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Valorisation, Personality Cult and the Militarisation of Nation State Under a Civilian Ruler in Zimbabwe: a Public-Private Media Gaze.

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Abstract

Using the public-private media gaze, this paper explores how thirty-seven years of Robert Mugabe's rule culminated in the militarization of nation-state under a civilian ruler. I argue that the civil-military relations in Zimbabwe – at least from the perspective of the public and private media –had the consequent effect of cult of personality and valorization of Robert Mugabe as the only leader suitable to rule Zimbabwe. Even in the face of waning popularity, the military and police ensured that Mugabe continued to hold on to the highest office in Zimbabwean politics. I further posit that post-independence Zimbabwean politics has seen both the military and police overtly and covertly meddling in national politics to the extent of making a farce of elections in Zimbabwe.

Keywords

Valorisation; personality cult; militarization; nation-state; civilian ruler.

Introduction

At age ninety-three, Robert Mugabe was Africa's oldest serving President until his unceremonious albeit peaceful departure from power in November 2017 through civil-military intervention code-named "Operation restore legacy". Until then, he had been at the helm of Zimbabwe for thirty-seven years: first as Prime Minister for seven years, and secondly, as the Executive President for thirty years. Using the private and public media lens, I argue that Robert Mugabe's thirty-seven year reign resulted in the gradual militarisation of nation state under a civilian ruler in Zimbabwe. This process of militarisation, which spanned three and half decades, was the upshot of the cult of personality and valorisation of Mugabe as the only political leader suitably qualified and 'God-sent' to rule Zimbabwe. The result of this toxic thinking as Lipman-Blumen calls it, was the conscious and deliberate "feeding of [Mugabe's] followers, illusions that enhance his power and impair [their] capacity to act independently, [by] persuading followers that [he is] the only one who can save them or [the country]" (2005, 19). Okey Ndibe, in his novel *Arrows of Rain*, lampoons this farce of "perpetual leader[s]" and submits that "nobody in the country [...] seriously expected His Excellency, after a brutal reign of twenty years, to hand over power to any force less ultimate and compelling than death itself" (2000, 15). My argument thus, stems from a desire to interrogate how the private and public media in Zimbabwe reacted to this kind of thinking that was entrenched in Zimbabwe through Zanu-PF's one-centre-of-power principle. I also seek a more analytical view of the character and consequent effect of this toxic thinking in shaping civil-military affairs in Zimbabwe. I submit, drawing on Simon Baynham (1986, 15) that "in [Mugabe's] personal-rule system, soldiers are among the players of the political game". This had the consequent effect of creating a totalitarian or narrowly dynastic police-cum-military regime ironically under a civilian ruler in Zimbabwe.

The name Robert Mugabe, like Josef Stalin of the Soviet Union, Augusto Pinochet of Chile, Charles Chankay Taylor of Liberia, Slobadin Milosevic of Yugoslavia, Hastings Kamuzu Banda of Malawi and Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire among others, elicits mixed feelings. For decades, his charm and grandeur, charisma and intellectual perspicacity in spite of his age, blinded many people. Consequently, "[e]ven the media [had] difficulty resisting the seductive appeal of [this] wily leader" (Lipman-Blumen 2005, 12). During his 2015 Second State visit to South Africa in 21 years, Mugabe sardonically thanked the media – both private and public – for the "publicity" it gave him over the years. Mugabe's comment demonstrated that he was not averse to the diverse ways he had been portrayed in

and by the media. The Rhodesian media for instance, viewed Mugabe as a terrorist. It demonised him as a militant, ruthless, blood-thirst, power-hungry and unforgiving communist. However, this negative image of Mugabe altered radically in 1980, as a consequence of the conciliatory tone of his inaugural address as the first black prime minister of Independent Zimbabwe. The exhortative tone and spirit of inclusivity in his speech are pellucid when he says,

[s]urely this is now time to beat our swords into ploughshares so we can attend to the problem of developing our economy and our society. [...] I urge you, whether you are black or white, to join me in a new pledge to forget our grim past, forgive each other and forget, join hands in a new amity, and together, as Zimbabweans, trample upon racialism, tribalism and regionalism [...]" (Mugabe, 1980, 2).

