

# TRANSITION POLITICS IN THE POST-MUGABE ERA



Public Perceptions on the role of the Military in Transition Politics Post Mugabe and Attendant Effects



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## Table of Contents

Copyright Statement.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	ii
SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS.....	iv
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
1.0 Introduction	
1.1 Background to the Study	
1.2 Conceptualisation of Key Variables	
1.3 Justification of the Study	
1.3 Research Objectives and Questions	
1.4 Research Design	
1.4.1 Sample and Sampling Procedure	
1.4.2 Data Collection Procedures	
1.4.3 Data Analysis and Presentation	
1.5 Chapter Summary	
CHAPTER TWO.....	8
2.0 Introduction	
2.1 The Military and Transition Politics in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes	
2.2 The Military in Zimbabwe's Transition – Two Schools of Thought	
2.2.1 The Subordinate Infrastructure School of Thought	
2.2.2 The Supreme Power-bloc School of Thought	
2.3 Chapter Summary	
CHAPTER THREE.....	12
3.0 Introduction1	
3.1 Unpacking the Umbilical Codes of Transition Politics in Zimbabwe	
3.2 Perceptions on the Role of the Military in Democratic Transition Politics	
3.4 Perceptions on the state of Human Rights in post-Mugabe Militarisation	
3.5 Chapter Summary	
CHAPTER FOUR.....	20
4.1 Conclusion	
4.2 Recommendations	
Bibliography.....	22

## **SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

The study found that militarisation has worsened in the post-Mugabe era. Citizens have been made to fear the military and thus being deterred from exercising their constitutionally given rights. The study revealed that the post Mugabe dispensation government has put much military effort on the electoral process and the exercise of the freedom of protest and media as key areas of military blockade of transition in Zimbabwe. It has also been revealed that the military is the supreme power-bloc in transition politics as it has been a decisive player that has caused the failure and success of transitions in Zimbabwe.

### **Unpacking the Umbilical Codes of Transition Politics in Zimbabwe**

- The study found that in Zimbabwe, transition politics rely on six umbilical codes, which are: (i) the electoral process, (ii) the process of exercise of the right to media and protest, (iii) the judiciary process, (iv) the legislative process and (v) the politics of the farms.
- In these six centres of transition politics, the study found that the voice of the military is supreme. The electoral process was identified as the most recognised enabler of political transition in Zimbabwe.
- Findings also show that citizens have experienced a dramatic intensification of militarisation, deployment of naked force and intimidating deterrence in all key centres of transition politics in Zimbabwe.

### **Perceptions on the Role of the Military in Democratic Transition Politics**

- 52% of the interviewed respondents said political transition without support from the military is not possible while 43% think that political transition without support from the military is possible
- 76% of the respondents stated that most citizens view the military as an enemy of political transition
- 77% of sampled respondents perceived the military as prohibiting the freeness and fairness of the electoral environment, 18% perceived the military as enhancing the fairness and freeness of this process while 5% perceived no impact.

### **Perceptions on the state of Human Rights in post-Mugabe Militarisation**

- 72% of the sampled respondents indicated that their rights have been grossly infringed whenever the military is deployed by the Mnangagwa administration.
- The snap survey showed that the rights that have suffered most infringement include the freedom of assembly and protest, freedom of expression and media freedoms and political conscience.

### **Perceptions on the effect of fear caused by post Mugabe military deployments and policing**

- The study found that 62% of sampled respondents have been made to fear the military and this has deterred them from participating in public protests and resistance activities.

### **Comparison of the state military- civilian interactions in the Mugabe and post Mugabe era**

- 82% of the sampled respondents perceived that the Mnangagwa dispensation has worsened use of brutal force on protesters, journalists, opposition and citizens in general.
- 10% of the respondents said brutal force in the Mugabe era is still the same in the Mnangagwa dispensation, 6% said brutal force has lessened while the remaining 2% declined to comment.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH DESIGN

### 1.0 Introduction

On 15 November 2017, an exhilarating breeze swept across Zimbabwe as an unusual coalition coalescing protesters, civic organisations, the military and politicians across the political divide crisscrossed the capital celebrating what has come to be known as a 'military assisted transition.' Looking at it from a distance, one would construe it as midwifery to transition into a democratic dispensation. So many expectations and hopes were pinned on the outcome of this power transition from former President Robert Mugabe to the Mnangagwa administration. Thus, many questions have emerged following the failure of the 'new dispensation' government of President Emmerson Mnangagwa to transition the country into a democratic dispensation and its attendant socio-economic fruits.

Zimbabwe Democracy Institute has postulated in many of its transitology literature that the military is the decisive power-bloc determining the outcomes of transition politics in Zimbabwe. Given the military assistance in the overthrow of former president Robert Mugabe, a relook into the role of the military in political transition became necessary. Many politicians in the post-Mugabe government including president Mnangagwa have on numerous occasions asserted that Zimbabwe has entered a new dispensation. They have emphasised that the new dispensation is tilted towards a democratic transition in terms of its tools of power assumption, maintenance and retention. Therefore, ZDI conducted this study to interrogate the role of the military in transition politics in this post-Mugabe political order given its ubiquitous role in the past. This was done through a survey of public perceptions on the subject, analysis of public actions, inactions and positions of the military in

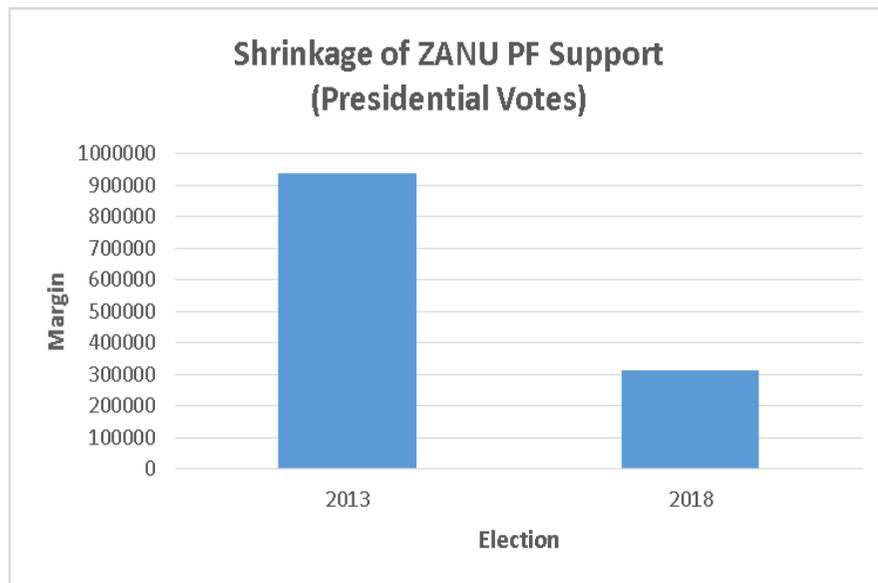
issues of transition. Understanding the role of the military as a central lynchpin in transition politics in Zimbabwe goes a long way in informing citizen agency and democratic consolidation efforts in the country.

### 1.1 Background to the Study

The study came at a critical juncture in Zimbabwean history when the state has been puzzled by a quadruple of dilemmas. The citizen-government dilemma, the constitutional dilemma, the money dilemma and the health dilemma seem to be at their worst. Citizens, that is to say, the governed have lost their fiduciary trust in the ruling elite. This has been evident in two critical indicators. First is the recurrence of popular unrest and protests over almost every service delivered by the state. There have been strikes and protests of doctors, nurses, teachers, war veterans of the liberation struggle residents and most importantly, secondary school children. For the first time in the history of the state since independence from Britain, the army was used to clampdown protesters who were protesting over electoral malpractice through use of naked force on defenceless citizens which includes random firing of live bullets on the streets in the capital. This state brutality against citizens saw 3000 extrajudicial executions and 7000 cases of beatings and torture.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, the voting patterns of the 2018 presidential elections have shown a dramatic shrinkage of the popular support of the ruling party.

