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Female Leaders and Women's Empowerment: 3 Case Studies

Nicole DiMarco

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Master's Thesis

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Advisor: Professor Jean Krasno

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Abstract

The issue of women's empowerment and gender equality is a global issue and one that, in many parts of the world, is in dire need of attention. It is for this reason I have decided to examine whether women in positions of power facilitate the enactment of gender-oriented measures or whether they continue to focus on the traditional national security interests, or interests of another kind, of their countries. My hypothesis is that women in power are not significantly more likely than men to pursue gender-specific policies while in office. Instead, much depends on environmental factors and individual personality. Sometimes other issues, like security are more likely to hold the attention of female leaders, but even absent security threats, female leaders will still vary in their level of attention to these issues, vis-à-vis other social issues. I have chosen this topic because it is a common assumption that women leaders will be concerned with issues pertaining to women and children, as we have seen in the past with some female leaders, but while this may be true in some cases, it is not true in all, so I would like to further explore some possible explanations about the conditions that facilitate such attention.

I am particularly interested in women that have come to power in developing countries after serious conflict because both the political and social conditions in these countries are dire and statistics clearly show that across the board, in third world countries, women are a fourth world themselves. I have therefore chosen the following women leaders to study: President Violeta Chamorro of Nicaragua, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan.

Chapter 1: Purpose of Study & Research Design

In the field of international relations, there has been little research done on the role gender plays in leadership; and even less has been written about the ways in which gender issues are addressed over the course of a leader's tenure, especially if the leader is female. Some have argued that around the world gender relations remain unchanged in periods when women hold executive office. As V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan point out, "there is no simple, one-to-one relationship between the presence of women in power and the extent of feminist politics."¹ Author David Close contends:

A female president or prime minister frequently has not spelled good times for a country's women's movement. The most powerful and successful female heads of government in the twentieth century, Indira Gandhi of India and Margaret Thatcher of Great Britain, may have inspired other women to enter politics and certainly showed male politicians that they did not hold a monopoly on toughness and cunning, but neither could be styled a great defender of feminist values. Indeed, women political leaders have not been exceptionally strong defenders of women's rights.²

The goal of this thesis will be to examine whether women in positions of power facilitate the enactment of gender-oriented measures or whether they continue to focus on the traditional national security interests, or interests of another kind, of their countries. My hypothesis is that women in power are not significantly more likely than men to pursue gender-specific policies while in office. Instead, much depends on environmental factors and individual personality. In particular, pressing national security issues are sometimes more likely to hold their attention, and even absent security threats, female

¹ V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan, *Global Gender Issues* (CO, Boulder: Westview Press, 1993) p. 23

² David Close, *Nicaragua: The Chamorro Years* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999) p. 79

leaders will still vary in their level of attention to these issues, vis-à-vis other social issues. I have chosen this topic because it is a common assumption that women will be concerned with issues pertaining to women and children, as we have seen in some cases, for example, Sheikh Hasina Wazad in Bangladesh, who has focused on the empowerment of women and has successfully created legislation to implement adequate representation of women in the local government bodies, leading to the election of more than 14,000 women to these bodies.³ While this may be true in some cases, it is not true in all, so I would like to further explore some possible explanations about the conditions that facilitate such attention.

I am particularly interested in women that have come to power in developing countries after serious conflict because both the political and social conditions in these countries are dire. Politically, post conflict reconstruction involves serious nation-building tasks. Socially, statistics clearly show that across the board, in third world countries, women are a fourth world themselves. In developing countries, women are generally less influential in the political and social sphere and poverty is generally higher among women. I have therefore chosen the following women leaders to study: President Violeta Chamorro of Nicaragua, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan. All three came to power at a time when national security issues were a priority for their countries. Moreover, these leaders are from different regions of the world and so comparative analysis can produce generalizations which can lead to theoretical advancements.

³ <http://www.womenspeecharchive.org/women/profile/index.cfm?ProfileID=254>

The case studies will aim to answer the following question: Are women in power more likely to help initiate social and economic programs that benefit women and children? In order to do this, I will examine what programs and laws specifically dealing with education, health and anti-poverty were put in place during the mentioned administrations. Furthermore, were these leaders more focused on matters of national security than on gender-oriented issues?

In recent decades, gender development and empowerment have begun to be the focus of planning in both international and domestic spaces and not only in the policy sphere, but also in the sphere of international relations theory, which has expanded in recent years to include feminist approaches and discussions of the role of women. If women leaders are no more likely than male leaders to pass domestic legislation that benefits women and increases gender equality, then who will? If female leaders do not use their power to bridge the gender gap then again, who will? But if women do, in fact, facilitate the adoption of gender-specific measures and policies that benefit women, then it can be argued that women's political empowerment, particularly in the developing world can be a tool to bridge the gap and improve the social conditions of women and society as a whole. Or perhaps, women's empowerment comes from a different place entirely. Perhaps, it is not something that can be dispersed from the top down perhaps it comes from the bottom up, in the form of grassroots organizations, started by women, for women. Therefore, my research will look at the causal relationships leading to the empowerment of women. I will examine this evidence to see if it supports my argument that the empowerment of women is not top down.

In the following chapters, I will elaborate on my research design. I will then examine the political and economic conditions under which the leaders of Nicaragua, Pakistan and Liberia came to power to set the context for my analysis of the three women of these countries. I will examine the domestic laws, policies and budget proposals instituted by these women leaders and their administrations, during their tenure in office. Later, I will compare the performance of these women with their developed country counterparts before making some general conclusions about my hypothesis.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

As stated in the first chapter, my hypothesis is that women in power are not significantly more likely than men to pursue gender-specific policies while in office. I am particularly interested in women that came to power in post-conflict countries, which is why I have chosen President Violeta Chamorro of Nicaragua, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan. All three came to power at a time when national security issues were a priority for their countries.

In classical Realism, the statesman works to ensure that the state's national interests, namely security, are prioritized. Individuals within the state (male or female) do not matter because states are all seeking power and national security. The state itself is the actor within the international community and there is little consideration given to the individual. Realists view the state as a "single opaque unit."⁴ In realism, the state is the actor and the individual is of little importance. State security rather than human security (including gender empowerment) is prioritized. But since the individual is not considered, gender does not matter so then there is even less consideration given to a female individual. Indeed, with respect to my hypothesis a realist approach would suggest that the leaders I am analyzing would focus on security issues because the state, as a unit in the Realist's anarchic system, requires this.

On the other hand, Liberalism considers individual well-being as important. Thus liberal theory allows for an examination of leadership and the policies and laws created by each leader in a heightened context, beyond traditional military security. Since the end of the Cold War and interdependence that has resulted from globalization, the field of

⁴ Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Liberal International Theory and International Economic Law," *The American University International Law Review*, 10.2 (Winter 1995)

IR has faced challenges to its core theoretical assumptions.⁵ Issues of war and security are no longer the only means of analysis in the field of IR, as was the case in the past. International relations broadened in scope to include liberal concerns, such as development, human rights, civil society and international political economy. Liberalism is an approach primarily concerned with “the human will and institutional progress.”⁶ This theory, unlike its opposite Realism, is grounded in the assumption that human beings have reconcilable desires for peace, happiness, prosperity and health, and that human beings create institutions to fulfill these goals. This school of thought favors the analysis of civil and political liberties and the autonomy of the individual. Under this umbrella, states are but one actor amongst many, and states can work together to resolve problems through diplomacy and incentives, not war. Liberals begin with individuals and groups operating in both domestic and transnational civil society. These are viewed as the primary actors in the international sphere.⁷ Liberals view “the nature of domestic representation...as the decisive link between societal demands and state policy.”⁸

Feminist theory has also brought a new perspective to IR. These theories have introduced gender as a relevant empirical category and analytical tool for understanding global power relations.⁹ Feminist theory refers to the school of thought that arose out of feminist movements and includes theories about the way gender is constructed as well as

⁵ Tricia Ruiz, “Feminist Theory and International Relations: The Feminist Challenge to Realism and Liberalism,” available at <http://honors.csustan.edu/journals/Soundings/Ruiz.pdf> accessed May 15, 2011

⁶ Martin Hollis and Steven Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) p 11.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

the origins of gender inequality and social gender constructions. There is a wide range of theories that fall under the umbrella of feminism but they are all linked by their attention to social differentiations based on gender (presumably “empirical” distinctions between males and females), or more recently, gender.¹⁰ For example, standpoint feminist theorists believe that a feminist perspective is needed to understand global, systemic oppression in a society and that the feminine experience in life is very different from that of men.

Empirical feminist theory focuses on the way in which women are involved in foreign policy. It turns the attention to women and gender relations as empirical aspects of international relations.¹¹ For example, there are still fewer women politically empowered in the world than there are men, and women are more likely to be among the group of non-state actors in global politics, making their voice in the creation of policies affecting society unheard. The Inter-Parliamentary Union reports a world average of only 15.6% women in combined houses of parliament.¹² The statistics by region offer few surprises, ranging from 6.8% in the Arab States to 18.6% in the Americas, and 39.7% in the Nordic states.¹³ While women are inadequately represented in the lower levels of government, they are scarcer still in the upper levels of government. The absence of women from positions in government means that national, regional and local priorities, i.e. how resources are allotted, are typically defined without any input from women,

¹⁰ V. Spike Peterson, “Feminist Theories Within, Invisible To, and Beyond IR,” *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol X Issue 2 (2004) p 11.

¹¹ Scott Burchill, *Theories of International Relations*, (New York, NY: 2009, Palgrave MacMillian) p 245.

¹² Augusto Lopez-Claros, *Women’s Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap*, *World Economic Forum*, 2005

¹³ *Ibid.*

whose life experience of managing the needs of the family gives them a different cognizance of the community's needs than that of men. This theory contends that women's lives and experiences have been and continue to be, often excluded from the study of international relations.¹⁴ Empirical feminism corrects the misrepresentation of women in world politics due to false assumptions that male experiences account for both men and women in society.¹⁵

Another useful body of IR theory focuses on leadership, emphasizing the gap between the classical model of rational decision making and the personality of the leader and the cognitive constraints that come into play in even relatively simple choice situations.¹⁶ Cognitive and motivational constraints are said to affect the decision-making performance of a leader.¹⁷ Scholars of foreign policy have engaged in extensive theoretical and empirical research on leadership style and how the personality of a leader can influence political outcomes. The differences in leadership style can have both direct and indirect effects on domestic policy.¹⁸ This approach, unlike realism, liberalism and feminism, can account for variations within state policy that could be attributed to personality and leadership style. For example, in an article written by Stephen Dyson he explores how one leader, Harold Wilson, declined sending troops to Vietnam, while another leader, Tony Blair, sent forces to Iraq. He argues that since situational factors

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ole. R. Holsti, *Theories of International Relations*, <http://www.duke.edu/~pfeaver/holsti.pdf> p 26 accessed May 15, 2011.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Juliet Kaarbo, *Prime Minister Leadership Styles in Foreign Policy Decision-Making: A Framework for Research*, *Political Psychology*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Sep., 1997) p 553-581

generate conflicting predictions, an investigation of individual-level variables is necessary.¹⁹ Studies such as these will provide a better understanding of leadership as it relates to promoting and enacting policies.

However, studies of political leadership have been remarkably non-gender specific and lacking. This is due to an assumption made by most people, that leaders in the world are men. There is of course, a great deal of validity to the assumption, but it is not entirely true. So additionally, under the umbrella of leadership studies, for the purposes of this paper, I will examine how gender contributes to leadership, if at all, and what influence, if any, does gender have on a leader's policies and what they do with their time in office.

Definitions:

For the purpose of this paper, gender-oriented policies will be defined as programs that were created to better the lives of women in each country. Programs and policies to be examined will be ones that focused on the health and education of women. I will look at whether employment among women in the country increased or decreased during the tenure of the president. I will also examine other social factors, such as literacy rates, education and health statistics among women in each country plus infant mortality rates (IMR), to determine how women fared under each administration. I will analyze each leader's commitment to women's empowerment based on whether organizations and programs geared at assisting women were created or deconstructed during each presidency and whether laws protecting women and bettering their lives were implemented. In my analysis, the statistics that have been compiled by The United

¹⁹ Stephen Benedict Dyson, *Alliances, Domestic Politics, and Leader Psychology: Why Did Britain Stay out of Vietnam and Go into Iraq?*, *Political Psychology*, Vol. 28, No. 6 (Dec., 2007), p 647

Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), The World Bank, The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the United Nations Human Development Reports, are useful.

Since 1990, the UNDP has published the Human Development Reports, which include a Human Development Index (HDI) for each country and more recently, a Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) and a Gender Development Index (GDI). The HDI is measured by three dimensions, namely health, education and living standards. It also has four indicators, which are life expectancy at birth, mean years of schooling, expected years of schooling and gross national income per capita. The HDI sets a minimum and a maximum for each dimension, called goalposts, and then shows where each country stands in relation to these goalposts, expressed as a value between 0 and 1.²⁰ The GDI measures achievement in the same basic capabilities as the HDI does, but takes note of inequality in achievement between women and men. The methodology used imposes a penalty for inequality, such that the GDI falls when the achievement levels of both women and men in a country go down or when the disparity between their achievements increases.²¹ The GEM evaluates the progress in advancing women's standing in political and economic forums.²²

In order to compare gender measures taken with security measures, I will examine figures on military expenditure using the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) database. An analysis of budgets will also provide information about how much has been spent in which areas.

²⁰ http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/indices/gdi_gem/ accessed June 14, 2011

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Scott Burchill's book entitled *Theories of International Relations* provides a comprehensive survey of leading perspectives in the field. The introduction explains the nature of theory and the reasons for studying international relations in a theoretically informed way. The nine chapters which follow provide thorough examinations of each of the major theoretical approaches currently prevailing in the discipline. The chapters of specific interest to me are the ones pertaining to Realism and Feminism.

Realists argue that national security is the primary focus of a leader when in power. Therefore, the female leaders I have chosen to examine would understandably choose to focus their attention to matters of security instead of economic and social programs that empower women, which is the basis for my hypothesis. Since no consideration is given to the individual leader under this theory, it would make sense then, that gender does not play a role in policy making.

Feminists pay special attention to the way in which gender is constructed and to the reality of gender inequality. Under the umbrella of this theory, it could be argued that the female leaders I have chosen to research would therefore, rule differently than a man and also, make different choices in office than a man in the same position. Empirical feminism would further argue that the lack of female empowerment in government positions contributes to a lack of policies promoting women's empowerment. If this is true, then my hypothesis should prove to be unsupported, and the female leaders I have chosen to examine would in fact, have created policies to empower women.