The profound consequence of this speech was immediate. The media, both local and international lauded him as a pragmatic, forgiving and optimistic African statesman. In an interview with David Martin, Mugabe commented on this sudden spin of the media thus:

'The change is not in me. I am not the one who has undergone a metamorphosis. The transformation really is taking place in the minds of those who, once upon a time, regarded me as an extremist, a murderer, a psychopathic killer... they are the people who have had to adjust to the change. I have remained my constant self. What I was, I still am'. (David Martin, 1981)

I find Mugabe's words both fascinating and relevant to the thrust of my argument. The words project a man who is constant and consistent in word and deed. They also were Mugabe's inadvertent confession and affirmation of the way the media then and now regarded him.

It is at this point that I propose to examine the current political situation in Zimbabwe with a view to interrogating the notion that there has been militarization of nation state under a civilian ruler in Zimbabwe. The examination will be done from two gazes namely, the public and private media lenses. Through these lenses, I will trace the role that has been played by the military in Zimbabwe's political space and how this role consolidated Mugabe's position as the head of state and government over a period of three and a half decades.

Politicised and Partisan Military in Zimbabwe: Private Media Gaze

The active and partisan roles played by the military and quasi military groups in Zimbabwe's political and economic spheres have created the notion that

Zimbabwe has been militarized. These roles were perceived as deliberately and strategically meant to safeguard and perpetuate Mugabe's reign. Moreso, the valorization of Mugabe by the public media, resulted in what Masiwa (2013, unpublished) described as "the curse of a cult of personality", and belief that "no other individual can rule Zimbabwe" except Mugabe. Similarly, in his online article "Military regimes: a third world phenomenon" Warnapala (2009) argues that "[a]ll military leaders emerged on the basis of the slogan that their services are required to restore democracy and good government and political stability". In the case of Zimbabwe, former president Robert Mugabe, clad in designer suits made similar claims. He vowed that he would not step down until he had won his fight against the British and Americans' regime change agenda in Zimbabwe. On the economic front, Mugabe saw himself as the only man who could fight to ensure that the economy of Zimbabwe was in the hands of and controlled by the majority black Zimbabweans. This personalization of power, according to Warnapala (2009), is based on personality cult.

Warnapala (2009) further posits that in a true democracy, the military is neither expected nor is it oriented to intervene in electoral representative democratic politics. This flies in the face of the role that has been played by the military in Zimbabwe. Both overtly and covertly, the military influenced the outcome of elections. It created fears that in the possibility of a Mugabe loss, the military would take over. Mambo (2013) contends that during the past electoral processes, especially in 2002 and 2008, the military played a key role in the elections to ensure Mugabe's political survival. For example, on the eve the 2002 Presidential election, five Service Chiefs from the country's security clusters who make up the Joint Operations Command (JOC) appeared on national television, Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) and openly declared:

Let it be known that the highest office in the land is a straight jacket whose occupant is expected to observe the objectives of the liberation struggle. We will, therefore, not accept, let alone support or salute anyone with a different agenda that threatens the very existence of our sovereignty, our country and our people (Zimbabwe Independent; August 2, 2013).

This open threat on the eve of an important election confirmed already existing fears that Zimbabwe had been militarized. It further enhanced the notion that Mugabe drew his power and authority from the military. The statement and its timing, was not only a direct threat to democracy and Mugabe's political opponent Morgan Tsvangirai but also pointed towards the militarization of nation state. By issuing a threat, the service chiefs betrayed the failure of the military to disengage from politics. The threat succinctly suggests that military disengagement from

politics “is both an elusive goal and a slippery concept” (Welch, Jr 1986, 67) in Zimbabwe. Evidently, “the armed forces remain the eminence grise of politics” as they have failed to “remove themselves from the political stage” (Welch, Jr 1986, 67). Until November 2017, they ominously hovered in the wings of Robert Mugabe and his party Zanu-PF.

However, Muchena (2013), one of Mugabe’s military men and loyalists challenged what he perceived as deliberate misinterpretations of the alleged “threats” by the five service chiefs. He avered that the statement by military generals should be understood within the context of Zimbabwe’s history of the liberation struggle that shaped its socio-political and economic trajectory. He says,

Let me put their [service chiefs] statements into context. When those statements were made, the service chiefs said they will not salute a commander-in-chief who does not respect the values of the liberation, therefore, they did not say Tsvangirai or anybody else. It is important to note that the ballot we talk about today came as substitution to the bullet that was used during the liberation struggle and so any Zimbabwean worth his or her salt has to respect the values of the liberation struggle and the principles for which thousands of Zimbabweans died for. (Muchena, 2013; Zimbabwe Independent: July 26)

