
THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE PARA-MILITARY IN CIVIL MILITARY
RELATIONS IN ZIMBABWE 1980-1987

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore civil military relations, ethnocentric accentuation and the difficulties faced by Zimbabwe in the formative years of independence. The objectives that guided the study were to discuss the link between civil-military relations and ethnicity, and to evaluate the role of youth during the post-conflict recovery and reconstruction period. The researchers used interviews and documentary analysis to gather data. The results showed that the youth can play either a destructive or constructive role in peace building. The post-conflict recovery period is fraught with many dangers which can either stabilise or destabilise the post independence civil- politico- military architecture and peace building. The recommendation is that post-conflict recovery and reconstruction should be done in the context of stable civil-military relations. The researchers concluded that the youths played a prominent role in the construction and deconstruction of the post independence peace process in Zimbabwe.

Keywords: Post-Colonial Regimes, Arms Conflict, Military, Zimbabwe.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Para-military in Zimbabwe called the Zimbabwe People's Militia was a significant component of the country's post-independence politico-military architecture and peace building/deconstruction. The employ of paramilitary forces was not an entirely new phenomenon in Zimbabwe. As part of its counter-insurgency strategy the Rhodesian regime had established auxiliary units to buttress the regular Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF) war effort against the freedom fighters. But, the questions are, 'What was the Zimbabwe People's Militia? Was it established as a complementary and strategic partner to enhance the defence and security sector of the country? Was the Zimbabwe People's Militia formed as a security "counter-balance" to regulate the influence of the armed forces of President Julius Nyerere's Tanzania National Service Scheme? Given the "perceived" fragility and insecurity of the state during the 1980s, where the security of the state was a priority, would it have been over-ambitious to expect genial civil military relations? What was the nature of the relationship between the para-

military forces, the Government and the People? Furthermore, did the Zimbabwe People's Militia operate independently of their state or party political institutions or were they serving perceived political and civilian elite interests?

This study answers these pertinent questions by integrating various arguments and evidence on youth and civil-military relations into a coherent whole of the contextual background, the genesis and the evolution of the Zimbabwe People's Militia from its establishment in 1980 to its disbandment in 1987. The study also focuses on the Zimbabwe People's Militia's subsequent relations with the other arms of the trinity, that is, the Government, the People and the Armed Forces. This study report is organised into thematic form. In attempting to address the role and functions of the Para-military in civil-military relations in Zimbabwe 1980-1987, the study was linked to literature review. The key themes that follow after this introduction are literature review, theoretical foundations, method and materials, results and discussion, conclusion and bibliography.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ndlovu-Gatsheni in Williams, Cawthra and Abrahams (2003) argues that civil-military relations in Zimbabwe were not uniform across the country in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. The Ndebele people are presented as a military off-shoot of the Militaristic and brutal Zulu kingdom under the kingdom of Shaka/Tshaka. Cobbing (1976) points out that the Shona people are often portrayed as the targets of Ndebele brutality in pre-colonial times. These pre-colonial relations shaped colonial and post colonial relations between the Shona and Ndebele.

The pre-colonial Ndebele state in Zimbabwe is an example of cordial relationship between the civilians and military. The Ndebele military was derived from the three-age set groups. Ndlovu-Gatsheni notes that the Ndebele military were not only agents of dictatorship and violence as some historians argue. The military provided crucial civilian and community services such as building homes, herding cattle, cultivating crops and general policing. The Ndebele military were only violent in external operations and after the military assignments, the military joined smoothly in the civilian community.

The war of liberation in Zimbabwe was fought by the Zimbabwe National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) under the overall name Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) against the Rhodesian Security Forces. Lan (1985) explains that the Zimbabwean civilians were in between ZANLA and Rhodesian Security Forces. These military groups were competing for the same turf (the civilians).

