulers and a woman judge was among three judges brutally killed during the last military regime. This does not mean, however, that military regimes do not seek to mobilize women to their own ends and/or co-opt women/gender and development discourses. This can be accomplished through the establishment of state sanctioned (often 'first lady-led') women's associations, such as the 31st December Women's Movement, to the detriment of any other women-focused civil society organizations and activism. This essay seeks to interrogate the impact of military rule in Ghana on women's political leadership. In 2015 scholars reported an ongoing 'pervasive sense of insecurity' and fear during presidential and parliamentary elections that discourages many women in particular from contesting elections. To what extent has the legacy of decades of military rule contributed to a sense of insecurity and fear, impacting the prospects for women's political leadership, in particular in parliament where candidates must stand for election? This essay provides a preliminary reading on this topic.

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« Avez-vous été témoin(e) de ce qui est arrivé aux femmes du marché? »
Héritages du régime militaire pour le leadership politique des femmes au Ghana

Résumé

Dans les 35 premières années de l'indépendance, le Ghana a connu de longues périodes de régime militaire. Sous le régime militaire, ni les femmes ni les hommes ne sont élus à aucun poste politique. En raison du fait que l'armée est généralement une institution dominée par les hommes, les femmes avaient peu de possibilités pour le leadership. Au Ghana, les femmes du marché étaient des cibles pour les leaders militaires et, en conséquence, une femme juge a fait partie des trois juges qui ont été brutalement assassinés pendant le dernier régime militaire. Toutefois, ceci ne signifie pas que les régimes militaires ne cherchent pas à organiser les femmes à leurs fins et ou à coopter les discours sur les femmes/le genre et le développement. Ceci est réalisé à travers l'établissement des associations de femmes reconnues par l'Etat (souvent sous la direction de la Première Dame), telles que le groupe *31st December Women's Movement*, au détriment de tout(e) autre organisation de la société civile ou militantisme concentré(e) sur les femmes. Cet article cherche à mettre en cause l'impact du régime militaire au Ghana sur le leadership politique des femmes. En 2015, des chercheurs ont rapporté l'existence continue d'un « sentiment d'insécurité répandu » et de peur durant les élections parlementaires et présidentielles, ce qui décourage les femmes, en particulier, de se présenter aux élections. Dans quelle mesure l'héritage des décennies de régime militaire a-t-il contribué au sentiment d'insécurité et de peur, affectant, en conséquence, les perspectives de leadership politique des femmes, particulièrement, en ce qui concerne les élections parlementaires?

Introduction

"Did you see what happened to the market women?" Anonymous

"…the sense of uncertainty that characterized the transition from a military dictatorship to democracy also generated a sense of fear…presidential and parliamentary elections have continued to be characterized by a pervasive sense of insecurity…the situation is direr for women who dare to break out of the traditional mold…to become players in the game…such fear has the

propensity of discouraging women from joining the contest…" (Darkwa, 2015, 254)

Despite a small increase in the number of women in the seventh parliament of the Fourth Republic, Ghana remains among the lowest ranked countries in the world in terms of women's representation in a single or lower house of parliament – with only 13.1 percent women in its parliament. Ghana's current parliament is not an aberration – until 2017 women have never been more than 11 percent of members in the country's national legislature (see Table 1). At the same time, the East African nation of Rwanda leads the world in women's representation in a single or lower house of parliament (63.8 percent women since 2013) and 14 African countries have more than 30 percent women in their national legislatures (www.ipu.org). Why does Ghana lag so far behind so much of the rest of the world, including other African countries, in this regard? A few scholars have addressed his question. Tsikata (2009a, 15-21) refers to three sets of explanations: 1) the impact of women's position in other spheres of life as a result of the inequalities in the sexual division of labour, women's disadvantages in the control of resources, and gender ideologies which naturalize and reinforce inequalities; 2) problems of the political system including political parties wary of women in leadership positions, the plurality majority electoral system, and an increasingly vocal role played by chiefs; and 3) the failure of public policy including the failure of successive governments to make good on international commitments, manifesto promises, and their own policy commitments. Darkwa (2015, 251-252) also suggests three reasons: a "structural and direct violence in the Ghanaian political environment" that keeps women from standing as candidates, the power of political party affiliation and its influence on women candidates' chances of winning, and political parties' overall unwillingness to "make the fundamental structural changes" needed to ensure that women candidates have the opportunities to participate effectively. Adams, Scherpereel and Jacob (2016, 152-153) speculate that there are fewer women in Ghana's parliament because of a gradual (rather than post-conflict) political transition,

no electoral gender quota and a single member district (SMD) [plurality majority] electoral system.

There is no question that around the world the use of an electoral gender quota, more than any other single factor, has led to women's increased presence in parliaments (Tripp and Kang 2008).[1] In Africa, a unique set of factors led to the early adoption by political parties and governments of electoral gender quotas for parliament including: "the political opportunity structure offered by a political transition (often post-conflict), entailing the adoption of new constitutions and electoral laws, mobilized national women's movements with support from an international women's movement and influenced by international norms, cadres of capable women many of whom had participated in conflicts or benefited from overseas training during exile, diffusion effects from one country/movement to another, and a liberation movement/dominant party with a stated commitment to women's emancipation" (Bauer 2016, 197). More recently, a second wave of electoral gender quota adoption has taken place across Africa, prompted by mobilized national women's movements working in collaboration with regional, continental and international organizations usually in the context of a constitutional review process. For the first time, some of these are countries in West Africa (Bauer 2016).