In David Sear's piece, entitled "Handbook of Political Psychology," he discusses and explains the different approaches that fall under the umbrella of political psychology

theory. Of particular interest to me and this paper, is his section about the ways in which personality influence a leader's tenure. If women in leadership promote women's empowerment, can this be attributed to their personality, their gender or both? Are some female leaders more likely to promote women's issues while in office than others and if so, is this because of differences in personality? These are a just a few of the questions this theory poses to my topic.

The book entitled *Missionaries and Mandarins*, edited by Carol Miller and Shahra Razavi, examines the different methods used by women working to transform the structures of state organizations, NGOs and other institutions to make them more "gender-equitable." The contributors to the publication examine struggles not only at the discursive level but also at the institutional level of laws, procedures and resource allocation. The writers acknowledge the gendered nature of governments but argue against the commonly held view that these institutions are impenetrable.

In one chapter the author writes about the lack of awareness and commitment to gender issues generally found amongst state personnel. One reason is because these institutions are usually headed by men, who are more often than not, gender insensitive and the author argues that the same attitude can be found amongst the female population in bureaucracies. They argue that women in positions of power cannot be assumed automatically predisposed to work on women's interests, and some of the data I have found in my research supports this contention. The author explains in greater detail one possible reason that women in positions of political power neglect women's issues while in office:

Their class status distances them from the concerns of poorer women. More importantly, the few women who do gain access to political power

tend to be so isolated from other women and are under powerful pressures to conform to the dominant orientations of their institutions and the work patterns of their male colleagues. These pressures limit possibilities for developing sensitivity to, and acting in, women's interests.²³

This is an interesting explanation that I will use in my analysis as a possible reason for a female leader's lack of action.

Michael Genovese edited the book *Women as National Leaders*, which focuses on the careers of seven women (two of whom are the subject of this case study) who are, or have been, leaders of nations: Golda Meir, Isabel Peron, Corazon Aquino, Violeta Chamorro, Indira Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto and Margaret Thatcher. Contributors to this study use case studies to examine critical issues including: context, political, social and economic situation during the time they rose to power; biographical factors that were important or relevant to the leader's rise; leadership style, how well or poorly they performed and why; and to what extent, and how, did gender matter in a leader's rise to office and performance, all of which are of particular interest to this paper and women I have chosen for analysis.

According to Genovese, because of the scarcity of women in power, the field of leadership studies has all but ignored the role of gender in leadership. He contends that the story of woman's rise to power traces her obstacles and restrictions that she faces in her society. It will also illuminate the distinctive barriers that she tackled because of marginality and her skill at developing gender-specific strategies to overcome them²⁴.

This will allow us to look at obstacles she faced rising to power, but perhaps more

²³ Carol Miller and Shahra Razavi. *Missionaries and Mandarins* (London, England: UNRISD, 1998) p 71

²⁴ Michael Genovese, *Women as National Leaders* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993) p 4

importantly, the obstacles she faced *while in office*, that may have restricted her ability to focus on bridging the gender gap.

Genovese also argues that a successful leader will develop strategies and behaviors for dealing with both opportunities and challenges. If the leader is female, strategies will inevitably be shaped and influenced by her society's definitions and expectations of gender. I will go on in later chapters to explore and analyze this contention as it relates to the women I have chosen to research and whether or not there is any truth to this statement.

V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan collaborated on a wonderful book, entitled *Global Gender Issues* that greatly influenced my thinking on the three case studies I have chosen to examine and also provided a great deal of information on gender and leadership. The book argues the need to look at world politics through a different set of lenses, lenses that reveal how gender blinds us to the presence of women in international affairs. Some women do find their way to traditional power as heads of state but there are also women in positions of less visible state and non-state power, many of whom are trying to attain a more equal and just global order. And then there are the billions of women around the world who feed, clothe, and care for their families and societies, whether as mothers, farmers, textile workers, nurses, teachers, factory workers, who have no formal political power. This book tries to connect the inequalities between women and men within the context of world politics, i.e., power, security, and economy. Using history and theoretical analysis, the authors bring to light the gender differences of power, violence, labor, and resources. In doing so, they show links between women's issues and world political matters. At the same time, the authors lay out a clearly

articulated hope for redefining and reorganizing gender relations and international relations as we begin to embrace difference, demand equality, and develop new standards of power and progress. This book was a great tool when taking a theoretical approach in my analysis and it also offered historical data that supported some of my arguments.

Karen Kampwirth has written extensively on feminism within the context of political science, but more specifically, within the context of Latin America. Much of her research has influenced my thinking when examining Violeta Chamorro of Nicaragua. In her book entitled *Feminism and The Legacy of Revolution* she argues that in many Latin American countries, guerrilla struggle and feminism have been linked. Women were mobilized by the thousands to promote revolutionary agendas that had little to do with increasing gender equality but ironically, did end up creating a unique form of feminism that intertwined revolutionary goals (economic equality, social justice) with typically feminist aims (equality, nonviolence, and reproductive rights). The book uses over two hundred interviews with women in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and the Mexican state of Chiapas, to tell the story of how the revolutions and wars led to the rise of feminism, why certain women became feminists, and what sorts of feminist movements they built. It explores how the violent politics of guerrilla struggle can be unexpectedly related to the peaceful politics of feminism. The ideas in this book offer an interesting contrast to the politics of the Chamorro administration, when considering that “guerillas,” however inadvertently, contributed to women’s empowerment, more so than the female leader did during her tenure. The chapters in this book that center on Nicaragua also give us a detailed account of the Sandinistas in power, what they did for women and how their

leadership compared to that of Chamorro. This will be elaborated on more in the next chapter.

Lois Wessel wrote a fascinating article entitled “Reproductive Rights in Nicaragua: From the Sandinistas to the Government of Violeta Chamorro.” This article was written in 1991, shortly after Chamorro won the presidential election. The article contends that during this time, the National Opposition Union (UNO) government in Nicaragua posed a threat to the achievements made during the Sandinista years of 1979-90 and that the women of Nicaragua were struggling to maintain the reproductive rights they gained under the Sandanistas. Wessel contends that since the unexpected electoral defeat of the Sandinistas in February 1990, Sandinista organizations have been going through a process of self-criticism. Within this context, the fight for reproductive rights has focused both on the past shortcomings of Sandinista policies and on the current campaign to win these rights in spite of the present conservative government of Chamorro.²⁵ This article influenced my thinking a lot because Wessel provides concrete data to support her contentions. She is able to argue, very convincingly, that the Chamorro administration was not pro-women and that the Sandanistas, despite their socialist roots, laid the groundwork for reproductive rights for women in Nicaragua. I will touch on reproductive rights in Nicaragua under both the Sandinista’s and Chamorro in the next chapter.

There is also an autobiography of Violeta Barrios de Chamorro entitled *Dreams of the Heart*, which informed my chapter dedicated to the former president of Nicaragua. The book provides a history of her family, beginning in 1762 and continues all the way

²⁵ Lois Wessel, “Reproductive Rights in Nicaragua: From the Sandanistas to the Government of Violeta Chamorro,” *Feminist Studies* Vol. 17, No 3 (1991)

up to her presidency. When she won the election in 1990, many feared the Sandinista's (in power before her and headed by Daniel Ortega) would not allow her to take office, but due to her admirable skills in diplomacy, they did. She reached out to them instead of fighting with them, which helped her secure office, quite smoothly. The book shows how after six years in office, Chamorro brought her country back from ruin, ended a civil war and revitalized an economy that was one of the worst in the Western Hemisphere at that time.

One of the most interesting facts found in the book, that influenced my writing a great deal, was that Chamorro had never before held office and from a very young age wanted nothing more than to be a mother and wife. Many critics of her administration argue that this very attitude caused her to be somewhat blind to the problems of women in her country and virtually ambivalent about gender equality. Whether that is true or not remains to be seen, but these arguments will be addressed further in the next chapter.

Another book that influenced my thinking was Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's memoir entitled *This Child Will Be Great*. In this book Sirleaf shares the story of her rise to power, including her early childhood; her experiences with abuse, imprisonment and exile; and her fight for democracy, social justice and women's rights. She reveals her determination to succeed, from her studies in America to campaigning in some of Liberia's most dilapidated, war-torn villages. What emerges from the book is a tale of an outspoken, fearless, female, social reformer who fought dictators to champion change. Africa's "Iron Lady" was sworn in as president in 2006 and this event marked a tremendous turning point in the history of the West African nation.

Reading this book allowed me to learn about the events in her life that shaped her personality, and more importantly, her thinking. She has been outspoken about women's rights and empowerment in her book and all throughout her presidency so it was interesting to learn about the obstacles in her past, which I believe shaped her to be a defender of women. We get insight into her personality, from her own words and also learn about the aims of her administration, what challenges existed that prevented the aims from being reality and what aims she succeeded in achieving.

Benazir Bhutto wrote the book entitled *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy and The West* in which she gives a gripping account of her final months in Pakistan and offers a bold new agenda for how to deal with the tide of Islamic radicalism and rediscover tolerance and justice, the values that in her opinion lie at the heart of religion. She speaks to the West but also to Muslims across the globe. We also get a first-hand account of her first months in 1988; her goals, what she accomplished and what stood in her way and her time in office in 1993. She is candid about what she wanted to do, what her priorities were, what she accomplished and what had to be cast aside and for what reason. Therefore, this book was a huge help in my research on Bhutto and informed my thinking a great deal.

In the article entitled "Female Leadership of Democratic Transitions in Asia," Mark Thompson focuses his analysis on democratic uprising in Asia. He writes that "the role of women in "engendering" democratic transitions through active participation in social movements has long been recognized but female leaders of democratic transitions have been extremely rare."²⁶ He claims that the importance of women leaders is quite

²⁶ Mark Thompson, "Female Leadership of Democratic Transitions in Asia," *Pacific Affairs*, 75.4 (Winter 2002-2003) p 535

evident if we focus on "democratic revolutions"²⁷ because these revolutions are, according to him, characteristically peaceful and urban-based movements, defined as "spontaneous popular uprisings-which topple dictators and begin a transition process that eventually results in the consolidation of democracy."²⁸ He focuses his research and analysis in Asia, where women have been at the forefront of mass movements that have overthrown unyielding dictatorships and resulted in a process of democratization. One of several leaders he researches is Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, so the information he collected supported some of my thinking and provided a great deal of support for my arguments, which I will discuss further in the chapter devoted to her tenure as prime minister.

Anita Weiss wrote an article in 1990 entitled "Benazir Bhutto and the Future of Women in Pakistan." This article was published about a year and a half after Bhutto won the office of Prime Minister in Pakistan. This article provided detailed information about Bhutto's first year in office, what she did and the challenges she faced. Weiss describes the conflicting sides of the new democracy in Pakistan during Bhutto's time in office and how they battled each other and how the opposition forces seized upon any opportunity to undermine the popularity of the PPP (Pakistan People's Party) government. Weiss explains the nature of her research by stating:

While it is still premature to assess its [PPP] actions, we can question whether in fact it appears that the Bhutto government will cause much of a difference in most peoples' lives, particularly in the lives of women. We are, therefore, forced to question just how much power does Benazir actually hold, and is it enough to accomplish what she promised in her inauguration speech? Can she close the gap between the rich and the poor

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

as pledged? What is the likely outcome of state policy now toward women and the larger society?²⁹

The information Anita offers has helped my research tremendously, especially given the fact that there is not an overwhelming amount of information about Benazir's tenure, specifically. She provides a great deal of data that was challenging to find and provides specific examples of the work Benazir did, and at times did not do, during her first year in office.

Data/Statistics

A huge portion of my research was done analyzing data from various studies conducted by institutions around the world. The statistics that have been compiled by The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), The World Bank, The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the United Nations Human Development Reports, are useful. These reports have been done to assess growth and development in countries around the world. The data compiled gives an accurate depiction of a country's social factors, such as literacy rates, education and health statistics, and infant mortality rates. This can be used to assess the status of women in each country by year, which can then be directly linked to the administration in charge, and in this case, the woman in office at the time.

An analysis of each leader's budgets and policies will allow me to examine each leader's commitment to women's empowerment based on whether organizations and programs geared at assisting women were created or deconstructed during each presidency and whether laws protecting women and bettering their lives were implemented. Examining each administration's military expenditure compiled by the

²⁹Anita M. Weiss, "Benazir Bhutto and the Future of Women in Pakistan" Asian Survey, 30.5 (May 1990) p 435

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) will show that perhaps these leaders were more concerned with state security rather than social programs.

In the next chapter I will begin discussing the presidency of Violeta Chamorro of Nicaragua. I will begin with a historical background to provide the context of her rise to power, followed by an examination of her time in office and what her administration was able to do for the women of her country.

Chapter 4: Violeta Chamorro

Violeta Chamorro came to power after a period of major instability and civil war in Nicaragua. Her tenure followed a period of socialist reform during which women's rights were enhanced. Therefore, I will briefly examine the treatment of women prior to her rise to power and in particular, the policies of the Sandinista's government that preceded her in order to analyze the tenure of Chamorro and compare it with that of the Sandinistas.

