

Research Paper

Unpacking Civil-Military Relations Trajectory in the New Dispensation in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: The removal of Mugabe by the civil-military alliance ushered a new hope for improved civil-military relations in Zimbabwe. Prior to the coup, civil-military relations were strained and the military was unleashed by the government on the civilians to undermine democracy. During the ouster of Mugabe the military used the civilians to demonstrate thereby legitimising their putsch. There was euphoria among the civilians that this was the beginning of democracy and the stabilisation of civil-military relations. However the exultation suffered from stillbirth as the military continued with its traditional practice of untethering violence and coercion on the civilian, in the post-Mugabe epoch militarisation reached its crescendo. This research analyses civil-military relations in the context of the role of the military in the 2018 elections, militarisation of artisanal small-scale mining in Zimbabwe and the collision of militarisation and state capture. This paper argues that the political vicissitude heralded the military-executive alliance that employs an orgy of violence on the civilians hence this exacerbates strained civil-military relations in Zimbabwe and cast a horrendous situation for democracy in the future. The Corona virus 2019 (COVID 19) lockdowns rules and regulations have aggravated the relations as the military used comprehensive surveillance against the civilians.

Keywords: Civil-Military Relations, Coup, Military-Executive Alliance, State Capture.



1. Introduction

The military in Zimbabwe has historically proved to be a major gatekeeper to power thus threatening the prospects of democratisation. In Zimbabwe it is apparent that the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) has traditionally used the military to consolidate its grip on power. This paper argues that the ZANU PF and the military were interwoven from the ontology of both the institutions and this has a profound implications on democratisation and development. In 2011 Mugabe said the army could never be separated from ZANU PF. The Mail and Guardian (2012) quotes Mugabe saying that, “the army is a force that has a history, a political history, we work with them when they were still guerrillas”. The self-interested action of the army is a serious breach of the constitution. According to Section 208 (1) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, members of the security services must act in accordance with this constitution and law. Section 208 (2) states that, neither the security services nor any of its members may in the exercise of their functions act in a partisan manner, further the interest of any political party or cause, prejudice the lawful interests of any political party or cause. This paper contends that the army is a serious threat to constitutionalism and the rule of law and the roadmap to future democracy in Zimbabwe depends on successful security sector reforms.

It is evident that the longevity of ZANU PF rule is attributed to its traditional umbilical cord with the army. This relations has been typified by military consolidation, military institutionalisation and military deepening. The emergence of the military as important political elites and critical political actors has resulted into the arrest of democracy and the consolidation of authoritarianism. The military has been instrumental in the survival and durability of the regime in Zimbabwe. The role of the military in party politics in Zimbabwe has been more pronounced in electoral politics, where the military has been orchestrating an orgy of violence against members of the opposition [28, 20, 39]. The 2008 harmonised elections was the most deplorable one with the military initiating mass displacement and death of members of the opposition. The military had also been involved in key state institutions like the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to mastermind the consolidation of power by the regime. In the 2008 elections, it is quite interesting to note that ZEC was headed by Brigadier General Chiweshe. Global Militarisation Index 2017 ranks Zimbabwe among the top ten most militarised countries in sub-Saharan Africa and 75 globally.

The military also has a strong history of overtly and covertly dabbling in factional politics in Zimbabwe and it is clear that the faction which is supported by the military will outmanoeuvre its rival. The November 2017 military intervention undergirds the above assumption. The commander of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF) General Chiwenga warned members of the Generation 40 for purging members of ZANU PF with liberation war credential. Chiwenga had to issue a veiled warning that, “the military will not hesitate to step in if the purges against former liberation war fighters continue [1]. The general statement was value laden as it shows that the army’s allegiance to ZANU PF was indeed born in the struggle and the army used ZANU PF to preserve its interest. The statement shows that the military is committed to its earlier pronouncement that, it will only support leaders who fought in the country’s war of liberation. The late former commander of the ZDF General Zvinvashe once said that, we would not accept let alone support or salute anyone with a different agenda. In a recent development that reveals that the military are the gatekeepers to democratic transition, ZANU PF apologist Goodson Nguni hinted that, the people who removed Mugabe are still around and they will not let the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) to rule the country even if it wins the elections. The paper argues that the involvement of the military is inimical to democratisation in Zimbabwe.