But electoral gender quotas are difficult to adopt in single member district electoral systems, with the most effective quota for an SMD system being a reserved or special seat (Laserud and Taphorn 2007).[2] In Ghana, like many other former British colonies with a single member district electoral system, there has been scant consideration given to adopting an electoral gender quota for

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[1] Tripp and Kang (2008, 338) write that: "This study shows that the introduction of quotas has helped overcome constraints on women's representation posed by economic under-development, cultural influences, and even electoral systems. This study also demonstrates that the introduction of quotas offers the most explanatory power for women's representation today, together with electoral systems that allow for greater candidate turnover…"

[2] Reserved or special seats may be seen as a particularly undemocratic form of quota. Matland (2006) suggests that less democratic countries are more likely to have adopted reserved or special seats than more democratic countries.

parliament, although as Tsikata (2009b) has described, there is a long history of largely successful affirmative action programs in the country.[3] Indeed, electoral gender quotas of any kind are only slowly being adopted in West Africa - where the preponderance of military regimes in post-independence Africa has also been located.[4] While Hughes and Tripp (2015) provide compelling evidence that across Africa women in post-conflict countries have achieved greater political representation than in other African countries that did not just end civil wars, what about countries that experienced years of military rule, even if that military rule was decades ago?[5] Some scholars have hinted at an association between militarized polities and fewer women in politics. Schroeder (2015, 2) finds that in democratic states from 1981 to 2007, female representation decreases in those countries involved in an interstate rivalry, with women's exclusion from political power being "a repercussion of increasing militarization to maintain security." Meanwhile for Latin America, scholars have observed that those countries with military dictatorships during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s but with no civil war (Chile, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay with Argentina being the exception) are also the ones in Latin America with the lowest levels of women's representation in national legislatures today.[6]

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[3] Tsikata (2009b, 30) describes two generations of affirmative action programs. The first generation refers to policies implemented from independence up until the end of the 1970s and the second generation refers to policies implemented from the 1980s onwards. A more recent Affirmative Action Bill has been in the works for years now, but yet to be passed.

[4] Powell and Thyne (2011, 255) show a band of military coups across Africa from Guinea Bissau and Sierra Leone in West Africa to Sudan and Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa. Military coups and coup attempts were far fewer in north and southern Africa.

[5] Hughes and Tripp (2015, 1513) show that between 1985 and 2010 in Africa, "…the end of long-standing armed conflict had large positive impacts on women's political representation, above what can be explained by electoral institutions and democratization alone." See also Tripp (2015). Indeed, Bauer and Britton (2006), among others, argue that post-conflict transitions, in particular, offered the political opportunity structure for the adoption of electoral gender quotas for political office in many African countries. The relationship between the adoption of electoral gender quotas (or lack thereof) in countries once dominated by military rule has not been examined.

[6] Personal electronic communications with Dr Jennifer Piscopo, 18 September 2016, and Dr Farida Jalalzai, 18 September 2016.

This essay seeks to consider to what extent the legacy of decades of military rule may be inhibiting women's presence in parliament in countries like Ghana, in particular, where women have to stand in constituencies (as opposed to being listed on a party list as in a proportional representation electoral system) for election to parliament. In my view, as Tripp and Kang (2008) have argued more broadly, the lack of an electoral gender quota in Ghana, along with the 'woman unfriendly' single member district electoral system, go a long way toward explaining Ghana's low representation of women in parliament, especially in comparison to other African countries (Bauer 2017). And yet, it also seems worth exploring to what extent, if any, a legacy of military rule may impact women's success as candidates for political office.

This essay suggests that there may be a couple of ways in which the legacy of decades of military rule may inhibit a greater women's representation in parliament in Ghana today.[7] On the one hand, lingering fear and intimidation resulting from scapegoating and other violence against women during military eras combined with a lack of experience in formal political office due to women's exclusion from the military may help to keep women from standing for political office. On the other hand, 'femocracy' – including the co-opting of women's organizations in particular by 'First Ladies' and the closing off of any other associational space – may help to keep women's movements from being effective constituents on behalf of women candidates and women's interests – though some women may gain some limited political experience and some 'feminist awareness' may be created.[8] The article proceeds as follows: the first section reviews the impact of military regimes on women across Africa with emphasis on West Africa, the second section summarizes women's political leadership in Ghana since independence and the third section explores more

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[7] Prah (2007, 8) observes that: "There is very little research about the relationship between women and the state, women's voice, and ways in which they coped with the militarism" of earlier periods in Ghana.

[8] See Prah (2007, 27-28).

closely the nature of military regimes in Ghana with particular reference to women.