Role of Women in Nicaragua

Nicaragua takes its name from Nicarao, chief of the indigenous tribe that lived around present-day Lake Nicaragua during the late 1400s and early 1500s.³⁰ In 1524, Hernandez de Cordoba founded the first Spanish permanent settlements in the region, including two of Nicaragua's principal towns: Granada on Lake Nicaragua, and Leon, located west of Lake Managua.³¹ Nicaragua gained independence from Spain in 1821, briefly becoming a part of the Mexican Empire and then a member of a federation of independent Central American provinces and in 1838, Nicaragua became an independent republic.³² Much of Nicaragua's political history since independence has been characterized by the rivalry between the Liberal elite of Leon and the Conservative elite of Granada, which frequently led to civil war.³³

In 1909, the United States provided political support to Conservative-led forces rebelling against President Zelaya and intervened militarily to protect American lives and

³⁰ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/1850.htm#history>

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

property. The United States maintained troops in Nicaragua from 1912 until 1933.³⁴ After the departure of U.S. troops in 1933, National Guard Commander Anastasio Somoza Garcia outsmarted his opponents and secured the presidency in 1936. The Somoza dynasty, beset by corruption, ended in 1979 with a massive uprising led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), which had conducted a low-scale guerrilla war against the Somoza regime since the early 1960s.³⁵

Before examining the effects of the Sandinista Rebellion on women in Nicaragua, it is necessary to understand the nature of women's political participation in pre-revolutionary Nicaragua. The women's movement in Nicaragua was primarily restricted to electoral politics with the primary focus of gaining the right to vote and calls for women's suffrage began as early as 1880.³⁶ By the 1920s, women expanded their struggle to include the fight for equal access to education; however, the primary goal was to obtain entry into political society. Throughout the 1920s, '30s, and '40s, sporadic bursts of momentum kept the fight for women's suffrage alive.³⁷

The Somoza family consolidated power in 1936 and curtailed women's participation in society so sharply that many achievements of the early feminists became virtually obsolete.³⁸ In 1955, women were finally granted the right to vote, although they

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Victoria Gonzalez, "Somocista Women, Right-Wing Politics, and Feminism in Nicaragua: 1936-1979." *Radical Women in Latin America, Left and Right*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001) p 41-78.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

would have to wait until 1957 to actually exercise this right.³⁹ While women's suffrage was an important historical milestone, it did little to change the political landscape. Completely ignoring the contributions of earlier activists, the Somoza family took full credit for women's suffrage in hopes of gaining the support of Nicaragua's newly enfranchised female population.⁴⁰ The Somoza family, particularly Luis and Anastasio Somoza Debayle, repeatedly invoked their connection with women's rights in order to bolster the legitimacy of the dictatorship.⁴¹

The Somoza dictatorship used women's enfranchisement to subdue challenges to the patriarchal status quo. The women's branch of the Liberal party, known as *Ala Femenina del Partido Liberal*, was created in 1955 and charged with the task of grooming women to be supporters of the regime.⁴² It was the *Ala Femenina's* duty not only to turn women voters out to the polls for Somoza but also to monitor and control women's participation. The *Ala Femenina* encouraged women to support the Somoza dictatorship through "proper" and "acceptable" manifestations of political expression.⁴³ Members of the *Ala Femenina* focused their energy on electoral campaigning and were discouraged from participating in more radical social movements. The *Ala Femenina* did positively impact women in pre-revolutionary Nicaragua by providing an open, yet limited, space to address political concerns and by offering support to women who sought public office.⁴⁴

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Karen Kampwirth, *Women and Guerilla Movements*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002) p 23.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Gonzalez, 43

⁴³ Ibid.

However, these gains were largely negated by the Ala Femenina's refusal to facilitate independent feminist thinking.⁴⁵

Women's participation during the Somoza dictatorship was largely void of any attempt to address concerns specifically facing women. After gaining the right to vote, women became active in the struggle for better schools, more jobs, and public safety; however, they supported these causes in a non-gender specific way.⁴⁶ They did not demand any change to the prevailing patriarchal gender ideology in Nicaragua. Instead, women used their newfound electoral power to perpetuate a regime that subjected women to marginalization in the workforce, government, and family setting.⁴⁷

Women responded to economic hardship not only by migrating to cities but by entering the workforce as well. In 1950, women made up 14 percent of the economically active population; by 1977, that number increased to 29 percent.⁴⁸ Joining the workforce exposed women to a range of political ideologies absent from the environment of traditional family life.

While economic devastation, disruption of the family, and urban migration provided the desire for action, liberation theology provided women with a justification for action. A new generation of clergy promulgated the philosophy of justice for the poor, thus inspiring women to take action against the current regime.⁴⁹ The voices of

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Gonzalez, 43

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Kampwirth, *Guerilla Movements*, 23

Catholic priests preaching against the regime and its economic policies added legitimacy to the revolutionary movement and assured women of their right to security from poverty.⁵⁰

It was against this backdrop of social unrest that the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) emerged.

The Sandinistas' Gender Policies

In July 1979, the new Sandinista government came to power in Nicaragua. During the Sandinista revolution, the condition of women and the opportunities they had to organize improved. A key element in the Sandinista political strategy was the conversion of the lower classes and historically excluded sectors of society, including women, into effective political actors. This was in part due to the fact that the Sandinista leadership instituted a social regime, entitled Sandinismo, which clearly supported women's equality. The revolutionary forces that overthrew the Somoza dictatorship were made up of 25 to 30 percent women, a percentage unprecedented in Nicaragua as well as in the history of the Western Hemisphere at that time.⁵¹ Cynthia Chavez Metoyer explains that even though the Sandinista's commitment to gender equality became secondary to other concerns, their administration opened political spaces and created an environment in which women's interests and equality could be pursued.⁵² While the political participation of women during the revolution was groundbreaking, many critics argue that the Sandinistas were simply using women to increase their numbers and

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Cynthia Chavez Metoyer, *Women and the State in Post-Sandinista Nicaragua* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000) 12.

⁵² Ibid.

strength in order to further the revolution. However, even if the motivations of the Sandinistas were purely calculated, their policies were arguably helpful to women. Women were empowered to put ideas in motion that laid the groundwork for grassroots organizations to develop.

The Sandinista agrarian reform had a huge effect on the women of Nicaragua. It began in 1979 with the redistribution of land that the previous dictator, Anastasio Somoza and his close associates, had confiscated. According to one source over fifty thousand farms (almost 3 million hectares) were redistributed.⁵³ The reform affected 46.2 percent of Nicaragua's farmland and was distributed as follows: 13.9 percent was allocated to production cooperatives, 11.7 percent was divided into state farms, 20.7 percent was given to individuals and 2.1 percent was given back to indigenous communities.⁵⁴ The reason this act of reform is so important is because it was the first law in Latin America to include the incorporation of women in its objectives. For example, the 1981 agrarian reform law explicitly states that "neither gender nor kinship status would hinder someone from becoming a beneficiary to the law."⁵⁵ The law also explicitly states that a goal of the newly created cooperatives should be to encourage the participation of women, stating that they should be "incorporated into the cooperatives under the same terms as men with the same rights and duties."⁵⁶ Between the years 1979 and 1989, 5,800 women benefited from the agrarian reform, representing 9.7 percent of the total beneficiaries

⁵³ Carmen Diana Deere and Magdalena Leon de Leal, *Empowering Women: Land and Property Rights in Latin America* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001) 95.

⁵⁴ Center of Investigation and Studies of the Agrarian Reform, (Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios de la Reforma Agraria - CIERA) 1989. Vol. 9: 39 (Managua: CIERA)

⁵⁵ Deere and Leal, 95

⁵⁶ Ibid.

affected by the law. Women also made up 11 percent of the cooperative workers and 8 percent of the individuals allotted plots of farmland.⁵⁷

In 1979, a Statute of Rights was passed, aimed at improving the status of female workers in agriculture by making wages payable to all workers over the age of fourteen on an individual basis rather than to the male head of household. As a result, women were able to receive their own income and this seemingly small change narrowed the wage gaps between female and male agricultural workers.⁵⁸ By 1989, women made up 29 percent of the temporary workers and 10 percent of the permanent farm workers.⁵⁹ Thus, it can be argued that much of the Sandinista agrarian reform benefited women. Carmen Deere maintains that the Sandinistas improved women's status because ideologically the Sandinistas believed that gender equality, not just class equality, was necessary for social transformation, and because economically gender equality was important to promote development.⁶⁰ If half of the population is female and not working or able to work, growth cannot be achieved. Thus the Sandinistas were committed to agricultural development and gender equality among the workers. These two policies were prioritized.

The Sandinistas also put into effect policies that improved the material conditions of the female population as a whole. In fact, the day after the Sandinistas came to power, they decreed the Law of the Means of Communication, which explicitly prohibited the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ CIERA. 1989. Marco jurídico de la reforma agraria. Vol. VII (Managua: CIERA).

⁵⁹ Metoyer, 20

⁶⁰ Carmen Deere, *Rural Women and State Policy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987) 176

use of women as sex objects in advertising.⁶¹ A few weeks later a program was initiated that provided alternative-job training to prostitutes.⁶² More specifically, two laws were introduced that directly addressed female-male relations: the Law of Relations between Mothers, Fathers, and Children (1981) and the Provision Law (1982). The first law “intended to remove men's special privileges over custody of divorce settlements and recognized the legal rights of illegitimate children.”⁶³ The second law made all adult family members legally responsible for the well-being of their family and required that financial obligations and household tasks be shared.⁶⁴ While this is seemingly impossible to regulate, it was perhaps a tool to validate the heavy burden placed upon women in the home. In 1977, the FSLN had created The Association of Women to the National Problem (AMPRONAC) to draw women into the revolutionary struggle against Somoza. After the triumph the organization became known as AMNLAE, an organization that encouraged Nicaraguan women to continue to organize and meet to better themselves “in order to discover and understand [women's] specific situations and organize women to change their reality to move forward in destroying the ideological chains that tie women to a pattern of behavior that is dependent, submissive and that underestimates women's capacities.”⁶⁵ Even though the organization was initially designed to recruit women for the revolution, the importance cannot be overlooked because after the revolution, the

⁶¹ Junta de Gobierno. 1984. Evaluación del decenio de las naciones unidas para la mujer: Igualdad, desarrollo, y paz, 1976-1985. Managua: Oficina de la Mujer

⁶² Deere, 23

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ *Barricada*. “AMNLAE organiza mujeres.” Managua, April 15, 1980.

organization was able to take a new direction, away from recruitment for the revolution and more specifically toward dealing with women's issues.

Other examples of radical democracy can be seen in the 1987 Constitution, in sections concerned with social rights, the rights of the family, and those of labor. The constitution assured Nicaraguans the right to work in Article 57, to education found in Article 58, and to health care covered in Article 59. But most importantly for this study, it also established the absolute equality of rights and responsibilities between men and women, in Article 73.⁶⁶

Skeptics, such as Cynthia Metoyer, have criticized the efforts of the Sandinistas. She writes that “despite the enactment of constitutional and legal guarantees, the impact of the Sandinistas ideological commitment to gender equality was somewhat problematic,”⁶⁷ arguing that the Sandinistas were just using women as revolutionaries in order to achieve their political goals. And Karen Kampwirth, contends that “women were mobilized by the thousands in order to promote revolutionary agendas that had little to do with gender equality.”⁶⁸ These are complicated assumptions, leading to slightly oversimplified conclusions. Often times, the very act of putting through gender specific policies is difficult if not impossible for leaders around the world, so the laws the Sandinistas put through should not be discredited so easily. Laws lay the groundwork for real change. Nothing happens over night, but with laws in place, awareness grows and incremental change is possible. Laws are not always arbitrary; they are the foundation

⁶⁶ Close, 64

⁶⁷ Metoyer, 24

⁶⁸ Karen Kampwirth, *Feminism and the Legacy of Revolution*, (Athens, OH: Ohio Univeristy Press, 2004) 165

for the cultural and structural changes that may pave the way for long lasting change. However, it can also be argued that the Sandinistas involved women in order to gain revolutionaries that would fight for them to gain office. It is difficult to say exactly and both arguments have a substantial amount of information to back them. Perhaps there is an area of grey between the two arguments, where the truth lies. Melinda Leonard writes that the legacy of poverty resulting from the Somozas' personal usurpation of Nicaragua's resources, as well as rising tensions with the United States, undermined the Sandinistas' struggle to institute the socialist policies that were the platform of their revolution.⁶⁹

It should be noted that the Sandinista gender policies were enacted by male leadership, that of Daniel Ortega and his advisors. The policies were part of a socialist program and not that unusual for socialist countries. By 1990, when Violeta Chamorro came to power, socialism no longer existed and liberalism was beginning to spread globally.

Violeta Barrios de Chamorro of Nicaragua

Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, known to her supporters as "Doña Violeta," became the first female President of Nicaragua in 1990 and was in office until 1996. Chamorro came to power in Nicaragua after a period of turmoil characterized by conflict between socialist and conservative forces. She confronted major security tasks as well as the task of massive social reconstruction. In its 1989 report, the International Commission for the Recovery and Development of Central America described Central America as "trapped in a vicious circle in which violence impedes development and the poverty resulting from

⁶⁹ Melinda Leonard, "The Desk Studies of Colombia, Guatemala, and Nicaragua" (New York, NY: International Rescue Committee, 2001) 13

underdevelopment intensifies violence.”⁷⁰ The civil war, known as the “contra war,” had been extremely costly and destructive to the country. “The Contras” (counter-revolutionaries), of the opposition movement were trained and financed by the U.S. government, and were spread throughout rural Nicaragua. The civil war took the military and civilian death toll to an estimated 80,000, further ravaging an already fragile infrastructure and economy.⁷¹ Although the conflict came to an official end in 1990 with the election of Chamorro, periodic fighting between guerilla groups, that grew out of the Contra movement continued throughout her presidency. Paul Oquist outlines the costly nature of the contra war to give a better picture of what Chamorro’s administration inherited upon election:

Material damage and damage to productive forces resulting from the war totaled US \$1,998 million; the financial blockade meant for Nicaragua a loss of US \$642 million, and the commercial embargo another US \$459 million; the added costs for defense and security (in excess of the average 1980–1982 defense expenditure) in the period 1983–1989 totaled US \$1,933 million, for a total of US \$5,032 million. The aggregate effect of these on the gross national product was US \$4,055 million, for a grand total of US \$9,087 million.⁷²

As Chamorro discusses in her autobiography, she inherited a country riddled by poverty and polarized by hate. She writes, “My first order of business was to demilitarize Nicaragua.”⁷³ She also writes that she felt the need to achieve an order of stability before focusing on the many problems Nicaragua faced.

⁷⁰ Michael Genovese, *Women as National Leaders* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993) 87

⁷¹ Leonard, 13

⁷² Paul Oquist, “The Sociopolitical Dynamics of the 1990 Nicaraguan Elections,” (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1992) 1-40.

⁷³ Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, *Dreams of the Heart*, (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1996) 280

Opposition candidate Violeta Barrios de Chamorro won against incumbent Daniel Ortega with 54.7 percent of the vote and her campaign focused on her role as a mother and widow. She usually dressed in white, in order for the people of Nicaragua to equate her with the virgin mother of the bible. She presented herself as “the Mother of the Nicaraguans.”⁷⁴ Chamorro had never personally taken part in the revolution, so she was perhaps viewed as a docile, benevolent, leader. The symbolism found quite openly in her campaign foreshadowed what some argue were antifeminist policies put into effect during her tenure. There was little focus placed on her qualifications during the campaign. According to Metoyer, “Chamorro's lack of experience as a statesperson was evident in her early campaign speeches, which she slowly read in a painfully monotone fashion. Chamorro pledged to end the war and stressed reconciliation.”⁷⁵

From the start it was clear that her primary goal for Nicaragua was national security, which is a possible reason why Chamorro remained silent on women’s issues and gender equality. Chamorro and her administration went to great lengths to promote traditional family values by, among other measures, ordering new school texts that emphasized women's traditional roles as wife and mother during her tenure in office.⁷⁶ Feminists argue that this is a controversial idea to promote and limits women to the household. She told a reporter, “I’m not a feminist, nor do I want to be one. I am a woman dedicated to my home as Pedro [husband] taught me.”⁷⁷ Countless feminist critics have used this quote to argue that it was clear from the start that Chamorro would

⁷⁴ Close, 80

⁷⁵ Metoyer, 44

⁷⁶ Close, 80

⁷⁷ Metoyer, 44

not be concerned with women's empowerment during her tenure. While that is debatable, the quote does illustrate her traditional views of women in society. Her devout Catholicism was another indication that she would remain opposed or, at the very least silent, on abortion and contraception. International theory based in the study of personality and how it affects leadership argues that a leader's personality has a tremendous effect on what they do while in office. This theory would support the assumption, that it was her traditional values and religious beliefs that led her to be soft on issues pertaining to gender equality.

