The Military Factor in Zimbabwe’s Political & Electoral Affairs

From this week, the Zimbabwe Briefing serialises a report recently launched by the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition. The report, titled ‘The Military Factor in Zimbabwe’s Political and Electoral Affairs’, was launched in Johannesburg on Thursday, 9 June. We begin with a Preface to the report written by a former senior member of the Zimbabwe National Army and security expert, Dr Martin Rupiya.

In Zimbabwe’s dynamic political and electoral affairs since 2000, it is difficult to see the woods for the trees as it relates to the role of the military? And yet, we must remain clear, the use of violence—manifest through the role of the military in politics—is but a reflection of the dominance of an aggressive faction within ZANU (PF), one that has always had the propensity to kill, maim and torture political opponents and is now able to do so using armed state organs. As we write, this faction is galvanized to extremes, shorn of all semblance of political rationality, spurred by the obvious failing health of the First Secretary and President against the background of fiercely contested, internal political succession issue within the party.

The excellent research undertaken here, carefully documenting events, facts and personalities associated with the violence strategy within a post-colonial Zimbabwe has to be located within the broader political survival struggle of a former liberation movement that has now lost electoral mass appeal. There are at least two historical epochs, over the last 30 years, during which evidence of the aggressive faction’s willingness to destroy political opponents had registered itself, only to be quickly reined in. The first period was against the Ndebele, as well as designed to destroy ZAPU the political party and former ZIPRA forces.

This period, from the early 1980s until 1988, witnessed separate armed and partisan elements created and used outside the purview of the official Zimbabwe National Army, later acknowledged by President Robert Mugabe as “moment of madness” the period witnessed the deployment of a highly partisan Zimbabwe People’s Militia (ZPM), the Korean trained 5th Brigade and the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) with a command and control chain that was separate from the conventional force.

The second period for the dominant aggressive faction to show its fangs was in 2000. This followed the then Army Spokesperson, Major Chiriyah Dye, before the right Parties. Elections of June 2000, announced that the Military was apolitical and would support any victor emerging from the electoral contest. This was the last time this type of message was to be heard. On 9th January 2002, led by the late Chief of Defence Staff Lieutenant General Vitalis Zvinavashe, the service chiefs pledged exclusive allegiance to President R. Mugabe and ZANU-PF.

The barely defeated ZANU-PF, only returned to office with a wafer thin 5 seat majority, publicly declared the establishment of a War Cabinet, people by “Ama-doda Sibili” and whose war mongering objectives were to be implemented by a security sector with a defined role and of course, after the necessary “purification” with the political opposition now tram muted to represent “the face of the enemy.”

This development has remained true to this day: where the partisan military is discharging a political role, holding the ring—bludgeoning any perceived or actual political opponents and thereby denying any political aspirants through the elections, the opportunity. Meanwhile, ZANU (PF) continues to desperately re-organise itself to wrest political power and legitimacy.

For example, in 2005, Operation Murambatsvina uprooted an estimated 700,000 families or 2.4 million people, a further fitting moment, showing us the propensity for callousness of this mendacious group. Again further and similar events were quickly culled from the cacophony of local and international criticism that emerged. The major electoral and political beneficacy from the critical constituencies of rural folk, the unemployed, struggling workers, students, intellectuals and urban communities is the Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai (MDC-T) whose manifesto promisses non-violence, tolerance and consultation in adopting people-centred policies—something that resulted in sweeping victories at local government, national assembly and even presidential vote in March 2008.

By 2008, after the unprecedented socio-economic collapse that further saw the deployment of the military in the strategic areas of the economy, the opportunity for divesting the politics away from government, national assembly and electoral results announcements were by one of the contestants: ZANU-PF.

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SADC Has Spoken, But Will Zimbabwe Implement?

SADC leaders meeting for an extra-ordinary summit on Zimbabwe in Sandton on 12 June, have urged the SADC Organ Troika to continue to as-

sist Zimbabwe in the implementation of the GAPA and to appoint their representatives as soon as possible to participate in the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Commit-

tee (JOMIC). Having noted the Livingstone Troika resolutions, SADC leaders encouraged the GAPA par-
ties to move faster in the implementation of the GAPA and create a conducive en-
vironment to the holding of elections that will be free and fair, under con-

ditions of a level political field. The challenge for SADC and for Zimbabwe leaders is to translate these words into positive action that benefits the people of Zimbabwe.