Women and the military in Africa[9]

We may think of militaries in 20th century postcolonial Africa, as in many other places at the time, as being no place for women; in general women were not soldiers and did not hold leadership positions in the military. But Luckham (1994) argues there was no historical reason to assume this would be the case in Africa. In his review of the military, militarization and democratization in Africa, Luckham (1994, 23-24) observed, that "[T]he historical record of female warriors in precolonial states…..and of women combatants in recent national liberation struggles suggests that there is little inevitable about the exclusion of women from warfare. Yet following liberation struggles, women have been reinserted in gendered divisions of labor and have been excluded from command and combat roles in the new professional military establishments." He continues that women were "almost by definition" excluded from "key power positions" in military regimes, although they may well have fulfilled other positions. With "…..military and security bureaucracies themselves largely male institutions, they coopt women (for example, as military wives, prostitutes and ancillary workers) into divisions of labor which cater to their needs….." So while it may not have been 'inevitable,' across Africa women were largely excluded from post-colonial militaries and from roles in military regimes.[10]

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[9] There seems to be a very scant literature on women and the military or military regimes in Africa or around the world. What literature there is tends to look at women's roles in opposition to military regimes, for example in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s or in the transitions from military regimes to more democratic regimes. For Africa, there is more on women and conflict or gender and conflict, for example, Turshen and Twagiramariya (1998) or Tripp (2015). This article is suggesting that a greater examination of the legacy of military rule (rather than 'conflict') for women in politics could be instructive.

[10] Women's exclusion from leadership roles in military regimes is not unique to Africa. Moreover, women's more significant participation and leadership in politics globally is a recent phenomenon, of the last few decades. See Dahlerup and Leyenaar (2013).

But it is not just that women were absent from militaries and military rule. Add economic decline and economic crisis to military rule in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s in Africa and the combination for African women was potentially lethal. Howard (1985, 287), writing about the 'crisis of women' in Commonwealth Africa suggested that: "The consequences of the contemporary crisis for women in Commonwealth [east and west] Africa are that their economic opportunities in both the rural and the urban sectors are declining, and that they are increasingly scapegoated as the causes of economic disintegration. Politically, the entrenchment of corporatist one-party states and military regimes means that what little participation was opened to women at independence is being eroded." Further, according to Howard (ibid), economic crisis and military rule in 1980s Commonwealth Africa meant: "…less political representation and fewer economic resources, more political repression and more work." In her survey of early 1980s Africa, Howard (290) commented on Ghana as well - where "an even more foreboding scapegoating of women" had recently emerged accompanied by the razing of markets and the public flogging of women. Moreover, as she lamented (293): "The centralizing tendencies of one-party states" were not "offset by the existence of pluralistic voluntary organizations…" Indeed, as was all too common, a centralization of associational life also took place.

Dennis (1987, 16), in writing about military regimes in independent Nigeria, shows the continuity from the colonial period to the postcolony of the practice of scapegoating/targeting women. With reference to the Federal Military Government in Nigeria in the mid-1980s, she describes the way in which the military regime used 'indiscipline' to explain the economic crisis that prompted the 1983 military coup and identified three groups of women as particularly responsible for the breakdown of social discipline: "wives and mothers who failed to devote their time to the upbringing of their children; single women who provided a source of temptation to men; and petty traders who hoarded essential goods and created congested urban centres" (13). Of course, as Dennis also observes, these three categories "would appear between them to encompass most

Nigerian women" (19). Indeed, during seven military regimes in Nigeria, according to Mama (1995, 42), women played no significant role in government, given that they held no positions in the upper echelons of the Nigerian military.

But there was also another response to women, especially as military rule continued into the 1980s and 1990s in some West African countries. With reference to Nigeria, Mama (1998, 2) argued that postcolonial military regimes did not "exclude and ignore women" or respond to gender with "ambivalence or inconsistency…" Rather, she argues (4): the "authoritarian military regimes" of Generals Babangida and Abacha in particular "…improvised a banal game of gender politics which became a key mechanism through which the tentacles of militarism were extended, legitimized, and consolidated at a time when internationally, military rule had become an unacceptable form of government."[11] Under those two military regimes in particular, there emerged what Mama (1995, 41) has called 'femocracy,' namely, "an anti-democratic female power structure which claims to exist for the advancement of ordinary women, but is unable to do so because it is dominated by a small clique of women whose authority derives from their being married to powerful men, rather than from any actions or ideas of their own."[12] The small clique of women refers primarily to First Ladies and indeed both of these ideas – of femocracy and a First Lady Syndrome - are applicable to Ghana under military rule (Ibrahim 2003, 2004), as is discussed below.

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[11] Mama (1998, 1): "Because Nigerian civil society has been so reluctant to engage with gender, the military have been able to appropriate the terrain they refer to as 'women development' for their own ends. Through a series of high profile programs, they have neutralized the potentially subversive and inherently antimilitarist notion of women's liberation and propagated a gender politics which normalizes military rule." See also Mba (1987).

[12] Mama (1995, 47) wrote: "Yet Babangida's regime is likely to go down in history as one in which women gained prominence. This was not because it had radical gender politics, but because his wife engaged in highly publicised activities, and ordered other wives of the military oligarchy to replicate her example. Mrs. Babangida's impact on the body politic ought to be assessed against the extreme marginalization of women in Nigerian state and national politics under both military and civilian regimes….."