Chamorro's family history in politics must also be noted as a potential reason why gender relations were not a priority. Chamorro's deceased husband, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, was an outspoken opponent of the Somoza administration for decades, and used his position as editor of his newspaper, *La Prensa*, as a forum for dissent. He was assassinated in January 1978 and this set off waves that led to periods of insurrection. The FSLN rode this wave and took control of the country the following July.⁷⁸ This family history in politics is potentially problematic when assessing her goals as president because it can be argued that there was no real inner motivation for her rise to power, making her less oriented to goals of gender equality.

Chamorro also introduced policies of economic structural adjustment in order to align the country more closely with the prevailing global liberal norms. These policies were put into effect to stabilize the country but incidentally they caused women some harm. Even though her main goal to stabilize her country was a good one, there were some negative effects. However, it is understandable that in this instance, economic

⁷⁸ Kampwirth, "The Mother of the Nicaraguans," *Latin American Perspectives* 23:1 (1996): 69

stability for a war ravaged country would be of greater importance than promoting gender equality.

When Chamorro came into office, her main goal was to mend the Nicaraguan economy, by shifting from the Sandinista redistributive social model⁷⁹ to an export model based on neoliberal principles, specifically, structural adjustment programs (SAPs), that would hopefully bring about a certain level of economic stability which could in turn, bring about increased national security.⁸⁰ SAPs are programs promoted by the World Bank and The International Monetary Fund which place conditions on the loans they distribute. The ultimate aim of SAPs is to make the borrowing country more market oriented, and more focused on trade and production, thus boosting the economy.

Metoyer provides a thorough explanation:

Neoliberal adjustment programs seek to stimulate economic development through a combination of adjustment and stabilization policies. Adjustment involves a standard set of policies designed to achieve structural changes to enhance allocative efficiency, strengthen local currency, eliminate inflation, stimulate international trade, and result in rapid economic growth. Typically the policies involve cutbacks in public sector employment, limits on food and other crop subsidies, reduction in public spending, restrictions on credit, and reduction in government intervention in the economy. Structural reforms focus on introducing appropriate market incentives by deregulating domestic goods markets, privatizing state-owned enterprises, downsizing the government and balancing its budget, eliminating obstacles to savings and investments, and liberalizing trade by lowering tariffs between 5 and 20 percent.⁸¹

However, the effect of these programs on women is often negative. Structural adjustments resulted in widespread elimination of public sector jobs, and the job market

⁷⁹ See section entitled "Nicaraguan Gender History" for more background information on the Sandinistas and their time in office.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

for women thus declined drastically. For those women who were employed, their salaries were typically lower than those of men with comparable professional experience and education, with men making twice as much as women in some cases.⁸² Many critics of adjustment point out that the effects of SAP's on households are not taken into consideration because measures are usually implemented and analyzed in relation to the paid labor market and this oversight is particularly detrimental to women. Labor supplies are maintained and reproduced in the paid labor force as well as in the unpaid labor force; these supplies include housework, chores, child care, and senior care. However, economists tend to treat SAP's as if they are costless and they overlook the work that is required for its maintenance because the work is unpaid and therefore has no bearing on the larger economic variables.⁸³ Yet it is, ironically, at the domestic, household level that leaders like Chamorro expect social services that have been cut from budgets to be absorbed without any repercussions on the economy. What some economists see as an increase in productivity and efficiency attributed to SAPs, may be a misguided contention, and instead may really be a transfer of costs from the paid economy to the unpaid economy, the household. For example, an effort to make hospitals more efficient may ultimately lead to a patient's premature discharge and that patient may still need time to recuperate. This moves the burden of patient care from the paid staff at the hospital to the unpaid female relatives at home.⁸⁴

In Nicaragua, and many Latin American countries, motherhood is a social construction in which the women are celebrated as heroes. However, this also reinforces

⁸² Leonard, 14

⁸³ Metoyer, 56

⁸⁴ Ibid.

subordination, by keeping women in the home, caring for the children and managing household duties. When women from lower income families take on a job outside the home, their workload in essence doubles, but the domestic duties are still primarily their responsibility. One study suggests that 6 percent of domestic chores are performed by men, 16 percent of chores are done by men and women and 78 percent of the remaining household chores are performed exclusively by women.⁸⁵

This is not to suggest that Chamorro enacted SAPs knowing the effect they would have on women in her country but the bottom line is that they did affect the women of Nicaragua in an arguably negative way. Some women in Nicaragua disagreed with the adjustment policies, so much so that in the first three months of Chamorro's presidency, they took to the streets, banging pots and pans, to protest the new economic SAPs she was designing.⁸⁶ Lois Wessel states that "women are especially hit hard by this situation because they generally earn less, are often single heads of household and face the 'Rosie the Riveter' syndrome where men demobilized from the army or fired from state jobs have now taken over their jobs."⁸⁷

A study conducted by the World Bank in 2001 reported that the unemployment rate among women in 1995 had risen to 19 percent from 4.6 percent in 1985. However, the unemployment of men had also risen to 15 percent in 1995 from 2 percent in 1985.⁸⁸ Based on this statistic it cannot be argued that Chamorro's policies targeted women only,

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Wessel, Lois, "Reproductive Rights in Nicaragua: From the Sandanistas to the Government of Violeta Chamorro," *Feminist Studies* Vol. 17, No 3 (1991): 544

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ World Bank, *Gender Statistics*, September 28, 2010.

but rather that the unemployment rate was simply higher during her tenure than during the Sandinistas'. Her adjustment policies had a negative effect on employment rates, regardless of gender; in other words, men and women were equally unemployed.

What the reduction in funds for education and health care did mean was that fewer social services were available. During the first two years of their time in office the Chamorro administration dissolved The Nicaraguan Social Security and Social Welfare Institutes (INSSBI). Day care centers were closed down or the funding for them was drastically reduced, support centers for battered women were closed and workshops to prevent domestic violence were eliminated by mid-1990.⁸⁹ President Chamorro and her Minister of Education Sofonias Cisneros announced that sex education would no longer be taught in schools and that it was the responsibility of parents to talk to their children about sex.⁹⁰ Chamorro also cut other government positions, including the Coordinator of the National Sex Education Committee.

These cuts affected women specifically; Nicaragua in the nineties had the highest birthrate in the hemisphere, after Haiti, with an average of five children born to every woman in the city and seven in the countryside.⁹¹ To provide a comparison, the average birthrate per woman in the United States was 1.8.⁹² However, the birthrate in Nicaragua was actually higher in 1980, with statistics showing 6.14 children to every woman.⁹³ And that number continues to fall reaching an all-time low in 1995 with 4.14 to every

⁸⁹ Kampwirth, 49

⁹⁰ Wessel, 545

⁹¹ Kampwirth, 51

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Alicia Adsera, *Fertility Changes in Latin America in the Context of Economic and Political Uncertainty*, (University of Chicago, 2005) p 23

woman.⁹⁴ This data is problematic for the claims that Chamorro's cuts in social programs had a negative effect on women or that they affected the birthrate during her tenure. However, when examining another measure of women's health, many sources cite that by 1996, infant mortality rates (IMR) that had previously declined under the Sandinistas, were now the highest in Central America.⁹⁵ In 1974, the infant mortality rate was 120 deaths per 1,000 births, but this dropped in 1985 to 76.4 deaths per 1,000.⁹⁶ Other statistics show that the IMR stayed the same during the first three years of the Chamorro administration; so although she did not help the IMR of Nicaragua, it also did not get worse under her administration.⁹⁷ Infant mortality rates are an important statistic that point directly to the health and well-being of a country's female population.

Right before the elections, Chamorro said during an interview on Catholic Radio that one of her first tasks as president would be to shut down the private feminist clinic that performs abortions.⁹⁸ In addition, under Chamorro, the director at The Bertha Calderón Hospital shut down the therapeutic abortion committee and began deciding each case without consulting his colleagues. Before he took over the position as director, an average of thirty therapeutic abortions were performed each month.⁹⁹ In contrast, in that first month he was in charge, only one abortion was granted. One of the cases rejected was that of a severely retarded adolescent with two incapacitated parents, who

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Staten, Clifford. *The History of Nicaragua* (Greenwood Publishers, 2010) 141

⁹⁶ Metoyer, 35

⁹⁷ Pena, Rodolpho. "Fertility and infant mortality trends in Nicaragua 1964–1993." *Epidemiol Community Health*, 1999

⁹⁸ Wessel, 545

⁹⁹ Ibid.

had been raped by her neighbor.¹⁰⁰ Feminist lawyer Marvis Jiron was quoted in 1991 as ferociously pointing out that, “three new laws have been passed protecting the rights of cattle, not one concerning the rights of women.”¹⁰¹ Thus it is understandable that many people felt the Chamorro administration was not doing its part to better the status of women.

Karen Kampwirth contends that “by 1992 Nicaragua had the largest, most pluralistic, and most feminist women's movement in Central America.”¹⁰² But she goes on to explain this apparent contradiction in a very interesting way. She believes that the organizational experience pioneered by women during the Sandinista era, allowed them to achieve even more in the 1990s. She also believes that women representatives in the National Assembly would occasionally cross party lines to support women’s issues and that the FSLN rule assuring women candidates 30 percent of the slots on the party's national electoral list also helped.

Something else worth noting is Nicaragua’s ranking in the Human Development Reports compiled by the United Nations. According to the report compiled for 1992, Nicaragua had a Human Development Index (HDI) of .496, which ranked them at 97 out of 160 developing countries surveyed.¹⁰³ This number is low and improved a great deal

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Karen Kampwirth, “The Mother of the Nicaraguans,” *Latin American Perspectives* 23:1 (1996) 67-80

¹⁰³ UNHDRP 1992

under the administration that followed Chamorro because Nicaragua was listed as an HDI of 116 in the UNHDRP of 1998.¹⁰⁴

Despite these economic cuts that had an arguably negative effect on women, it could be argued that Chamorro had bigger concerns after securing office, state security issues that trumped an agenda to close the gender divide. Her administration is described by writer David Close:

Chamorro's government was not a strong one. A modern political scientist might say that it failed to integrate the political system. This showed itself most obviously in the state's inability to control violence. Though the violence was never so great as to threaten the state's survival, it was a big enough problem for anyone unlucky enough to be caught up in it. People suffered because the government lacked the power to assure its citizens peace, order, and good government.¹⁰⁵

In addition to dealing with guerillas and ex-soldiers who had not yet demobilized, Chamorro's government faced continuous political violence and unrest in the form of protests and strikes throughout her entire tenure. Homicide rates spiked in 1992, according to a study compiled by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO-OPS).¹⁰⁶ For these reasons, it seems that the main goal of the president was to maintain order and stability for Nicaragua.

For example, in May 1990, 70,000 workers from the Unión Nacional de Empleados, the public service union went on strike.¹⁰⁷ The country was paralyzed, and the strike caused a complete halt in all transportation, including the

¹⁰⁴ UNHDRP 1998

¹⁰⁵ David Close, *Nicaragua: The Chamorro Years* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999) 113

¹⁰⁶ Mark Cohen, *Violence and Crime in Latin America* (San Jose, Costa Rica: Copenhagen Consensus Center, 2007) p 4.

¹⁰⁷ This material is drawn from *Mesoamerica*, June 1990, pp. 9–11; and CAR, 18 May 1990, pp. 138–140.

airport, as the strikers occupied public buildings. Talks between the labor minister and union leaders finally led to a settlement granting 100 percent pay raise and the establishment of a committee to propose reforms to the law.¹⁰⁸ Another incident occurred less than two months later. The newly formed National Workers' Front called its 41,000 members to strike, this time adding concerns about privatization to its economic claims. President Chamorro dismissed the strikers, accusing them of being tools of a Sandinista conspiracy to destabilize her government and she refused to negotiate with them. The result was an enormous strike, involving an estimated 130,000 people that shut down the capital. Street fights followed, leaving six dead and over a hundred injured. Negotiations eventually resumed and the crisis was resolved by the administration's promise to slow the pace of privatization and give labor a formal role in wage policy.¹⁰⁹

Other forms of violence during her administration came from the demilitarized guerillas, once a part of the Contras, who took up arms again a year into her administration. Land shortages and poverty were the immediate cause of renewed violence.¹¹⁰ The return of the Rerarmados (or "recontras") sparked the return of demobilized Sandinista troops known as the "recompas," and the return of violent conflict across the country. In March and August 1993 the violent conflict peaked between the "recontras" and the "recompas."¹¹¹ The first signs appeared in March as

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ CAR, 6 July 1990, pp. 193–194; 13 July 1990, p. 203; and 20 July 1990, pp. 213–214

¹¹⁰ Close, 96.

“recompas” began mobilizing. The “recontras” then seized the Nicaraguan embassy in San José, Costa Rica, for thirteen days but were eventually able to negotiate a ransom with the Chamorro government.¹¹² On July 21, an estimated 120–200 armed members of the Revolutionary Campesino Worker Front (FROC) occupied the northern city of Estelí.¹¹³ These recompas held the historic Sandinista stronghold for three days before being ousted by the army. Officially, forty-five died and ninety-eight were wounded.¹¹⁴ On August 19, there were more protests from the Northern Front 3-80, a recontra group that would stay in business for the duration of the Chamorro years and even into the administration of the succeeding president Miguel Alemán. The group took forty-one people hostage in Quilalí, in northern Nicaragua.¹¹⁵ Among the forty-one were FSLN deputies Doris Tijerino and Carlos Gallo. For these reasons, it seems both obvious and understandable that the focus of the Chamorro government was peace and stability, more so than social issues, including women’s empowerment.