The relations between ZANU PF and the military has been deepened by giving the military kickbacks and allowing them to plunder national resources. Key members of the army had been appointed in strategic positions such as the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), state enterprises like Grain Marketing Board. The appointment of members of the army in the NPA undermines the rule of law and resulted into the negation of the democratic ethic. The army has also been granted mining concession by the government. Rupiya (2003) [2] quotes former Mines minister Obert Mpofu in 2011 saying that, “I want to make it clear that, if Zimbabwe Prison Services applies for a mining concession I will give them anytime, that applies to the police, army and air force. The militarisation of mining in Zimbabwe undermines economic development as it resulted into plundering and smuggling of natural resources.

Amid a long history of antagonism between the civilians and the military, the ushering in of the new dispensation reinvigorated optimism of a cordial civil-military relations. This was mainly because the military manipulated the citizens in the removal of Mugabe and thereby making the

military transition to appear as a citizen-led movement [3], [4]. The 2017 military coup in Zimbabwe is a typical example of a veto coup as the coup was triggered by the need to protect the gains of the war of the liberation struggle. Argues that, in the early days after the coup, there was some expectation that relations between the military and the civilian would improve, however this has not been the case [5].

2. Literature Review

The involvement of the military in politics had been the major hallmark of the political system in world history and this has resulted in a deplorable state of human rights. In Africa it is interesting to note that more than 40% of Heads of State and Government have military backgrounds. In Europe and Latin America the inclination to rely on the military is on the decrease while in Africa it is on the increase. This paper contends that, military involvement in politics is not Zimbabwean problem but a crisis which is ignited by the absence of democratic institutions, Latin America used to be a citadel of the militarisation of politics however the entrenchment of democratic institutions resulted in a drastic reduction in the involvement of the military in political, social and economic affairs. The military in Zimbabwe is anathema to democracy and economic development and this has put the country on the brink of praetorian military state. The democratic crisis is further compounded by the fact that, ZANU PF was a liberation movement during the colonial epoch and it fails to adapt to democratic norms and ethos after the end of colonialism.

Military involvement in politics has become the common feature of African politics and has been underpinned by electoral manipulation through voter intimidation and manipulation of the electoral process. ZANU PF inherited the culture of using the military in canvassing for support and consolidation of power from both pre-colonial and colonial Zimbabwe. In pre-colonial Zimbabwe the survival and decline of the states was determined by the strength and loyalty of their military structures [6], [7]. In colonial Zimbabwe the colonialist regime used the Rhodesian Army to negate the democratic ethic, with the end of colonialism ZANU PF used the same modus operandi to survive. The scourge of attempted and failed coups in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular are triggered by the overreliance on the military for survival. The 2007 foiled coup and the 2017 coup in Zimbabwe indicate that succession politics in Zimbabwe is determined by the military and this undermines democratisation in politics.

The role of the military in African politics ranks high among the major concerns for African leaders today. There is sizeable literature that points out that the arrest of democracy in the continent is linked to the clandestine and open role of the military in politics [8]. The factors that are responsible for the diminishing of democracy is the extent to which neo-patrimonial politics dominate African politics since independence. In Zimbabwe there is a general agreement among scholars that the ZDF inherited the political culture of fear from the belligerent Rhodesian army. This paper argues that, democracy in Zimbabwe was quarantined with the creation of the Joint High Command in March 1980, the Joint High Command was the integration of the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary army (ZIPRA) which was Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) military wing, the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) which was ZANU PF military wing and the belligerent Rhodesian Army. It is clear that the integration gave ZANU PF unfettered powers to interfere with the function and appointment of members of the ZDF and ZANU PF and ZDF relations were interwoven from the birth of the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA).

