Patronage Exchanges between Political Elites and Military Leaders as a form of Hybrid Security Governance Structure

Humphrey Asamoah Agyekum

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

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INTRODUCTION

The hybridity concept, coined by Volker Boege, entails the interactions of a wide variety of *formal* and *informal* institutions in complementary or competing ways, while influencing the development of public policies. Similarly, the concept of *hybrid security*, which flows from hybridity, focuses on how *formal* and *informal exchanges* between Ghana's political elite and military leaders and personnel converge to form a hybrid security governance structure. The case of the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) is the second manifestation of a multi-hued hybrid security governance structure. The first part dealt with the internal expressions of hybrid security governance structure – thus the factors internal to the GAF itself. The second iteration focuses on external hybrid security governance – the interactions between the military and civilian political authorities and institutions, or better, civil-military relations. Essentially, the Ghana case illustrates the frictions between the formal norms sanctioned by the 1992 Constitution of Ghana and other legislation, and the informal strategies employed by the civilian political class (with the connivance – willingness or otherwise – of actors within the military and the wider security sector).

The GAF has its origins in the colonial Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF) (Aboagye, 1999; Addae, 2005). Subsequently, the Gold Coast Regiment of the RWAFF officially became the Ghana Army, on 6 March, 1957. In 1960, the army was combined with the Ghana Navy and the Ghana Air Force to form the Ghana Armed Forces (Hutchful, 1983). Historically, and societally, Ghana's military has always been an important actor, not only in the security space, but also in the country's political arena. For most of Ghana's political history, soldiers and the military have been instrumental in realising socio-political change (Israel. 1992), such as the demonstration by ex-servicemen in 1948, which triggered the quest for independence. The GAF also has a dark past of interference in the country's governance through five successful coups and countless coup attempts in the post-independence era.

Due to the prominence of the military, both societally and politically, almost every civilian government has tried to, either gain a foothold in the barracks, or diminish the military's influence in the political arena, usually with limited success. The interventions by the political actors feed off patronage exchanges between the military establishment and the political elite, which, in turn, informs the hybrid security governance structure.

POLITICISATION AS A HYBRID MODEL OF SECURITY GOVERNANCE

Patronage exchanges, in this case, are give-and-take or two-way negotiations between politicians and the military in Ghana, which play out both at the individual and institutional levels. The political class draws the military into patronage exchanges, using such strategies as tools to exact loyalty and support from the military. For soldiers who engage in such patronage exchanges, these are means to exploit for positions, promotions or prestige. Patronage exchanges in this context entail reciprocity and mutual benefits for the parties involved. Thus, per definition, they do not depend on any one side alone. The notion of exchange is important here, as there are military operatives who actively seek and engage in these relationships for favours in respect of appointments or lucrative offices, while the political actors, on the other hand, engage in these relationships to gain soldiers' loyalty or support.

Un Ghana's political system, the President and Members of Parliament (currently 275) are elected once every four years. Despite Ghana's democratic credentials, the political class, generally, requires the military's loyalty and support – tacitly or explicitly – to personalise and consolidate its power. This is the source of the "intrusion of politics" into the barracks (Sørensen, 2011). Ghana's Constitution allows the President to appoint the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) and the commanders of the Army, Air Force and Navy, thus, making these appointments a political affair (Aning, 2008). Such appointments and promotions are used as bargaining chips in patronage exchanges between

politicians and top military commanders. These appointments enable political patrons to position their trusted associates in desirable key offices. Also, they often offer senior officers under their control post-retirement contract. In recent years, it has become a common practice for senior commanders to be diplomatic appointment upon retirement as "Ghana's ambassadors" to various countries (Agyekum, 2019). In the barracks, such appointments are assumed to be rewards for services rendered to political patrons (cf. Oostrom and Gukurume, 2022).
Furthermore, retired senior military commanders have been known to offer their knowledge, skills and contacts to the governing party responsible for their appointment to prestigious and lucrative offices. Although former military commanders engaging in politics is not a new phenomenon in Ghana, such activities are still frowned upon, as the GAF's code of conduct explicitly forbids military operatives from openly and actively engaging in any form of partisan politics. As a result, military operatives are not active members of political parties and do not engage on the campaign trail, but instead offer various behind-the-scene services, such as logistical support, security provision and strategic or tactical advice. Put differently, although engaging in partisan politics is forbidden for soldiers, it is evident that military operatives participate quietly in the country's politics.

Soldiers of lower rank or non-commissioned officers with ties to political "big men" (Nugent, 1995) use their connections to gain access to the corridors of power. They may, for instance, lobby to be deployed on guard duties at the "Jubilee House" (Office of the President) as this can pave the way to joining the entourage of powerful political actors, such as the President, Vice President, or Chief of Staff. According to a commanding officer who has managed such soldiers, being part of these circles can be lucrative as soldiers receive extra financial incentives for services, such as participating in presidential escorts. Furthermore, soldiers forge relationships with political bigwigs through such deployments, and these contacts can be useful in the future, when they retire and are applying for employment outside the barracks. A recommendation from a prominent political figure can do wonders in Ghana inn the face of high unemployment rate and difficulty in securing job. Sometimes, soldiers previously deployed to the "Jubilee House", upon retirement, later join the entourage of politicians as personal bodyguards or security advisors According to a regimental sergeant major who assigns soldiers' deployments, "It is important for some guys to be seen in the entourage of powerful political people. That makes them look good to their mates." In short, soldiers engaging in discrete relations with political actors do not only hope to benefit professionally but also socially, as this may enhance their status within the barracks (Ravanilla, Haim and Hilken, 2022). The aforementioned are soldiers participating in patronage exchanges with political actors in the hope of benefiting, either now or in the future, while the political actors hope to gain loyalty from soldiers in such relationships.