However, there are perplexing statistics that show that despite the civil unrest during her administration, Chamorro was cutting defense spending. In 1991, Chamorro’s budget was not well received and the point of dispute was over the defense allocation. One of Chamorro's goals was to reduce the military and this was accomplished in the seven months between her inauguration and the budget presentation. Chamorro reduced the military from some 80,000 troops to 28,400 and cut its budget from US\$166 million

¹¹¹ Close, 97

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

to US\$78 million.¹¹⁶ This was not enough for members of government, so they cut another US\$20 million from the defense budget, a decrease that would have meant laying-off an additional 10,000 soldiers.¹¹⁷ The president vetoed their revisions to the budget and after a week of intense lobbying by the executive (and a promise to cut defense spending by another US\$8 million) the legislature sustained her veto, in a 69-to-21 vote.¹¹⁸ In 1992, the same scene played out in which Chamorro submitted a budget asking for about US\$42 million to maintain a military with 21,000 troops. The UNO caucus, however, wanted deeper cuts, complaining that the army had done badly controlling riots that had broken out over the past year. Thus, they deleted US\$4.3 million from the president's proposal.¹¹⁹ Again Chamorro vetoed the budget, and again her veto was sustained, but this time only by two votes, 47 to 45.¹²⁰

In terms of GDP, in 1991 approximately 4 percent of Nicaragua's GDP¹²¹ went towards military expenditures. This number went down over the course of the Chamorro administration and by 1993 defense spending was at 2.1 percent and by 1995 it was only 1.1 percent.¹²² While there is no official explanation given for these cuts, it is rather confusing. It should also be noted that in 1995 1.8 percent of the GDP was spent on

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ SIPRI Publications, <http://milexdata.sipri.org/result.php4>, Stockholm, Sweden.

¹²² Ibid.

health and education,¹²³ so by 1995 slightly more was actually being spent on education and health than on the military.

Additionally, in 1991 and 1992 the Chamorro administration received an estimated US\$ 2 billion in foreign aid to pay off outstanding debts.¹²⁴ Paradoxically, however, the government itself and all the country's political and social sectors agree that poverty and unemployment worsened considerably during those same two years. To be fair, it is apparent it would take some time to improve things.

Chamorro's victory certainly broke the mold of Latin American presidents: she was a woman, a mother and a widow, a complete break from the male leaders who came before her. Her election also proved that it was possible for a woman to be elected and this was extremely important. However, despite this, there has been great debate among feminist critics as to whether Chamorro helped or hindered women's interests. Some argue that the very act of her holding office was a huge advancement for the female population, since only thirty-seven¹²⁵ women worldwide had ever been heads of state at that time. It certainly challenged the "machisto" notion rampant in Nicaragua and most Latin American countries that political office is reserved for men.¹²⁶ Other critics argue that her economic structural adjustment policies pushed women out of the workplace and back into the home, to a more traditional role as wife and mother.

¹²³ <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/WorldStats/HNP-public-spending-education.html>

¹²⁴ <http://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/1687>

¹²⁵ For a complete list of female leaders, please see Metoyer, page 54.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

If Violeta Chamorro could have found a way to incorporate her SAP policies while maintaining some of the Sandinistas social programs to activate women in the political system, things may have been viewed differently by feminist critics and they may not have judged her so harshly. Accomplishments that can be attributed to Chamorro are: maintaining constitutional rule in the midst of conflict, giving Nicaragua a free press, allowing political opposition and providing some economic stability.¹²⁷ It can be argued that without economic stability and national security, gender equality policies could not be successfully implemented in a country. She also never created a platform for gender equality and never committed to putting through policies to benefit women, so it can be argued that it is not fair to dissect her presidency based on policies she never agreed to promote. As was mentioned earlier, it can be argued that she was faced with so many issues of security, that the gender divide was not a priority.

¹²⁷ Kampwirth, 208

Chapter 5: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

In the fourteen years prior to Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's election, the country was ravaged by civil war during which many Liberian women were systematically raped and abused. Over the course of those years, murderous warlords supported by Sierra Leone fought government forces and each other. Both sides conscripted child soldiers and inflicted wanton violence against women and the civilian population, killing an estimated 200,000 people and driving 850,000 more into refugee camps in neighboring countries.¹²⁸ A description of the chaos and violent history of Liberia provides an important backdrop to the efforts of Sirleaf to restore stability and create space for the rule of law.

History of Liberia

Liberia, "land of the free," was founded by free African-Americans, freed slaves from the United States beginning in 1820.¹²⁹ Thousands of freed American slaves and free African-Americans arrived during the following years, leading to the formation of more settlements and culminating in a declaration of independence of the Republic of Liberia on July 26, 1847.¹³⁰ In Liberia's early years, the Americo-Liberian settlers

¹²⁸ Ruthie Ackerman, "Rebuilding Liberia, One Brick at a Time", World Policy Institute, 2009

¹²⁹ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6618.htm#history> Accessed June 16, 2011.

periodically encountered stiff and oftentimes violent opposition from indigenous Africans, who were excluded from citizenship in the new Republic until 1904. At the same time, British and French colonial expansionists invaded Liberia, taking over much of its territory.¹³¹ Politically, the country was ruled by the True Whig Party (TWP). Joseph Jenkins Roberts, who was born and raised in America, was Liberia's first President. The style of government and the country's constitution was fashioned on that of the United States, and the Americo-Liberian elite controlled political power and restricted the voting rights of the indigenous population.¹³² The True Whig Party dominated all sectors of Liberia from independence in 1847 until April 12, 1980, when indigenous Liberian Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe (from the Krahn ethnic group) seized power in a coup d'etat.¹³³ Doe's forces executed President William R. Tolbert and several heads of his government, mostly of Americo-Liberian descent. One hundred and thirty-three years of Americo-Liberian political domination ended with the formation of the People's Redemption Council (PRC).¹³⁴

Over time, the Doe administration began endorsing members of Doe's Krahn ethnic group, and they soon dominated political and military life in Liberia. This raised ethnic tension again and caused frequent hostilities between the dominant Krahns and other ethnic groups in the country.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

After the October 1985 elections, Doe solidified his control. The period after the elections saw increased human rights abuses, corruption, and ethnic tensions and the standard of living further worsened.¹³⁶ Life under the Doe military regime for women was especially filled with fear. A statement given by a man who had grown up in Monrovia described it this way:

Doe proceeded to take the law into his own hands, effecting murders and rapes with impunity. Everyone was frightened; if a man were walking with his wife or daughter on the street, Doe's men or others would simply take the woman and rape her. I personally witnessed such an event one day in the vicinity of the radio station. When I saw three soldiers take a woman into a building, I ran to find their commander; but by the time the commander arrived the woman, presumably raped by all three, simply sat weeping on the ground. Only one of the perpetrators was detained, and the next day he was released.¹³⁷

According to countless reports, this was a commonplace practice. Women's empowerment did not exist under the Doe administration and human rights violations were not limited to women.

1989-1996 Civil War

The Liberian civil conflict began in December 1989 when the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, led by Charles Taylor, crossed into Liberia from the Ivory Coast to overthrow the government of Samuel Doe. This group, who called themselves the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), initially encountered support but The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) eventually launched counterattacks against Taylor's forces.¹³⁸ Ethnic tensions that had increased under Doe's rule fueled the fighting. Ten

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷The Advocates for Human Rights, Human Rights Violations During the Rice Riots and Doe Era.

months after the war began, The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) peacekeeping force, ECOMOG, entered the conflict under a cease-fire and peace deal, albeit without the support or agreement of the NPFL.¹³⁹ The NPFL continued to make military gains in the capital of Monrovia, and widespread atrocities were reported in Krahn and Mandingo areas.¹⁴⁰ The Mandingoes were still largely victims of the NPFL onslaughts until 1991, when they, along with exiled Krahn, organized the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO).¹⁴¹

In September 1990, President Samuel Doe visited the ECOMOG headquarters in Monrovia, where officials urged him to accept exile outside of Liberia. At the port, Doe was captured and taken to the INPFL's Caldwell base. The circumstances that led to Doe's visit to Free Port are still unclear; however, after Doe arrived, Prince Johnson's INPFL attacked the headquarters and captured, tortured, and killed him.¹⁴² Johnson's INPFL and Taylor's NPFL continued to struggle for control of Monrovia in the months that followed.

In September 1995, in accordance with the Abuja Peace Accords, the seven factions involved in the continual fighting joined to form the Liberian Council of State. Despite this agreement, fighting continued until 1996 and it was during this time that some of the war's deadliest battles took place. However, in accordance with the timetable laid out in a supplement to the accords (the "Abuja Supplement"),

¹³⁸ Peter Dennis, "A Brief History of Liberia," International Center for Transitional Justice, MAY 2006

¹³⁹ Dennis, 4

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

elections were conducted in July 1997 and Charles Taylor was declared winner, with nearly 75 percent of the vote.¹⁴³ Some have speculated that Taylor won because many citizens believed that electing him was the only way to end the war.

Nearly half of Liberia's 2.5 million people were forced to flee their homes at least once during the civil conflict, giving Liberia the largest percentage of refugees and internally displaced people of any country in the world.¹⁴⁴ Liberians who fled to Monrovia lived in and traveled through parts of the country that were under the control of one or more factions before they reached Monrovia and the relative protection of a West African peacekeeping force.

A survey conducted in 1994, which consisted of 205 women between the ages of 15 and 70 years of age reported that 49 percent of these women had experienced at least one form of physical or sexual assault by a soldier during the first civil war.¹⁴⁵ An additional 17 percent had been beaten or held captive and 15 percent had been brutally raped.¹⁴⁶ Women who were subjected to strip searches and fondled made up an additional 32 percent.¹⁴⁷

1997–2003: Civil War

Peace in Liberia, if it ever really existed, was short lived. By the late 1990s, it was clear from reports that Taylor was supporting the Revolutionary United Front

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Dr. Shana Swiss, "Violence Against Women during the Liberian Conflict," Women's Rights International, 1998

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

(RUF) in the civil war in neighboring Sierra Leone. As a result, the UN imposed sanctions on the Liberian government, including the following:

- An arms-importation ban
- A ban on foreign travel by high-ranking members of the government and their immediate families
- A ban on trading “blood diamonds”¹⁴⁸

At the same time there was a growing opposition movement to Taylor’s government within Liberia, based largely in northern Lofa County. This opposition group, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), headed by Sekou Conneh (a businessman married to the daughter of Guinean President Lansana Conté), began to engage in sporadic fighting with the AFL in 1999.¹⁴⁹ By 2000, it was believed that LURD controlled nearly 80 percent of the countryside.¹⁵⁰ Fighting between the government forces and LURD continued through 2002, but Taylor maintained control of Monrovia.

Throughout the fighting both the AFL and LURD were accused of widespread human rights violations against innocent civilians as well as child soldier recruitment.¹⁵¹ With fighting intensifying, Charles Taylor agreed to participate in an ECOWAS-sponsored peace summit in Ghana. In the hope that Taylor would be arrested by his Ghanaian hosts, the Office of the Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone unsealed an indictment against him. Reportedly caught by surprise and

¹⁴⁸ Dennis, 5

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

unwilling to arrest Taylor, Ghana refused to detain him. Within hours Taylor returned to Monrovia. In the following months, fighting intensified in and around Monrovia.¹⁵²

Finally, in August 2003, Taylor accepted an ECOWAS-brokered peace deal that offered him into asylum in Nigeria and proposed an ECOWAS vanguard intervention force. Taylor's vice president, Moses Blah, finished the remaining term and was followed by a transition interim government headed by Liberian businessman Gyude Bryant.¹⁵³ In October 2003, the UN took over peacekeeping operations from ECOWAS and established the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). In the years that followed, active disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration and rebuilding efforts unfolded.

Women's Organizations in Liberia

The role women's organizations have played in Liberia are important discuss, especially because they are credited with helping Sirleaf get elected.

The role women's organizations played throughout the course of the civil wars is interesting. Although many women suffered a great deal of violence during the civil wars, many other women united for peace, creating organizations aimed at ending the conflict. Women were tired of seeing their husbands and sons killed, their daughters raped and kidnapped, so they organized together to peacefully protest and call for an end to the war. A group of four women eventually turned into 500, and so the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace Campaign was created.¹⁵⁴ They organized themselves to lead a peaceful initiative for international intervention in Liberia's civil

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ <http://www.thescavenger.net/>

conflict. They sat on the streets together dressed in white shirts holding signs that begged the soldiers to lay down their guns, they held prayer vigils and petitioned the heads of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to arrange peace talks in Accra, Ghana in July of 2003 – the talks that gave rise to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which brought an end to the civil conflict.¹⁵⁵

Another organization, Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), is actually credited with helping President Sirleaf get elected. WIPNET made it a point to ensure women's representation during the 2005 election. Initially, many women expressed an indifferent attitude to voting, believing that the previous government structures had never done anything to advance them as a group. Five days before the last day in the registration period, WIPNET realized that market women were not registering to vote. In response, a coalition of 200 women, led by WIPNET, provided transportation, childcare, and supervision of market stalls to allow women the means to leave their work and register to vote. At the end of five days, an additional 7,400 women had registered to vote.¹⁵⁶

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf: Biographical History

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was born on October 29th, 1938 in Monrovia, Liberia. Her father was the son of a Gola chief and was taken in as a ward by the McGrity family and in the name of assimilation was renamed Carney Johnson. He benefited from his time as a ward because the McGrity family sent him to school and he was given a solid primary education, which opened up the world for him. Eventually, he apprenticed with a

¹⁵⁵ <http://www.theperspective.org/2005/feb/struggleofwomen.html>

¹⁵⁶ <http://www.usip.org/publications/women-s-role-liberia-s-reconstruction>

practicing attorney in Liberia and became a lawyer himself. He began looking towards a life in politics as a way to serve his country and build on his career, as Sirleaf describes in memoir.¹⁵⁷ Her mother Martha, was born to a woman from Sinoe County and a father who was a trader from Germany. This made Martha stand out in the village she grew up in because she had fair skin and wavy hair. Nonetheless, the two were married and according to Sirleaf, determined and eager to create a better life for themselves and their family.¹⁵⁸

Her father was eventually elected to the House of Representatives and was the first indigenous man to be so; a major accomplishment. President Tubman was in office at this time and not only appointed Sirleaf's father to many foreign delegations but often visited their home, she recounts fondly in her memoir. Her father travelled a lot for work, and her care was left up to her mother. She describes her father as a womanizer, who chased after women and had extramarital affairs, but also seems forgiving of this, writing that "this was not particularly frowned upon at that time. Polygamy was the dominant form of marriage in Liberia and most of West Africa before the arrival of settlers and colonists."¹⁵⁹ Her mother, a devout Catholic, was no doubt pained by these activities, but according to Sirleaf, she kept any strain in the marriage away from the children.¹⁶⁰ She found solace in religion and focused her energy on education, eventually opening a school close by, which was attended by dozens of children as well as Sirleaf

¹⁵⁷Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, *This Child Will Be Great* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2009) p 11.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

and her sibilings. Her parents broke through many boundaries, which set the groundwork for Sirleaf to follow in their footsteps.