Huntington [9] argues that, the sources of military involvement in politics have not only the keen interest of the military itself but it is also as a result of weak political institutions and low culture of the developing countries. Concur that, ZANU PF has succeeded in politicising the army and the police and using these national institutions against the civilian population and opponents since the achievement of independence in 1980. Zimbabwe political history is awash with incidences of the use of the army to silence the discontent population [10]. The army has been successfully used to dispel protestors and the 1 August 2018 is a testament that the use of the army has undermined human rights culture in Zimbabwe and the future for democracy is bleak and horrendous [11].

This paper also contends that the democratic crisis in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular was exacerbated by the fact that the end of colonialism in Africa saw liberation movements taking over the echelons of powers and it is interesting that those liberation movements were only aware of the guerrilla strategies and unaware of democratic principles. This is why post-independence Zimbabwe was marked by the overreliance on violence by the ruling elites for survival. From its ontology, ZANU PF was not a political party but a liberation movement and the failure by ZANU PF to adapt to

democratic ethics and norms has clear ramification on democracy in the future. Observed that, the liberation struggle which commenced in the 1950s was a violent process, violence thus became ingrained in the Zimbabwe political culture and this would have long term consequences for the shaping of post-independence politics. There is general consensus among scholarship that weak and ineffective civilian political institutions have directly contributed to military involvement in politics. The effects of the involvement of the military in politics is the emergence of a praetorian society where because of the absence of unifying orientation there is no consensus regarding who should be the legitimate authority to allocate resources. ZANU PF and the military are conservative in their approach to politics and they believe that the guns lead politics and the traditional approach by the two “twin” institutions threatens democratisation and humanism in the future [12].

3. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative methodology as the strategy of inquiry. The study also utilised secondary source of gathering information such as books, journals, newspapers and internet sources. The period of the study is between 2017 and 2021 because this is when there was expectation of improved civil-military relations but the relations exponentially deteriorated. The study concomitantly focuses on the hallmark of civil-military relations in the new dispensation and their effects on the future of democracy in Zimbabwe. The author is guided by ethical considerations and international academic best practices that encourages objectivity and respect for evidence in research.

4. Finding and Discussion

4.1. The Consolidation in of the Military-Executive Alliance

Since the attainment of independence in Zimbabwe, government apparatus have been overshadowed by the existence of the military-executive alliance. Military-executive alliance become more established with the ushering in of the second republic. Military-executive alliance is a threatening political arrangement in which political power is shared between the military elements and hardliner ZANU PF element. This arrangement is as a result of the role played by both the military element and ZANU PF in the military transition of 2017. The objectives of the military-executive alliance is to ensure legitimisation, delegitimation and re-legitimation. While using the Lesotho experiences describes such relationship as love-hate at times as the two institutions can oppose one another while also compliments one another. The military-executive alliance reinvigorates the political culture of fear and repression and aggravates the negation of the democratic ethic. The military dalliance with ZANU PF is also characterised by bickering and asymmetrical interaction. The military has three major advantages over the civilian, firstly superiority in organisational unity, secondly it has a highly emotional symbolic status and finally it has superiority in the means of applying force [13].

Military-executive alliance was formalised with the appointment of the element of the military in key government and ZANU PF posts [14]. The appointment of the elements of the military was triggered by the need to preserve vested interest of the military as ZANU PF and the military are inalienable. The Herald 29 December 2017 reported that, General Chiwenga who was commander of the ZDF was appointed as the Vice President. In order to consolidate the military-executive alliance, Chiwenga was also appointed as the Minister of Defence and war veterans. Military-executive alliance was also entrenched by the appointment of Retired Lieutenant General Sibusiso Moyo and Retired Air Chief Marshal Perrance Shiri as Minister of Foreign affairs and International Trade and Minister of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement respectively. Major General Engelbert Rugeje was appointed as national commissar sparking concerns of a militarised campaign. The appointment of Chiwenga sparked debate that Mnangagwa had anointed a successor, as the appointment placed the former ZDF commander in a strategic position to assume power in the event that Mnangagwa is incapacitated [46]. Argues that, soon after the 2017 coup some top general resigned their army posts and take up positions in the civilian government. The military-executive alliance had reanimated militarisation of politics and the creation of a praetorian state [15].