Kruger (1992) explains that in Mashonaland the guerrillas sought support and recruitment from the masses through intimidation, violence, force and murder. According to Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000) reiterates that violence and force marked the operations of guerrillas as they sought support and opportunities to recruit from the masses. However, Lan (1985) and Ranger (1967) argues that civilian-military relations were positive in Dande and Makoni areas in Mashonaland. The *mujibas* and *chimbwidos* were the link between the military and civilians. Bhebe (1999), Ranger (1967) and Brickhill in Bhebe (1999) studied civil-military relations in Matebeleland. Generally, their studies show that ZIPRA did not rely on spirit mediums and did not use force and violence to gain legitimacy among the civilians.

Alexander, McGregor and Ranger (2000) point out that Zimbabwe's attainment of independence in April 1980 was partly a result of the effective conduct of guerrilla warfare against the colonial Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF). The Zimbabwe National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) were the two groups that formed and sustained the military wings of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) respectively. These two military wings waged Zimbabwe's liberation war against the colonial regime that was anchored by the

RSF. ZANLA's liberation war strategy was Chinese-influenced. Its war ideology and strategies were rooted in the general masses in the communities. ZANLA relied on mass mobilisation to sustain a protracted guerrilla-based liberation struggle. The operational structure of ZANLA was composed of guerrilla units and *chimbwidos* and *mujibhas*. *Chimbwido* and *mujiba* are Shona words for female and male war collaborators. On the other end, ZIPRA's strategy was Soviet-oriented. The emphasis by ZIPRA was on conventional warfare strategy. It is important to note that from the formation and as the liberation war developed, nationalist politics planted the seeds of division since the birth of ZANU (Sadomba, 2011).

According to Shubin (2008), from the onset ZANU and ZAPU were violently opposed to each other and this animosity permeated to ZANLA and ZIPRA. Rigid identification by the fighters with nationalist political parties further entrenched the division with disastrous consequences for the guerrilla war. This animosity between ZANLA and ZIPRA did not only affect the relationships between these two military wings, but also dented the Zimbabwe post-independence civil military relations. Rupiya (2005) explains that typical of guerrilla insurgency, an integral facet of liberation war was the close interaction between the combatants and the wider civilian society. This close relationship was part of a function of the guerrillas' political orientation and mobilisation campaigns. The close interaction of the guerrillas and the masses from various communities presented opportunities for recruiting more guerrillas from the masses. In addition to presenting a ready recruitment base for the liberation armies, civilians were a critical source of intelligence and logistical provisions including food, clothing, money and medicine. The liberation struggle was greatly assisted by the employment of the youth as collaborators, intelligence gatherers and weapon carriers. This same segment of the population was later to play an important role in the para-military set up.

Sadomba (2011) purports that progressive nationalists recruited young people, organised them for military training and formulated military strategies and tactics, despite lack of formal training themselves. This phase was the early period of building a formidable war machine. Vested animosity failed to create cordial civil military relations in this early phase. However, the seeds for the creation of the problem were planted during this period and nurtured throughout the protracted liberation struggle. Thus, the civil military relations during the liberation struggle were marked by violence, intimidation, force and at times murder and coercive propensity of the guerrillas in their interaction with the peasants (mass).

The pre-independence ethnic and political rift between ZANLA and ZIPRA forces was replayed during the process of the reintegration of these erstwhile competing armies and the common opponents, the RSF, into independent Zimbabwe's unitary national defence force. The integration exercise was delicate and fraught with intense animosity and suspicions. The mutual suspicion between the RSF and the guerrillas persisted for some time.

The antagonism between the former guerrilla armies essentially based on the regional patterns of the recruitment and operation, the nature of training and mutual distrust between the armies and their political leaders translated to the dichotomisation of the liberation movement into ZANLA being dominated by the Shona people while ZIPRA was dominated by the Ndebele people. These former guerrillas compelled to co-exist in the Assembly Points to facilitate the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. It is not surprising therefore that tension and friction characterized the relations between the two former groups of combatants subsequently exploding into armed clashes in Chitungwiza in October 1980 and later, the more serious Entumbane clash in Matebeleland (Rupiya, 2005).