As a child, it was important to her father that his children stay connected to their indigenous roots and they spent a great deal of time in the village with their grandparents. Sirleaf writes that she was grateful her father did this because it would have been easy for him to disappear into the elite settler class because they had accepted him and he had married a woman that did not look African in any way.¹⁶¹ It would have been easy for them to walk away from their rural background, but they did not.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has led a distinguished career spanning nearly four decades in the private and public domain in Liberia and internationally. While growing up in Liberia she attended high school at the College of West Africa in Monrovia, studying at Madison Business College, the University of Colorado and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, where she obtained a Master's Degree in Public Administration in 1971.¹⁶² In 1965, she joined the Treasury Department in Liberia, where she was eventually selected to be Minister of Finance in 1979, during which time she implemented measures to limit the mismanagement of government finances. After the military coup d'état in 1980, Sirleaf served as President of the Liberian Bank for Development and Investment (LBDI) but fled Liberia that same year to avoid the suppressive government that was gaining momentum.¹⁶³ She went to Kenya and served as Vice President of CITICORP's Africa Regional Office in Nairobi, and later moved to

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² <http://www.emansion.gov.lr/content.php?sub=President's%20Biography&related=The%20President>

¹⁶³ Ibid.

Washington, D.C. to assume the position of Senior Loan Officer at the World Bank, and Vice President for Equator Bank. In 1992 she joined the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as Assistant Administrator and Director of its Regional Bureau of Africa with the rank of Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations.¹⁶⁴

Ironically, what many political biographies do not mention is that in 1956, she married a man named Doc, with whom she had four sons. What many do not know is that throughout the entirety of her marriage, Sirleaf was verbally and physically abused by her husband.¹⁶⁵ This is one of many reasons why she has made women's empowerment a priority during her administration. She poignantly writes in her memoir:

Domestic violence knows no geographical boundaries. It exists in every nation, every society, every corner of the world and neither Africa in general nor Liberia in particular is immune to this particular disease. Right from the start of my administration, even in my inaugural address, I pledged to bring the full weight of the government against those who would continue this terrible abuse. Those who violate our women and girls know that they will bear the force of the law.¹⁶⁶

When President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf won the election in 2006, she inherited a country that had been ravaged by civil conflict; there were displaced citizens, traumatized combatants, a broken economy and society. It was clear from the start, when she was inaugurated that gender issues would be a part of her agenda, in addition to her promises to rebuild the nation's economy, government and society. In an excerpt from her first inauguration speech she said:

My Administration shall thus endeavor to give Liberian women prominence in all affairs of our country. My Administration shall

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Sirleaf, 38

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

empower Liberian women in all areas of our national life. We will support and increase the writ of laws that restore their dignities and deal drastically with crimes that dehumanize them. We will enforce without fear or favor the law against rape recently passed by the National Transitional Legislature. We shall encourage families to educate all children, particularly the girl child. We shall also try to provide economic programs that enable Liberian women to assume their proper place in our economic revitalization process.¹⁶⁷

Thus President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf made it a priority to include women in Liberia's reconstruction: women were named to head the ministries of commerce, justice, finance, youth and sports, and gender and development. They also comprised five of the fifteen county superintendents.¹⁶⁸

She followed through with her stated goals from the beginning. In August of 2006, President Sirleaf created the Liberian Education Fund (LEF) – Monrovia. Some of the accomplishments that can be attributed to this organization are the building of fifty schools, reaching 500 Teachers through short-term programs and providing scholarships to 5000 Girls/Women in formal schools and women in literacy programs.¹⁶⁹ LET has reportedly reached every county in Liberia through construction, literacy or scholarships.¹⁷⁰ Additionally, LET has implemented a scholarship program for 100 girls in the Southeast and has also undertaken a

¹⁶⁷ Inaugural Address of H.E. ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF, January 16, 2006

¹⁶⁸ Women's Role in Liberia, <http://www.usip.org/publications/women-s-role-liberia-s-reconstruction>

¹⁶⁹ <http://www.peopletopeople.info/id490.html>

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

scholarship program for 200 impoverished but high achieving girls at the F-SHAM School of Girls with support from PLAN Liberia.¹⁷¹

Another policy worth mentioning is the National Gender Policy (NGP) that emerged in 2009 from a participatory process involving Liberian Government Ministries and Agencies, public and private institutions, women's NGOs, religious leaders, cultural leaders, the national legislature, media practitioners, other civil society organizations, youth and community based organizations nationwide. The NGP is a powerful tool, calling for the integration of gender perspectives in all policies and programs on behalf of Ms. Vabah Gayflor, the Liberian Minister of Gender Development. Gayflor outlines why this policy is so important to Liberian stability and development:

The Government of Liberia is strongly committed to gender equality as a means of maintaining peace, reducing poverty, enhancing justice and promoting development in the country. It is in furtherance of this commitment, that a National Gender Policy was developed in 2009 through a wide consultative process with input from various stakeholders. The Policy recommends that gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting should be adopted as a development approach and shall inform the economic reform agenda, medium and long term development planning, value re-orientation, social transformation and other development initiatives of government.¹⁷²

The goal of the National Gender Policy is to mainstream gender in the national development processes, enhance women and girl empowerment for sustainable and equitable development; and create and strengthen gender responsive structures and mechanisms in which both women and men can participate and

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ministry of Gender and Development, Liberia National Gender Policy, Monrovia: Liberia, 2009.

benefit from development programs on equal basis.¹⁷³ A policy such as this sends a very clear message about the priorities of the Sirleaf administration; one of their main goals is women's empowerment.

The findings of the report reveal that women and girls in Liberia play an essential role in Liberia's economy but face countless obstacles that prevent them from full participation in economic activities. The reason the report gives is because gender segregation in the labor market and women's multiple roles in the family limit their opportunities for economic empowerment. Women are major players in the agriculture sector, providing all marketing and trading services, and linking rural and urban markets through their personal networks.¹⁷⁴ However, despite their important contribution, they neither own land nor have secure tenure to the land they work on, compared to men.¹⁷⁵ For these reasons, and countless more outlined in the policy itself, the Ministry for Gender and Development had created and is currently implementing the NGP.

Statistics compiled by reports and organizations provide more information about the administration. In terms of literacy rates in 2005, 47 percent of women over the age of 15 could read and write but by 2009, that number rose to 55 percent.¹⁷⁶ Before Sirleaf came to office, the number of women who held seats in parliament was 8; by 2009 it was 13, an increase of over 50 percent.¹⁷⁷ According to the World Bank, in

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ <http://web.worldbank.org> Gender Statistics of Liberia.

2005, the female labor force participation rate (percent of women between the ages of 15-64) was 69 percent. This number saw no growth as of statistics dated 2009. This proportion of women workers is about average when compared to statistics for other Sub-Saharan countries.¹⁷⁸ Fertility rates amongst women were 5.6 children in 2005 and this number decreased, only slightly in 2009 to 5.3.¹⁷⁹ While these statistics seem to be heading in the right direction it is still an indication that there is still much work to be done. Another important measure is the Human Development Index (HDI) which was at .265 in 2004; compare this number to the 2010 data of .300 and it is clear that incremental progress is being made, regardless of how slow it may seem.¹⁸⁰ At 2009, Liberia was still ranked under “very-low human development” at 169 out of 177 countries surveyed.¹⁸¹

Another important measure of the condition of women is infant mortality rates. In 2006, when Sirleaf took office, the IMR in Liberia was the highest it had ever been, with 152 children out of 1,000 under the age of one-year-old dying.¹⁸² In addition, the maternal mortality ratio, estimated at 1,200 deaths per 100,000 live births, was one of the highest in the world in 2006.¹⁸³ Compare these numbers to the more recent data for Liberia, and the progress made is clear. In 2010, the IMR in Liberia was calculated at 74 out of every 1,000 live births. Still a staggering number when

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ United Nations (2010). World Population Prospects: 2008 Revision. New York.

¹⁸¹ http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2009_EN_Complete.pdf

¹⁸² http://www.unicef.org/har08/files/har08_Liberia_countrychapter.pdf

¹⁸³ Ibid.

compared with the rest of the world, but a decrease by more than 50 percent, which is worth noting.

Military expenditure as a percentage of the Liberian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was .6 percent in 2006 and remained the same until it increased a little in 2009 to 0.8 percent.¹⁸⁴ This is a rather low expenditure when compared to other post-conflict countries, like Nicaragua who had defense spending at 4 percent of the GDP, post conflict. In contrast, the total government expenditure on education was 12 percent in 2008 according to the World Bank.¹⁸⁵ Since Sirelaf has been in office, the percentage of government spending on health has increased from 11.9 percent in 2004 before she became president to almost 17 percent in 2008.¹⁸⁶ It is also worth noting that Liberia received an estimated 229 million from the United States in 2010 for the purpose of development.¹⁸⁷

Efforts have continued under President Sirleaf to bridge the gender gap. An act to promote women's participation in government was in 2011 in the process of approval and ratification in the Liberian Senate. The law states inter alia: "There shall be no less than 30 percent and no more than 70 percent representation of each gender in national elected officers and heads of principal and subsidiary organs and structures of each registered political party in Liberia."¹⁸⁸ She is also the founding member of

¹⁸⁴ <http://milexdata.sipri.org/result.php4>

¹⁸⁵ <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/liberia/public-spending-on-education-total-percent-of-government-expenditure-wb-data.html>

¹⁸⁶ <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/liberia/health-expenditure-public-percent-of-government-expenditure-wb-data.html>

¹⁸⁷ http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/liberia/liberia_fs.pdf

¹⁸⁸ <http://www.liberianobserver.com/node/6601>

the International Institute for Women in Political Leadership.¹⁸⁹ Since being re-elected in 2011, as of the writing of this paper, a recent online article in March 2012 reports that of 14 possible government positions, Johnson-Sirleaf appointed half of the said positions to women.¹⁹⁰

According to a UN report, Liberia has created a task force to implement recommendations in the 2009 report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).¹⁹¹ Also under Johnson-Sirleaf, the Ministry of Gender and Development in Liberia has launched a program that is gaining positive feedback from the international community. The Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls & Young Women (EPAG) Project is a collaboration between Liberia, Denmark, the World Bank and Nike. An excerpt from the program proposal claims that the goal is to:

Smooth the path of adolescent girls to productive employment through job skills training and business development services. The training offered to participants will focus on technical skills, as well as the integration of life-skills training to address some of the crucial barriers to the development of adolescent girls in Liberia. These include, for example, early pregnancy, social restrictions from family and community members, and forms of GBV, including sexual exploitation and abuse.¹⁹²

This program is important because many public work programs in Liberia have previously been geared towards assimilating male ex-combatants into the job market and the few skills training programs that did exist for girls taught primarily “female”

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<http://www.emansion.gov.lr/content.php?sub=President's%20Biography&related=The%20President>

¹⁹⁰ <http://allafrica.com/stories/201203050458.html>

¹⁹¹ United Nations Security Council, 21st Progress Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia, August 11, 2010.

¹⁹² http://www.supportliberia.com/assets/108/EPAG_one-pager_1_.pdf

job skills, such as cooking or sewing. The program is targeting nine counties in Liberia and an outreach to 2,500 young girls.¹⁹³ Although it is obvious that the need of Liberia's women and girls reaches far beyond what the project will be able to deliver, the program is nonetheless an indication that gender issues are on the list of priorities for the Johnson-Sirleaf administration.

However, despite all these positive achievements and huge advances, violence against women is still a primary concern for the administration. Since 2007, rape has been the highest reported crime in Liberia and there are innumerable unreported rapes.¹⁹⁴ According to the most recent UNHDR Liberia is still very much behind the rest of the world, ranking 182 out of 187¹⁹⁵ countries in terms of human development, so there is still much work to be done. Johnson-Sirleaf has vowed to continue the fight for women's empowerment during her inauguration in 2011. She was quoted in the UK Guardian as saying: "in studies conducted in many of the counties of Liberia in 2004, a large percentage of women and girls reported that they were victims of various forms of violence and abuse. International organization reports show that a large percentage of these women were raped."¹⁹⁶ Additionally, Liberia has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in the world according to the Human Development Report

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Jordan Ryan, Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Liberia (PSEA), Country Report, Monrovia, Liberia, August 2008.

¹⁹⁵ http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2011_EN_Complete.pdf

¹⁹⁶ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2010/oct/06/guardian-development-network>

(HDI) of 2010 and is ranked 162 under the “low human development” category,¹⁹⁷ so there is still much work that needs to be done.

According to a report in 2008, the public has criticized Johnson-Sirleaf for traveling abroad too much and not spending enough time addressing the country’s needs. The challenge for Johnson-Sirleaf has been to balance her international profile with the needs of her country. She has generated a great deal of goodwill and single-handedly raised the country’s profile in the rest of the world. And her efforts have somewhat paid off through debt-forgiveness and increased foreign investment. According to critics, not enough of these benefits have translated into tangible benefits for the country’s people.¹⁹⁸

President Johnson-Sirleaf stated from the beginning that development and women’s empowerment would be the focus of her administration and it is clear she is trying to do everything she said she would. Due to the fourteen years of civil war, she inherited a country that was economically and socially ravaged, so progress is sure to be slow. In this instance there may be more work to be done but it is clear that progress is still being made. In 2011, she won the Nobel Peace Prize “for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women’s rights to full participation in peace-building work,” so it is clear her work is noted in the international community, as well.¹⁹⁹ She also told the New York Times in an article from 2010 that she would appoint women to every ministry position, if she could find enough that were qualified

¹⁹⁷<http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/LBR.html>

¹⁹⁸ Women’s Campaign International Assessment Report: Transforming Protracted Conflicts Through Women’s Empowerment: Liberia, February, 2008.

¹⁹⁹ http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2011/johnson_sirleaf.html

saying, “Women are more committed. Women work harder. And women are more honest; they have less reasons to be corrupt. They don’t have so many diversions. Men have more than one wife; they have their concubines. We have polygamy here, not polyandry.”²⁰⁰ Work is being done on the part of Liberia’s women, and Sirleaf is has made it clear that women are a priority.

Chapter 6: Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan

In the years prior to Benazir Bhutto’s time in office, Pakistan was ravaged by civil war and militant ideology, which was oppressive to women in society and created an unstable nation.

History of Pakistan

The history of Pakistan is tumultuous and extensive. Pakistan, along with parts of western India, contains the archeological remains of an urban civilization dating back 4,500 years but it wasn’t until the 8th century that Islam was introduced to Pakistan by Muslim traders in Sindh.²⁰¹ The collapse of the Mughal Empire in the 18th century provided a chance for the English East India Company to spread its control over much of the subcontinent.²⁰² The Sikh adventurer, Ranjit Singh, stamped out a territory that went from Kabul to Srinagar and Lahore, encompassing much of the northern area of modern Pakistan but British rule replaced the Sikhs in the first half of the 19th century.²⁰³ In a decision that had enormous consequences, the British allowed the Hindu Maharaja of Kashmir, a Sikh, to continue in power.