Mnangagwa retired and reassigned Major General Anselem Sanyatwe, Air vice Marshall Shebba Shumbayawonda, Major General Martin Chedondo and Major General Douglas Nyikayaramba. Some observers argue that, the move was a coup-proofing strategies but it was also aimed at reorienting the military to civilian matters. Mnangagwa reassigned and retired the generals who played significant role in the military transition to new portfolios completely detached from military operations. The military-executive alliance is marred with division and such bickering mainly pits the civilian strata on the one hand while the military strata on the other hand, this had heightened the purging of the

military in key strategic position. Demilitarisation was followed by the reassignment of Rugeje from the National Political Commissariat and the failure to appoint the military elements to replace the deceased Moyo and Shiri in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Ministry of Land, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement respectively. The consequences of militarisation is bureaucratic inefficient as the military pays particular attention to discipline, loyalty and partisanship while ignoring meritocracy.

4.2. The Role of the Military in Electoral Politics

The appointment of Rugeje as the New National Political Commissar of ZANU PF sparked concerns that the 2018 harmonised elections will be heavily militarised. Zimbabwe had a long history of the involvement of the military in the electoral process and this stifles credible elections. The involvement of the military in electoral politics is both covert and overt, covert involvement is reinforced by panoptic surveillance by the military elements in ZEC operations. Ahead of the 2018 watershed elections there were allegedly dalliance between the military and ZEC, ZEC secretariat was dominated by elements from the military and this compromised the credibility of the elections. Although the 2018 elections were marred by reports of military involvement, the election environment was relatively peaceful when compared to previous elections. The 2018 election was a break from a past of violent and tension laden elections to which Zimbabwe had become accustomed. In general civil-military relations improved during the pre-election and election cycle as human rights were respected more than in previous elections. The turning point was the post-elections cycle which was marked by the killing of six civilians by the military on 1 August 2018.

On 1 August 2018 Zimbabwe military used unjustified force against opposition protestors in the wake of the 2018 harmonised elections, six people were killed after the military intervened to curb protests in the capital Harare. This further deteriorated civil-military relations as the use of live ammunition and disproportional force against civilian is inconsistent with peremptory norms of international law [16]. The Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) had the capacity to curb protests and demonstration and the use of the military to obliterate protests underpins the mistrust between the security apparatus of the government. The second republic relies more on the military than the police in its quest to maintain its grip on power.

The failure by the second republic to implement security sector reforms during and after the 2018 elections also aggravated antagonist civil-military relations. The absence of meaningful security sector reforms also hinders the quality of the harmonised elections. The militarisation of ZEC is anathema to security sector reforms, this is largely obstructing the independence and efficacy of ZEC in ensuring free, fair and credible elections. The militarisation of state apparatus was legalised on 24 November 2017 when High Court Judge Retired Brigadier General George Chiweshe ruled out that, the military intervention that toppled Mugabe was unlawful under Zimbabwe constitution. Concur that, lack of meaningful security sector reform significantly reduces the chances that free, fair and credible elections can be held. In the run to the 2018 harmonised elections members of the security sector continue to exhibit traits of partisanship and this was underpinned by the military clampdown on civil society activist, journalist and supporters of the opposition. The action reinvigorate the political culture of fear and repression that had been the hallmark of previous elections [17].

There were also allegations of the presence of the military in the villages in order to inculcate fear. An increasing number of reports from key election stakeholders indicates that the new dispensation deployed soldiers in the village and communities across the country ahead of the 2018 elections. Psychological fear was also instilled on the electorate through utterances by some powerful ZANU PF members that the military is determined to defend ZANU PF hence it will not countenance the opposition to rule Zimbabwe even if it wins the elections. Mukupe declared that the military will not allow MDC Alliance leader Nelson Chamisa to rule if he wins this year's election [45]. In a related story, former Minister of State for Masvingo and ZANU PF politburo member Josiah Hungwe told attendants in Chiredzi that if Mnangagwa could shoot his way into power during the military transition of November 2017 there was nothing to stop him from doing the same to keep office. This paper extrapolates that, the involvement of the military in electoral politics is undergirded by lack of security sector reform, militarisation of ZEC, inculcation of psychological fear on the electorate and the militarisation of ZANU PF commissariat department.