The discovery of arms caches on ZAPU properties resulted in expulsion of Joshua Nkomo and his sympathisers from parliament. An assortment of arms including grenades, anti-aircraft guns, rocket launchers, landmines, machine guns, AK 47s, mortars, bombs, pistols and binoculars were 'discovered'. The key questions are, 'Who discovered these weapons and with what effect on the fragile and shaky civil military relations? Why were fingers pointed at ZAPU when all the three adversaries had their own catches and even strategic forces?' The RSF had a

well oiled strategic force based in Masvingo (DD, 1994). ZANLA had its own back-up force stationed in rear bases in Mozambique (Nhidza and Gawa, 1993). Who was a threat to what? A threat on one hand, is identifiable, often immediately, and requires an understandable response. Military force since time immemorial, has traditionally been sized against threats; to defend a state against external aggression, to protect vital national interests and to enhance national security and civil military relations. A threat in short, is either clearly visible or commonly acknowledged. Vulnerability on the other, is often only an indicator, often not clearly identifiable, often linked to a complex interdependence among related issues, and does not always suggest a correct or even adequate response. Moreover, a vulnerability, unlike a threat, is not clearly perceived, often not well understood, and almost always a source of contention among the conflicting views (Liotta, 2005).

The top ZIPRA commanders comprising of Dumiso Dabengwa and Lookout Masuku were subsequently arrested. The drastic action taken by the government outraged many Patriotic Front ZAPU (PF) supporters including the rank and file in ZIPRA. This convinced the rank and file in ZIPRA that the worst was still to happen. The way that the government responded to the armed confrontations and discovery of the arms caches prompted defection by the ZIPRA elements from the cantonment centres. In addition, the integrated ZIPRA guerrillas engaged in mass exodus from the unitary Zimbabwe National Army, citing persecution and unequal labour practice and relations with ZANLA counterparts to “save their lives”.

According to Mngangwa, (1989), desertions were caused by many factors, but there were major. Firstly there was fear by some ZIPRA cadres and civilian supporters that the ‘discovery’ of arms might lead to a witch-hunt by the government. This feeling bred insecurity and worsened the hitherto fragile civil military relations. Secondly, and as argued by Mngangwa, there were some who felt that the actions taken by the government were too sudden, unjustified and draconian. They therefore wanted rectification of this through force. Thirdly, others viewed this as the best opportunity to advance the Patriotic Front ZAPU cause. This marked the birth of dissident phenomenon. Some fled the newly independent state to become refugees in Zambia, Botswana and South Africa. The incumbent government saw this as a regrouping to launch the final onslaught against it. This was compounded by South Africa’s destabilisation activity which included providing military and material subvention to surrogate Super ZAPU forces, adding another dimension to the national security threat. An increasing incidence in banditry activity culminating in the kidnap and murder of six foreign tourists reflected the severity of the situation.

The dissidents adopted a multi-pronged strategy. The first was political mobilisation and propaganda. They had to convince people in the areas they operated that they had genuine grievances and cause to fight for. Consequently, they had to project a picture of the government in a bad light and persuade people that they embodied and articulated the aspirations of the people. Once again, they had to recapture the hearts and minds of the rural populace just like they had successfully done in the protracted war of independence. How far successful they were imparting this message it is not exactly clear, but where persuasion did not work, they resorted to intimidation and force. The other strategy was to attack the government buildings and projects. Consequently, reconstruction projects, schools, resettlement schemes, commercial farmers and strategic installations were attacked. The dissidents also sought to disrupt law and order, thus rendering the dissidents affected areas unfavourable to the government. Mandaza (1996) argues that the civil-military relations in post-colonial Zimbabwe were shaped by colonial legacy. Civil-military relations in post-colonial Zimbabwe were largely authoritarian, divisive and racist in early phases of independence. In the later phases of post-colonial Zimbabwe authoritarianism still persists. However, the Zimbabwean military is now increasingly involved in community development projects such as the construction of houses for the needy, offering free medical services, constructing clinics and hospitals, initiating income generating projects for orphans and other vulnerable groups in society and disaster management.