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<sup>1</sup>Human Rights Watch, 2019. Zimbabwe events of 2018. Available online at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/zimbabwe>



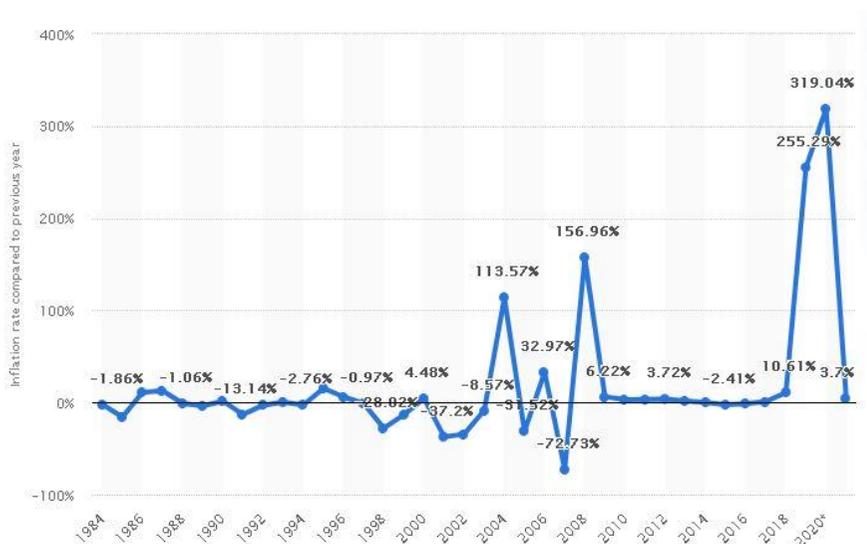
Although some would blame this on the effects of the absence of their trade name “Mugabe” in the ballot box, the percentage of the shrinkage is so huge to justify identifying it as a signal of loss of trust and confidence in the ruling elite. When viewed together, these developments give a vivid indicator of state failure to deliver public goods triggering popular dissatisfaction across the country. The role of the military as a cardinal tool of power retention cannot be overlooked in such circumstances.

The Constitution promulgated into law in 2013 has been cascaded as a powerless assembly of wishes. The ‘military assisted overthrow’ of former president Mugabe had no enabling clause in the constitution. What has been known is that the constitution allows power transfer through either general elections or party secondment. Although ZANU-PF tried to follow the latter procedure, the whole process was contaminated by procedural impropriety. The constitution does not provide for the military to deploy weapons of warfare on the streets in the capital and encampment of heavily armed soldiers besides constitutional court and parliament buildings before impeaching the president. No proportional threat to security was discernible to justify the military’s surrounding of government which was witnessed in November 2017. The judiciary was expected to protect the constitution. Instead, the judiciary has issued a grotesque ruling stating that the coup d’état staged against former president Mugabe was constitutional.<sup>2</sup> Nobody knows which constitution the learned justices were referring to. The relationship between the constitution of Zimbabwe and the military elite has since been subject to debate. The contention that the constitution is subservient to permanent interests of the military elite has since been corroborated.

Money has also been a persistent problem alongside the challenges stated above. On one hand, there has been a cash shortage crisis since 2015 that has seen a sharp increase of queues in banks across the country. On the other hand, a terrifying hyper inflationary environment has emerged.

Inflation rate in Zimbabwe from independence to 2020

<sup>2</sup>Zimbabwe Legal Information Institute. Was the army intervention constitutional? Available at: <https://zimlil.org/content/was-army-intervention-constitutional>



Source: Statista 2020

The Zimbabwean currency, the Bond Note and the RTGS Dollar have suffered a fast and steep devaluation crisis that has triggered shortages of basic commodities, externalisation of foreign currency by businesses and ruling elite, shortage of fuel and drugs. This has caused a serious logjam in all productive sectors of the economy with the transport sector, agriculture, industry being the hardest hit points. A massive citizen protest occurred over these challenges in January 2019 which resulted in government deployment of armed military in residential areas to arrest, detain, torture, assault and injure citizens including

children.<sup>3</sup> This again came as an experience that was never expected in an independent Zimbabwe.

The fourth and most brutish to the citizens and the economy has been the health dilemma. Zimbabwe like other countries has fallen victim to the Corona virus pandemic also referred to as Covid-19. This has resulted in series of lockdown episodes which have seen the government defaulting into rule by decree *modus operandi* and use of armed military to assault citizens in the name of enforcing lockdown measures. The government of Zimbabwe has created a Covid-19 Taskforce which has caused the worst suffering, terror and fear among citizens across communities of Zimbabwe. Citizens have been made to fear the soldiers and their punitive measures than the threat posed by the Covid19 pandemic.<sup>4</sup> The government has been caught unprepared by the pandemic. Lock-downs have worsened the hunger crisis in a country that was already in a food security crisis. In some areas of the country, shops have run out of stock whilst in others, prices of basic commodities have skyrocketed beyond the reach of ordinary citizens who earn devaluated salaries.<sup>5</sup> The military has featured in all the four dilemmas of the nation-state which speaks of its ubiquity in the key drivers of the state.

<sup>3</sup>Amnesty International, 2019. Zimbabwe: Ruthless crackdown on freedom of assembly exposes intolerance for dissent. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/02/zimbabwe-ruthless-crackdown-on-freedom-of-assembly/>

<sup>4</sup> United States Institute of Peace, 2020. COVID Raises the Stakes for Zimbabwe's Civil Society Movement - As in nations worldwide, the pandemic offers new opportunities for repression. Available at: <https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/06/covid-raises-stakes-zimbabwes-civil-society-movement>

<sup>5</sup> Famine Early Warning Systems Network, 2020. Available at: <https://fews.net/southern-africa/zimbabwe/food-security-outlook-update/april-2020>

## 1.2 Conceptualisation of Key Variables

The main variables under study were: (i) military and (ii) transition politics. In this study, the military is construed to mean what section 207(1) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe defines as 'security services' and members deliberately retired from the security services to grab positions of influence in government. The phrase 'transition politics' is used to refer to key political processes that lead to political transition and this study was delimited to the following: electoral processes, exercise of the right to media and protest, judiciary processes, legislative processes and agriculture. These institution and processes have the ability to initiate, promote and enable political transition in a nation state. For instance, Levytsky and Way (2002) identified four of these institutions: the electoral system, the legislature, the judiciary, and the media as key political institution that are captured by competitive authoritarian regimes for the purpose of blocking political transition. The 'farms' have also been a centre of political jostling in the history of Zimbabwe. Ownership, distribution and redistribution of farms and inputs thereof have been at the centre of the liberation war that ended in 1979, they were at the centre of the Land Reform Programme in 2000s and existed as the centre of government Command Agriculture Programme. Farms are thus a vital political theatre in Zimbabwe which cannot be ignored in transition politics. Thus, in the name of appeasing the international community and public relations, the Mnangagwa regime announced that white farmers, locally and foreign can apply for restitution for their seized farms.<sup>6</sup> Together with the other four centres of transition politics, they thus form an effective litmus paper for ascertaining the extent to which a competitive authoritarian regime deploys the military to control transition.

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<sup>6</sup>The Zimbabwean, 2020, Zimbabwe extending an olive branch to its white farmers. Available at: <https://www.thezimbabwean.co/2020/09/is-zimbabwe-extending-an-olive-branch-to-its-white-farmers/>

## 1.3 Justification of the Study

In the past 37 years of Robert Mugabe administration, it has been argued that the military played a decisive role in the politics of transition in Zimbabwe. Some have described the military as the kingmaker and supreme power while others viewed it as a very trusted protector, enabler and maintainer of power in the Mugabe rule.

ZDI in its publications has been consistent in postulating that the military is a decisive power bloc in transition politics of Zimbabwe. It has conducted many studies revealing this point. ZDI has further argued that, any effort to promote transition in Zimbabwe that either sidelines the military or targets not the military or drastic changes therein is doomed to fail ad initio. To be precise, ZDI has concluded that genuine transition in the socio-economic sphere depends on the success of transition of the political sphere into a democratic developmental state. However, the transition of the political sphere requires concerted efforts targeted at transforming the military factor in transition politics. For political transition to be successful, the military has to be on the side that pushes for transition either by choice or force majeure. ZDI has thus called for efforts to cause and promote this 'choice' or the 'force majeure' in the military as a starting point towards successful democratic transition in Zimbabwe.