Significant victories scored by SADC on be-
half of the suffering masses of Zimbabwe yearning for a return to normal life are in the appointment of a three-member SADC monitoring team to work directly with JOMIC. Something ZANU-PF was vehemently opposed to. Secondly, SADC leaders flatly refused to review or set aside Livingstone Troika resolutions as ZANU-PF had wanted. These are positive develop-
ments, which, coupled with recommendations for action to be taken towards democratic elections, show that SADC has come of age.

Never mind the out-
right lies and spin that ZANU-PF mandarins are trying to put on regard-
ing the outcomes of the Summit, it is self-evident that ZANU-PF has come away empty handed. This is despite deployment of its three main spin-doctors – Jonathan Moyo, Tufa-
taona Mahoso and Vimbai Chivaura. The only con-
cern is that ZANU-PF will, as it did with the GPA, re-
fuse to implement these provisions because of the conspicuous absence of measures to address non-
compliance.

The CPA is a docu-
ment agreed to by all the parties, and, had it been fully implemented, would have represented sig-
nificant steps in the democ-
ratization agenda of Zimbabwe. But it has not been implemented. It is clear that those who wield power in Zimbabwe, that is, those in ZANU-PF and close to president Mugabe, lack the necessary political will to implement reforms. They will not reform vol-
untarily. Similarly, therefore SADC needs to take the next logical step beyond mak-
ing mere pronouncements. It needs to demonstrate to Zimbabwe that failure to act to comply with its pro-
visions will attract certain punitive measures. This is the only language that will elicit positive responses from ZANU-PF.

On behalf of the peo-
ple of Zimbabwe who are waiting to behold the dawn of a new democratic Zim-

babwe, we wish to thank SADC, and particularly Zimbabwe Mediator pres-
ident Zuma and his excel-

lent Facilitation Team for showing that they care about the ordinary people of Zimbabwe. Despite personal and many times venomous attacks on the Facilitation Team by ele-

ments in the state media in Zimbabwe, the Facili-
tation Team was not de-

terred, they kept their eyes on the ball. This people of Zimbabwe, I being one of them, greatly appreciate the sacrifice and commitment of the Facilitation Team.

We strongly urge the SADC Organ Troika to move swiftly to set up and dispatch the monitoring team that will work with JOMIC and to assist in mobilizing resources for JOMIC to be more effec-
tive and efficient in dis-
charging its mandate.

We appeal to the leadership of Zimbabwe, especially to president Mugabe and those in ZANU-PF who are using their political muscle to re-
 sist reforms, to please put the interests of the nation first and to sincerely con-
tribute to finding a lasting solution to the challenges facing our country.

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“Noted” or “Endorsed”? - Spinning the Unspinnable on the SADC Summit

and are legitimate. It means the Sum-
mit has given recognition to the Troika decisions. This is important when
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considered against the background that one party to the GAPA (ZANU PF) had taken umbrage against the SADC Livingstone Troika decisions on grounds of pro-
decural irregularity. Therefore, for anyone holding the view that the SADC Liv-
ingstone Troika decisions were illegitimate and that they should not be upheld, the recognition of the decisions by the Sum-
mit must be a disappointing outcome.

Also important to consider is that the interpretation of that word, “noted” in Article 21 cannot be done in isolation. In interpreting words of any document con-
text matters a great deal. The word ‘noted’ is used in various provisions of the SADC Communique - see Article 9, 12, 21 and 30 for example - and in each case the no-
tion communicated by noting is official recognition by the SADC Summit that a matter was brought before it. It is a statement of the Summit accepting its value. In fact, Clause 30 of the SADC Communique also states that the Summit ‘noted’ the recom-

mendations of the sanctions mission man-

dated by SADC in August 2010. It does not say it ‘endorsed’ the recommendations but that does not mean SADC takes the issue less seriously. No-one seems to be downgrading the idea of ‘noting’ san-
cctions recommendations but instead giving publicity as SADC’s recognition of the sanctions problem in Zimbabwe.