4.3. Collision of Militarisation and State Capture

Civil-military relations has been compounded by the collision of state capture and militarisation that became more entrenched with the ushering in of the new dispensation. Zimbabwe has an unprecedented history of the capture of the key institutions of the state and democracy by the securocrats [18]. Security sector involvement in politics and economics is rooted in the very existence of post-independence Zimbabwe. There is debate among scholars on who captured who between the state and the military? The situation as a conflation of the state and the military. The conflation of the state and the military or state capture has reawakened the political culture of fear and repression in the new dispensation. Competitive authoritarian regimes have the inclination to capture key state institutions in an endeavour to acquire and preserve state power. In the context of the New Dispensation, Team Lacoste captured the state media and the legislative to acquire power. Competitive authoritarian regimes are characterised by the absence of automatic transfer of power after electoral defeat, power is retained through the use of the armed force. In competitive authoritarian regimes incumbents give concession to the military in form of political appointments and economic incentives.

In the context of Zimbabwe, the ascendancy of the military-executive alliance can be attributed to twinning of state capture and militarisation. The military is using state capture to amass and accumulate wealth and this led to the impoverishment of the population. The “capture” or “conflation” of the ruling party by the military in the aftermath of the 2017 coup triggered military consolidation and military institutionalisation. There are five state institutions that are targeted by the securocrats for state capture, this are the incumbent party, legislative, judiciary, electoral commission and the media. In the new dispensation the foregoing institutions have lost their autonomy to the military and they are no longer functioning in a comprehensive interest to promote democracy and human rights. This has fuelled the erosion of the rule of law, press censorship, lack of checks and balance, lack of free, fair and credible elections. In the new dispensation epoch, state capture engulfs a web of military and business moguls and the presidium.

The captured political space is characterised by a complex and well-coordinated patronage web which the status quo maintained. It is suffice to note that, in the new dispensation the state media, ZEC, the judiciary are now lapdogs of ZANU PF and the military this is underpinned by the recruitment and appointment of security sectors members who are patriotic, loyal and partisan to the state but lack meritocracy to serve in the offices they are appointed [19]. This further diminished democracy and the prospects of a stable civil-military relations. In the new dispensation the state media is used as a weapon of propaganda by the state and the military. Competitive authoritarian regimes like the new dispensation in Zimbabwe have the inclination to target the media because on one hand it can be a possible way out of power while on the other hand it is an instrument to maintain and consolidate power through propaganda and mudslinging the opposition political appeal to the electorate [17]. The new dispensation has been awash with clampdown on private media journalist and surveillance of the social media.

Key state institutions have been consistently populated with security sector recruits and Trojan horses and these have maintained the continued dominance of the security sector in political affairs of Zimbabwe. Civil-military relations has been strained by the militarisation of the NPA and the appointment of the security sector members in the Judiciary Service Commission, for instance the appointment of retired general Chiweshe as the judge president of the high court further strained civil-military relations.

4.4. The Military as a Weapon to Contain the Discontent

Zimbabwe has a long history of sporadic protests and demonstrations, in the first republic the government mainly relied on the police to quell demonstrations and protests with the military involved if the police manifestly fails to contain the situation. The trajectory of quelling protests tremendously changed in the Second Republic which heavily relied on the military to contain protests. The involvement of the military has resulted into the erosion of human rights this is attributed to the heavy-handedness of the military and that it is inexperienced in dealing with protests hence the use of lethal and disproportional force. The second republic has witnessed the proliferation of the waves of protests (2018 protests against alleged electoral skulduggery), (2019 protests against exponential increase of fuel price) and (2020 July envisaged protests against deteriorating economic conditions). This have compelled the government to deploy the military to thwart the protests. The military has

played a conspicuous role in the outcomes of these protests whether in the form of soldiers quickly and effectively silencing demonstrations.