Given the departure of Robert Mugabe at the helm of politics in Zimbabwe, it has become necessary to reevaluate the role of the military in transition politics to permeate the needed transitioning efforts. It is believed that a new ruler comes with new power retention, maintenance and pursuit strategies. The successor government of President Emmerson Mnangagwa that overthrew the former has proclaimed itself as an embodiment of transition into a 'new dispensation', a dispensation different from the politics lived during the Mugabe era. This has aroused the question: How has the role of the military in transition politics been

affected by this change of political leadership? Did the November 2017 military assisted transition cause transitioning in the traditional position of the army in politics of Zimbabwe? What is the current influence of the military on democratic waves and pressures in the new dispensation? Answers to these questions are very important in unlocking alternative transitioning strategies and/or informing democracy defenders in their democratic consolidation work. Absence of published literature with answers to these questions has motivated ZDI's decision to conduct this study.

### 1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

The main objective of this study was to re-evaluate the role of the military in transition politics of Zimbabwe in the post Mugabe era. Specific research objectives and their corollary questions were:

- 1) To investigate the role of the military in electoral processes in Zimbabwe;

#### Research Questions

- (i) To what extent has the military been involved in electoral processes in the post Mugabe era?
  - (ii) How is the military involved in electoral processes in post-Mugabe Zimbabwe?
  - (iii) How has the involvement of *the military* impacted democratic electoral processes in Zimbabwe?
- 2) To interrogate the role of the military in the exercise of the right to media and protest in the post Mugabe era;

#### Research Questions

- (i) How has the military affected the exercise of the right to media and protest and what implications does this have on political transition?
- 3) To interrogate the role of the military in the judicial and legislative processes in the post Mugabe era.

#### Research Questions

- (i) To what extent has the military been involved in judicial and legislative processes in the post Mugabe era?
- (ii) How has the military been involved in the legislative and judicial processes in the post Mugabe Zimbabwe?
- (iii) How has the involvement impacted political transition?

### 1.4 Research Design

Apart from answering the 'what' and 'how' questions about the role of the military in transition politics of the post Mugabe Zimbabwe, the study also sought answers to the 'why' questions. It sought exploratory data which required quantitative and qualitative research methods respectively. Therefore, the research was carried out through a mixed-methods research design. A mixed methods research design "is more than simply collecting and analysing both kinds of data; it also involves the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research" (Creswell, 2009:4). It was chosen for its ability to collect diverse data and "collecting diverse types of data best provides an understanding of a research problem" (Creswell, 2003: 2). As presented in subtopics below, qualitative and quantitative research tools and techniques were alternated and sometimes used concurrently.

### 1.4.1 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study used purposive sampling to select 30 respondents from among civil society organisations (CSOs), politicians from the ruling party and opposition political parties, public officials in government institutions. The study also used random sampling to sample 470 citizens across the country.

Table 1.1: Sample Distribution across Research Areas<sup>7</sup>

Research Area	Number of Interviews
Masvingo	40
Manicaland	40
Matabeleland North	40
Midlands	50
Bulawayo	70
Matabeleland South	40
Mashonaland Central	40
Mashonaland West	40
Mashonaland East	40
Harare	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>

The choice of these research areas was influenced by the purposive sampling of the study; it tracked the CAP only to those communities where it is implemented and known.

<sup>7</sup>More respondents were sampled in Harare, Bulawayo and Midlands as they have high population density

### 1.4.2 Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through a mix of qualitative and quantitative data collection tools. The study used semi-structured interviews and analysis of archives that were purposively sampled from readily accessible public data sets as presented below.

#### 1.4.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

The study conducted 500 semi-structured interviews guided by a fill-in interview guide which was used to interview all sampled respondents. The interview guide had a mix of qualitative and quantitative questions to gauge the depth and breadth of the problem. As a data collection tool, the interview guide was manually completed by the ZDI team of eight researchers deployed in each of the eight research areas presented above. Interviews were audio recorded to facilitate cross examinations and re-analysis during data analysis.

#### 1.4.2.2 Analysis of public data-sets

Fifty public data-sets were interrogated for critical information answering the research questions of the study. Key among the sampled data-sets was the Global Militarization Index (GMI). The GMI measures the relative weight and importance of the military apparatus of one state in relation to its society. To measure militarization levels the GMI compares military expenditure with the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and its health expenditure (as share of its GDP); the contrast between the total number of (para)military forces and the number of medical doctors and the overall population; and the ratio of the number of heavy weapons systems available and the total population.<sup>8</sup> This data-set was cardinal in

<sup>8</sup>The Global Militarization Index (GMI) 2017, <https://www.bicc.de>.

providing time series data used to compare the extent of militarisation in the Mugabe era and post Mugabe era.

Sampled archives also included scholarly articles, reports and social media blogs and newspaper articles. These archives were collected using subject matter search on Google search engine. Many articles and archives were downloaded and sieved using the quality and relevance assessment tool of the study which was derived from research objectives and questions of the study.

### **1.4.3 Data Analysis and Presentation**

Data were analysed using quantitative and qualitative data analysis strategies. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used as the quantitative data analysis tool that analysed answers to quantitative research questions in the semi-structured interviews while thematic analysis analysed answers to qualitative questions. These two tools were also used to analyse data in archives as described below.

#### *1.4.3.1 Descriptive analysis on SPSS*

The study conducted descriptive analysis of quantitative data collected through semi-structured interviews and analysis of public data sets using SPSS. The aim was to describe the involvement of the military in transition politics, how it has impacted transition. This kind of analysis only dealt with data collected through

quantitative questions in the interview guide and quantitative data from archives. Data from this analysis strategy were presented in graphs, charts and tables to aid in giving a descriptive illustration of the problem under study.

#### *1.4.3.2 Thematic Analysis*

Data collected through qualitative questions of the interview guide and qualitative data in sampled archives and public data-sets were analysed using thematic analysis. Under this data analysis strategy, data were cross-examined for recurring content, coded according to recurring content, broken down into groups of recurring issues which were further digested into thematic topics that helped in answering the “why” questions about military role in transition politics in the post Mugabe era. Data from this kind of analysis were presented in textual summaries that aid in providing explanatory data about the problem under study.

### **1.5 Chapter Summary**

The study interrogated the role of the military in transition politics which includes electoral process, citizens’ exercise of the right to media and protest, judicial processes and legislative processes in the post Mugabe era. Semi-structured interviews and archival of public data-sets were used to collect data. The following chapter presents the previous studies on the military role in transition and the conceptual framework of analysis adopted by this study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter engages previous theoretical and empirical studies on the role of the military in transition politics of Zimbabwe. It seeks to set the bedrock upon which the role of the military in the post-Mugabe era should be understood. The chapter mainly focuses on relevant literature on the role of the military in transition politics in competitive authoritarian regimes. Literature presented here is divided into two bodies: first being literature that interrogates the role of the military in transition politics in competitive authoritarian regimes in general and second being literature that focuses on the role of the military in transition politics in Zimbabwe. Within the body of literature that focuses on the role of the military in transition politics of Zimbabwe, literature is further classified into two emerging schools of thought – the subordinate infrastructure school of thought and the supreme power-bloc school of thought. Theoretical extrapolations from these schools of thought are weighed against empirical evidence collected during this study to determine their applicability in interpreting the role of the military in transition politics in Zimbabwe. The main aim being to decipher the extrapolations in literature which have stood the test of time and have the greatest explanatory value to be used to construct a dependable theory of political change in Zimbabwe.

#### 2.1 The Military and Transition Politics in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes

Most literature on the role of the military in transition focuses mainly on its role in two stratum of transition politics and/or processes: its role in coup d'états and in electoral processes. This study identifies with the latter. Zimbabwe has been identified by many researchers as a competitive authoritarian regime (Levytsky and Way, 2002; Diamond, 2002; ZDI, 2017). Competitive authoritarian regimes are defined as political systems wherein elections as a means of power transition are conducted as a ritual procedure to legitimate the ruling elite (Levytsky and Way, 2002). In these political systems, elections without democracy are held as electoral management bodies, the legislature, the judiciary and the public media are politically engineered to ensure victory for the incumbent (Levytsky and Way, 2002).

In some competitive authoritarian regimes, the ruling elite depend on the politicized military to “carve out large, autonomous spheres of political influence and economic domination behind the veil of civilian, multiparty rule” (Diamond, 2002: 27). In Diamond’s perspective, the ruling elite are the supreme body and the military is either a subservient tool or a strategic partner in manipulating the state institutions to intimidate voters to always avoid voting against interests of the ruling elite.

