



## ZIMBABWE AND NO END

After the first elections in Zimbabwe without its founding father and long term dictator Robert Mugabe Zimbabweans saw their hopes dashed for a new democratic start. President Mnangagwa won with a slight majority while his party ZANU-PF won a two third majority in parliament. The intimidation before the elections and the crackdown on the opposition after the elections revealed the old dictatorial nature of the new government.

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**FEPS**

AUGUST  
2018

The historical elections in Zimbabwe of 30<sup>th</sup> July 2018 turned out not to be the positive surprise many had hoped for. When protesters in Harare demonstrated against the slow release of the election results by the Zimbabwean Electoral Commission, police and military shot live ammunition into the crowd killing six. When the results finally were announced Harare resembled a ghost city.

The elections had been called historical because for the first time after independence did they take place without the country's founding father and long term dictator Robert Mugabe. In a military coup he had been removed in November last year and been replaced by his close party comrade Emmerson Mnangagwa. The ZANU-PF establishment did not like that Mugabe supported the efforts of his much younger wife Grace to succeed him and therewith threatened the dominance of the old guard. Mnangagwa faced two tasks: firstly to revive the economy and secondly to keep his party in power through internationally accepted elections which would legitimise the "military assisted transition" of last year and his position as State President.

After taking over the government last year the 75 year old Mnangagwa concentrated on economic matters. He revoked the indigenisation legislation which requires companies to be over 50% Zimbabwean owned, invited foreign investors and admitted that the controversial land reform of 2000 was a mistake. More than 4000 white farmers were violently forced off their farms. Now Mnangagwa invited them to return and that they would be secure. Zimbabwe also applied to re-join the Commonwealth. He knows that his economic policies will only be successful if the country returns to stability after having gone through peaceful elections with a country-wide accepted outcome.

The second task turned out to be more difficult because the elections were a close race between Mnangagwa's ZANU-PF and the coalition of opposition parties MDC-Alliance (Movement for Democratic Change) under the leadership of 40 year old Nelson Chamisa who replaced long term leader Morgan Tsvangirai who died of cancer at the beginning of this year.

The Electoral Commission announced that Mnangagwa won the presidential elections with 50.8% while Chamisa received 44.3%. The figures for the presidential election were in line with earlier predictions of a close race between the two blocks. Afrobarometer's poll saw Mnangagwa at 40% and Chamisa at 37%.

The Electoral Commission further declared that ZANU-PF won a two third majority of 145 seats in parliament while the MDC got 63 seats; an increase of 15 seats from the 2013 elections. One seat went to the National Patriotic Front and one to an independent candidate. The results for the National Assembly reflect the urban - rural divide. The MDC won 28 of the Harare constituencies while ZANU-PF got only one seat in the capital, just as in the country's second city, Bulawayo. In the rest of Zimbabwe i.e. in rural areas ZANU-PF

dominated. 68% of the 14 million people in Zimbabwe live in rural areas. The results suggest that predictions were influenced too much by opinions of the urban population.

Mnangagwa needs credible elections. The EU so far had not responded positively to Mnangagwa's efforts to revive the economy and to normalise international relations. The EU extended its sanction regime to February 2019. Therefore, for the first time in two decades Zimbabwe invited foreign observer delegations into the country. All observer groups confirmed that the election process itself was quiet and peaceful. AU (African Union) and SADC (Southern African Development Community) stated that the elections were free and fair and that the results needed to be respected. Also the President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, urged Nelson Chamisa to accept the results.

Non-African observer groups were more critical. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed the organisation's concern at the increasing number of reports, particularly in some rural areas, of voter intimidation, threats of violence, harassment and coercion. In a joint statement the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute of the US confirmed irregularities with the voters' roll and the operation of the Zimbabwean Electoral Commission. The EU mission pointed out "misuse of state resources, instances of coercion and intimidation, partisan behaviour by traditional leaders and overt bias in state media". After the election the chief observer of the EU, Elmar Brok, criticised the slow release of the results of the presidential election which is contributing to a "lack of credibility".

In the run up to the elections the MDC-Alliance questioned the impartiality of the Electoral Commission and the correctness of the voters' roll indicating that they do not expect the conduct of fair elections. Considering the experience with past elections under the ZANU-PF government the opposition's doubts cannot just be put aside as a reflex of an opposition that might expect losing. In 2013 the Electoral Commission contemplated for 5 weeks over the results and finally announced that no one had a majority and ordered a re-run. The opposition was convinced that Morgan Tsvangirai at that time had a clear majority.