Women's participation in formal politics in Ghana since independence

Many scholars have provided us with accounts of the participation of women and their organizations in formal politics in Ghana in distinct periods since independence (see, inter alia, Allah-Mensah 2005, 2007; Allman 2009; Bawa and Sanyare 2013; Darkwa 2015; Fallon 2008; Manuh 1993a, 1993b, 2007; Manuh and Anyidoho 2015; Musa and Gariba 2013; Nketiah 2010; Prah 2004, 2007; Sossou 2011; Tackie 1996; Tandoh-Offin 2011; Tsikata 1989, 1997, 2009a, 2009b).[13] Many of these accounts make clear the way in which military regimes in the post-independence era disrupted the opportunities for Ghanaian women (and their organizations) to play a larger role in elected and appointed office. With particular reference to parliament in Ghana in the post-independence period, a transitional constitution in 1955 provided for a parliament of 104 members elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage. The first universal franchise election was held in 1956, one year before independence under Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah and the Convention People's Party (CPP), and no women were elected to parliament, although Mabel Dove Danquah, who had been elected to the last Legislative Assembly in 1954, tried unsuccessfully (Nketiah 2010, 17).[14] In 1960 the Representation of the People (Women Members) Act created 10 seats in parliament especially for women, in the process creating one of Africa's first gender quotas for parliament.[15] Both Tsikata (1997) and Allah-Mensah (2005, 14), among others, have described these seats (and one or two others in government) as a reward for women's

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[13] Steegstra (2009) and Stoeltje (2013), among others, have examined women's roles as queen mothers in different parts of Ghana.

[14] According to Allah-Mensah (2005, 13), "women were systematically and formally excluded because of the gendered [colonial] education system and the patriarchal traditional ruling system." Nketiah (2010, 27) describes Mabel Dove's election in 1954 as "a groundbreaking election…which in all respects blazed the trail not only in Ghana but the whole of Africa."

[15] The 10 women were Susanna Alhassan, Ayanori Bukari and Victoria Nyarku from the Northern Region, Sophia Doku and Mary Koranteng from the Eastern Region, Lucy Anin from Brong Ahafo, Regina Asamany from Volta Region, Comfort Asamoah from Ashanti Region, and Grace Ayensu and Christiana Wilmot from Western Region (Nketiah 2010, 26-27).

"indispensable role…in the prelude to independence and immediately after."[16] At one point the 10 women members were to be elected by women voters in the regions, though in the end the 10 women members of parliament (MPs) were selected from among 52 candidates by men MPs from the respective regions (Tsikata 2009a, 33).[17] Also in 1960, Ghana became a unitary republic and in 1964, it became a one-party state. In 1965 the first parliament was dissolved and a new one, with 198 members all from the ruling CPP, was elected unopposed.[18] The new parliament in 1965 had 18 women members (Nketiah 2010, 38-39).

In 1966, Ghana's First Republic ended in a military coup in which then President Nkrumah was overthrown and parliament dissolved. Three years later, in 1969, under the Second Republic, constitutional rule and parliament were restored with two women elected among 140 members, only for the Second Republic to be ended in another military coup 22 months later. In 1979, constitutional rule and parliament were revived again, this time with five women elected out of 140 members to parliament (Nketiah 2010). The Third Republic was also short-lived, cut short by another military coup in 1981 led by Flight Lt Jerry Rawlings. Finally, in 1992, through a political transition and a new constitution presided over by Rawlings, a more enduring democratic rule commenced under the Fourth Republic. Since 1996 largely free and fair elections have been held every four years (the New Patriotic Party [NPP] boycotted the 1992 parliamentary elections over concern about the presidential ballot, with the result that most National Democratic Congress [NDC]

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[16] Tsikata (1997, 390) states that while "the independence movement had no serious agenda for addressing gender discrimination…market women and other individual women worked tirelessly in the party as supporters and financiers since independence was expected to benefit the population at large….this work was recognized and rewarded after independence."

[17] Tsikata (2009a, 33) further relates that: "The accounts suggest that the ten seats were highly contested, and this disputes the impression that the low representation of women could be on account of their lack of interest in electoral politics. That the candidates were to be vetted for their proficiency in English and current affairs was also significant given that this was not a requirement for the men in parliament."

[18] These members have also been described as 'appointed' by President Nkrumah.

parliamentary candidates were elected unopposed); since 1992 the NDC and NPP have alternated power every eight years, through the late 2016 election. Women's representation in parliament, with the number of members growing from 200 in 1992 to 275 by 2016, has hovered around 10 percent since 1996 - until the slight improvement in 2016 (see Table 1).