Another symptom of a competitive authoritarian regime is identified by Alvarez, *et al* (2008: 4) as absence of automatic transfer of power after electoral defeat; power is retained through other means. Such means include deployment of armed forces to retain power. The ruling elite calls in the military after numbers fail to add up as expected. It is implicit in this study that the military is only used when all manipulation means have failed.

In competitive authoritarian regimes, incumbents give concessions to the military in form of political appointments and economic incentives (Diamond, 2008). The main aim being to buy it off and/or co-opt it, rely on it to maintain and retain power and preserve the status quo in their favour not regarding whether such machinations violate the yearnings of the masses (Diamond, 2008).

Empirical evidence shows that presence of the military as a transition agent and/or catalyst does not always block democratic transition. The interest of the military is what matters the most. For instance, findings in Robinson and Acemoglu (2012) show that developed countries such as the United States and United Kingdom among others developed out of military leadership which made the political and economic transition their main interest and pursuit. The logic in this argument is that, unlike in Zimbabwe where political institutions are weak and narrowly designed to benefit a small group of the military elite and their conduits, developed countries managed to create strong political institutions (electoral systems, rule of law, state apparatus and accountability mechanisms) that guaranteed political participation and human rights of the people which made it very hard for the security sector to capture the state and get away with it (Fukuyama, 2014). Thus the military remains a key player in transition politics with the ability to determine the course of transition. In one context, it has served as a reliable enabler of transition to politico-economic democracy, while in another; it has proven to be very trustworthy in blocking it (Acemoglu *et al*, 2010).

ZDI (2017) argues that in some cases of competitive authoritarian regimes such as Zimbabwe, the menu for the 'military assurance' of electoral victory is more complex than the Levytsky and Way (2002) problematisation. The military elite firstly captures the dominant political party, populates it with its members and compradors and then use it to populate the election management body, the judiciary,

the media and the legislature to ensure electoral victory for its appointed candidate (ZDI, 2017). In such cases, the ruling elite are the military elite who create what others refer to as *securocrats*.<sup>9</sup>In this study, ZDI sought to draw much attention to the role played by the military in these competitive authoritarian regimes as a starting point in interrogating the way forward for political transition in Zimbabwe. As stated earlier, transition in all other spheres such as the socio-economic in Zimbabwe depends on the success of transition in the political sphere. The mother problem in Zimbabwe, as argued in this paper, is of a political nature and thus political transition and means thereof should be taken as the first and most important step.

## **2.2 The Military in Zimbabwe's Transition – Two Schools of Thought**

In the years of Robert Mugabe administration, two main schools of thought on the role of the military in transition politics of Zimbabwe have emerged – (1) the subordinate infrastructure school of thought and; (2) the supreme power-bloc school of thought. These schools of thought are discussed below.

### **2.2.1 The Subordinate Infrastructure School of Thought**

The first and most popular has been the 'subordinate infrastructure' school of thought. To this school of thought belongs the traditional literature and perspectives on transition in Zimbabwe. Under this school of thought, four key assumptions have been postulated. First is that the military is an effective and very powerful tool in the hands of the ruler that he uses at will to effect or block transition (Masunungure and Bratton, 2008; Oslow, 2011; Reeler, 2016; Mandaza, 2016). Cases such as the use of the Five Brigade to orchestrate operation Gukurahundi from the early 1980s till

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<sup>9</sup>See for instance, Mandaza, (2016)

1987, the Fast Track Land Reform Programme in 2001, the 2004 Operation *Murambatsvina/Restore Order* and the 2008 military brutality on opposition supporters in the June re-run election campaign have been cited as examples (Oslow, 2011; Reeler, 2016). In the early 1980s, the military was used to kill around 2000 supporters of the opposition party Patriotic Front Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF ZAPU) to intimidate and shrink opposition votes, in early 2000s, the same ruling elite deployed security forces to brutally drive out white commercial farmers from their farms as a punitive measure for financially sponsoring the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and as a means of cutting-off financial avenues for the opposition (Masunungure and Bratton, 2008; Oslow, 2011; Reeler, 2016). In 2008 in the June run-off campaign, many supporters of the opposition MDC party were brutally assaulted by the military whilst some were killed as means of intimidation and dissuading opposition votes. In all these instances, it has been observed that former president Robert Mugabe used the military as his tool of maintaining and retaining power against the threat posed by opposition parties in elections. This study sought to evaluate whether this tenet of Mugabe's management of transition politics has been done away with, persisted or innovated.

The second assumption has been that in transition politics, the ruler is supreme to the military and the military takes commands from the ruler all the time. For instance, previous studies have used the 1983, 2004 and 2008 deployment of soldiers cited above as examples of former president Mugabe's use of the military to ensure his will is done in elections. In these cases, it has been observed that Mugabe issued commands that were followed without resistance (Masunungure and Bratton, 2008; Oslow, 2011). Actually, some studies assert that the Five Brigade which orchestrated the 1983-1987 massacres of opposition supporters was more like the ruler's personal militia as it reported directly to the Prime Minister (CCJP, 1997). This study sought to evaluate whether this relationship between the ruler and the military still

exists. This went a long way in unraveling the current role of the military in transition politics.

The third assumption has been that the interests of the military in transition politics are the interests of the ruler, what the ruler speaks or thinks becomes the interest of the army. This assumption has been corroborated by absence of evidence of mutiny and/or dissent in the military when politically motivated deployments are done (Mandaza, 2016). The fourth and last assumption has been that the military is a homogenous body with a homozygous interest and one centre of authority and command who is the ruler. The homogeneity of the military and its interests have been tacit in the broad consensus in the public statements of military elite. However, these assumptions have been questioned by ZDI in many of its publications. The events leading to the November 2017 ouster of former president Robert Mugabe have corroborated the counter assertions of ZDI. This has resulted in the emergence of the second school of thought which this study refers to as 'the supreme power-bloc school of thought.'

### **2.2.2 The Supreme Power-bloc School of Thought**

The 'supreme power-bloc school of thought' comprises key alternative explanations of the role of the military in transition politics. This school of thought emerged as a result of the failure of traditional literature to give explanations to key developments in transition politics. ZDI among others has been a leading researcher in this school of thought that seeks to bring a narrative different from the rest of published literature.<sup>10</sup> Two major disagreements and points of departure in this school of thought have emerged pertaining to the power relations between the president and

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<sup>10</sup>See for instance, ZDI (2017) *Zimbabwe Transition in a Muddy Terrain: Political Economy under Military Capture*.

the military and the homogeneity of the interests of these two parties in transition politics. The first point of disagreement has been that the military is not subservient to the president; it is the supreme power-bloc that uses the ruling party and its president as a tool of ensuring that the will of the army is done in Zimbabwe as is done in the barracks. As argued in Matlosa and Zounmenou (2016: 95) "... the legitimacy of some ... governments moved from the will of the people to the barrel of a gun... The military became a power unto itself." This has been the case during the Mugabe administration.

The Mgagao Declaration in 1975 that saw the military parachuting Robert Mugabe into leadership of the ruling party, the 1983 Gukurahundi massacres of opposition supporters and the 2008 military violence on opposition supporters are classic examples of the military stamping its supreme authority. These have been critical junctures in Zimbabwean history where the military displayed itself as a superpower that determines the direction of transition politics. The military stepped in 1975 to install Robert Mugabe as leader of the then biggest political party the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in a coup d'état against Ndabaningi Sithole. The military stepped-in in 2008 to reinstall Mugabe against after losing to opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai in the March 2008 election. When Robert Mugabe decided to side with the G-40 faction of ZANU PF which was associated to his wife, the army stepped-in on 15 November 2017 and removed him from power paving way for its candidate, the current president Emmerson Mnangagwa. Citing these instances, ZDI has asserted that the military exists as the supreme power-bloc that captured the ruling party ZANU PF in 1975 through the Mgagao declaration and uses it to rule the country and direct the course of transition politics. In this study, these observations

were re-evaluated to ascertain whether any changes in this state of militarisation have followed the 15 November 2017 change of leadership.