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) in its report of 2019 accused soldiers of using systematic torture in crackdown on protest [20]. During the 2019 protests against fuel price hike at least eight civilians were killed by members of the security services and most of the death were triggered by the use of live ammunition, this dovetails with assumption that the military enjoyed unequivocal superiority in the means of applying force [4]. Armed soldiers and police started visiting citizen's homes subjecting them to indiscriminate and severe beatings, they were also alleged reports of sexual exploitation perpetuated by members of the security service [21]. Scholars of civil-military relations such as concur that, in competitive authoritarian regimes mass protests are inhibited by a partisan, emotional and unprofessional military and this strain civil-military relations.

One of the most paramount dimension about protest in Zimbabwe is that they succeed if they are calculated at preserving and promoting the interests of the echelon of the military, and they dismally fail if they threaten the interests of the military leadership. In 2017 during the military transition that toppled Mugabe civilians thronged the streets in what looked like a democratic and people centred mass-uprising yet the protest conferred legitimacy to militarisation. This paper argues that, civil-military relations in Zimbabwe are asymmetrical and the civilians is a lapdog of the military and is used for political expediency. Mass protest is one of the cardinal used to measure civil-military relations, thus in countries that have a balanced civil-military relations protests succeed and resulted into genuine democratic transition. The 2014 protest in Burkina Faso that resulted in the downfall of President Compaore was successful apparently because it was organised on the backdrop of stable civil-military relations.

The ouster of Algeria President Bouteflika in 2019 during the Algerian protests or revolution of smiles and the decimation of long serving Sudanese President Al-Bashir during the Sudanese protest in 2019 confirm how protests and demonstrations are key indicators of analysing civil-military relations trajectory. The Washington Post 31 July 2020 reported that, scores of people were arrested on Friday in Zimbabwe as hundreds of military troops as well as the police attempted to thwart an anti-government protests, with streets empty and many people hiding in doors. The July 2020 anticipated protest was marked by the heavy presence of the police and soldiers manning and patrolling checkpoints, people were chased out of the city and businesses were forced to close. The military also used panoptic surveillance with the helicopter hovering over some of the capitals poor and volatile suburbs

4.5. The Military Factor in Zimbabwe's Economy

The second republic adopted an economic model that limits private freedom and as a result the economy is exponentially controlled by the government through the military. This has been underlined by the militarisation of state enterprises and parastatals that resulted into wanton looting of state resources by the military, lack of public trust on the military as the civilians are largely pauperised in a command economy which favours the interests of the partisan military. The conflation of the military and the state has caused the nosedive economy experienced in Zimbabwe which is largely underpinned by rapid inflation, exchange rates volatility and escalating unemployment. The spike in exchange rates in Zimbabwe is partly because companies linked to the president and the secorocrats use their protected political status to illegally purchase vast amount of United States Dollars on the parallel market [22]. Used the term military commercialism to define the increased incursion of both retired and serving military officers into the state enterprises and parastatals as shareholders, directors, Chief Executive Officer and more curiously as labour. Military officials have little background in macro-economic policy or the professional ethos required in making state enterprises and parastatals deliver on their social and economic mandate. The factor that is responsible for the collapse of state enterprises and parastatals in Zimbabwe is the romance between the foregoing and the military.

The second republic had the opportunity to improve the living conditions of the people through economic and governance reforms, however the conflation of the state and the military has casts a shadow on the prospects for economic recovery. During the military transition of 2017 both Chiwenga and Mnangagwa encapsulated that, the military intervention was necessary to preserve the revolution and stabilise the country. ZANU PF and the military are funded by international capital networks during and in the aftermath of the 2018 elections and this has compromised democracy and economic recovery. Another indicator of the heterodox and clandestine of the involvement of the military in the

economy is the fusion of the military and business interests. The conflation of the military and shadow actors has facilitated corruption, diminish the provision of public services and weakened accountability mechanisms. Due to the penchant involvement of the military in the economy, civil-military relations has been compounded as the civilian allege that the military is responsible for the economic quagmire bedevilling the country.