3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The study of the role and functions of the Para-military in civil-military relations in Zimbabwe was based on three theoretical foundations. These are Structural Functionalism, Symbolic Interactionism and Conflict theories. Ritzer (2005) explains that the major contributors to Functionalism are Herbert Spencer, Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, Robert Merton and Talcott Parsons. The focus of Functionalists is on large scale social structures, sub-parts, stability, integration, consensus, collective effervescence, structural superiority over individuals and evolutionary change. Functionalists view society as a vast organism whose parts are interrelated. Functionalism focuses on the role of institutions in maintaining the overall functioning of society and that the institutions must address problematic aspects. The key terms in the Functionalist theory are – Status, role and institution. Status is a socially defined position in a group or organisation. We occupy different statuses in the groups and organisations we are a part of (military, family, work, church etc.); Role is a certain set of behaviours that are expected of and performed by an individual on the basis of his or her status or position in society. For example, teachers are expected to be disciplined and professional in and outside the school environment. The roles and statuses of the members of a group form an institution thus; the institution is a relatively stable structure of statuses and roles devoted to meeting the basic needs of people in a society. Examples include educational system, health care system and political system. The functionalism is important in this study because the focus of the study was on the roles and functions of the para-military in the interaction of the civilians and the military. The military and civilians are sub-units of society that interact on their own, or in relation to other sub-units to form an integrated whole termed society. However, Functionalism is criticized for being teleological and conservative.

Charles Horton Cooley, George Herbert Mead and Erving Goffman are among the major contributors to Symbolic interactionism. The Symbolic interactionist theory has a micro orientation because it attempts to get closer to the individual level of behaviour. The theory focuses on the actors, learning, context, interaction/exchange of symbols, the process of interaction and outcomes of interaction (Turner, 1999). The theory focuses on the processes whereby different people become part of a situation that the larger society defines as a social problem and construct a version of life that promotes certain values (Skocpol, 1980). An individual or group's definition of the situation is central to understanding the actions of that individual or group. Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead argue that although individuals learn values and ways of behaving early in life (from family). They also learn from *peer groups*, from which they draw much of their identity and sense of who they are. Individuals also learn values and behaviour from peer groups.

Symbolic interactionism is crucial because the study focuses on the interaction of the civilians and the para-military. Moreover, the para-military and the civilians exchange meanings and the interactions between the two results in outcomes that may be positive or negative. However, Symbolic interactionism lacks reference to macro factors that affect civil-military relations such as the political and economic climate.

4. METHOD AND MATERIALS

In compliance with Uwe (2006: 97) the case study research design was adopted, which relates to the development of detailed and intensive knowledge of a single case or of a small number of related cases. The case study research design involves the collection of information via a wide range of data collection methods. We applied a mixed method approach to data gathering in the selected case. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data gathering and data analysis were applied. Examples include documentary analysis, focus group discussions (FGDs), interviews, questionnaires and observation. The justification for using the

mixed methods design is that was considered the research problem to be complex and the use one approach or method or strategy as incomprehensive in addressing the research problem. Some aspects of study required quantification while some aspects needed exploration and explanations. However, we relied more on qualitative because the intention was to provide in-depth understanding, enable discovery, explore and interpret civil-military relations. Holland (2004: 5) explains that the target population is a term used to refer to all the individuals in an organisation or community who are potential participants for the study.

4.1 SAMPLING METHODS

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define a sample as a sub-unit drawn from the target population for the purposes of data gathering and the resultant generalization. The population may be too big to the extent that not all potential participants can be included in the study. A sample is economical and manageable. According to Burgess (2000), a sampling procedure is a technique used to draw the participants from the population. There are basically two categories of sampling procedures; probability and non-probability sampling. In this study sampling procedure were drawn from both categories.

Punch (2005) explains that purposive sampling is a sampling technique whereby the selected research participants are compiled on the basis of the information (real or perceived) that the targeted participants hold. For example, key informants (those with vital information on civil-military relations and roles and functions of the para-military relations) were selected on the basis of the information they possess for the purposes of the study.