²⁰⁰ <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/24/magazine/24sirleaf-t.html?pagewanted=all>

²⁰¹ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3453.htm>

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

Pakistan emerged from an extended period of agitation by Muslims in the subcontinent to express their national identity free from British colonial control as well as control by what they perceived to be a Hindu-controlled Indian National Congress.²⁰⁴ Muslim anti-colonial leaders formed the All-India Muslim League in 1906.²⁰⁵ Initially, the League adopted the same objective as the Congress--self-government for India within the British Empire--but Congress and the League were unable to agree on a formula that would ensure the protection of Muslim religious, economic, and political rights.²⁰⁶

The idea of a separate Muslim state in British India first emerged in the 1930s and on March 23, 1940, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League, formally endorsed the "Lahore Resolution," calling for the creation of an independent state in regions where Muslims constituted a majority.²⁰⁷ However, the Congress Party and the Muslim League could not agree on the terms for a Constitution or establishing an interim government. In June 1947, the British Government declared that it would bestow full dominion status upon two successor states, India and Pakistan, formed from areas in the subcontinent in which Muslims were the majority population.²⁰⁸ Under this arrangement, the various states were free to join either India or Pakistan. On August 14, 1947, Pakistan, comprising West Pakistan with the provinces of Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan,

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

and the North-West Frontier Province (now Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa), and East Pakistan²⁰⁹ with the province of Bengal, became independent.²¹⁰

Independence and Instability

With the death of Muhammad Ali Jinnah in 1948, the first head of state, and the assassination in 1951 of its first prime minister, Liaqat Ali Khan, political instability and economic difficulty became prominent features of post-independence Pakistan.²¹¹ On October 7, 1958, President Iskander Mirza, with the support of the army, suspended the 1956 Constitution, imposed martial law, and canceled the elections scheduled for January 1959.²¹² Shortly after that, the military sent Mirza into exile, and General Mohammad Ayub Khan assumed control.²¹³ After Pakistan's loss in the 1965 war against India, Ayub Khan's power diminished.²¹⁴ Simultaneously, political and economic grievances ensued, which ultimately inspired protests that led to his resignation in March 1969.²¹⁵ He handed over responsibility for governing to the commander in chief of the army, General Agha Mohammed Yahya Khan, who became President and Chief Martial Law Administrator.²¹⁶

The Rise of The Pakistan People's Party (PPP)

²⁰⁹ East Pakistan later became the nation of Bangladesh in 1971.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

General elections held in December 1970 polarized relations between the eastern and western sections of Pakistan. The Awami League, which advocated autonomy for East Pakistan, swept the East Pakistan seats to gain a majority in Pakistan as a whole.²¹⁷ The Pakistan People's Party (PPP), founded and led by Ayub Khan's former Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (Benazir Bhutto's father), won a majority of the seats in West Pakistan, but the country was completely divided.²¹⁸

On March 26, 1971, following a bloody crackdown by the Pakistan Army, Bengali nationalists declared an independent People's Republic of Bangladesh.²¹⁹ On April 17, 1971, Bengali nationalists formed a provisional government in an area bordering India, and in November 1971, India sent its military into East Pakistan to intervene on the side of the Bangladeshis.²²⁰ On December 16, Pakistani forces surrendered in Dhaka, and East Pakistan became the new nation of Bangladesh. Yahya Khan then resigned the presidency and handed over leadership of the western part of Pakistan to Bhutto, who became President and the first civilian Chief Martial Law Administrator.²²¹

Bhutto moved decisively to restore national confidence and pursued an active foreign policy, taking a leading role in Islamic and Third World forums.²²² Domestically, Bhutto pursued a populist agenda and nationalized major industries and the banking

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

system and in 1973, he promulgated a new Constitution accepted by most political elements and relinquished the presidency to become prime minister.²²³ Although Bhutto continued his populist and socialist rhetoric, over time the economy stagnated, largely as a result of the dislocation and uncertainty produced by Bhutto's frequently changing economic policies.²²⁴ When Bhutto proclaimed his own victory in the March 1977 national elections, the opposition Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) denounced the results as fraudulent and demanded new elections. Bhutto resisted and later arrested the PNA leadership.²²⁵

With the increasing anti-government unrest, the army grew restless. On July 5, 1977, the military removed Bhutto from power and arrested him, declared martial law again, and suspended portions of the 1973 Constitution.²²⁶ Chief of Army Staff General Muhammad Zia ul-Haq became Chief Martial Law Administrator and promised to hold new elections within 3 months.

Zia released Bhutto from prison but after it became clear that Bhutto's popularity had survived his government, Zia postponed the elections and began criminal investigations of the senior PPP leadership.²²⁷ Subsequently, Bhutto was convicted and sentenced to death for an alleged conspiracy to murder a political opponent. Despite international appeals on his behalf, Bhutto was hanged on April 6, 1979.²²⁸

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

Zia assumed the presidency and called for elections in November. However, fearful of a PPP victory, Zia banned political activity in October 1979, and postponed national elections. In Zia's search for legitimacy, he implemented a religiously based legal code (Shari'a Law) unparalleled in the modern history of Islam in South Asia.²²⁹ For the first time, the resultant laws regarded men and women as having different legal rights and paradoxically compromised the rights of women.²³⁰ He also passed into law the Hudood Ordinance, which implemented harsh Quranic punishments for violations of these new laws, which directly affected women in negative way. Of the 4,500 women that were imprisoned in 1989, 80 percent of them were sentenced under the new, harsh, discriminatory laws implemented by Zia.²³¹

Shari'a Law

Also meaning "path" in Arabic, shari'a guides all aspects of Muslim life including daily routines, familial and religious obligations, and financial dealings. It is derived primarily from the Quran and the Sunna, the sayings, practices, and teachings of the Prophet Mohammed. These laws are oppressive to both men and women, but affect women's daily life more directly.

Marriage and divorce are the most common themes in Shari'a law. This is a result of the commonly held view that women are property with no rights of their own; a view that is deeply rooted in Islamic culture according to Tahira Shahid Khan, who is a

²²⁹ Anita Weiss, "Benazir Bhutto and the Future of Women in Pakistan" *Asian Survey*, 30.5 (May 1990): pg 8.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ Michael Genovese, *Women as National Leaders* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993)

professor specializing in women's issues at the Aga Khan University in Pakistan. He wrote in *Chained to Custom*, a review of honor killings published in 1999 that “women are considered the property of the males in their family irrespective of their class, ethnic, or religious group. The owner of the property has the right to decide its fate. The concept of ownership has turned women into a commodity which can be exchanged, bought and sold.”²³² Other practices that are woven into the shari’a debate, such as female genital mutilation, adolescent marriages, polygamy, and gender-biased inheritance rules, elicit a massive amount of controversy in other parts of the world, but exact statistics concerning women victimized by these laws are not easy to find because many of the indicators used to assess gender equality and human development did not exist at this time.

The Rise of Benazir Bhutto

In 1980, most center and left parties, led by the PPP, formed the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD). The MRD demanded Zia's resignation, an end to martial law, new elections, and restoration of the Constitution, as it existed before Zia's takeover. Zia's opponents, led by the MRD, boycotted the elections. When the government claimed a 63% turnout, with more than 90% approving the referendum, many people questioned the figures.²³³

On August 17, 1988, a plane carrying President Zia and 28 Pakistani military officers crashed on a return flight from a military equipment trial near Bahawalpur, killing all on board.²³⁴ In accordance with the Constitution, Chairman of the Senate

²³² National Geographic, *Thousands of Women Killed for Family "Honor."* October, 28, 2010.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

Ghulam Ishaq Khan became Acting President and announced that elections in November 1988 would take place and that they would take place on a party basis.²³⁵ On one side was an eight-party alliance and on the other, the PPP. The PPP won 94 seats out of 207 and the Islamic Democratic Alliance (II) won 54 so the president was bound to invite the PPP to form the government.²³⁶ Ultimately, President Khan asked PPP Co-chairperson Benazir Bhutto to form a government.²³⁷ From the very start of Bhutto being given the seat as Prime Minister, there was debate about whether a woman could hold such a high position in government under Shari'a law. After much analysis, they decided that since she was not president, which was a position reserved for men, but the leader of a political party, that it was fine.

Benazir Bhutto, the daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was born in Pakistan June 21st, 1953. According to many family histories, her father was delighted and did not share the prevailing Pakistani attitude that a daughter was a disappointment.²³⁸ She was the eldest child and was raised to speak both Urdu and English, although English was her primary language. She came from a wealthy, powerful family and it was her privileged background that gave her a strong sense of confidence and entitlement that that enhanced her later attempt at leadership.²³⁹ She was the eldest of four, two brothers and one sister, and she stated many times in the past that there was no question she and her sister were allotted the same opportunities as her brothers. Upon reaching puberty, Benazir's mother

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Genovese 44

²³⁹ Ibid.

wanted her to start wearing a burqua (a tent-like black covering) when she traveled but her father said it was not necessary. With regard to this matter she mentioned “I was the first Bhutto woman to be released from a life spent in perpetual twilight.”²⁴⁰

After completing her early education in Pakistan, she pursued her higher education in the United States. From 1969 to 1973, she attended Radcliffe College at Harvard University, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree with cum laude honors in comparative government. Bhutto later called her time at Harvard "four of the happiest years of my life" and said it formed "the very basis of her belief in democracy."²⁴¹ The next phase of her education took place in the United Kingdom. Between 1973 and 1977, Bhutto studied Philosophy, Politics, and Economics at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, during which time she took additional courses in International Law and Diplomacy. After Lady Margaret Hall she attended St Catherine's College, Oxford.²⁴²

Bhutto returned to Pakistan in 1977, and was placed under house arrest after the military coup led by General Mohammad Zia ul-Haq overthrew her father's government. Benazir remained in varying degrees of detention for seven years. She took this opportunity to write condemnations of Zia and his administration and defenses of her father's domestic and foreign policies.²⁴³ It was an obvious attempt made by Zia to break her spirit but it only increased her determination and “added another layer of anger.”²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ Benazir Bhutto, *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy and the West* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2008) pg 47.

²⁴¹ "Benazir Bhutto," Biography.com, <http://www.biography.com/people/benazir-bhutto-9211744> (accessed Mar 22, 2012).

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Genovese 48

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

One year after Zia ul-Haq became president in 1978, the elder Bhutto was hanged after his conviction on charges of authorizing the murder of an opponent.²⁴⁵ This was how she inherited her father's leadership of the PPP. It is clear that based on her personal history, leadership and more specifically, democracy, was in her blood and in her family tree, and she would go on to follow in the footsteps of her father.

On December 18th, 1987, she married Asif Ali Zardari in Karachi, an arranged marriage that was a political decision on her part and a calculated move because being a single woman in Muslim society was considered dangerous and suspicious.²⁴⁶ The match was selected by her mother and aunts and was agreed upon because he was the same age as Bhutto, had been educated in the West and had no personal political ambitions. The marriage was, as she said “the price in personal choice I had to pay for the political path my life had taken.”²⁴⁷

Benazir became the first ever female prime minister of a Muslim nation on December 1, 1988. She claimed her father had asked her to take up his “mission,” and so she did.²⁴⁸ She also was quoted as saying “the suffering in the country, the suffering of my family; of all of us, had risen above the barrier of gender.”²⁴⁹ This comment demonstrates that her kinship tie to the male martyr (her father) not only helped her to overcome traditional barriers that blocked women from positions of leadership, but also linked the female leader to her father’s martyrdom, almost as if to insinuate that she was

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Bhutto, 350

²⁴⁸ Genovese, 42

²⁴⁹ Thompson, 546

going into politics not by choice, but rather out of a political necessity after the death of her father.²⁵⁰ Whether this was a calculated move on Bhutto's part remains to be seen, but it does provide an explanation as to how a woman was able to win such high office.

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (1988 – 1990)

Benazir Bhutto's performance as prime minister has been criticized from every angle: friends, opponents, feminists, mullahs and pacifists. It must be stated before examining her tenure that the problems she confronted were so formidable that it is difficult to imagine how any leader could have governed successfully.²⁵¹

Immediately after the November 1988 election, the PPP released a manifesto outlining a number of reforms for the empowerment of the Pakistani people, including provisions for securing basic human rights, employment, and political participation. The manifesto was consistent with the goals pledged in the "Awami budget" of 1986 in which Benazir

stated that: "The Pakistan People's Party believes the role of the government is in creating a society free from social and economic inequalities—a society where there is respect for the individual dignity and opportunity for development and mobility.... We want to see that our people are free from hunger and disease, free from oppression and exploitation, free from unemployment and injustice."²⁵²

The 1988 Manifesto, in pledging to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, promised that a new PPP government would:

(1) sign the [United Nations] convention on the Elimination of all forms of

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Genovese, 60

²⁵² Weiss, 3

Discrimination against Women;

(2) actively support women's right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work, to protection against unemployment, to equal pay for work of equal value, and payment of maternity leave;

(3) repeal all discriminatory laws against women;

(4) take special measures to promote the literacy of women;

(5) Jahez [dowry] would be "eradicated by enlarging social consciousness and strictly enforcing the relevant laws and Dowry Act."²⁵³

These are just a few of the many measures outlined in the PPP manifesto but one thing remained clear; the empowerment of women became one of the major themes of the PPP's manifesto and platform. However, many people say that the economic condition in Pakistan during this time was dire, with inflation running at about 15 percent and foreign exchange reserves at an all-time low, she had no right to make promises that she knew she would be unable to fund, especially since the government was borrowing money to pay its own employees.²⁵⁴

Another thing that Benazir Bhutto did as prime minister was to free many female prisoners from Pakistan's jails.²⁵⁵ Some critics argue it was merely a symbolic gesture, but on the contrary, the very act of releasing women from unfair imprisonment and oppression, most of whom were very poor, sent a clear message to the previous administration and was a blatant objection to the "social prisons" that had previously been built. The new government also allowed for the revival of trade unions, which

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Genovese, 60

²⁵⁵ Weiss, 3

included a sizeable number of women in their ranks and perhaps, more importantly, the government lifted press censorship, which resulted in a marked difference in the media's portrayal of women.²⁵⁶

Author Anne Weiss visited Lahore in 1988 and many poor craftsmen and traders spoke with her about the dream of the PPP that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir's father, had espoused: women, the poor, and other disenfranchised would get land and political rights. She claims that the people did believe that Benazir has built on that dream, as when she stated in 1987: "I like to think I'm carrying on my father's vision of a federal democratic Pakistan. He set the way for a society in which there should be no discrimination on the basis of sex, race, or religion, and I too am fighting for this."²⁵⁷

Infant mortality rates in Pakistan in 1988 were 108 out of 1,000 live births.²⁵⁸ By 1990, this number dropped to 96 according to one source²⁵⁹ and 91 according to another.²⁶⁰ Either way, there is a notable drop in IMR while Benazir Bhutto was prime minister.