While the military has been always influential in Zimbabwe, it has however expanded its footprint in the economy, parastatals, state enterprises, parliament and cabinet following the exit of Robert Mugabe in November 2017 [23]. The military entrench policies of self-aggrandisement which reduce investments in public goods, exacerbates poverty and inequality among civilians and this has profound implications on the relationship between the civilian and the military. This is further worsened by allegations that the securocrats looted more than \$1.6 billion USD under command agriculture. The parliamentary portfolio committee on public accounts reported massive skulduggery by the securocrats, Sakunda which resulted into the abuse of treasury bills and as a result the civilian lost confidence in the military. To augment, another dimension that has heightened antagonism between the military and the civilians is the implication of the military in the surge of robbery cases. ZRP reported that, more than \$5 million USD was robbed between January and October 2021. The proliferation of robbery cases perpetrated by the military members is mainly caused by the economic quagmire experienced in Zimbabwe with soldiers using the power at their disposal to make money. In competitive authoritarian regimes the relations between the civilian and the military are generally marred by the competition for limited resources.

4.6. The Military Factor in Artisanal Small Scale Mining in Zimbabwe

Perennial economic hardships experienced in Zimbabwe force members of the security services to throng the artisanal, small scale mining sector in quest for better living conditions. During the Marange diamond rush in 2012 the involvement of members of the security services heightened the erosion of human rights in the mining sector. In 2019 there was a dramatic and traumatic involvement of members of the security service apparently because of the deterioration of the living conditions due to the ban of the use of foreign currency by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe. The ban was followed by the erosion of civil servants salaries. Basic salaries of many workers deteriorated to below the poverty datum line and not enough to sustain a family of five for a month. The total consumption poverty line (TCPL) for an average of five person stood at \$6420 RTGs in March 2020 yet most workers' salaries were below \$2000 RTGs. This forced soldiers to resort to mining as a silver lining as such the number of artisanal miners exponentially increase to around 1.5 million from below 1 million. Artisanal small scale mining in Zimbabwe is shrouded by policy and security conundrum, therefore the military used its superiority to control the civilians this fuelled the economic deprivation of civilians in the sector [24].

Strained civil-military relations has been fuelled by the militarisation of gold rushes in the mining sector. This paper observed that, whenever there is a gold rush, members of the security services have the inclination to move in pretending to be restoring order and then control access to the gold rush sites. The researcher visited three gold rushes, Open Cast in Empress, Cricket in Battlefield and Patchway in Kadoma and observed that, artisanal miners are deprived from reaping the benefit of mining sector because of the militarisation of gold rushes. The military are illegally involved in the gold rushes and newspaper are awash with stories of the involvement of the police and the military. Kudakwashe Hoko who was a Corporal in the Zimbabwe National Army based at the military headquarters in Harare was shot and killed at Brompton mine in Kadoma during gold rush [15]. Gold miners in Bindura killed two soldiers following violent clashes. The newspapers reports and the observation of the paper are a tip of the iceberg on the intrusion of the mining sites by rogue elements of the military.

Another important trajectory of the militarisation of the mining sector is the conflation between some rogue elements of the military and machete gangs to extract gold. This unorthodoxy involvement of the military has augmented instability in the mining sector underpinned by patronage and erosion of gold export revenue. The alliance between machete gangs and rogue elements of the military has fuelled machete violence that is undergirded by disputes about mining site ownership and intrusion on mining sites. The erosion of the rule of law in Zimbabwe, lack of formalisation of the mining sector make the military and machete gangs to flourish. There are also widespread reports that, the military used lethal force to control the civilians during gold rush and this has worsened the humanitarian catastrophe in Zimbabwe and compromised civil-military relations.