Simple random sampling is a component of probability sampling procedures. Para-military members; Members of Parliament; and, the Chiefs were some of the participants randomly selected from the population. Creswell (2003) defines simple random sampling as a procedure of selecting participants from the population on the basis of simple random criteria. Random sampling does not imply a haphazard way of selecting participants but it is actually a logical approach to reduce bias in participant selection and allowing each potential participant to having an equal chance of being selected.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explain that stratified random sampling is based on strata established by the researchers or that naturally exist in the field. We used the already existing strata such as rank in the military, leadership position in society, age and sex to randomly select participants from these strata. This sampling technique was vital because it allowed the for the gathering of views from participants in various strata.

4.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The study involved the use of primary and secondary data collection methods. The primary methods included interviews, focus group discussion (FGDs) and questionnaires. Both primary and secondary methods have comparative advantages and disadvantages therefore in this study the methods were combined. Formal interviews were used on the basis of an interview guide while unstructured interviews did not follow a specific guide but focused on the core demands of the research topic. Both open and closed questions were used. Open ending questions allowed greater room for discussion because they are explorative. Close ending questions was used on issues which did not require elaboration. The rapport was established throughout the study in order to create a friendly environment for discussions. The study also used focus group discussions (FGDS) to gather data from groups of civilians. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) the FGD is a way of gathering data based on group interaction and facilitation. The questions on civil-military relations (FGD guide) were prepared and used for discussions.

There was a minimal use of questionnaires due to the need to maintain dominance of qualitative orientation. According to Uwe (2006), a questionnaire is a document containing questions designed to solicit information appropriate for analysis. Questionnaires were administered to experts in the field of civil-military relations and policy formulation who had time to discuss. Only the literates were given the questionnaire to complete. Questionnaires were also used to collect sensitive information because in direct face to face interviews or in FGDs some respondents were not being willing to share what they termed as 'sensitive' personal views.

Administered questionnaires ensured full response rate, the researchers could clarify, reinterpret questions and observe both verbal and non-verbal cues. There was precision in structuring the questions which combined both open and close ending questions for adequacy. Open ending questions were essential on aspects of the research where elaboration was needed while closed questions covered aspects which require no explanations. These strategies were intended to eliminate low response rate, ambiguity on questions, inconvenience, inappropriateness to the illiterate and inadequacy. The questionnaires complemented FGDs and interviews.

Ethical considerations were considered. Punch (2005) explains that research ethics are the pillars of social science research. We fully informed the participants about the research topic, the objectives of the research and how the research results were to be used. Their full consent was sought after full information was given. The participants were also informed that they are free to pull out of the research at any time. Informed consent created trust and facilitated smooth interaction between the researchers and the participants. Deception was avoided throughout the study so that the participants would contribute with full knowledge of the implications of the research. Deceiving participants would have created conflicts, massive turnover and lack of trust (Denzin, 1998). Respect for privacy was observed hence, the inquiry did not venture beyond the limits permitted by the respondents when collecting data. Furthermore, the questions only focused on those aspects pertinent to the research and nothing else. This ethical practice was crucial because it reduced conflicts. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed through the use of pseudo names and destruction of any research materials containing names and other information which may lead to the identification of the true identities of the participants. The protection of the information given by respondents as confidential protects their identities thereby maintaining social relations in the community.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Ethnic identities are dynamic both in their salience and character, even when an armed conflict has deepened divisions between groups and their ethnicity rise to become an all-dominant social marker. Important opportunities for peace building may be lost if intervening actors fail to acknowledge the dynamic nature and ethnicity and opt for policies that institutionalize ethnic differences. Approaches to institution-building in the wake of armed ethnic conflict vary in terms of ambition. Some treat the current level of conflict as fixed condition and aim merely to contain the situation so that violence does not break out again. A more ambitious approach, however, might aim to reduce the level of conflict by affecting existing conflict pattern in a more profound way. In the order to manage ethnic conflict, the current face of a particular conflict must be addressed; this important for the legitimacy of institutions, and consequently for social stability. However, there is danger that institutions are built on implicit *assumptions of intransigence* – an assumption that the nature and intensity of ethnic divisions are beyond transformation. Accordingly, it is argued here that the level of sensitivity to conflict pattern on the part of the authorities designing new institutions is critical to the peace process. Ethnic divisions must be addressed, but attempts should be made to reduce the salience. This may be achieved through the creation of institutions that, while providing for

proportional ethnic representation in the immediate post-conflict setting, do not fixate the accentuation on ethnicity in politics or counteract achievements towards the de-ethnicisation in other sectors of society. Moreover, each institution should ideally contribute towards a long-term de-ethnicisation of politics, by encouraging contacts and trust building across ethnic boundaries.