In any event, if the SADC Sum-
mit had rejected the SADC Livingstone Troika decisions as some would have the world believe, it would have stated as much in unequivocal and no uncertain terms. Instead, not only did the SADC Summit recognise those decisions, it went further in Clause 24 to “urge the SADC Troika to appoint their representatives as soon as possible to participate in the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Commit-
tee (JOMIC)”. This is a body mandated to monitor the imple-
mentation of the Global Political Agree-
ment (GPA) that forms the foundation of the present Inclusive Government.

The appointment of a team by the SADC Troika to work with the JOMIC was one of the key decisions of the SADC Livingstone Troika Summit. It was also heavily opposed on grounds that it rep-
resents interference with Zimbabwe’s sovereignty. That the SADC Summit has reiterated in its Communique what the SADC Livingstone Troika resolved in March gives further weight to the view that in effect it has recognised and upheld the decisions of the Livingstone Troika. It must be pointed out, albeit as an

aside, that the view propagated in some quarters that the team to be appointed by the SADC Troika represents interference in Zimbabwe’s sovereignty is rather dis-
ingenuous in light of SADC’s role regard-
ing the GPA. It is a guarantor of the GPA. It has a responsibility to ensure the full implementation of the GPA. In fact, one could argue that SADC has already lived up to its obligation by appointing the JOMIC - the team that will act to comply with its pro-
visions contrary to what may have been argued by those opposed to them. The opposite would have been to side/ignore or totally reject the Livingstone Troika decisions without equivocation. The Summit did not do that. In fact it went on to reiterate the need to appoint a team to monitor the full implementation of the GPA, a key resolution and out-
come of the Livingstone Troika Summit.

The substance of the outcome is clear for any reasonable mind to see. But what we see instead is an exercise in spinning the unspinnable. It is the po-

eitical equivalent of the football manager who, upon his team losing a match, tells the media that his team did not lose but rather that it simply conceded more goals than it scored. It doesn’t change the out-

come. It is called a loss in any language.

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ZANU PF hardliners mislead Mugabe on SADC

The second time in three months, the SADC heads of States and government have sent a critical message to the ZANU PF component of the inclusive government that Zimbabwe must return to democracy, and the people of Zimbabwe have a democratic choice. The clear and democratic election outcomes contrary to the outbursts of President Mugabe following his hurried departure in Sandton. In this article, I seek to dismiss the statements of Mugabe and the ZANU PF propaganda machines that the SADC Troika positions on SADC have been rejected.

In the meeting of the SADC leaders and the Facilitator President Jacob Zuma of South Africa in Sandton, South Africa did not endorse the outcomes of the SADC Troika meeting on 31 March 2011 which called for the full implementation of the Global Political Agreement (GPA). The election roadmap which the Livingstone Outcome stated on clause 24 of the Communiqué which states that Summit urged the Organ to appoint its representative as soon as possible to participate in the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (JOMIC) and point 25 which states that the leadership mandated the SADC secretariat to mobilize resources for JOMIC for it to discharge its duties. Another critical point made by the SADC Summit which clearly shows that the regional leaders supported and endorsed the Livingstone outcome is captured on clause 26 which says that the Summit encouraged parties to the GPA to move faster in the implementation of the GPA and create a conducive environment for the holding of elections that will be free, fair, and credible. The above issues adopted by the SADC Summit in South Africa speak to the core issues agreed upon and adopted in Livingstone. It therefore boggles the mind to hear President of a country feeding his citizens with propaganda when he was part of the meeting which made adopted these issues.

The election roadmap which the Livingstone Organ Troika meeting adopted speaks to issues of leveling the political playing field before the holding of elections and the next election. These issues are succinctly captured on clause 26 of the Communiqué which Charumbira is misleading Mugabe that such a thing is not there. Charumbira was in the meeting of the SADC leaders and is privy to the fine details of the debate which transpired before the Communiqué was issued but he decides to swallow what Charumbira feeds him because he feels he cannot bear the truth.

