

Why Mugabe Won

The 2013 general elections in Zimbabwe were widely expected to mark a shift in the nation's political system and a greater role for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), led by Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai. However, the results surprisingly came overwhelmingly in favour of long-time President Robert Mugabe, who swept the presidential, parliamentary and senatorial polls under relatively credible and peaceful conditions. In this book, a valuable and accessible read for both students and scholars working in African politics, and those with a general interest in the politics of the region, Stephen Chan and Julia Gallagher explore the domestic and international context of these landmark elections. Drawing on extensive research among political elites, grass-roots activists and ordinary voters, Chan and Gallagher examine the key personalities, dramatic events and broader social and political context of Mugabe's success, and what this means as Zimbabwe moves towards a future without Mugabe.

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Why Mugabe Won

The 2013 Elections in Zimbabwe and Their Aftermath

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Preface

As this book goes to press, President Robert Mugabe seems to be nearing the end of his long rule in Zimbabwe. At 93 his health is poor, and he is beginning to lose a grip on the party he has dominated for more than 40 years, and the country he has ruled for more than 35. Yet only three years ago, Mugabe was celebrating a historic victory in presidential and parliamentary elections that saw him re-assert his dominance over the country after years of fractious inter-party competition, and four years of a precarious and bad-tempered coalition with the rival Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The MDC's leader Morgan Tsvangirai, once viewed as a heroic and viable alternative to Mugabe, was humiliated in those elections. His political demise was immediately evident in their aftermath. Mugabe, then triumphant, would have a few more years to wait until his own end became inevitable.

The 2013 elections were remarkable on many counts. They represent a substantial shift in Zimbabwe's fraught electoral history, which has been characterised by violence and malpractice since at least 2000. They were unexpectedly peaceful, even good-humoured, although there was evidence of malpractice and some rigging. It is also clear – as we argue in this book – that the outcome was by and large a reflection of the will of the Zimbabwean people. The heavy wins for both Mugabe as presidential candidate, and his party Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) in parliamentary and senatorial elections, were a dramatic departure from the dismal showing for both in 2008. Between 2008 and 2013, therefore, there was a dramatic swing in popular attitudes towards the parties and their leaders.

It seemed important to us that we try to understand what led to these changes – and this is what the book sets out to do. But more

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than this, 2013 marks an important point in Zimbabwe's history, possibly the last election for Robert Mugabe, who helped bring the country into being and has, more than any other one person, shaped its identity and history. And so the book also situates 2013 within the political history of the country and its region. It explores the broader social, political and international trends that both explain the outcome of an extraordinary set of elections, and will continue to be shaped by it for years to come.

There has been extensive analysis of Zimbabwean elections since the country's birth. Kriger (2005), Makumbe (2006) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012) each trace the decline in electoral probity since 1980, turning the country's elections into what Ndlovu-Gatsheni terms 'empty rituals' (1). Their work builds on a plethora of excellent studies of individual elections, including Sylvester (1986) on 1985, Sachikonye (1990) on 1990, Makumbe and Compagnon (2000) on 1995, Waldahl (2004) and Rich Dorman (2005) on 2000 and 2002, Kriger (2008) and Berting (2010) on 2005, and Chigudu (2012) and Masunungure (2009) on 2008, 'the most controversial and violent' elections in the country's history (Masunungure, 2009: 1).

Mugabe won all but one of these elections (the 2000 referendum on constitutional change). He did it because of his ability to appeal to the electorate, but was also able to use his power to abuse and subvert the electoral process where necessary. Zimbabwe's elections have been as controversial and surprising as they have been regular.

In 2013, the elections were extensively prepared for and widely speculated on in a way not seen since the early 2000s. Opinion polls, including those conducted by foreigners, suggested that, in a clean contest, ZANU-PF could win. The debate within ZANU-PF was not about the full-scale rigging seen in 2008, but how little rigging could guarantee an outcome that looked possible but not fully certain. Certainly, both South Africa and other regional leaders had issued stern warnings that 2008 could not be repeated. Some in ZANU-PF were tempted all the same to 'muscle' a path to victory, but the decision seems to have gone in favour of judicious rigging. Judicious

rigging, but scaled back from 2008, meant the party had to be attractive as well as manipulative; it had to put policies before the electorate – and much work went into crafting and selling them.

The MDC, in turn, was convinced that the rigging of 2008 would be reprised, albeit with less violence. The MDC strategy was not to seek to counter dishonesty, but to complain vociferously to the international community that rigging was underway and that a ZANU-PF ‘win’ could only be regarded as a stolen result. For Morgan Tsvangirai’s forces, there was less emphasis on internal policies to be put before the electorate; they focused energy on how the election should be interpreted for and by external actors.

This book is about how the 2013 elections were won fairly and unfairly by ZANU-PF; and how they were lost ineptly by the MDC against a backdrop of social and political change across the country and region. The authors visited Zimbabwe seven times in 2013 and were there for all stages of the election itself. They draw here upon their expertise, experience and contacts, as well as electoral observation methodologies that reached back to the inaugural election of 1980, and their years of living either in Zimbabwe or in neighbouring Zambia. What follows is their joint verdict.

Acronyms

AU	African Union
CIO	Central Intelligence Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EU	European Union
GNU	Government of National Unity
ICG	International Crisis Group
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDC-N	Movement for Democratic Change – Ncube
MDC-T	Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People’s Union
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZEC	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission
ZESN	Zimbabwe Election Support Network
ZUM	Zimbabwe Unity Movement