In reviewing the Nkrumah years, Tsikata (1989, 79) states that "an assessment of the CPP government's policies towards women has noted that it consciously encouraged the participation of women in politics and public life with the result that a few women held high political offices as members of parliament, deputy ministers and district commissioners, and that these were not acts of tokenism, but a recognition of their abilities." Manuh (2007, 129) notes that while Nkrumah's CPP government used a "top down approach…some measurable progress occurred in women's education, employment, and social life, albeit harnessed to the interests of the ruling regime." By 1960, following on a long history of women's organizing, two prominent women's organizations were operating in Ghana, according to Tsikata (1989, 77-78): the Ghana Women's League (GWL) and the Ghana Federation of Women (GFW). These two organizations were merged in late 1960, however, to form the National Council of Ghana Women (NCGW) which then became "an integral wing" of the ruling CPP, establishing branches throughout the country (Tsikata 1989, 79).

There followed, as will be discussed in brief below, a period from 1966 to 1981 (of which 11 years were under military rule) during which "mass political activity was virtually non-existent" (Tsikata 1989, 81). During that period, in 1975, the National Council for Women and Development (NCWD) was established by government decree, as the 'national machinery for women' (Prah 2007, 10; Manuh 2007, 130). Then once the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) was firmly in power in the early 1980s, the 31st December Women's Movement (DWM), to be discussed in greater detail below, was created; the DWM "effectively silenced" the NCWD and indeed crowded out most autonomous women's organizations or other associational life in the country (Prah 2007, 11). After the first eight years of democratic rule and with

the Rawlingses out of power, three overlapping networks of women's organizations emerged from the early 2000s – the Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT), the National Coalition on Domestic Violence Legislation (DV Coalition) and the Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana (WMC) (Prah 2007; Tsikata 2009b).

With "successive and intermittent coups d'etats" (Allah-Mensah 2007, 253), however, the hopeful beginnings of the Nkrumah years – with some seats for women in parliament, some appointments for women in government and the private sector, some legislative accomplishments and some party-based women's organizing – were disrupted. What followed for the next – nearly three decades, did not augur well for women's participation in national politics.

Military rule in Ghana[19]

In a striking table of 45 African countries listed according to a 'Total Military Involvement Score' between 1960 and 1982, Ghana is ranked number one and far ahead of most other countries.[20] Indeed, from 1966 to 1992, Ghana was mostly under military rule – three shorter-lived regimes and two under Rawlings, the second of which lasted a decade (see Table 2).[21] By and large,

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[19] Hettne (1980) provides an early 'history and anthropology of the Ghanaian army,' tracing its origins back to the late 19th century, and including an analysis of its changing class and ethnic composition. For more on military regimes in Ghana see: Adedeji (2001); Fawole (1994); Folson (1993); Hansen and Collins (1980); Hutchful (1997); Ninsin (1993); Owusu (1986). Kandeh (1996) provides a regional assessment.

[20] Johnson, Slater and McGowan (1984, 627); the authors find "that African states with relatively dynamic economies whose societies were not much mobilized before independence and which have maintained or restored some degree of political participation and pluralism while keeping their military forces small and nonpoliticized have been the most stable, whereas countries with the opposite set of characteristics have experienced considerable political instability in the form of military coups and associated forms of military intervention in politics."

[21] An in-depth discussion of military regimes in Ghana and the distinctions among them is beyond the scope of this paper, but such analyses are many. See, for example, Owusu (1989, 375) who relies on Dent's categories of caretaker, corrective and revolutionary military regimes for a typology of restorative-corrective (1966 coup), corrective-reformist (1972 and 1979 coups), and revolutionary-corrective-reformist (1981 coup) for Ghana's military coups.

military regimes in Ghana were led by appointed 'councils' and associated committees (councils in the case of earlier military regimes and committees under the PNDC); during each military regime a very few women were appointed onto one or another of the governing bodies. For example, three women were appointed to the National Advisory Committee of the National Liberation Council in 1967 during Ghana's first military regime, one woman was appointed Commissioner of Foreign Affairs by the Supreme Military Council in 1979 during the third military regime, and two women were appointed as secretaries presiding over ministries in 1982, as well as other positions over the years under Rawlings' PNDC regime (Nketiah, 2010, 65-90). Despite this very limited participation of women in leadership roles in some military regimes, the scholarly consensus on the impact of military rule on women's political participation in Ghana at the time is that it was largely negative. Allah-Mensah (2007 254) writes that "…the military system was not very gender-sensitive and hence had very few women in the ranks…This is indicative of the fact that military regimes in Ghana were not only averse to women's political participation but also largely inhibited women's full contribution to the development of politics and administration." Manuh (2007, 130) observes that Rawlings' P/NDC governments [including Ghana's second period of extended military rule, from 1981 to 1992, and another eight years of democratic rule after the political transition in 1992 during which Rawlings served as president] may have been somewhat of an exception among military regimes - "project[ing] a commitment to gender issues and gender equity and a redefined place and role for women," with laws passed to address concerns such as widowhood rites and ritual servitude (*trokosi*), registration of customary marriages and divorce, marriage age and intestate succession. Prah (2007, 16), by contrast, will have none of that calling the Rawlings era a period of "grand illusion of activity," with the illusion being the 'femocracy' "cogently described and analyzed by Mama (1995)…" In their study of women's participation in parliament in Ghana, Musah and Gariba (2013, 473) observed that: "Previous political administrations particularly the military regimes, paid little attention to

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the role of women in decision making and the political system." In general, there seem to be two specific ways in which military rule impacted women and their political aspirations: the scapegoating and fear and intimidation of women and the 31st December Women's Movement and the femocracy and First Lady Syndrome to which it contributed in Ghana.