The attempt by Muchena to justify and explain the utterances made by Service Chiefs on the eve of an important election is a succinct pointer that the Zimbabwean army “is not only subordinate to the party [Zanu-PF], but is meant to be aware of the ideological reasons for this” (Goldsworthy 1986, 119). It also confirms the declaration that was made by the late President of Mozambique, Samora Machel, that “no army is neutral, no army is apolitical. The armed forces of any country are the product of the class they serve” (quoted in Goldsworthy 1986, 119). Consequently, to be an officer in the Zimbabwe National Army is to be Zanu-PF, to explain and drive the Zanu-PF ideology and policy and to mobilize the masses to follow the party Zanu-PF through coercive means.

Muchena’s efforts to sanitise and deodorise the threats of military takeover by service chiefs on the eve of 2002 elections were just much ado about nothing. Before the general elections of 2008, the political dynamics of civil-military interaction in Zimbabwe were exposed by General Constantine Chiwenga. In what turned out to be disclosure of the politicization of the military and a clearer understanding of the role of the military in ensuring the survival of Mugabe’s civilian regime, General Chiwenga dropped a shocker when he openly declared:

[e]lections are coming and the army will not support or salute sell outs and agents of the West before, during and after the presidential elections. We will not support anyone other than President Mugabe who has sacrificed a lot for this country. (The Zimbabwe Independent; August 2, 2013)

Another military figure Major-General Douglas Nyikayaramba, spitefully described Mugabe's political nemesis Morgan Tsvangirai as a "national security threat" (ibid). Added to this are sensational headlines like "No army salute for Tsvangirai: [says] Mnangagwa" (talkzimbabwe.com), wherein the Minister of Defence argued that no person outside the chain-of-military-command was eligible for salute by service chiefs. These seemingly reckless statements were always strategically placed at critical moments in Zimbabwe's politics of elections. They bordered on threats and created the perception that there had been militarization of nation state under a civilian ruler in Zimbabwe. Added to this is the fact that as a truly remarkable political tactician, Mugabe played the dumb show in all this. He did not use his position as Commander-in-Chief of Zimbabwe Defense Forces to reprimand these military men whenever they meddled in civil-political affairs. Therefore, Mugabe's Princely style long-lived personal rule survived through employment of coercion, violence, and other harmful and unfair political means. In the case of my argument here, the military resorted to "intimidation, suppression and purges" to ensure Mugabe's survival in office (Goldsworthy, 1986, 103).

In a story entitled "Minister says no obligation to salute Prime Minister", The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) (2009) captured Defence Minister declaring that Service Chiefs do not commit their loyalty to the Prime Minister (Morgan Tsvangirai). Rather they commit their loyalty to the structure of the military headed by the President who, in the chain-of-military-command is at the apex as the Commander-in-Chief. A combination of Chiwenga's and Nyikayaramba's utterances with the Defence Minister's arguments speaks to the question of personality cult. But, who can blame them when even the Global Political Agreement signed by Robert Mugabe, Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara personalized offices, thereby contributing to the whole culture of personality cult? Article 20.1.6 on the Composition of the Executive declared: "There shall be a President, which Office shall continue to be occupied by President Robert Gabriel Mugabe", and that "There shall be a Prime Minister, which Office shall be occupied by Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai"; talk of personality cult in a document that became part of the country's supreme law through Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No. 19.

The military has also entrenched its power in strategic socio-political and economic institutions such as government ministries, parastatals, Commissions and companies in which government has a stake. Goldsworthy aptly puts it when he says,

governments usually sought to enhance their control by the deliberate use of techniques, [...] in strategies of recruitment,

promotion and retirement; in the cooption of soldiers into state authority structures, [...] by seconding them to ministerial, bureaucratic or parastatal office; in the dispensation of patronage, perquisites and payoffs; in manipulation of the military's 'mission'; and in the prudential use of militias, gendarmeries and security agencies as counter-balancing forces (Goldsworthy, 1986, 98).

In the case of Zimbabwe, the National Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Board, which oversees the implementation of the country's controversial indigenization and empowerment programme was headed by a retired Major-General. The Editor's comment of the Zimbabwe Independent newspaper (October 12, 2012) reveals that key parastatals and strategic public institutions in which ex-military personnel hold sway include; the National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ), Grain Marketing Board (GMB), Minerals Marketing Corporation of Zimbabwe (MMCZ), Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings (ZBH), Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) and Zimpapers. Ex-military chiefs also have their firm grip on "money-spinning companies" such as Mbada Diamond and Anjin, while a retired Major-General was the Chief Elections Officer at the Electoral Supervisory Commission during the 2002 and 2005 polls. (The Zimbabwe Independent, October 12, 2012).