### **2.3 Chapter Summary**

The chapter presented key literature on militarization and the role of the military in transition politics in authoritarian regimes. The chapter also tackled the main interpretations of the relationship between the military and government in Zimbabwe. It has been presented in previous studies that competitive authoritarian regimes deploy the military to ensure that elections without democracy are held as a ritual to give legitimacy to the ruling elite internally and internationally. In Zimbabwe, the military has been depicted by many researchers as a tool used by authoritarian regimes to maintain and retain power, maintain and direct the course of transition politics. However, as presented in this chapter, ZDI has argued contra-wise to these assertions. ZDI in its research has found that the military is the supreme power-bloc in Zimbabwe that uses government to promote and protect its vested interests. Given the change of leadership from Mugabe administration to Mnangagwa administration, some changes might have been witnessed. The following chapter presents research findings examining the state of militarization in the post Mugabe era.

# CHAPTER THREE

## MILITARISATION IN KEY CENTRES OF TRANSITION POLITICS

### 3.0 Introduction

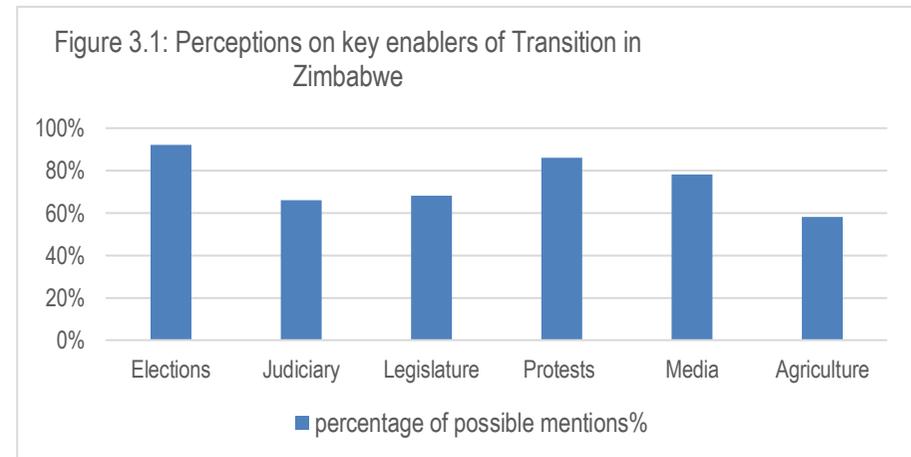
This chapter presents key findings and discussions of the study. In general terms, this study found that the military exists as the supreme power-bloc in transition politics of Zimbabwe. Its supreme power has been deployed to block transition politics and processes to maintain and retain power in the hands of the ruling ZANU PF party. The study also found that in Zimbabwe, transition politics relies on six umbilical codes, which are: (i) the electoral process, (ii) the process of exercise of the right to media and protest, (iii) the judiciary process, (iv) the legislative process and (v) the politics of the farms. These six constitute key centres in the engine of transition in Zimbabwe. In these six centres of transition politics, the study found that the voice of the military is supreme. This has been corroborated by evidence and nature of activities and interactions of the military in these centres of transition politics. Citizen's perspectives on militarisation in the post Mugabe era also speak to the continued supremacy of the military as a decisive power bloc that blocs transition to the success of the ruling ZANU PF. Findings also show that citizens have experienced a dramatic intensification of militarisation, deployment of naked force and intimidating deterrence in the five key centres of transition politics in Zimbabwe.

Human rights violations by the state using the military have worsened to the extent that citizens feel more frightened and deterred from participating in public protests in the post Mugabe era than before. As presented below, the study shows that political transition will not be possible and/or sustainable without the military either playing a

leading role or being on the side that pushes for transition by choice or force majeure.

### 3.1 Unpacking the Umbilical Codes of Transition Politics in Zimbabwe

To understand the role of the military in transition politics in post Mugabe Zimbabwe, this study saw it important to firstly unpack the umbilical codes political transition in Zimbabwe to ascertain how the military interacts with the operations in each. Therefore, the study interrogated the nature of political transition in Zimbabwe so as to identify its key pillars and the role of the military therein. To achieve this, sampled respondents were asked to state three key enablers of transition in Zimbabwe. Findings were as displayed in figure 3.1 below.



**Respondents were asked: Question 1–** *From your experience in transition politics, name three institutions or processes you recognise as most important enablers of transition in Zimbabwe?*<sup>11</sup>

The above figure shows that political transition in Zimbabwe has six umbilical codes that have the potential to deliver or abort it. These six umbilical codes of transition politics are very important in the orchestration, support and/or deterrence of transition in Zimbabwe. These institutions and/or processes were highlighted as the remaining hope and arsenal in the hands of the citizens to foster political transition and speak back to power.

In the order of frequencies in the mentions given by respondents, the electoral process was identified as the most recognised enabler of political transition in Zimbabwe. It is thus recognised as the most vital umbilical cord in transition politics of Zimbabwe. Sampled respondents stated that the electoral process gives them a chance to punish wrongdoers in public institutions through votes. However, the military has been very consistent in rendering the process impotent. This has been the modus operandi of the Mugabe regime which has persisted till 2020. The Mnangagwa regime has perpetuated the deployment of members of the security sector in key state institutions responsible for administering elections. ZEC has been proven to have members of security forces retired to take strategic positions in the secretariat, which the election management body chairperson Priscilla Chigumba said is comprised of ex-soldiers constituting 15%.<sup>12</sup> The most shocking display of institutional impotence was shown when ZEC kept revising and amending the electoral outcome results for presidential candidates until it published the final results.

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<sup>11</sup>Interviews, March-May 2020. The study only included those processes and/or institutions that obtained above 50% of all possible mentions.

<sup>12</sup>The NewsDay (Online). Published on 27 February 2018. Soldiers make up 15% of Zec staff. Available at: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/02/soldiers-make-15-zec-staff/>

The exercise of the freedom of assembly and protest came out second in popularity among mentioned enablers of political transition. It gives citizens the platform to challenge duty bearers, speak their minds and initiate the transition pathway they want.<sup>13</sup> However, the post Mugabe government has deployed armed soldiers three times in 2 years to brutally assault, shoot, kill and intimidate citizens during protests. First was the shooting and killing of civilians following the 1 August 2018 protests over electoral chicanery done by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC). President Emmerson Mnangagwa's midnight imposition of a 130% fuel increase on 12 January 2019 had spill-over effects on bus-fare costs, cost of basic commodities and ultimately a further depreciation of the Zimbabwean currency (Bond note/RTGS\$) against the United States Dollar. This spread the grievances and frustration across the country especially in towns with more industrial activity such as Harare, Bulawayo, and Gweru leading to a massive protest. On 14 to 17 January 2019 days of brutalisation, torture and human rights violations perpetrated by the military befell Zimbabweans including minors.

The media, exercise of media freedoms, freedom of expression and digital rights add more potency to the exercise of the right to protest and buttress the electoral process.<sup>14</sup> However, the post Mugabe government has deployed the military and other security services to infringe this space particularly on social media. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 2020, journalist Hopewell Chin'ono was arrested for exposing alleged government corruption involving the procurement of coronavirus supplies and charged with inciting public violence.<sup>15</sup> On 14 to 17 January 2019, the Minister of

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<sup>13</sup>Interviews, March/May 2020.

<sup>14</sup> Interviews, March/May 2020.

<sup>15</sup> BBC News, 2020. Hopewell Chin'ono: Whistle-blowing Zimbabwean journalist arrested. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53477423>

state security unilaterally switched off the internet for the whole country in attempt to sabotage the coordination of protests. Although the court dismissed his actions as unconstitutional, the intended impact had already been achieved. The judiciary was identified for its role in adjudicating electoral disputes and giving citizens a chance to challenge electoral chicanery. In the post Mugabe era, the judiciary has shown signs of being captured by the ruling elite in its adjudication role. For instance, in the case of *Nelson Chamisa and others versus Emmerson Mnangagwa*<sup>16</sup> the court in a partisan conduct denied the plaintiff's request to open the ballot boxes, conduct recounts of votes although this had a potential of proving whether the votes were really rigged.