The establishment of the paramilitary agency in June 1982 was a landmark development in the civil and politico-military history of Zimbabwe. As a national regime security was confronted by a perceived dual threat, that is, from both internal and external actors the Government created the agency originally as an adjunct to the conventional Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF) in pursuance of galvanizing the defence apparatus. In a demonstration of the Government's prioritization of the paramilitary forces the Deputy Minister of Defence William Ndangana, was obligated with the administration of the unit. The unit was treated as a separate entity from the ZDF. While its members operated on a part-time basis, its hierarchical structure was similar to Zimbabwe National Army ranks, and it was commanded by serving officers.

The militias' were primarily intended to act as a bulwark against the dissident menace obtaining in the Southwest provinces of the country. They were meant to neutralize and thus spell doom to the dissidents. A subsidiary role was to act as a "guard force" in the event of external subversion. Prime Minister Robert Gabriel Mugabe outlined complementary counter-force mechanism task of paramilitary force when he noted that "militias would take measures to eradicate any enemy incursions before the national army was called in." The militia would act as the first line of defence.

The militiamen, just like youth's intelligence gathering roles during the liberation war, represented the "eyes and ears" of the government tasked with strictly security purposes of discovering reliable Information about dissidents and external enemies. This included details about enemy origins and Location, disposition, regalia, and intent. They would then pass the information to the regular forces. The thinking was that whilst the ZNA and the police would provide a mobile defence against dissident and the perceived invasion of apartheid South Africa, the militia would remain at home as local defense forces. Next they were to guard strategic infrastructure and installations like bridges, dams, lines of communications, food and fuel depots.

In the theory eligibility for recruitment was supposed to be non-discriminatory. The official statute states that Zimbabwean citizen of unquestionable loyalty, regardless of political persuasion, creed or ethnic background, aged between eighteen (18) and sixty (60) could enroll upon successfully completing the requisite medical examination. In a move, which reflected the affinity between the paramilitary force establishment and the liberation struggle, the majority of recruits were unemployed youths and those who had crossed into Mozambique during the height of the liberation struggle but had not received military training. The targeted number was twenty thousand (20 000) in 1982. To facilitate national security it was it was planned that the country's nine (9) provinces would each have a brigade and that there would be fifty-five (55) battalions throughout the country.

The training and Operations of the People's Militia and Civil-Military Relations were well structured. Training of the Peoples Militia at Battalion Battle School (BBS) in Nyanga, and other camps namely - Paradise in Bindura; Gabriel Central Training in Marondera; Zaka Centre; Lundi Shashi in Mwenezi; Mavhirivi in Gokwe; and Dadaya which was manned by the North Korean instructors. The training period was three months and the recruits were divided into three wings: Recruiting wing, Retraining wing and, the potential junior non-commissioned wing.

The trainees underwent basic military training and were also taught karate, martial art skills, bayonet fighting and judo. After the training period these recruits retained home not in limbo but in a standby position. By September 1983, 4 000 recruits had been trained and 1 500

instructors had been deployed all over the country. As dissident atrocities increased especially in 1984 the training programme was hastened. 8 500 militiamen had to be trained by May of that same year (Herald 22 May 1984). In a sudden and unbelievable turn of events, school-going youths in dissident affected areas were also to be trained. The poignant reality was that the powers-that-be in the government had reached the lowest point of desperation. This failure by the incumbent government to find acceptable power-sharing formula and to resolve questions like pan-ethnic solidarity and fair treatment of minorities led to the post-colonial state to be intransigent and to use the repressive machinery against its own people (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003). The nature of the paramilitary force's functions prescribed their close co-operation with the masses (*povo*) and the national defence and policing sectors. They were supposed to gather timely and accurate intelligence about the location, disposition and intention of the enemy to use by regular forces in their formulation of combat operations. It was essential that they cultivated and nurtured their influence among the civilian infrastructure through cordial means.