There seems to be deliberate militarization of key and strategic socio-political and economic institutions. The justification given for this has been that, "when people join the military, they serve the country and state, but when they retire, they are free to join any political party of their persuasion" (Muchena, The Zimbabwe Independent, July 26, 2013). While it is common knowledge that professional ethics dictate that military man should remain apolitical in both word and deed, we still have to concede that politics is ubiquitous, and military officers are political animals that have political persuasions of their own. The problem arises when, still in office, military officers make utterances that betray their political standing. Allegations of militarization of nation state under a civilian ruler in Zimbabwe arise from these appointments, which are perceived as a deliberate political survival strategy, especially when one considers the central roles that are played by these key institutions in Zimbabwe's socio-political and economic spheres. Therefore, for Muchena (The Zimbabwe Independent, July 26, 2013) to dismiss reports of militarization of nation state as "fabrication and imaginations of people who are scared of losing elections" is not only deliberate and convenient blindness to a fact so glaring but also an attempt to down play the gravity of the militarization of public and civil institutions that has taken place in Zimbabwe.

A former freedom fighter Wilfred Mhanda, in his memoir *Memories of a Freedom Fighter* (2011) appositely puts it when he says,

In essence, the new state has continued to serve narrow interests, this time those of ZANU-PF, and to entrench its rule. All state institutions and organs comprising state security apparatus, the law enforcement and criminal justice agencies, [...] were progressively transformed into instruments that serve ZANU-PF rule through staffing them with loyalists and dispensing patronage. Accordingly, expecting the rule of law to be enforced in present day Zimbabwe is wishful thinking that runs against the grain of common sense. The same goes for expecting the security sector and state institutional transformation to be citizen-friendly rather than serving the narrow interests of ZANU-PF. It is only logical that the latter should resist any attempt to change the status quo. It is naïve to expect their willing co-operation in any policy that will lead to the erosion of their power. (Mhanda, 2011, p.254)

This delineation by Mhanda portrays a state whose civil status has been taken over by the military. This deliberate militarization of nation state has been and still is an ongoing process in Zimbabwe. Mugabe's appointment of nine military men to influential positions of permanent secretaries and principal directors of key and strategic ministries (The Herald, 16 April, 2015) in 2015, showed the highest level of military allegiance to government. This civil-military alliance in political matters offered real assurance that Mugabe's civil rule would survive any attempts at regime change. Only the military could remove Mugabe from power.

The media has also exposed budget allocations as subtle ways through which the militarisation of nation-state under a civilian has taken place in Zimbabwe. In an article titled "Why Chinamasa's \$4.1bn budget has alarmed Mugabe opponents", independent journalist Blessed Mhlanga (The Standard, 11 December 2016), captures the former finance minister Tendai Biti describing the 2017, budget as "anti-people and anti-development". Biti (2016) avers that "[t]he fact that two thirds of the budget is absolved by the four votes which include the office of the president (\$187million), defence (\$385m), agriculture (\$293m), Home Affairs (\$384m) is proof that this is securocratic budget that is serving the interests of Zanu-PF". Encompassed in these ministries are the central intelligence organization (CIO), the army and its various sectors, and the police. While agriculture might appear innocently as the economic (food) sector ministry, its innocence is lost when one looks at the history of how food has been politicized and used to win votes in Zimbabwe. Added to this is the fact that the current command agriculture programme spearheaded by then Vice-President now President Mnangagwa has as its nerve-centre, the military. This is tantamount to "purchasing the loyalty of the army" (Decalo 1986, 51), and it seemed to work effectively in ensuring the military's continued loyalty to Mugabe and Zanu-PF.