POLITICISATION BY POLITICAL ACTORS

The main reason for the political class to engage the military establishment in patronage exchange is personalisation of power, for which they require the military's support. Thus, for the political class, not having the backing of the military would mean that a government would have to tread carefully in order not to provoke hostility and lose control over the country's security apparatus. This is a particularly uncomfortable position for the Ghanaian political elite to hold, given the military's history of coups.

That is why Ghana's political class has resorted to a variety of tactics over the years. Most civilian governments have enticed the military through strategies, such as interference in the military's internal affairs, creation of patronage networks, politicisation of the military (and/of recruitment into the institution) andthe manipulation of tribal divisions / tensions among the rank and file. For instance, the Progress Party (PP) (1969 – 1972), under the leadership of Kofi Busia, replaced non-Akans who held strategic command positions with Akans, while forcing about half of the senior officers (holding ranks of lieutenant colonel and above) into retirement or semi-retirement. This deprived the GAF of

skilled and experienced officers who could pass their knowledge on to younger officers, and also of officers who possessed the stature to withstand pressures from the governing elite (Baynham, 1978). All the political machinations were aimed at coup-proofing the PP government, but they eventually triggered one.

Most previous politicisation attempts of the GAF by civilian governments resulted in coups. However, former junta leader Flt. Lt. J. J Rawlings succeeded in gaining control over, and obtaining the necessary loyalty from, the military. As a commissioned officer himself, he knew the institution very well, thus, using his knowledge to run a patronage scheme in which he rewarded officers with ranks and appointments, while placing his allies at strategic positions. Subsequent governments devised new strategies for politicising the military without triggering a coup by emulating Rawlings' approach and adding new elements to it. The new method by the political class s aimed at enticing both the individual soldier and the military establishment in a patronage exchange – a sort of whole-of-institution approach – by initiating and executing projects that benefit the entire armed forces.

In 2001, after Rawlings' presidency, Ghana's security sector, including the GAF, was in dire straits. The new government of John A. Kufuor of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) took advantage of the situation to make amends and reform the security sector to gain its support (Ansah-Koi, 2007). Whereas Kufuor's civilian predecessors focused on securing loyalty by establishing patronage networks (individual soldiers within and officers at the apex of the military hierarchy, his brand of patronage was geared toward individuals and he whole institution. For instance, he furnished the military with modern communication equipment and vehicles, increased salaries and substantially improved the conditions of service (Ansah-Koi, 2007). The administration further initiated numerous infrastructural projects, including the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre for the military. In the words of a senior officer: "The new Minister of Defence [at the time Dr. Kwame Addo-Kufuor]… started project after project. He built us a new assembly hall – Burma Hall. We just had to support them." The interventions boosted morale in the barracks and enabled the political class to gain the support of the military. Kuffuor's blueprint for patronage exchanges is still used by the political class to entangle the military establishment in patronage exchanges at the foundation of the hybrid security governance structure in Ghana.

Despite their influence in Ghana's political history and society, the GAF expend great effort to position itself as a politically neutral institution. "We are not into politics, but politics is into us," an interlocutor quipped, referring to the fixation that the Ghanaian political class is viewed as harboring the Ghana Armed Forces. This notion of political neutrality is of central importance to the military, and it is backed by regulations and codes of conduct that guide soldiers' behaviour and activities, as well as institutional efforts invested in maintaining the military's neutrality, including public relations and civilian assistance programmes. Since the early 1980s, the military has been undergoing a transformation process (Agyekum, 2019), which has converted it into one of the most trusted institutions (Agyeman-Duah, 2002). The Ghana Military is acutely aware of the value of being considered trustworthy and the least corrupt institution in the country (Agyeman-Duah, 2002). However, the military has been unable to prevent its individual members from engaging in patronage exchanges with, or being politicised by, the political class in their effort to gain control over the military institution to entrench political power, or to shield the institution from being politicised.

Participating in patronage exchanges between individual soldiers and the entire military establishment on one hand, and the political classs on the other hand, has serious implications, both for the individual soldier and the military institution. At the individual level, commanders may be disrespected by their subordinates due to suspicions about their engagement in partisan politics – activities which raise questions about their qualifications, professionalism and ability to command. At the institutional level, politicisation can lead to a decline in military discipline and professional

standards. However, it is in these patronage exchanges that the military establishment and the political elite converge in the hybrid security governance structure that runs the Ghana Armed Forces.

CONCLUSION

The hybrid security governance structure in Ghana is borne out of patronage exchanges between two powerful actors, namely the military establishment and the political class, specifically the ruling party. Although this constellation has its foundation in the ambition of the political elite to diminish the military's societal image, reputation and influence, the hybrid security governance structure is at the foundation of how the GAF is managed. Although not all involved are equally enthusiastic about the patronage exchanges between the military establishment and the political elite, lessons could be extracted from Ghana's layered approach to a hybrid security structure.

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