It is in the interest of Mugabe and those in ZANU PF concerned with the future of Zimbabwe that attempting to be cocky against the wise council of the regional leadership will not accept their case. The regional leaders have no reason to rubbish SADC and reject its advice will leave ZANU PF and Mugabe to continue misleading Zimbabwe.

Charumbira and his propaganda team of State journalists were quick to create a political narrative that would save ZANU PF and allow Mugabe to continue misleading Zimbabwe. This is a complete lie meant to save ZANU PF and Mugabe’s ego after the party of the octogenarian was humiliated by the SADC leaders. What is clear from what has transpired in Sandton since the Livingstone outcomes is that the regional leaders supported and endorsed the Livingstone outcomes and the position of the ZAMBU PF’s ego after the lie meant to save the face of his principal Mugabe.

In this article, I seek to dismiss the statements of Mugabe and the ZANU PF propaganda machines that the SADC Troika positions on SADC have been rejected.

The time for President Mugabe to read the signs of the times is now. This is not a moment to đa©nize the ZANU PF of long ago that was freely constituted. The time for President Mugabe to read the signs of the times is now. This is the opportune time for him to negotiate a political exit and a future democratic road map to return the country to democratic legitimacy promised on the rule of law before the whole world unite to ditch him. Mugabe should be sober and digest the implications of attempting to remain defiant against his last bastion of support, SADC. The significance of the ZANU PF false narrative means a lot of things to both SADC and democratice progressive political and civic forces in Zimbabwe. One of the messages is that ZANU PF rejects the outcomes of the meeting and would want to disregard them. This will be shown clearly if ZANU PF and its norm-violating securocrats continue to operate in a partisan manner and abuse human rights as before and refuse to implement the outcomes of the Livingstone SADC Troika meeting which called for the democratization of the political environment in Zimbabwe before the holding of future elections. On the domestic front, if the regime continues as it has done before such as refusing to implement fully the provisions of the GPA which among other things calls for security sector re-alignment and the liberalization of the airwaves then it will be clear that ZANU PF will be going for broke in the next election and is prepared to be a full pariah state in these eyes of its peers in the region. In the interest of Zimbabwe’s future, Mugabe should think twice before he implements positions from his poisonous propaganda team only to be discarded by the people of Zimbabwe and the securocrats who are concerned more about protecting their selfish economic and security interests. SADC leaders mean business. The toxic advice from these hardliners will not rescue Mugabe’s difficulty relations with the region. In fact, any reasonable person would ask why then is Mugabe still around when the elections are drawing nearer? The repeated attempts are accustomed to but for their own stubborn purposes for the democracy which they have fought for and the sacrifices of many ZANU PF heroes.

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On Leadership

O n Wednesday 8 June 2011, I had the opportunity to travel to Bu-
tique in Johannesburg, South Africa, for the 9th SADC Summit: Zimbabwe comes to South Africa. This summit was held at Cresta Churchill and the Zimbabwean President, Robert Mugabe, was in attendance.

The summit was attended by representatives from all the SADC countries, including those from the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party, which is perceived as a threat to Zimbabwe's ruling party, ZANU-PF. The summit was a platform to discuss issues of mutual interest and to demonstrate the solidarity of the SADC countries.

The summit was well attended with representa-
tives from the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, National Constitu-
tional Assembly, Zimbabwe Ex-
iles Forum, Zimbabwe Solidarity Forum in South Africa and many
more. ZANU(PF) big wigs were also present to make their view known. Among those who con-
tributed were Tafadzwa Ma-
hou, Brigadier General Asher Tafadzwa, Chris Mutsvangwa and Josh-
ua Sacco. The summit was supported by the usual
discussed protesta-
tions: that civil society
is funded by the West and its impetus can
cannot be imputed in its approach to issues of governance and hu-
man rights. Sacco conveniently forgot that the federal ZANU-PF
government, which sponsored formulations within the student, church, political movements; including NGO’s that are imple-
menting the Constitution as a legal framework (CPK) which is responsible for monitoring the exploitation of women and children is a tool used against the political oppor-
thus the Jamhuri Party, which brought much of their intellec-
tual muscle to the debate, rather than the grassroots. The Brigadier-General. Thus, al-
though tensions were high, the debates were enhanced by South Af-
can civil society representation and the feeling of the airwaves and the adop-
tion of the SADC resolu-
tions that were made in Liv-
ingston, Zambia. The march proceeded well, but with the rally that was supposed to take place after was disrupted af-
fer anarchist elements infiltrated the march and started burning
-shirts and throwing teargas. 