The private media's obsession with the role of the military in Zimbabwe's political landscape did more harm than good to the already battered image of Robert Mugabe and the military, and led to the notion that in deed there was

militarization of nation state under Mugabe's rule. The army is not only in control but also acts as a political safety valve for the straight-jacketed office of presidency. Evidently, the following headlines, all of which had to do with the July 31, 2013 general elections, pointed toward the private media's claim that Mugabe drew his power and authority from the military and had been an architect in the militarization of the state: "Army gives Mugabe leverage in polls" (The Zimbabwe Independent; August 2, 2013), "Army deploys ahead of polls" (The Zimbabwe Independent, June 28, 2013), "Security forces step up new recruitments ahead of election" (The Zimbabwe Independent; May 7, 2013), "Police embark on all-out-campaigning for Zanu PF" (The Zimbabwe Independent; June 28 2013) "Security reforms: Elephant in the room" (The Zimbabwe Independent, June 7, 2013), "Soldiers move in to save Mugabe" (The Standard; June 30, 2013), "Zanu PF intensifies military patronage" (The Zimbabwe Independent; October 12, 2012), "Zanu PF militarises its structures" (ibid; July 5, 2013) and "July 31 polls: Army versus people" (ibid; July 12, 2013).

What I find disturbing though, is not so much the private media's claim that Zimbabwe has been militarized under a civilian ruler. There is evidence that Service Chiefs openly declared their allegiance and loyalty to the person of Robert Mugabe and not to the state. Rather, it is the realization that in all these claims by the private media, evidence is attributed to unnamed sources. These take various forms and titles namely, 'senior government officials', 'politburo members', 'a Zanu PF senior member or senior police officers', who, for fear of reprisal, refuse to be named. Inexorably, therefore, one is left with so many questions and so few answers as to the authenticity of the information, and existence and reliability or lack thereof of the unnamed sources. This compromise to professional journalism brings to mind Justice Paddington Garwe's landmark ruling in Tsvangirai's treason trial on allegations of plotting to assassinate Robert Mugabe. Hudleston recollects the Supreme Court Judge's ruling when she writes;

Then Garwe started to review the evidence and turned almost immediately to the credibility of the witness. With regard to the prosecution's star witness, Ari Ben-Menashe, Garwe quickly dismissed allegations made in various press articles and publications attacking Ben-Manashe's general reputation. He commented: 'All that is before the court ... are unsubstantiated allegations made in some cases by persons who are unknown. Having carefully considered the evidence, this court is of the view that the allegations suggesting a bad reputation on the part of Mr. Menashe have not been proved'. (Hudleston, 2005, p.134)

The same can be said about the private media's obsession with and reportage on the role that has been played by the army in Zimbabwean politics,

especially in ensuring Mugabe's continued hold to power. Sources remain anonymous and thus the veracity of their information becomes questionable.

Without taking anything away from the battered image of the army as a result of its ugly past and bad reputation in its dealing with any dissenting voices, one still has to contend with the view that the army in Zimbabwe has, in public, tried to portray a professional and positive image of itself. In public fora and national events such as the Official Opening of Parliament, Agricultural Shows, the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair, Independence Day celebrations and Heroes and Defence Forces Day commemorations, the Zimbabwe National Army is the main attraction to the public. It mesmerises the public with its well-rehearsed and choreographed military drills and displays. It is an army that the public does not run away from, an army that portrays itself as a people's army. However, it is what the army does in the cover of darkness, the power behind the power of the office of presidency that the media and Human rights groups have tried to expose to the public and the world. What I find unfortunate is that, until such time the allegations raised by the media and human rights and governance organisations are substantiated with evidence and named reliable sources, they shall, in the words of Justice Garwe, remain unsubstantiated allegations made by some unknown persons.

Where lieth Mugabe's power? Public Media Gaze

Thirty-seven years of Mugabe's personal-rule exposed his chameleonic nature. His life and personality treaded the thin line between "hagiography" and 'demonization'" (Michael 2004, p.1). Accordingly, Rathbone (2011, p. 338) observes that "lots of authors, almost certainly far too many authors, have made a fist at capturing people, such as [...] Robert Mugabe. But with few exceptions, these have tended to be over-enthusiastic partisan accounts which either indict or praise." In her delineation of Robert Mugabe, Holland (2008, p.155) exposes the Janus-faced and paradoxical nature of the man when she portrays him as "the man [who is always] in the elegant suit", and a freedom fighter who became a tyrant. The Western media, which in the early 80s lauded him as a statesman, now vilifies him as a brutal, autocratic and murderous dictator. These polarities of hagiography and demonisation raise questions about whether Mugabe was a military ruler clad in designer suits or a civilian leader and shrewd contriver who in Machiavellian style masterminded the militarisation of nation state under the cover of Constitutional democracy. Chinua Achebe (1987, 10), in *Anthills of the Savannah* calls this "the remarkable metamorphosis of His Excellency" whose upshot is "the birth and

grooming of a baby monster". A bit of historical background will certainly place this discussion in context.