Under Bhutto's administration, Pakistan made huge leaps in repairing its relationship with the United States. Her team was able to get the White House and Congress to increase the aid to Pakistan, making it the third-largest recipient of foreign aid from the US, after Israel and Egypt. After her defeat in the 1990 elections, the U.S.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Sathar, Zeba. Changes in Mortality Rates in Pakistan 1960-88, The Pakistan Development Review, Winter 1991

²⁵⁹ <http://gis.emro.who.int/HealthSystemObservatory/PDF/Pakistan/Health%20status%20and%20demographics.pdf>

²⁶⁰ <http://www.prb.org/Articles/2007/pakistan.aspx>

formally cut-off all foreign aid to Pakistan. During her tenure she was not only able to sustain incoming aid but increase the flow, including military assistance.²⁶¹

In her book *Reconciliation*, she lists the numerous advances she and her team made during her first term as prime minister. These advancements included: freeing political prisoners; restoring free, open, uncensored print and media; removed constraints and conditions to the free operation of NGOs (including women's and human rights groups); lifted the ban on student and labor unions imposed by the Zia administration; granted amnesty to political exiles, introduced computer identity cards; introduced microcredit and protected minorities; and began the separation of the judiciary from the executive (which was completed in her second term).²⁶²

In the field of women's rights, she and the PPP government made advancements by appointing several women to her cabinet; creating women's studies programs in the universities; established a Women's Development Bank to give credit to enterprising women; created institutions to help women with family planning, nutrition, child care and even birth control; legalized and encouraged women's participation in sports (previously banned under the Zia administration),²⁶³ all of which was a solid start of progressing a society where Islam had been used to exploit and repress the position of women.

However, there is sharp criticism of Bhutto and her lack of politically empowering women during her first term as prime minister. According to Weiss, aside from herself and her mother, only one other woman was given a PPP ticket to run for a

²⁶¹ Bhutto, 203

²⁶² Bhutto, 198

²⁶³ Ibid.

National Assembly seat and few women were given provincial assembly tickets.²⁶⁴

Initially, no women were given ministry positions, but in March 1989, Bhutto increased the federal cabinet size to 43 members, ultimately including five women.²⁶⁵ Of the 19 ministers of state, four were women: Begum Shahnaz Wazir Ali (Minister of State for Education); Begum Rehana Sarwar (initially appointed as Minister of State for the Women's Division, then later headed the Ministry for Women's Development); Dr. Mahmooda Shah (Minister of State for Special Education and Social Welfare); and Begum Khakwani (Minister of State for Population Welfare).²⁶⁶

While these may not seem like huge feats on the part of gender development, the symbolism of these appointments cannot go unnoticed; during Bhutto's first term as prime minister, women were being encouraged to participate actively in public life. It is important to gender development that participation was permitted, was encouraged, and that it was possible. It should also be noted that coming to power in a country after previous male leaders had been executed and assassinated, must have affected her and made her cautious when deciding which issues to push to the foreground.

When examining military expenditure in Pakistan during Bhutto's first term, it is interesting to see how it decreased during the course of her tenure. In 1988, there was an expenditure of 6.2 percent of the GDP, 6 percent in 1989 and then to 5.8 percent in 1990. She signed an agreement before entering office, stating that she would not decrease the military budget while she was in office, but it is apparent, based on these statistics, the

²⁶⁴ Weiss, 6

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

budget was decreased. Whether or not she was directly responsible for this decline or not is unknown, but it is still worth pointing out.

There were many controversial agendas during Bhutto's leadership. She vehemently opposed Zia's Islamization programs and urged the repeal of the Hudood Ordinances and the Law of Evidence and all "cruel and inhuman laws that degrade women and make us second class citizens."²⁶⁷ When her father was in power and fighting for gender equality it was not as controversial as when Benazir took a similar stand years later because in between the two Bhutto's tenure there was an enormous rise in Islamic fundamentalism, perpetrated by Zia. Also, supporters of Benazir say that because she was a woman, it raised more suspicion and resistance for women's rights because of the generally held fear of female power.²⁶⁸ Although they were not successful in overturning the laws, her administration was able to prevent the implementation of both the proposed Ninth Amendment, which would have made Islam the law of the land and the Shariah Bill, which would have put religious courts above civil courts.

But some women's groups thought she didn't go far enough promoting women's rights and believed she had a lack of commitment, being accused of having more interest in politics than in women's rights while others believed she went too far and remained opposed to her leadership.²⁶⁹ And in 1990, criminal charges were brought against her for corruption, abuses of power and ineptitude.²⁷⁰ This signaled the end of her first term as Prime Minister of Pakistan.

²⁶⁷ Genovese, 54

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

An electoral sham gave Nawaz Sharif an absolute majority in the National Assembly. Immediately his administration reversed many of the social programs Benazir implemented: press censorship was reinstated, student unions were once again banned, access to the media by opposing political parties was blocked and funds were immediately shifted from the social sector back to the military, women's health and population control centers were also closed.²⁷¹

In 1993, General Asif Nawaz died under mysterious circumstances and Pakistan was once again thrown back into political turmoil and civil unrest.²⁷²

Second Term (1993-1996)

In 1993, the PPP won the elections for the National Assembly and Benazir was re-elected for a second term after the parliamentary elections and she did not waste any time getting back to work.

She worked quickly to implement a social action program that addressed the needs of the Pakistani people, concentrating on education, health, housing, sanitation, infrastructure and women's rights. While in office Pakistan was able to attract four times more private sector international investment than the previous year.²⁷³ This money was strategically used to jump start the Pakistani economy but also used towards women's empowerment. 100,000 women were trained to work in the villages of Pakistan in health and family planning.²⁷⁴ Her administration is also credited with building 48,000 new

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Bhutto, 203

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

schools and also instituted a remedial education program targeting women because they believed the most effective way to expand child literacy was to have literate mothers.²⁷⁵ However despite these advancements, when examining statistics compiled in 1995 the primary and secondary enrollment rates of male versus female is still staggering; with 50 percent of men being educated at these levels and 22 percent of women.²⁷⁶

In 1990, the first year the United Nations Human Development reports began, Pakistan was listed with a Human Development Index of 36, 1 being the lowest and 130 being the highest.²⁷⁷ This data was compiled shortly after Benazir left office, so it gives an idea of where Pakistan stood in comparison to the rest of the world shortly after her tenure. It also gives us a comparative base to see where Pakistan was ranked during her second term and if anything actually changed while she was in office. In 1993, Pakistan was ranked at 132 out of 172²⁷⁸, which again was extremely low. Please note that in this report the higher the number is to the corresponding country, the lower the HDI is considered. But by 1995, two years into Benazir's second term, Pakistan moved up to 128 out of 172²⁷⁹, a marked increase in the HDI of Pakistan. Looking further ahead, by 1996, the year she left office again, the HDI was back down to 134²⁸⁰, even lower than when she came into office and by 1997 down even further to 139.²⁸¹

²⁷⁵ibid.

²⁷⁶ 1997-99 United Nations ESCAP Fact Sheets

²⁷⁷ http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_1990_en_indicators1.pdf

²⁷⁸ http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_1993_en_indicators1.pdf

²⁷⁹ http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_1995_en_indicators1.pdf

²⁸⁰ http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_1996_en_indicators1.pdf

²⁸¹ http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_1997_en_indicators1.pdf

Other growth indicators include the gross domestic product which in Pakistan doubled while Benazir was prime minister, growing from 2.1 in 1993 to 4.37 in 1995.²⁸² This is a marked growth in GDP that can fairly be attributed to Benazir and her administration.

It wasn't long into her term before ghosts of the past came back to haunt Benazir again. Her brother was brutally gunned down in September 1996, a brother whom she had just recently reconciled with and only a few months later in November, Benazir was overthrown again. Add to this her assassination in December of 2007, and it is clear Pakistan lost a true leader and possibly one of the few people in government who stood for real democracy.

It is uncertain what she could have accomplished had she still been alive today. Perhaps she would be in office, perhaps Pakistan would have made real progress towards democracy and gender equality, but this is all speculation. Some critics argue that she would not have been able to follow through on her promises to make women full members of society and that eventually she would prove to be only the daughter of a wealthy rural landlord and not a democratic symbol for Pakistan, and that this would have major implications for the realization of a just, equitable, and democratic order ever emerging.²⁸³ Many critics believe the exact opposite; that if anyone was capable of making real change for women in Pakistan, it was Benazir. Unfortunately, we will never know and the debate will continue without any resolution.

²⁸² <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/pakistan/gdp-growth>

²⁸³ Weiss, 14

The Pakistan of today is still plagued by instability, poverty, violence, inequality and utter chaos. Even though much of the legislation she implemented has been tossed aside, forgotten, changed or erased, she still left a legacy for women and accomplishments can still be found. Perhaps what she did accomplish, is a testament to possibility – that it is possible for women to be educated, it is possible for them to enter government, it is possible for them to speak out against injustice and inequality, it is possible for a woman to dress as she chooses and more importantly, it is possible for a woman to have a vision.

In the next chapter I will move from the case studies of the previous chapters into concluding thoughts about these remarkable women leaders. I will analyze the data collected in the preceding chapters and offer a comparison of the women and their administrations as well as concluding observations.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

At the beginning of this paper I stated my hypothesis; that women in power are not significantly more likely than men to pursue gender-specific policies while in office. I also stated that instead, much depends on environmental factors and individual personality. In particular, pressing national security issues are sometimes more likely to hold their attention, and even absent security threats, female leaders will still vary in their level of attention to these issues, vis-à-vis other social issues. The goal of my thesis was to examine whether women in positions of power facilitate the enactment of gender-oriented measures or whether they continue to focus on the traditional national security interests, or interests of another kind.

I must point out before beginning my conclusion that the rise of these women, namely Violeta Chamorro, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Benazir Bhutto, altogether is a surprising phenomenon, given the fact that in all these countries, Nicaragua, Liberia and Pakistan, the status of women did not merit their elevation to such high positions. In the case of Bhutto and Chamorro, they rose to power by running on the platform of a family member's martyrdom; in Bhutto's case, her assassinated father was the leader of the Pakistan People's party and in Chamorro's case, her assassinated husband was an outspoken opponent of the Somoza administration and owner of the political newspaper,

La Prensa. In both cases, the assassination of a family member was a key point in their run for office and election.

All three women grew up in prominent families, and were exposed to the world of politics, but it was Bhutto and Sirleaf whose father's held high-ranking positions in government giving them exposure to the political process through their lineage.

Chamorro's exposure happened later in life, through her marriage. Even still, the fact that all these women had political exposure, in one form or another, begs the question, were they pursuing politics out of a sense of responsibility to their family or did they actually *want* to rule?

What I have concluded from the research I conducted is that the three women leaders I chose ultimately varied in their level of attention to women's issues. By looking at the hard data compiled, contrary to my hypothesis, progress in the field of gender equality actually did come from the "top down," in some areas, but not in every case. I think the evidence found did and did not support my hypothesis, depending on the case. In the case of Chamorro, my hypothesis was supported; the fact that she was a woman in power did not automatically make her sensitive to women's issues and she did in fact put economic issues and security issues at the forefront of her administration. She also reversed some initiatives benefiting women that were put into place by the previous government. In the case of Bhutto and Sirleaf, however, my hypothesis was not supported because both women made it their mission to promote women's rights while in office. The extent to which this actually happened during their terms is debatable but they undeniably put into effect many programs and policies that directly benefited women in a positive way.

Out of the three women I chose, Sirleaf and Bhutto, as the data has shown, were extremely verbal about their commitment to gender equality and this can be seen in policies created, but this was not the case for Chamorro, who was quoted famously for saying “I’m not a feminist, nor do I want to be one.”²⁸⁴ Chamorro stated from the beginning that national security was her main focus, and while there is evidence to support this was a priority for Sirleaf and Bhutto, it was by no means their main priority.

One possible explanation for this difference between the three could be that Sirleaf and Bhutto spent a great deal of time in the United States and received a large portion of their education here. Perhaps this is what made a difference with regard to their socialization. Additionally, Sirleaf was the only woman of the three who worked at the United Nations, and there is no doubt that this shaped her political philosophy. Yet, Chamorro never verbalized a desire to bridge the gender gap, and any analysis of her administration must take this into account. On the other hand, Sirleaf and Bhutto listed gender equality and women’s empowerment as one of the main objectives of their administration.

Nevertheless, all three women lowered military expenditures during their time in office. Budgeting clearly reflects the priorities of any administration, but it is not the only way to assess priority, as we can see in the case of Chamorro. She did lower the military expenditure of Nicaragua, but also cut a slew of social programs that ultimately affected the women of her country in a negative way. In the case of Sirleaf and Bhutto, as the data has shown, they did in fact create social programs and policies that benefited women and made an enormous effort to highlight women’s rights during their time in office.

²⁸⁴ Metoyer, 44

Liberia is still upholding a commitment to women's empowerment because Sirleaf has sufficiently shaped the culture while in office, but this could also be because she is still in office. A better analysis of her contributions to women's empowerment may be available after her term. But the same is not true for Pakistan; immediately following Bhutto's terms as Prime Minister, her policies were overturned and martial law was reinstated by men.

While the causal factors for these findings are many, I think it is fair to say that personality and personal history certainly had an impact on each woman's tenure. The fact that Sirleaf spent a portion of her life as a battered wife and that Bhutto had a close relationship with her father and was groomed for office at an early age, no doubt contributed to their democratic beliefs and mission for gender equality. But the question of whether their gender specifically impacted their administration is debatable. As was the case with Chamorro and so many other female leaders, gender alone did not make them sensitive to gender issues. The important part of the equation was whether the female leaders believed that empowering women was the key to their countries' economic growth and national security, as we have seen in the case of Bhutto and Sirleaf.

However, the role gender plays in a leader's administration and the impact it has on the gender policies created by that administration is a field of research that is still evolving. As of writing this paper it is an area lacking in information, since only about sixty women have ever been elected as head of state or prime minister. Therefore, one can only hope that this is an area of research that will continue to evolve as more women rise to power and even more information comes to light about the role gender and personality play in a leader's promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

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