The MDC-Alliance rejected the results because allegedly the agents of the parties were not allowed to see and verify the figures presented by the Electoral Commission. The MDC-Alliance claims that 21% of the V11 forms were not posted outside the polling stations as required. The forms summarise everything that has taken place in the polling station and can be used to deduct results separate from those of the Electoral Commission. Consequently the Alliance challenged the official election results in the Constitutional Court with the help of lawyers from South Africa. But the Court found that the opposition failed to place before it sufficient and credible evidence of irregularities. After the ruling of the Court the inauguration of President Mnangagwa took place on 26<sup>th</sup> August.

The opposition was fractured and ill-prepared for the elections. The MDC Alliance consists of seven parties that only recently joined forces for the election. Nelson Chamisa as the

successor of Tsvangirai was chosen to be the leader hoping that he would attract the younger generation in urban areas. This seemed to have worked considering the success of the Alliance in urban areas, which, however, have always been the centres of opposition to ZANU-PF. The Alliance lacked the resources and time to mobilise voters in rural areas where the population depends on government structures and therewith on ZANU-PF.

Two days after the elections the headquarters of the MDC were raided by the police. A search warrant of the city magistrate said that Nelson Chamisa and several others were suspected of the crimes of possession of dangerous weapons and inciting public violence. The warrant authorised the confiscation of computers and documents. The headquarters were closed and guarded by a heavy contingent of police officers. The MDC fears the raids were aimed at preventing the party from conducting its own count of the election results. The crack down on the opposition continued when one week after the election 27 members of the MDC had to appear in court on charges of inciting violence.

In a further move the government arrested Alliance co-leader Tendai Biti at the border to Zambia when he tried to flee the country to seek asylum there. Mnangagwa claims that on his intervention Biti was released on bail indicating that there are differences between Mnangagwa and the security establishment. It is also reported that President Ramaphosa of South Africa stepped in to solve the situation. In any case, the action of the government was a PR disaster and tainted the picture of free and fair elections.

The declared winner, Emmerson Mnangagwa, was born in 1942 and joined the struggle for independence from British rule in 1966. He underwent military training in China and from that time onwards enjoys the support of this country which stated to accept Mnangagwa's victory. His "Crocodile" nickname can be traced back to his ferocious "Crocodile Gang" unit that fought against colonial rule. After independence he was allegedly partially responsible for the brutal crackdown on opposition supporters in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces with a death toll estimate of 20.000. He never apologised for his involvement but set up a commission to address the allegations.

His relationship with Mugabe was not always easy but he served him in key positions. In 2008 he was head of Mugabe's election campaign and after Mugabe lost the first round Mnangagwa allegedly supervised the wave of violence and intimidation that forced the opposition to pull out of the run-off vote. His battle with Mugabe's wife Grace for the top job triggered the crisis that finally toppled Mugabe. When Mugabe dismissed him as Vice President he had to make a dramatic escape to Mozambique because of fear for his life. After the coup the military made him State President and he returned triumphant to Harare.

The mastermind behind the coup and Mnangagwa's appointment is Constantino Chiwenga who is Deputy President and also (unconstitutionally) Minister of Defence. He represents the military establishment that has the real power in Zimbabwe and which is dominating politics to safeguard their economic interests. In 1998 it deployed troops into the Second Congo War

and an UN panel in 2002 reported that a Congolese and Zimbabwean elite network is plundering the natural resources of the DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo). The military was behind the violence associated with the land reform programme and many confiscated farms were handed over to senior military officers. When the wealth of the Maranga diamond fields became apparent small scale miners were forced out by the military and the massive profits from mining were siphoned into private hands and bypassed the treasury.

During the election campaign ZANU-PF tried to persuade Zimbabweans that the economic downfall of the country is due to Mugabe's bad policies and that the "new dispensation" under President Mnangagwa is a reformed group of people that will transform Zimbabwe while the young Chamisa is unfit to govern. They try to hide the fact that the power still rests with the same elite.

In a developing country like Zimbabwe one does not expect a flawless voter's roll and the bar for credible elections is low. But the assessment of international observers about the missing of an equal level field for elections, the excessive force used against demonstrators, and the raids on the headquarters of the opposition party MDC and especially the arrest of opposition leader Biti have dashed hopes of Zimbabweans for a new start after the Mugabe era. Despite Mnangagwa's soft rhetoric and his conciliatory approach to international business and foreign countries he cannot hide the fact that he is part of and dependent on the ZANU-PF establishment. He is a military-backed veteran hardliner.

Zimbabwe will have to get along with Mnangagwa as State President. The crackdown on the opposition after the elections revealed the unchanged nature of ZANU-PF, a government party that builds and maintains its power if necessary through violence against its own population. The change one can hope for after the Mugabe era could be that the Mnangagwa government is pursuing a sensible economic policy that would create the necessary jobs the people of Zimbabwe are longing for. For most of them jobs are more important than the nature of their government: democratic or authoritarian.