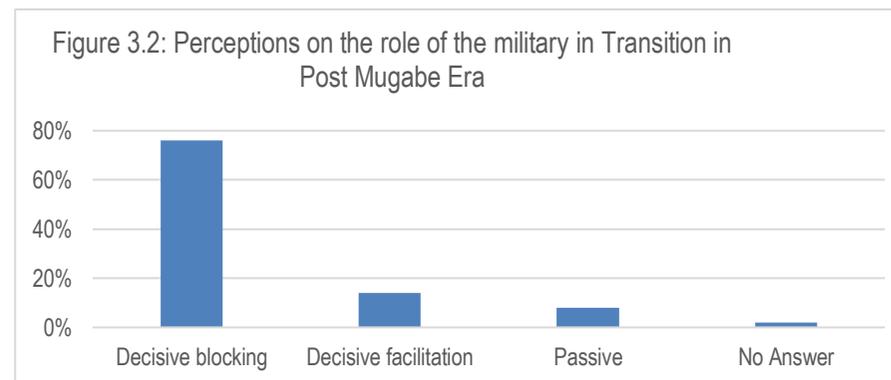
The politics of the farms have also been revealed as another factor responsible for hindering political transition in Zimbabwe. Four strategic reasons making politics of the farms a very key force in transition are: (i) farms have been used for vote buying, (ii) farms have offered a free space for creation of a safe haven of ZANU PF voters and constituencies, (iii) deploying intimidation infrastructure to ensure ZANU PF votes has been very easy in farming communities, (iv) farms have been used as a carrot and stick for managing and rewarding strategic players such as prospective party sponsors and the military.<sup>17</sup> The intended psychological effect of the farm invasions, was to posit Mugabe and ZANU PF as the people's government that takes from the rich settlers to distribute to the poor Zimbabweans. The state has frequently deployed the military in these centres to either manage the transition in such a way that the results thereof comply with vested interests of the ruling elite or block it if the former seems not doable.

<sup>16</sup>Veritas, 2019. CCZ 21-19 Nelson Chamisa and vs Emmerson Mnangagwa - Election Petition. Available at: [http://www.veritaszim.net/sites/veritas\\_d/files/Nelson%20Chamisa%20and%202024%20Ors%20v%20Emmerson%20Mnangagwa.pdf](http://www.veritaszim.net/sites/veritas_d/files/Nelson%20Chamisa%20and%202024%20Ors%20v%20Emmerson%20Mnangagwa.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Interviews, May 2020.

### 3.2 Perceptions on the Role of the Military in Democratic Transition Politics

As shown below, the study interrogated citizens' perceptions on the role of the military in the politics of transition in post Mugabe Zimbabwe and results were as analysed in figure 3.2 below.



**Respondents were asked: Question 2 - What has been the role of the military in the post-Mugabe democratic transition? Decisive blocking/Decisive facilitation/Passive/Others (probed) Why do you think so?**

Results displayed above indicate that most respondents view the military as an enemy of political transition as noted by 76% of interviewed citizens. This means that there is no discernible transformation in the conduct of the military as far as it relates with citizens, pressure groups and other pro-democracy groups. The military remains the buttress of the ruling party. This was highlighted more clearer by one interviewee who noted that:

*The military-Zanu pf relations have remained the same. The military destroys every move in our transition efforts as long as it deems it anti-Zanu PF.*

Another respondent stated that:

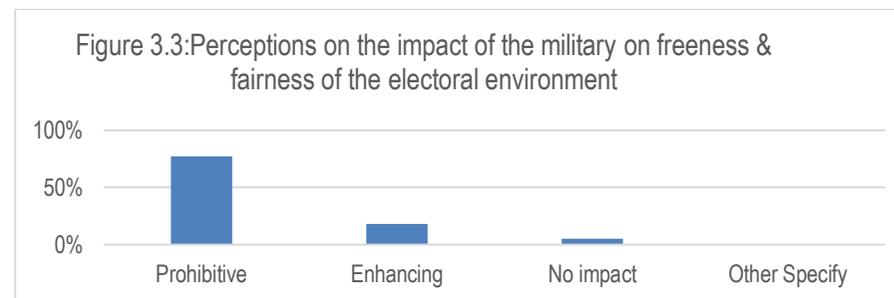
*President Mnangagwa did not change the attitude of the army towards democratic transition forces or the role played by the military during the Mugabe era. He just deployed the traditional infrastructure inherited from Mugabe.*

Three most popular reasons given by respondents for identifying the role of the military in transition politics as a “decisive transition blocking agent” were that: (i) the military has been seen on the ground beating, killing and intimidating transition agents, (ii) the military has continued to keep its pro-ZANU PF stance in key areas of contestation such as during the Motlante Commission hearings,<sup>18</sup> (iii) serving and most senior members of the army have continued the trend prevalent during Mugabe era of retiring to occupy powerful positions in the ruling ZANU PF. This perception of a continuation of military capture of transition has also been evident in public conduct of the military/ZANU PF complex. For instance, on 1 August 2018, the military gruesomely assaulted protesters who protested against the delays and inconsistencies of the ZEC in its counting and release of presidential election results. The military acted in a manner that left a clear sign that it still serves ZANU PF interests. This is so because one would have expected a neutral and patriotic military to either condemn the actions of ZEC that threatened peace and security in the country or remain silent and/or neutral. The delays and inconsistencies of ZEC served the interests of the ruling party in that it gave enough room for tempering with election results and revision of results to give ZANU PF an upper-hand. Whether this was actually the reason for delays or not, the oneness in interpretation and reaction by the military, government and the ruling party created a vivid picture of oneness

<sup>18</sup>Kubatana.Net, 2018. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE 1 AUGUST 2018 POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE. Available at: <http://kubatana.net/2018/12/18/report-commission-inquiry-1-august-2018-post-election-violence/>

that was so strong in causing the acceptance of this narrative. The reaction of the government and the ruling party to the January 2019 protests against president Mnangagwa’s announcement that hiked fuel prices adds more credence to the perception of the continuation of capture of the transition by ZANU PF/military complex. The government continues to deploy the military to stop and/or hinder the agents of transition in Zimbabwe. The difference between the modus operandi used by Mugabe and Mnangagwa is that, the former was very covert in his deployment of brazen brutality whilst the latter is very overt.

Since the electoral process was the most frequent among mentioned enablers of political transition in Zimbabwe, the study examined the impact of the military on its free and fairness. Figure 3.3 below presents perceptions collected from sampled respondents on this enabling facet of democratic transition.



Respondents were asked: Question 3- What has been the impact of the military on the freeness and fairness of the electoral environment? Prohibitive/Enhancing/No Impact/Other(specify) (probed) Why do you think so?

As shown above, 77% of sampled respondents perceived the military as prohibiting the freeness and fairness of the electoral environment, 18% perceived the military as enhancing the fairness and freeness of this process while 5% perceived no impact.

Three main reasons were given in support of the most frequent perception of the military as a prohibitive factor in achieving a free and fair electoral environment. Firstly, it was stated that the military issuance of threatening messages on the national broadcaster in support of ZANU PF during the electoral period creates timid voters.<sup>19</sup> One respondent noted that:

*This has for several years made most Zimbabweans to cast their votes in fear of possible reprisals and punitive measures from the military. Due to this fear of voting against ZANU PF, citizens elections have failed to effect the transition they want.*

This was also highlighted in vice president Chiwenga's repeated public statements saying the July 2018 election was expected to complete the agenda of Operation Restore Legacy which saw the heavily armed military removing former president Mugabe from power.<sup>20</sup> This assertion on its own implied that the military that assisted ZANU PF in removing its party president expected citizens to vote in a manner that maintains ZANU PF in power. As stated in an interview in Harare,

*No one would have expected the military to accept ZANU PF's electoral defeat after all the risks and work they did to protect it from destruction by the G40 faction. The violence unleashed by the army on opposition and protesters on 1 August 2018 and defence thereof should be understood along these lines.<sup>21</sup>*

This entails that ZANU PF continues under military capture even after the demise of Robert Mugabe's rule. President Emerson Mnangagwa continued the status quo as far as military meddling in internal politics in ZANU PF and inter-party politics is

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<sup>19</sup>Interviews, March 2020.

<sup>20</sup>The Herald (Online). Published on 18 June 2018. 'Vote ED to conclude Op Restore Legacy'. Available at: <https://www.herald.co.zw/vote-ed-to-conclude-op-restore-legacy/>

<sup>21</sup> Interviews, March 2020.

concerned. Secondly, it was stated that the mere presence of the military in communities during the electoral period deters opposition votes. The military has a history of unleashing violence against opposition supporters. The 2008 June rerun election violence, the Gukurahundi violence against opposition supporters and the 1 August 2018 violence against protesters have created citizens who vote to prevent violence than to promote political transition.