5.1 POLITICISATION OF THE PARAMILITARY UNITS

The paramilitary unit, originally, a security mechanism was essentially transformed into the arm of the ruling party ZANU (PF) party. In a surprise move in the lead up to the 1985 Parliamentary Election, the militia was to be called in ostensibly to help the forces of law and order in ensuring that every citizen entitled to vote would do so without fear. Notwithstanding this, however, the unit was embraced as a campaign tool with significant repercussions for its interaction with the people. The Editorial Comment in the 11 April 1985 edition of The Herald Newspaper explains:

“The creation of the people's militia is a deliberate political move based on trust to make the people an integral part of the nation's defence system... it reflects the democratisation of the branch of national defence. As a political act it contrasts sharply with claim of those with the hypocrisy advocate that the armed forces should be apolitical. Because nothing ... could be completely bereft of political convictions, and out of their functions satisfactorily. As a complement to the regular armed forces the people's militia should reflect a high level of political consciousness whereby the individual regards the gun as a weapon with which to defend the nation and the political system.”

The Zimbabwe Peoples Militia engaged in a “thorough-going campaign of politicisation” (The Herald, 11 April 1985). This was marked by violence against the general civilian sector:

“The ZANU PF Youth Brigade also became a prominent agent of violence and intimidation, particularly leading up to 1985 general elections. While the ZANU-PF Youth Brigade was not a military force in the true sense of the word, it is remembered in the Matabeleland region for the violence it perpetrated ... During the Fifth Brigade's depredations, the CIO and ZANU-PF Youth carried out more targeted programmes of political consciousness. The local and national elections of 1985 heralded a concerted campaign on the part of ZANU (PF) directed on the conversion, and accommodation of ZAPU cadres...The CIO was central in orchestrating the conversion, and accommodation of ZAPU leaders, councillors and others such as ZIPRA guerrillas...Parallel to the activities of the CIO, ZANU (PF) recruitment and campaigning was stepped up. The ZANU (PF) Youth became prominent agents of the

state in this process.....They operated mainly around districts' centres and gained stark recognition of the districts where they administered" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003:27).

The 1985 elections were conducted in an atmosphere characterized by violence and intimidation related to the split between ZANU (PF) and (PF) ZAPU and to the Matabeleland massacres in the early 1980s and tribal animosity between the Shona majority and minority Ndebele. The ZPM's violent conduct during its operations had negative effects on civil military relations with the population.

Several factors led to the disintegration of the people's militia. Chief among them were that the programme had become expensive and insurmountable to the government. By 1989 the economy of Zimbabwe was on the down-turn. Added to this, the signing of the Unit Accord in 1987, signalled the thawing of relations between ZANU and ZAPU, and the subsequent amnesty extended to the dissidents thereafter, spelt doom for the people's militia. The "perceived" threat from apartheid South Africa was also subsiding and the ZNA focused more of its manpower and the machinery on the RENAMO bandits both internally and externally. The people's militia was disbanded and its members then joined the Fifth (5th) Brigade and others joined the ruling party as "storm-troopers" yet others just dissolved into thin air. They only re-emerged, complete with uniforms, in the crucial parliamentary elections in June of 2000 and the presidential contest of March 2002.

6. CONCLUSION

The study shows that civil-military relations are a relatively new field for scholarly research. However, the literature on the subject is growing into a substantial body. This article distils from this body of scholarly literature focusing on civil-military relations in Zimbabwe between 1980 and 1987. The period from 1980 to 1987 was fluid as regards to the geo-political and *securico* status of not only Zimbabwe but the rest of the Southern African region as a whole. This fluidity determined the civil-military relations which prevailed then and the crucial role that was played by the Para-military. The study shows that the para-military of Zimbabwe has several roles and functions that could be positive or negative depending on one's perception. Civil-military relations in Zimbabwe are diverse and complex, depending on the historical period, contextual factors of that period and the political, social and economic ideology prevailing at a particular period. Stable civil-military relations are important if post-conflict recovery and reconstruction are to be achieved.

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