Zimbabwe attained independence on 18 April 1980, after 90 years of British colonial rule, and two liberation war movements known in the history of the country as the First and Second Chimurenga Wars. In its 37 years of independence, and in keeping with the provisions of the country's Constitution, Zimbabwe held eight (8) General elections. The last elections were held on 31 July 2013. However, the 2008 general elections were unique and telling in that they produce a hung parliament. They also marked the first time since 1980 that Mugabe and ZANU PF lost an election. Morgan Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T) won 100 seats, Robert Mugabe's ZANU PF 99 seats, Arthur Mutambara's MDC 10 seats, and one (1) seat was won by Jonathan Moyo who contested as an independent to complete the 210 contested House of Assembly seats. Mugabe with 42% of the total votes cast lost the first round of presidential election to Morgan Tsvangirai who got 47%, while Simba Makoni of Mavambo/Khusile/Dawn (MKD) garnered 8%. The fact that there was no absolute winner, resulted in a presidential run-off pitting Mugabe and Tsvangirai. The road to the 27 June 2008 presidential run-off was significant. It became apparent that the military in Zimbabwe was not "politically sterile and neutral" (Huntington 1957, 84). The once covert role of the arm, police and, war veterans and youth militia in ensuring Mugabe's continued grip to power was exposed by their overt and active involvement in the bloody and controversial election. The subsequent signing of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) by Mugabe, Tsvangirai and Mutambara on 15 September 2008, which ushered in an inclusive government in Zimbabwe also exposed the political history between the military and ZANU-PF.

In his seminal book *Military Regimes in Africa* (1975) William Gutteridge posits that

[t]he history of civil-military relations in the embryonic states of Africa since 1960 has exposed more clearly than ever before the range of variables involved in determining military decisions to intervene in the politics of their countries and their possible effectiveness once a decision has been taken. Of primary importance is the composition and nature of the military oligarchy. This will have been affected by [...] the circumstances in which the country concerned achieved independence (Gutteridge, 1975, p.19–20).

In Southern Africa, the armed struggle for liberation in Zimbabwe created and left a legacy of militarisation which is unlike that in neighbouring countries such as Zambia, Malawi and Botswana where there was a peaceful transfer of power from the former colonizer to the colony (Gutteridge 1975). Also by design, the Service Chiefs who head the Zimbabwe Defense Forces (ZDF), the Air Force of

Zimbabwe (AFZ), the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO), the Zimbabwe Prison Services (ZPS) and the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), have one thing in common. They all have liberation war credentials. This civil-military relation of consanguinity is aptly described by Philip Martin (2016) in his article "Why Zimbabwe's military sticks with Mugabe: Zanu-PF's blood brotherhood", wherein he avers that

[t]he military's loyalty to Zanu-PF is a product of deep ideological, personal and institutional ties. The relationship lies at the heart of Zimbabwe's political order, and it will discourage the mobilization of armed groups beyond the state's control for years to come (Martin, 2016).

Recent and past events in independent Zimbabwe have exposed the military "to be the willing instrument of the government of a recently independent state", to borrow from Gutteridge (1975, p.19). I will argue further drawing on Gutteridge that "economic problems, corruption, political schism and general disillusionment have combined to create a climate in which [...] it is natural to accept intervention by the army because it is seen as patriotic by definition and possessed of unusual virtue of rectitude" (1975, 18). Save to say that in the case of Zimbabwe, the military has intervened with the objective of maintaining the political status quo. Lately, this has manifested itself in what can be described as the Robert Mugabe's government's "political approach to problems of public order [...], especially the extent of reliance on the military or police apparatus for intelligence connected with internal security" (Gutteridge, 1975, p.21). This frequent and recurrent use of the army in roles meant for the police is the basis for the development of a propensity for political intervention by the military. It is thus my argument that since 1980, Zimbabwe has witnessed the gradual and later developing into a fully-fledged militarisation of nation state under a civilian ruler. This has been partly due to the deliberate and strategic assignment of the military with both military and non-military roles, due in part to the military's direct and overt involvement in political matters, which have seen the presence of military in both corporate and political and democratic institutions that have a direct bearing on the day to day running of government and the outcome of elections.