The third reason for identifying the military as a prohibitive factor in democratic transition was that ZANU PF membership and/or assumption of high positions therein continues to be a retirement package for feared high ranking officials in the military. Senior members of the military continue to retire and assume key positions in ZANU PF and contesting in elections as ZANU PF candidates. For instance, former commander of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF), Constantino Chiwenga campaigned in the July 2018 election as a vice president of ZANU PF. The same can be said for retired General Engelbert Rugeje who ran the same campaign as ZANU PF commissar. An interviewee in Mutare noted that:

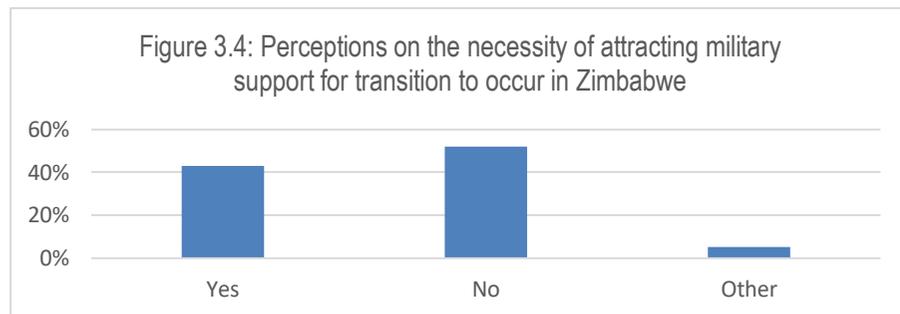
*The culture of soldiers retiring to run as candidates for ZANU PF in elections shows that ZANU PF is seen by serving soldiers as a retirement package to be safeguarded and promoted if a soldier wants to have a rewarding life after retirement.<sup>22</sup>*

In other terms, those who are intimidated by military presence due to historical traumatic experiences are made to also fear ZANU PF by the mere militarisation of their list in the ballot box. This is another military deterrence strategy in communities during elections.

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<sup>22</sup>Interviews, April 2020.

The perceptions of citizens on the possibility of political transition without the support of the military was also studied. This was done to shed more light on the relevance of the military in achieving democratic transition in Zimbabwe. Figure 3.4 below presents findings of the study on this aspect.



*Respondents were Asked: Question 4: Do you think any political transition is possible without the support of the military in Zimbabwe? Yes/No/Other (probed) Explain why do you think so?*

Findings presented above reveal that 52% of the interviewed respondents think that a democratic political transition without support from the military is not possible while 43% think that political transition without support from the military is possible. However, empirical evidence supports the former. All political transition that have occurred in Zimbabwe since decolonisation from Britain in 1980, the military has been very supportive. For instance, the military was supportive of the 1979 Mgasao Declaration that led to the replacement Ndabaningi Sithole by Robert Mugabe as leader of ZANU, it was supportive of the violent 2001 Fast Track Land Reform Programme as beneficiaries and the replacement of former president Mugabe by incumbent president Mnangagwa in November 2017. All these transition efforts had

little challenges and were thus successful. This entails that political transition needs military support to succeed.

### 3.4 Perceptions on the state of Human Rights in post-Mugabe Militarisation

The post Mugabe militarisation has been distinguished by the sharp increase in military deployments to police cases within the capacity and responsibility of the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP). As shown in figure 3.5 above, this study revealed that this form of militarisation in the post-Mugabe era has intensified the infringement of citizens' exercise of those human rights that are key to the attainment of democratic transition.

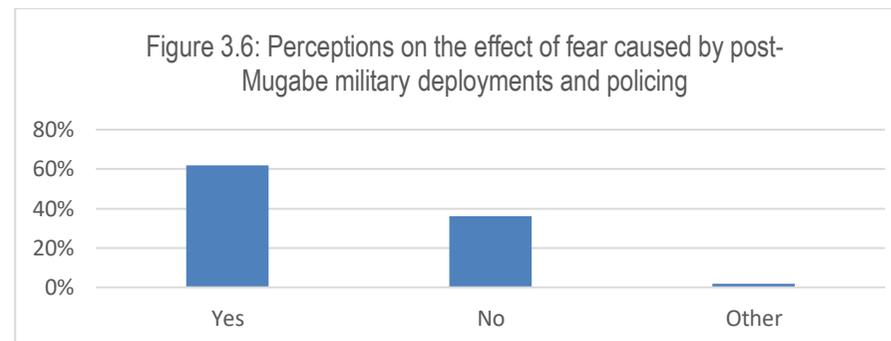


**Respondents were asked: Question 5 - Given your recent experience of military deployments in your community, what is your perception of the state of your right to protest, expression and political conscience? Infringed/Respected/Others (probed) Why do you think so?**

As presented in the graph above, 72% of the sampled respondents indicated that their rights have been grossly infringed whenever the military is deployed by the Mnangagwa administration. The rights that have suffered most infringement include

the freedom of assembly and protest, freedom of expression and media freedoms and political conscience. The military has on several occasions been deployed to hinder citizens' exercise of these rights, the 31 July 2020 planned demonstrations saw arrests and abduction of pro-activists and opposition leaders labelling them as 'enemies of the state'<sup>23</sup>. The 1 August 2018, January 2019 military deployments accompanied by the internet blackout showed that the ruling elite has lost confidence in the ZRP as a reliable policing force in matters that threaten their stay in power. This has intensified the rate of infringement of citizens' basic human rights since soldiers, unlike the police have low skills and literacy in maintaining peace and security while respecting human rights.

The deployment of the army to police protests threatens to create a subject political culture where timid citizens watch the state metamorphosis into a full-blown authoritarian regime without raising a finger of correction. In figure 3.6, the study examined the fear effect caused by the post-Mugabe government on citizens and pro-democracy activists as this has a strong impact on the possibility of a democratic transition in Zimbabwe.

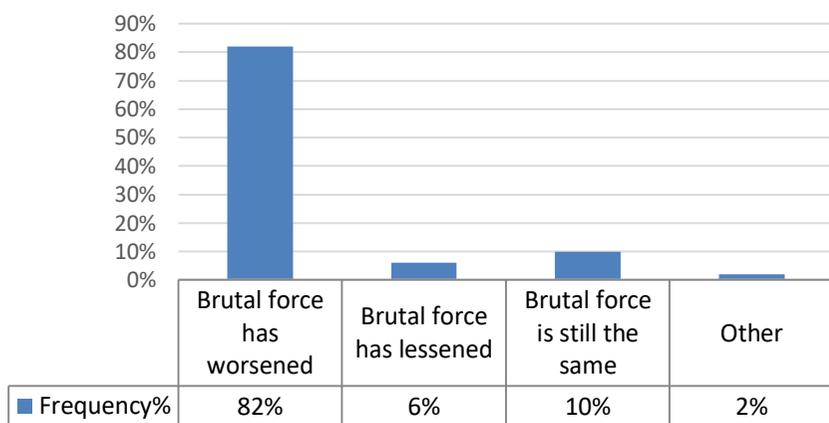


**Respondents were asked: Question 6- Given your recent experience of military and civilian encounters, do you think you now fear the military and have been deterred from participating in public protests and resistance? YES/NO/Other (probed) Why do you think so?**

The study found that 62% of sampled respondents have been made to fear the military and this has deterred them from participating in public protests and resistance activities. This is very injurious to the future of transition in Zimbabwe as it has the capability of creating timid citizens who would sell their democratic freedom in exchange for staying in peace with the oppressor. This trend of gross human rights violations through use of the military to police matters within the capacity of ZRP is an inherited culture that was frequented during the Mugabe era. However, as shown in figure 3.7 below, the study found that this trend has worsened in the post-Mugabe era compared to the prior dispensation.

<sup>23</sup> Zimbabwe Situation, 2020. Zimbabwe rule by law activists arrested and abducted. Available at: <https://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimbabwe-descends-into-rule-by-law-activists-arrested-and-abducted/>

Figure 3.7: Comparison of the state military-civilian interactions in the Mugabe and post Mugabe era



**Respondents were asked: Question 7-** *Compared to the Mugabe era, how would you describe the interaction between the citizens and the military once deployed? Brutal force has worsened/Brutal force has lessened/Brutal force is still the same/Other (probed)Why do you think so?*

The study revealed that 82% of the sample perceived that the Mnangagwa dispensation has worsened use of brutal force on protesters and citizens exercising their constitutional rights. Only 10% perceived that brutal force in the Mugabe era is still the same in the Mnangagwa dispensation. For the first time since 1980, a woman was shot by a soldier on camera in the capital, Harare. This, in addition to the torturing and detainment of children, switching off the internet following January 2019 protests have been most frequently stated by interviewees as evidence of worsened brutality on citizens.