Scapegoating and the culture of silence
After President Nkrumah was overthrown in 1966 there followed several different periods of military rule. The National Liberation Council ruled from 1966 to 1969 under Ankrah and then subsequently Afrifa. The National Redemption Council ruled from 1972 to 1975 under Col Acheampong; midway, it transformed into The Supreme Military Council (SMC I) in 1975 still under Acheampong's (promoted general) leadership from 1975 to 1978. Acheampong was replaced by Gen. Akuffo as head of the Supreme Military Council (SMC II) in a palace coup in 1978. The Supreme Military Council (SMC II) was ousted by junior military officers in June 1979 and The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) came into being under Flt Lt Rawlings. The AFRC ruled for four months before handing over to a civilian government; however, a little over two years after the power transfer Rawlings was back and ruled from 1981 to 1992 under the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC).[22] As has been written about by many, during the 1970s Ghana experienced economic stagnation and precipitous economic decline with calamitous effect on many sectors of the population and women, especially market women, were often held responsible. During the Acheampong and Akuffo years (the second and third military regimes), according to Tsikata (1997, 398), "…two different categories of women were blamed for the economic problems. Market women were accused of creating artificial shortages and making large profits while young women were said to be exchanging sexual favours for consumer goods and money, thus encouraging male corruption." "The increasing economic stagnation during these regimes, and their failure to provide goods and service,

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[22] See Table 2 below for a list of Post-Independence Regimes in Ghana.

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resulted in political leaders turning on their own citizens, women in particular," according to Manuh and Anyidoho (2015, 22); under military regimes in the 1970s and 1980s "…traders were blamed for high prices, the hoarding of goods and services, and corruption, *kalabule*, and were subjected to punitive measures." So, for example in 1979 under Rawlings and the AFRC, "…relations between sections of the state and market women come to a head with the demolition of two major markets in Accra and others in Kumasi and Tamale…Women traders were also among those publicly flogged, made to undergo forced military drills and prosecuted in the courts for selling above price levels imposed by the government…" (Tsikata 1997, 398).[23]

But apparently, according to Clark (2010, 43), going after market women in West Africa was not a new phenomenon in the 1970s and 1980s and was not unique to military regimes. She argues (2010, 43) that in West Africa "political elites have used market traders as loyal supporters and as scapegoats for centuries." Within a few years of independence, she maintains, Nkrumah "had adopted not only colonial price controls but the colonial rhetoric that blamed selfish, parasitic traders for the high prices of food and consumer goods, with special condemnation of the Lebanese and women traders" (Clark 2010, 51). But such policies re-emerged again during the economic decline of the 1970s as described above, with "raiding episodes" (52) and "published rhetoric denouncing market women" (54) culminating in the market bombings of September 1979. Finally, by the middle of the 1980s or so with the adoption of structural adjustment program reforms there was an end to the physical violence, police raids and fear of confiscation among market women that had marked earlier years (Clark 2010, 57; Tsikata 1997, 400).

And it was not just market women who suffered under the later Rawlings' regimes. Generals and former presidents (Afrifa, Acheampong and Akuffo, among others) were summarily executed on the beach, women were stripped and

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[23] Harrell-Bond (1980) argues that "attacks on traders during the [AFRC] 'revolution' in Ghana had more significance because the traders were women. Men seized upon the crisis as an opportunity to further the aim of eliminating women as economic competitors."

beaten on the street, men were kidnapped and disappeared, rigid curfews were enforced, people's livelihoods were disrupted and assets confiscated as the economy spiraled downward at least until the late 1980s. Haynes (2003, 63) describes harshly what unfolded more broadly under Rawlings' rule during the 1980s: "…the security forces developed into an oppressive machine with one aim: to smash (real or imagined) subversion and dissent. By the early 1990s, the regime's rough tactics had imposed acquiescence on the country's once vocal political opposition – but at a heavy price: a 'culture of silence.' That is, many people were simply too afraid to criticize the government." The 'culture of silence' was named, and only then began to be broken, with Adu Boahen's Danquah Memorial Lectures in 1988 (Boahen 1989).

31st December Women's Movement
A number of scholars, like Allah-Mensah (2005, 16), suggest that during the PNDC years, Rawlings' regime employed "a proto-type of Nkrumah's co-optation strategy" through the formation of the 31st December Women's Movement, launched on May 15, 1982. "While the movement began as a way of assisting women to engage in economic activities," according to Allah-Mensah (17), "it eventually also created the opportunity for some P/NDC women to access political office, for example, during district level elections in 1988 and the general election in 1992." But many activists and scholars have ascribed a much more pernicious role to the DWM, as is discussed below. The DWM, led by First Lady Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings, was the Ghanaian version of femocracy and the First Lady Syndrome.[24]

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[24] Afari-Gyan (1994, 45) saw the DWM in the mid-1990s as clearly drawing its inspiration from and allied to the PNDC regime. He wrote: "Well-organized and popular countrywide, the movement has done a tremendous job in creating general awareness among the country's womenfolk about their potentialities and in mobilizing them to undertake various development-oriented projects…..the movement has received preferential treatment by the government and has had ready access to state resources. It is not surprising then…..that the movement is consistently sending a vigorous message concerning the need to secure a continuation of the work of the PNDC during the next civilian rule."