In terms of the constitution, Mugabe drew his power and authority as the Head of State and Government and Commander-in-Chief of Zimbabwe defense forces, from the country's constitution which vests such power and authority in the office of Presidency. As such, he had under his wing and chaired the Joint Operations Command (JOC) Zimbabwe. This is a high powered Security Cluster Committee that brings together Service Chiefs from the Army, Air Force, Police, Intelligence and Prison services. Conceptually Mugabe drew his power and authority from the Constitution. Virtually his power and authority rested in these security

sectors. He occupied the top most rank of Commander-in-Chief in the chain of military command. Added to these military and quasi military sectors are the war veterans or former freedom fighters, whose patron was again former President Robert Mugabe, and youth militia who were trained at the infamous Boarder Gezi training camps under the auspices of the national youth service programme. Their allegiance to Robert Mugabe and the party Zanu PF is a matter of ideology and political.

The signing of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) on 15 September 2008 provided a conspicuous opportunity for the media to expose the source of Mugabe's power. With Morgan Tsvangirai officially taking up the newly created position of Prime Minister, the media – both private and public – went about debating the dynamics of power relations and power sharing between then President Robert Mugabe and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai. The debate, though highly polarised and partisan made interesting and stunning revelations. In a bid to prove and disprove who had the highest power between Mugabe and Tsvangirai, the private and public media trivialized the debate to the level where it reduced to a numerical count of the duties of the president and prime minister as listed in Articles 20.1.3 and 20.1.4 of the GPA. The GPA listed nineteen (19) functions of the office of the president against ten (10) for the prime minister (GPA 2008, Articles 20.1.3 and 20.1.4). The interpretation of the noble spirit behind the GPA was reduced, like an election, to a game of numbers. Throughout the debate, both the public and private media were blinded by their obsession with power dynamics and creating headlines for lead stories that would sell. Hence, caught in the trap of political and media polarisation, they found it politically convenient to ignore the fact that the GPA was a power sharing agreement and a “negotiated transition pact” (Masunungure, 2009, 4) paving the way for political, Constitutional and electoral reforms which would lead to a free and fair General Election.

The media also overlooked article xx of the GPA, in particular the fine writing in Article 20.1.1, which talks about “Executive Powers and Authority” (GPA 2008). Here, the GPA makes a clear distinction between power on the one hand and authority on the other through the conjunctive word “and” [own emphasis]. Woolf (2000, 3), while admitting that there is a thin line of difference between power and authority, argues that “power is the control you have over subordinates [and] authority is the influence you have over peers”. This view is shared by Wayne Mark (accessed on 2013/08/14) who contends that power is the degree to which people will accept your decisions without question while authority is about influence and the ability to convince people of the validity of a decision.

The third aspect that the media overlooked was that the GPA was a negotiated document, and if “history is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake” as James Joyce (1882 – 1941) once said, then surely the media in Zimbabwe was caught slumbering. It overlooked the historical fact that Zanu PF, led by Robert Mugabe, had a history of, and experience in negotiating with its adversaries, and had learned a great deal from that. The Lancaster House Agreement of 1979 was a negotiated settlement in which ZANU and ZAPU had participated under the banner of the Patriotic Front. The 1987 Unity Accord between ZANU and ZAPU was again a negotiated arrangement; one which eventually created the powerful office of the Executive President in Zimbabwe. Given the exposure to and experience gained from previous negotiations, Mugabe’s Zanu PF, I argue, though seemingly a spent force in 2008 was negotiating from a position of advantage.

Conversely, what the public media – both print and electronic – did not lose sight of, was the existence of hidden power. The power behind the power that the GPA, and the Constitution of Zimbabwe were giving to the office of the Presidency – military power or power of the military. While debate on the dynamics of power sharing was raging on, the government controlled public media made a casual assault on civilian authority by introducing an editorial policy which became a mantra and slogan in Zimbabwe. Any reference to Robert Mugabe had to be preceded by his rank, title and mark of identity as “The Head of State and Government and Commander-in-Chief of Zimbabwe Defense Forces”. The timing could not have been accidental. Strategically, the message that was being put across the length and breadth of Zimbabwe’s political landscape and even beyond was that of civil-military relationship between Mugabe and the army. “Official pronouncements by military juntas about their ‘reluctant’ reaction” to recognising the appointment of Tsvangirai as Prime Minister, and refusal to salute him betrayed their intervention in the civil political process “as prime actors on their own corporate behalf” and on behalf of Mugabe (Decalo, 1986, 45). It became patently clear that Mugabe did not need the GPA to exercise his power and authority. Rather, he derived his power and authority from the military. Forthwith, the once silent voices of military power became vacuous, as loud and apparent as to be actively and directly involved in Zimbabwean politics.