### 3.5 Chapter Summary

The chapter presented the research findings of the study. It revealed that militarisation has worsened in the post-Mugabe era. Citizens have been made to fear the military and thus being deterred from exercising their constitutionally given rights. The chapter also revealed that the post Mugabe dispensation government has put much military effort on the electoral process and the exercise of the freedom of protest and media as key areas of military blockade of transition in Zimbabwe. It has also been revealed that the military is the supreme power-bloc in transition politics as it has been a decisive party that has caused the failure and success of transitions in Zimbabwe. The following chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **4.1 Summary**

The study examined the role of the military in transition in the post Mugabe era. Data collection was done through semi-structured interviews and analysis of public data-sets. The study adopted the competitive authoritarian regime school of thought as its conceptual framework. This literature explains that authoritarian regimes manage transition waves by running elections without democracy as rituals for attracting acceptance and legitimacy. The military is used to defy and emasculate transition pressure points such as the electoral system, protests, the media, the judiciary and the legislature to ensure the incumbent stays in power by other means rather than winning democratic elections. The study also acknowledges the fact that the military has been a decisive power-bloc in transition politics during the Mugabe era. The history of military capture of the state can be traced back to the Mgagao Declaration

in 1975 by the Zimbabwe National Liberation Army (ZANLA) forces leading to the elevation of former president Robert Mugabe to be the leader of ZANU PF. From this point onward, the military elite has successfully captured ZANU PF, transmogrified it into a conduit of its interests and/or a retirement package for aged soldiers who want to join active politics. Following the overthrow of former president Mugabe, this study sought to reevaluate the position of the military in transition politics in the new dispensation and citizens' perceptions on the same.

#### **4.2 Conclusion**

The military remains a decisive power-bloc in transition politics of Zimbabwe. Its decisive role has been highlighted in four interrelated ways. First, the military elite captured ZANU PF as early as 1975 and they continue to use it as a conduit for its interests in transition politics. This has gone to the extent of turning ZANU PF into more of a retirement package and/or work for the aged security personnel. The civilian masses within the party have been reduced into mere sloganeering crowds and compradors canvassing support for the interests of the military from time to time.

The military uses 'declaration of support' by most senior members of the army pronouncing the position of the military regarding the presidential candidates. The position has been that the military will only recognise a ZANU PF as president. This is done on state media and/or televised to reach a wider cross-section of voters so that the choice of the military is heard by many. Given the past experiences of electoral violence perpetrated by the military targeting opposition voters, voting any other candidate rather than the one supported by the military becomes a risk not only to the voter but beloved ones too.

The military has also been strategically deployed in the electoral management body, ZEC and in farming communities to cause the 'voting-in-fear' effect that serves to benefit ZANU PF. Most Zimbabweans have a history and scars of brutalisation and violence done on them by the military in the past for supporting opposition parties. Therefore, when they see members of the military towards election days, the traumatic experiences are refreshed leading to voting ZANU PF to protect their lives and lives of their loved ones from possible punitive measures they experienced for voting the opposition in the past. This explains what this study terms a 'ZANU PF/military deterrence of opposition votes'. This revival of traumatic experiences by deployment of soldiers to tweak the electoral environment to give ZANU PF a competitive advantage has been used in the Mugabe era and it continues as a key strategy in Zimbabwe.

The military has also been used to squash citizens' mass protests against bad governance of ZANU PF. The level of impunity in the military's disbursement of violence has left lasting fear and trauma among transition enabling agents such as social movements, civic organisations and human rights defenders in Zimbabwe. It has been revealed in this study that this strategy is intended to transform citizens into subjects for ZANU PF to rule. This again has been a very effective hindrance of transition in Zimbabwe.

The media has also been targeted, censored, infiltrated and muzzled with the help of the military. Protesters have been rounded up, searched, tortured and their cell phones seized, passwords breached to suppress free sharing of information. Competition and contestation in elections is done in an undemocratic environment. The vote is not rigged on the election day, it is rigged from the first day after the previous election by manipulating the electoral environment through military deterrence.

The Mnangagwa administration continues being captured to pursue vested interests of the military as was done in the Mugabe era. However, three key innovations have been added: (i) the deployment of the military to control transition has been intensified and overt; (ii) the violence disbursed has been brazen and deep cutting; (iii) information sharing and media freedom have been increased to create a democratic picture of the regime abroad and to increase the number of recipients of fear and trauma created by news of military deployment and violence.

For transition to succeed, it must have a decisive power-bloc supporting it. Former president Robert Mugabe's departure was enabled by the decisive role of the military. The post-election protests in August 2018 were cut short by the decisive role of the military too. The future of political transition be it regime change or change of governance culture, lies in the ability to cause support of the military for the transition. Given the deep-seated relations between the military and ZANU PF, a 'force majeure' is needed to cause support for democratic transition within the military to ensure success of the transition.

#### **4.3 Recommendations**

- Human rights and democracy defenders in and outside the country should re-define the democratic transition problem in a way that identifies the military as a primary and decisive power-bloc in transition politics of Zimbabwe.
- For democratic transition to be successful, it must have support of key members of the military in Zimbabwe. A research on the homogeneity of the military and interests thereof should be sponsored to ventilate possible entry points for coalition building.

- Human rights and democracy defenders must endeavor to internationalise the transition problem in Zimbabwe by lobbying regional and international bodies to raise the costs of continued militarisation in Zimbabwe.
- Concerted efforts should be targeted at bursting the role of the military in key transition enabling processes such as the electoral environment, the protests, the media, the farms and the judiciary. Advocacy and lobby and national and international level should seek to address the militarisation and exposure of brutality in these transition pressure points. This will create an enabling environment for democratic transition to occur.
- Security sector reform should be adopted as the main agenda by pro-democratic transition agents to enable the military to re-assert its neutral and patriotic duty to the nation.
- Military leaders must be made to proclaim under oath on national television and radio stations renouncing their affiliation to any political party, condemning such affiliations and proclaiming their readiness to support any winning candidate in elections.
- Military leadership must be seen condemning and publicly opposing all acts of electoral manipulation and violence that threaten the longevity of peace in the country without taking sides. This will rebuild the lost trust, neutrality and respect in the public.

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## ABOUT THE ZIMBABWE DEMOCRACY INSTITUTE

The Zimbabwe Democracy Institute (ZDI) is a politically independent and not for profit public policy think-tank based in Zimbabwe. Founded and registered as a trust in terms of the laws of Zimbabwe in November 2012 (Deed of Trust Registration Number MA1223/2012), ZDI serves to generate and disseminate innovative ideas, cutting-edge research and policy analysis to advance democracy, development, good governance and human rights in Zimbabwe. The Institute also aims to promote open, informed and evidence-based debate by bringing together pro-democracy experts to platforms for debate. The idea is to offer new ideas to policy makers with a view to entrenching democratic practices in Zimbabwe. The ZDI researches, publishes and conducts national policy debates and conferences in democratization, good governance, public finance and economic governance, public policy, human rights and transitional justice, media and democracy relations, electoral politics and international affairs.

ZDI was born out of a realization that there is an absence of credible policy and research analysis by Zimbabwean organizations. A careful assessment of most publications on Zimbabwe's political economy shows that a majority of them are generated from outside Zimbabwe. ZDI's team of trustees includes eminent Zimbabwean scholars and experts.

The vision, mission and Objectives of the organization are as listed below:

### Vision

A democratic Zimbabwe in which citizens fully participate in all matters of governance, realize and assert social economic and political rights.

### Mission

To promote cutting-edge research and public policy analysis institute for sustainable democracy

To be the leading cutting-edge research and public policy analysis institute for sustainable democracy

### Organisational Objectives

1. To strengthen policy formulation and implementation through public policy debate in Zimbabwe.
2. To inculcate a culture of critical debate on public affairs among Zimbabwean citizens.
3. To ensure that Zimbabwe's development trajectory is shaped by locally generated information and knowledge.
4. To stimulate citizen participation by strengthening the capacity of state and non-state actors in undertaking research and analysis of public policy.
5. To ensure the direct participation of women in public policy formulation and implementation.
6. To ensure direct participation of youths in public policy formulation and implementation.