From the beginning the DWM was closely associated with the ruling regime; indeed it was widely seen as the women's wing of the PNDC. Its association with the state and the First Lady also attracted members and resources to the movement which saw its missions as complementing government efforts to rebuild Ghana and restoring the lost dignity of Ghanaian womanhood (Manuh 1993b, 187, 188). Even after the transition from military rule to more democratic rule (but still under Rawlings for another eight years), the DWM was closely aligned with government. Oquaye (2000, 72) describes the DWM also as the 'women's wing of the NDC' (as it had been of the PNDC). It was "financed from state funds in a variety of ways; its leader, the President's wife, and other officials, travel at state expense; a number of its officials are seconded from state institutions and paid from state coffers; a large amount of government works and projects with foreign funding, are placed in its way; it has compulsorily engulfed other women's organisations which should either be affiliated to it or be of no consequence." According to Tsikata (2009b, 185), writing about the DWM: "Independent women's organisations in that period found themselves squeezed from the public arena and alienated from the national machinery for women, the National Council on Women and Development" - that had been formed in 1975 when 'national machineries' for women were being established across the continent.

The DWM was clearly part of a mobilization strategy for Rawlings under the PNDC and it was much less an advocate for transforming women's lives; rather, as Manuh (1993b, 192) argued: it "became a women's organization with little feminist vision and in reality an agent of the gender ideology of men in general and the regime in particular…in general, questioning of social structures and unequal gender relations were not on the agenda, and the mobilization of women has mainly served to create another support base for the government of the PNDC…" In 2015, Manuh and Anyidoho (22), doubted to what extent the movement had even been able to advance women's empowerment for its members or Ghanaian women in general. Aubrey (2001, 204) saw the DWM as an 'exemplar' of 'state feminism,' – as "a state-controlled women's organization

that addressed women's issues in a non-threatening way and indeed often acted against the interests of women." As such, state feminism, according to Aubrey, "serves ultimately to…repress women's engagement in civil society." Indeed, that is exactly what Fallon (2003, 533) found in her interviews with members of other women's organizations in Ghana that had emerged by the late 1990s: "the legacy of repression created under the military regime and the presence of the 31st December Women's Movement have hindered the development of a larger women's movement in Ghana." As noted earlier, it was not until the Rawlingses were out of power around 2000 – and the unresolved murders of about 30 women in and around Accra from 1998 to 2001 leading to the formation of the Sisters' Keepers organization and renewed women's activism - that women's autonomous organizing took off again in earnest in Ghana (Prah 2007; Tsikata 2009b).[25]

Conclusion

In the early 21st century, a clear majority of Ghanaians, male and female (73 and 71 percent, respectively), would disapprove or strongly disapprove of the army 'coming in to govern the country.' An even higher percentage – 87 percent for both men and women – agree that the country's leaders should be chosen through elections rather than any other method for choosing leaders. At the same time, in a survey in which men and women's views are largely similar, there are significant differences in how much men and women 'trust the army,' with only 29 percent of women trusting the army 'a lot' as compared to 41 percent of men (71 versus 80 percent, respectively, trust them 'a little,' 'somewhat,' or 'a lot'). Only 17 percent of men do not trust the army 'at all' as compared to 24 percent of women (CDD-Ghana 2014).[26]

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[25] Sisters' Keepers was a coalition of individuals and organizations dedicated to resisting all forms of violence against women.

[26] Brenya et al. (2015) seek to ascertain the impact of 'the Rawlings factor' on politics in Ghana and administer their own small survey. One of the respondents, in a response to a question about human rights, observed: "women were afraid to enter politics during Rawlings term of office." The authors suggest (13) that: "This argument derives from the assertion that

So is it possible in 2017 to identify any lingering legacies of military rule in Ghana that might be working against women aspiring or standing successfully for political office? If such legacies exist what might be done to counter them? This essay has offered a preliminary reading of at least the first of these questions. Under successive military regimes from most of 1966 to 1992, Ghanaians suffered in a myriad of ways including the threat of beatings, imprisonment or execution, confiscation of assets, curfews, economic deprivation and humiliation, hunger, loss of jobs and more (less so in later years). A culture of silence and fear prevailed for a decade. Women, who were largely left out of leadership roles in military regimes, were especially abused in earlier regimes, subject to being stripped and publicly flogged for spurious transgressions, being scapegoated and losing their livelihood if market women, and having only one organizational option – the 31st December Women's Movement – under the last military government. Indeed, femocracy brought little for Ghanaian women; as Mama (1995, 57) notes, "…femocracy is not a viable political phenomenon, and…it does not lead to any sustainable change in women's political status, or to any enduring improvement in the lives of ordinary women. Nor can it be successfully transformed to create a democratic space for women, when the democratization of the whole society has been set back by a further extension of military rule."