Zanu PF and military relations in Zimbabwe

The online mission statement of the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) clearly spells out that the roles of the ZNA include defending Zimbabwe’s territorial

integrity, independence, sovereignty, socio-economic well being, vital interests and participation in peace keeping operations. However, the historical record of the army in post independence Zimbabwe, especially on the domestic scene has left scars and emotional wounds that may never disappear. For instance, the name 5 Brigade, with their distinct red berets is synonymous with the atrocities in Matabeleland and the Midlands provinces between 1983 and 1987. According to Meredith (2002), Mugabe was so explicit about the purpose of this army unit, which answered directly to his army commanders and by extension to himself in his role as Prime Minister. The 5 Brigade, Mugabe said, “was trained by the North Koreans because we wanted one arm of the army to have a political orientation which stems from our philosophy as Zanu-PF” (Meredith, 2002, p.62). Admittedly, Mugabe confessed to the self-seeking orientation and opportunistic utilization of military power in order to further and protect his personal nest and political power. 5 Brigade was Mugabe’s baby. He literally owned it. If we take the observation that “[s]oldiers are trained to kill people, not to govern them; sensitivity and subtlety do not thrive in the barracks” (West Africa, 1981), we can confidently conclude that by birthing 5 Brigade, Mugabe had direct control of the means of coercion.

The blood-chilling warning issued by Mugabe during an address in Parliament in 1982, moved the military from the periphery into the political centre stage of Zimbabwe still in her infancy of political independence. He pronounced that “some of the measures we shall take are measures that will be extra-legal [...] an eye for an eye and an ear for an ear may not be adequate in our circumstances. We might very well demand two ears for one ear, and two eyes for one eye” (Hansard 1982). What began as a verbal warning turned out to be an officially sanctioned act of genocide and/or ethnic cleansing. While controversy surrounds the number of people who died during the dark period of civil unrest and the command operation code named “Operation Chinyavada” , lives were lost at the hands of the 5 Brigade, the CIO, Police Support Unit and Zanu-PF youth brigade in what came to be known as the Gukurahundi atrocities. Commenting on the Gukurahundi atrocities, Tsvangirai (2011, 99) recalls asking the question; “when would all this come to an end? Mugabe was a ruthless leader and I could see no signs of any soft spot”. Through brute force and the power of the military in what can be delineated in Seegersean terms as “the worst year[s] on record for violence in postwar Zimbabwe” (Seegers 1986, 131), Joshua Nkomo, the alleged father of dissidents and leader of PF-Zapu, capitulated, and his political party was swallowed by Mugabe’s Zanu-PF in what is known as the Unity Accord signed by Mugabe and Nkomo on 22 December, 1987. Gukurahundi was the first classic example of the sins of the paramount politician finding their way into the military and vice-versa,

and the gradual growth of Mugabe's personalist ambitions, leading to the militarisation of nation state under a civilian ruler.

Conclusion

Writing in 1963, close to two decades before Zimbabwe attained independence from British colonial rule, Fanon said,

In these poor, under-developed countries, where the rule is the greatest wealth is surrounded by the greatest poverty, the army and the police constitute the pillars of the regime; an army and a police [are] (another rule which must not be forgotten)... the strength of the police force and the power of the army are proportionate to the stagnation in which the rest of the nation is sunk. (Fanon, 1963, p.138)

These words, though full of pessimism were 'prophetic' in that without necessarily mentioning names are fitting, succinct and precise delineation of the state of affairs in Zimbabwe's socio-political and economic landscape. Mugabe's thirty-seven year reign paradoxically did more harm than good to those that he supposedly governed. What we saw over the years was the gradual militarization of nation state under Mugabe's leadership. State security institutions were used to ensure and guarantee that Mugabe continued to hold on to power. The military openly entrenched itself in the day to day running of the state as evidenced by the numerous military man and women who continue to take over – albeit through official appointments - strategic and powerful positions in government ministries and institutions. The situation was worsened by Mugabe's refusal to name a successor to his throne. This raised speculations that the military aided Mugabe to become Zimbabwe's life president in the same way that Hastings Kamuzu Banda of Malawi and Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire turned themselves into military dictators with the blessings and support of their armies. However, the same military that secured Mugabe's position for 37 years, paved his exit in what has come to be referred to as a coup that was not a coup in November of 2017.

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