My Call on Conscience
The summit has been marked by the intolerant behavior witnessed from some hooligans at the last SADC meeting, let alone the tear-
Little surprise as ZANU-PF turns to the gun to win elections

"Our votes must go together with our guns; after losing the vote, we shall have been the product of the gun. The gun, which produces the votes, shall also produce the members of the government. When a government is in power, it should have its own security officer, its guarantor. The people's vote and the gun's votes are inseparable twins." 

These words, pregnant with meaning, were spoken by Robert Mugabe on 19 January 1967. In an ideological viewpoint that ZANU-PF has struggled to part with to this day, the purpose of the gun pre-independence was to ensure ZANU-PF's ascendancy to the leadership of Zimbabwe. Post Independence, the purpose of the gun has been to maintain the party in power.

Faced with overwhelming unpopularity three decades later, ZANU-PF, under the leadership of Emmerson Mnangagwa, has turned to the gun again to ensure its top position in the political power structure. But democracy is not rule by the gun; rather, it is rule by the people. It is the people who must care about this as it appears set to engage, once more, in a brutal, lethal, and vicious manner of ensuring that the ballot gives it some returns. It is a startling contradiction.

After losing the control of parliament for the first time since 1980 in 2008, and president Mugabe having trailed the opposition by more than 30% in the first round of the presiden
tial election the reality of losing power dawned on ZANU-PF. This was no other option for the party than to turn to the military which was formed and tested method. And only the military and the party's other para-mili
dary organisations would satisfactorily "deliver" the vote in the June 27 run-off election. Indeed the gun pre
served the vote in 2008 by ensuring that voters op
ered to the rule of President Mugabe and ZANU PF were beaten into apathy and others force-marched to polling stations to vote for Mugabe who was the obvious contest against himself. In a carefully executed war-like strategy, the military leadership led by Deputy President Mugabe's victory and therefore ensure that ZANU-PF maintained its upperhand in Zimbabwean politics. This strategy has continued as evidenced by the continued presence of military offfic
erial officers such as Vice Air Marshall Muchena, who was appointed by Mugabe although he had now become uniformed. So, what Zimbabweans think is the national army is not ZANU PF's military wing (ZANLA) now uniformed and with bet
ter weaponry and funded by the taxpayer. That is why the constitutional
tional reform with the party and the military was never made after 1980. Despite all the strategies and attempts, the military has been the right political move. Hence the military perceives any threats to the party a direct threat to the military. The Mugabe regime has always been a military backed. Therefore, the military has a strong political position in the party. The military controls the gun. The controls the military has a strong political position in the party. The military controls the gun.

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The wounded patriarchs of ZANU-PF's spin doctors peddle the lie that Mugabe and ZANU PF have been sug
eratorially suggested that president Zuma had agreed that the 'girl's wings must be clipped.' Why should any
ter face off when Zuma is a strong woman at the centre of efforts to pull Zimbabwe out of the ZANU PF manufactured quagmire? Ambassador Lindiwe Zulu, Zuma's International Relations Advisor to president Zuma, is no Matzikumulo to negotiating peace processes, she has previ
ously been at the behest of the Democratic Republic of Congo and has been South Africa's Ambassador to Brazil. ZANU PF sidekicks should show her some respect. And women in ZANU PF must protest when little male egos instigate and launch depraved and extremely unpleasant attacks on a woman who is simply trying to help the people of Zimbabwe. She does not own the people of Zimbabwe a duty of care. Such vile hate language used in attacking the per
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