And the situation did not change immediately with the political transition in 1992, largely because the Rawlingses were still in power for the first two presidential terms of the Fourth Republic – until 2000. Ibrahim (2004) has argued that in both Ghana and Nigeria where the 'First Lady Syndrome' was identified first during periods of military rule but extended into civilian rule, femocracy and First Ladies did "more harm than good" although there may have been some positive impacts. So for example, with regard to women in political office, Ibrahim suggested that: "those First Ladies who encourage the promotion of women into positions of power, no matter how dubious their motives, are

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there were brutalities associated with Rawlings' regime and that women are normally averse to violence."

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providing access to political skills and resources that will enable the pool of women politicians to become more competitive in the cut-and-thrust of campaigning." On that note, it has been mooted that the DWM may have encouraged some women to stand in district assembly elections in 1988, the first elections after years of military rule, or in the transition general election in 1992 (Allah-Mensah 2005, 17). In retrospect, however, the 'femocracy' of the DWM and First Lady Rawlings did little to advance women more broadly into national political office.

Table 1. Women Members of Parliament in Ghana, 1956-2016 Elections

Election Year	Number Women	Number MPs	Percent Women	Percent Women Candidates
1956 (1960)	0 (10)	104 (114)	0 (8.8)	
1965	18	198	9.1	
1969	2	140	1.4	
1979	5	140	3.6	
1992	16	200	8	5.2
1996	18	200	9	7.3
2000	19	200	9.5	8.7
2004	25	230	10.9	10.9
2008	20	230	8.7	9.5
2012	30	275	10.9	10.0
2016	36	275	13.1	11.7

Sources: there is some discrepancy among sources on some of these numbers (including www.ipu.org); Bauer 2017.

In the first decade of the democratic transition, Oquaye (2000, 58) (now the speaker of parliament) offered an important reminder – that parliament as an institution had "suffered tremendously…because of military intervention in politics. The instant dissolution of parliament on the occasion of every military coup (1966, 1972, 1979, [and] 1981) has dissipated the systematic and sustained development of the institution." In a later piece on women's low representation in parliament, Oquaye (2012, 2) argues that the composition of parliament may

have suffered from military intervention as well: "Military intervention in politics inflicted a lethal wound on women's political emancipation as the process of development through political parties was arrested in the face of masochistic male dominated militarism." And yet, in a set of interviews with male and female selectorates, aspirants, candidates and sitting MPs from different political parties in mid-2016 (for a separate research project), a legacy of military rule was never raised as an impediment to women's access to political office. One male parliamentary aspirant and businessman did note that people warned him away from politics because it could be harmful, among other ways, to his business. But he countered that the present day is no longer like the military days when 'they' might 'hang me or kill me' for a transgression.[27]

One of the most egregious and least forgotten acts of the last military regime in Ghana was the killing early on – over a court ruling - of three High Court judges, one of whom was a woman (breastfeeding her baby in the moments before she was abducted). In the 2016 general election campaign this act was recalled, in the minds of many, by the so-called 'Montie 3' affair – during which a radio talk show host and two guests made threatening comments about killing Supreme Court justices and raping the (woman) Chief Justice over their ruling in an election-related case. The three were then charged with contempt and sentenced to prison only for their sentences to be commuted by President John Mahama under pressure from fellow NDC officeholders and party members. At the same time, the Montie 3 affair is one of several reasons that have been cited as contributing to the trouncing of Mahama and the NDC by President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo and the NPP in the 2016 election - suggesting that the Ghanaian electorate has little patience for such gendered threats and

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[27] Interview with male NPP aspirant, Achimota, 1 June 2016. Not surprisingly, interviews with two Ghana Armed Forces officers suggested that there is no negative legacy of military rule keeping women out of politics in Ghana today, rather other factors are at play. Interview with retired male Ghana Armed Forces Brigadier General, University of Ghana Legon, 27 May 2016 and with female Ghana Armed Forces Colonel, Burma Camp, 7 June 2016.

intimidation today.[28] To that extent, it may be ventured that a legacy of military rule is waning in contemporary Ghana. Or maybe it just remains buried.

Table 2. Post-Independence Regimes in Ghana

Years	Regime	Leader	Government
1957-66	Convention People's Party (CPP)	Nkrumah	Civilian
1966-69	National Liberation Council (NLC)	Ankrah/Afrifa	Military
1969-72	Progress Party (PP)	Busia	Civilian
1972-78	National Redemption Council (NRC) Supreme Military Council (SMC) I	Acheampong	Military
1978-79	Supreme Military Council (SMC) II	Akuffo	Military
1979-79	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)	Rawlings	Military
1979-81	People's National Party (PNP)	Limann	Civilian
1982-92	Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC)	Rawlings	Military
1993-2001	National Democratic Congress (NDC)	Rawlings	Civilian
2001-2009	New Patriotic Party (NPP)	Kufuor	Civilian
2009-2017	National Democratic Congress (NDC)	Mills/Mahama	Civilian
2017-	New Patriotic Party (NPP)	Akufo-Addo	Civilian

Source: Tandoh-Offin (2011, 9).

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[28] Akufo-Addo was a young lawyer involved in the court case that led to the execution of the three high court judges in 1982.

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