4.7. Civil-Military Relations in the Backdrop of COVID-19

On 21 March 2020, the government through the Ministry of Health announced that, the first case of COVID-19 had been recorded and this was followed by the unprecedented increase of infections that has hitherto reached more than two hundred thousand. To contain COVID-19 the government introduced lockdowns and to enforce lockdown regulations the government deployed soldiers and the police and this heightened unjustified socio-economic deprivation of the civilians by members of the security services [25]. Cases of corruption by soldiers and the police become pervasive. Combating COVID-19 the government used the training and strategies that several executive members acquired from the military. The ruling military-executive alliance led by Mnangagwa has responded to the eruption of COVID-19 by adopting a highly securitised approach backed by a battery of legal and extra-legal instruments. The militarisation of COVID-19 demystify that, COVID-19 was a golden opportunity for ZANU PF led military-executive alliance to quarantine democracy and sanitise authoritarianism [20].

COVID-19 was an opportunity for the governments to cement authoritarianism, and the government response had been underlined by the heavy handed of the security service. Competitive authoritarian regimes such as Zimbabwe are more repressive and more threatening to their citizens than COVID-19, hence this paper argues that, the weaponisation of COVID-19 shows that the government response can be best described as medicine which is worse than the disease. postulates Authoritarian regimes are taking advantage of the COVID-19 to entrench their power and control, the lockdowns in Zimbabwe has been marked by the deployment of the police and the army, it is common to hear people say in this country we are more afraid of hunger and the state security apparatus than COVID-19. Rampant corruption by members of the army during lockdowns enforcement has strained civil-military relations, before COVID-19 the conventional wisdom among the civilian in Zimbabwe was that corruption and extortion were the monopoly and colophon of the police. Ironically COVID-19 shows that the military has slip into the crevasse of bribe, corruption and extortion [12].

The soldiers and the police arrested and beat the civilians who violated lockdowns rules, in Kwekwe and Kadoma they were widespread reports that soldiers and the police brutally assaulted the people for violating lockdown rules. The militarisation of streets and public spaces constitutes symbolic violence that invokes traumatising experience of past experiences of brutality. Sexual exploitation and the entrenchment of the political culture of fear and repression become pervasive. The government used the lockdown to demolish informal markets and illegal structures in Gweru, Kwekwe, Harare and Bulawayo. This paper argues that, the military executive alliance in Zimbabwe confirms that it is an opportunistic regime because at first the militarisation of lockdown appears to be calculated at curbing the spread of COVID-19, yet the regime used the opportunity to clamp down on its critics who were agitated by the continuation of the depreciation of the economy.

5. Conclusion

In the second republic the military has concomitantly increased its influence on governance in Zimbabwe. The military is now a major gatekeeper to the democratisation process. The military has increased its decision making through both covert and overt strategies. Covertly, the military elites have entrenched their influence through electoral politics, militarisation of the economy, militarisation of the mining sector and the highly securitised approach to COVID-19. The foregoing militate against stable civil-military relations and as a result Zimbabwe is now an epicentre of democratic backsliding. The conflation of the military and the state has precipitated an economic crisis underpinned by rapid inflation, exchange rates volatility, the collapse of state enterprises and parastatals. As a result Zimbabwe is facing an existential crisis which consists of militarisation on one hand and state capture that became pervasive with the inauguration of the second republic.

In addition the statements by the securocrats which shows that there are partisan has caused despondency and trepidation in the country. Since members of the securocrats in particular the former ZDF Chiwenga on 13 November postulates that, the role of the military is to protect the revolution and they will not allow a person without liberation war history to rule the country. The colossal partisanship of the military has triggered an avalanche of fundamental and yet basic questions, on what will happen if a person without the liberation war credential wins a presidential election?, will the military accept a person without liberation war history to become the President? and for how long will the military be power brokers in the political terrain in Zimbabwe?. The foregoing political

dilemmas shows that the future of democracy is bleak and the new dispensation is accelerating democratic backsliding.

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