

# Zimbabwe elections: Mnangagwa wins, violence follows

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Emmanuel Mnangagwa managed to gain just enough votes, 50.8 percent, to win Zimbabwe's presidential election and secure the post he gained by force in the military coup to oust Robert Mugabe in November 2017. That slim majority means the ruling Zanu-PF candidate will not have to face a second round against his rival, Nelson Chamisa of the Movement For Democratic Change, MDC, who gained 44.3 percent.

The opposition forces, who won majorities in almost all the urban centres, including the capital Harare, and among the oppressed ethnic groups, like the Ndebele people, soon discovered what Mnangagwa has in store for them, when police and other state forces raided MDC offices, arrested its leaders and physically attacked its post-election rallies, killing at least six people.

Chamisa appealed against the result but lost his case without, it appears, putting forward much actual evidence of electoral fraud. Indeed, Zanu-PF won over 144 of the 210 parliamentary seats contested, proving that it does still have an electoral base in the population.

Election monitors from various countries, including the US, China and the EU (though not the UK, due to its imposition of sanctions), reported minor irregularities but did not question the result. The irony of China being an authority on electoral matters will not be lost on the Chinese of course ? nor on Zimbabweans, for that matter, since Mnangagwa flew to Beijing to seek Chinese approval a few days before he launched his coup last year.

Neoliberalism or neoliberalism?

Clearly, some of Mnangagwa's support derived from his role in getting rid of the hated dictator Mugabe; yes, it was a military coup, but it was also accompanied by huge celebrations on the streets.

This has subsided to a large extent in the cities and those parts of the country where memory of the Crocodile's role as Zanu-PF's security chief overseeing the genocidal massacre of over 20,000 Ndebele people in Matabeleland between 1982 and 1987 remains fresh. But for large parts of the countryside, where two-thirds of the population live, Zanu-PF, under new management, as it were, continues to embody the spirit of anti-colonial resistance.

Of course, this illusion couldn't be further from the truth. Zanu-PF's People's Manifesto euphemistically stated:

?We are now in a New Dispensation under the leadership of ZANU-PF, where focus and preoccupation of the new administration is opening up the country for business?and promoting investment, economic empowerment and realigning to an investor-friendly trajectory that leads to economic growth?.

Wages, trade union and democratic rights, crucial public services and tax breaks will all now be ?realigned? to the needs of foreign, imperialist investors. The only real difference with the Mugabe era is that now Mnangagwa will court US and, especially, British investors in an attempt to play one imperialist camp off against the other. Theresa May?s current trade tour of southern Africa emphasises the UK?s eagerness to take up the offer.

To pave the way for Britain dropping economic sanctions, which will surely follow swiftly, Mnangagwa has promised to compensate evicted white farmers, offered those remaining 99-year leases and suggested incentives to those who emigrated to Zambia and elsewhere.

No wonder the Crocodile proved a hit in January in the Alpine resort of Davos, where he was the first Zimbabwe leader to be invited to the World Economic Forum.

### Time to change away from the MDC

Another reason for Zanu-PF?s victory, however, lies in the fact that what the opposition offered was little better, indeed, in many ways it was actually worse. Its manifesto made the tragic error of promising agricultural reform in reverse, by opening up a free market for arable land. This could only have the effect of increasing the rate of monopoly on the land and returning redistributed lands to their former (white) owners.

The MDC went further than Zanu-PF in offering ?ease of doing business? reforms for foreign investors. And it too was tainted by its years of loyally passing anti-working class legislation when it was a junior partner with Mugabe in 2009-13.

The reason why it continues to have mass support among large parts of the working class is that the MDC started out as a workers' party, or at least one set up in 1999 by the trade union bureaucracy. Its initial leader Morgan Tsvangirai was the Secretary-General of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, ZCTU.

Despite its origins, however, the MDC it courted support from western imperialism and the white farmers from the start, even going so far as to promise to implement the IMF Structural Adjustment Programme in full. Soon, white capitalist agribusiness controlled many of the levers inside the party and this year it stood in alliance with six smaller capitalist parties. Rather than call for a new party, however, the ZCTU leadership has, in an opportunistic and unprincipled manner, continued to support the MDC Alliance.

What is needed is a new working class party. The trade union movement, though it has suffered defeat and retreat in recent years, is still one with a proud record of militancy. So too have peasant organisations.

The rank and file of the unions, in an alliance with the urban and rural poor, need to break free from the death grip of the union leaders, first by organising resistance to the clampdown and the employers? offensive which will surely follow the election; then by calling local and national conferences to discuss the lessons of the MDC and steps towards setting up a new party, under control of the rank and file and with a revolutionary anti-capitalist, anti-colonial programme. One that reaches out in international solidarity and seeks ties with similar moves afoot in South Africa. One that can finish off the struggle for national independence in the only way possible, by fighting for a Socialist Federation of Africa as part of a socialist world.