



MAIN STORIES

Election Results and Outlook

HIGHLIGHTS

- According to the official Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) statistics, President Emmerson Mnangagwa won 52.6% of the vote and his main contender, Nelson Chamisa from the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) won 44%. Overall, voters' turnout was 68.86%, sharply down from 85.10% in 2018.
- Mnangagwa described his election victory as a product of a "mature democracy." Chamisa described the presidential election result as a "blatant and gigantic fraud."
- The CCC on 29 August called for fresh elections supervised by neighbouring countries, digging in on its rejection of the election results.
- Zanu-PF won 136 (65%) parliamentary seats (145 in 2018) and the CCC 73 (63 in 2018), with the ruling party retaining its rural base and the CCC capturing the urban vote.
- The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM), led by Zambia's former Vice President, Nevers Mumba, concluded that some aspects of the elections fell short of the requirements of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, the Electoral Act, and the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2021). Acting Foreign Affairs Minister, Amon Murwira, reportedly told ambassadors from the SADC to alter its preliminary report by removing parts that tainted Mnangagwa's electoral victory.
- Zanu-PF spokesperson, Christopher Mutsvangwa, accused Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema and Mumba of trying to use the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to advance Western interests in the region.

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- The SADC Secretariat in Botswana dispatched its Panel of Elders (PoE) on a fact-finding mission into the disputed elections in Zimbabwe between 28 August and 1 September 2023.
- The European Union (EU) election observation mission (EU EOM) said that during the election process, fundamental freedoms were increasingly curtailed, both in the passing of regressive legal changes. The government summoned EU ambassadors accredited to Harare for a meeting, where it accused the EU EOM of bias.
- President Cyril Ramaphosa was amongst the first leaders to congratulate Mnangagwa on his victory.
- China and Russia, both key allies of Zimbabwe, sent congratulatory messages.
- United States (US) State Department spokesperson, Matthew Miller, said the country intends to share its concerns over the elections with regional leaders. US Senator Jim Risch called for a review of all aspects of the existing US-Zimbabwe relationship and called the elections a sham.
- UK Minister for Development and Africa, Andrew Mitchell, said the pre-election environment and election day fell short of regional and international standards.



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Key Findings:

- Zanu-PF has perfected a ‘new’ approach to election rigging: Don’t openly intimidate or kill anyone on election day while the observers are active, but rather manipulate the voters’ role and control the counting process which inevitably takes place behind closed doors.
- The CCC will have to review its political and election strategy, maybe even its leadership.
- While the CCC has prevented a two-thirds Zanu-PF parliamentary majority, this is not enough to steer the country out of its dire economic mire. On the contrary, Zanu-PF may even sideline parliament from its role in scrutinising the exercise of executive power.
- A fragile region, including South Africa, already looking after more than two million Zimbabweans, now has to face a fresh wave of Zimbabwean immigrants.
- After nearly two decades of targeted sanctions, the appetite in the West to continue to exclude Zimbabwe has waned. As SADC is expected to walk back on its initial criticism of the election, the West is not expected to take any substantial measures to penalise Zanu-PF for the sham election. However, political and commercial relations between the West and Zimbabwe will remain poor because of the elections.
- More than being worried about democracy, there will be concerns about what measures will be counter-productive to Western as well as other interests, especially in the light of growing geopolitical competition in the subcontinent.
- From an economic point of view, the worst might yet to come. Inflation could spiral higher, with the currency depreciating even further. That will saddle the country with a lack of trust by the investment community, because of a kleptocratic arrangement that favours those who are connected to the political centre. In short, those who are connected will continue to benefit at the expense of ordinary Zimbabweans and everyone else — including potential investors.



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- China and Russia will continue to back Zanu-PF, also by way of selective investments, for instance in the mining sector. In return, they will receive preferential treatment, sometimes at the expense of the national economy, but to the benefit of Zanu-PF apparatchik.
- Mnangagwa will face a tough task keeping his web of political power stitched together over the next five years. A contest for supremacy in Zanu-PF will risk instability and further economic setbacks.

