

Polity IV Country Report 2010: Zimbabwe

Score:	2009	2010	Change	<p style="font-size: small;">Authority Trends, 1970-2010: Zimbabwe</p>
Polity:	1	1	0	
Democ:	3	3	0	
Autoc:	2	2	0	
Durable:		1		
Tentative:		No		

SCODE	ZIM	CCODE	552	Date of Report	1 June 2011
-------	------------	-------	------------	----------------	--------------------

Polity IV Component Variables

XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP
2	2	4	3	3	3

Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)

End Date	10 February 2010	Begin Date	11 February 2010
----------	------------------	------------	------------------

Polity Fragmentation: No

Constitution	1979
Executive(s)	<p>President Robert Gabriel Mugabe (ZANU-PF); initially appointed prime minister, 1980; assumed presidency, December 1987 (post of prime minister abolished); initially directly elected, 1990; most recently reelected, 28 March and 27 June 2008, 43.2% and 85.5%</p> <p>Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai (MDC); appointed according to terms of power sharing agreement, 1 February 2009</p>
Legislature	<p>Bicameral:</p> <p>House of Assembly (210 seats; directly elected; most recent elections, 28 March 2008)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF): 99</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Movement for Democratic Change (MDC): 110</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Non-partisans: 1</p> <p>Senate (93 seats; 60 directly elected, 10 provincial governors nominated by the president, 16 traditional chiefs elected by the Council of Chiefs, 2 held by the president and deputy president of the Council of Chiefs, and 5 appointed by the president; most recent elections, 28 March 2008)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">ZANU-PF: 30</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">MDC: 30</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Nominated/Appointed: 33</p>
Judiciary	Supreme Court; High Court

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Transitional or Restricted Elections (7)

While citizens have the legal right to change their government through democratic elections, for all intensive purposes Zimbabwe has been governed as a one-party state under the guiding influence of President Robert Mugabe for nearly thirty years. After a protracted guerilla struggle against the racist Rhodesian government during the 1960s and '70s, Mugabe became the country's first black prime minister after his political party, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), won a decisive victory in the 1980 elections. With the abolishment of the post of prime minister in 1987, Mugabe assumed the office of executive president. Despite the façade of democracy constructed in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980, President Mugabe has effectively used the built-in advantages of incumbency and state power to weaken his political opponents and ensure his electoral success. Key to President Mugabe's political success has been his ability to control the distribution of public funds to opposition political parties and his capacity to limit their access to the state-controlled media. Additionally, Mugabe has also relied heavily on the security apparatus of the state to intimidate and harass his political opponents and has blatantly manipulated the electoral process to his advantage through gerrymandering, ballot stuffing and voter intimidation. While President Mugabe made some small effort to liberalize the electoral process in the past few years, nevertheless, these gains in democratic institutions have been more than offset by his increasing reliance on political force and coercion to maintain his hold on power. The most recent presidential elections of March 2002, which were won by Mugabe, were deemed by international observers to be seriously flawed. On 30 March 2007 the ZANU-PF party congress endorsed Mugabe as their candidate for the scheduled March 2008 presidential election, despite increasing tensions within the party over the succession question. Mugabe turned 83 on 21 February 2007.

Constitutional amendments enacted in September 2007 restructured the bicameral legislature and called for presidential and legislative elections to be held concurrently. New elections were announced by President Mugabe in late January 2008 and scheduled for 29 March 2008. Early results indicated victory by the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in both the presidential race and the legislative slate. The results were delayed by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission until 2 May 2008 when it announced that the MDC candidate, Morgan Tsvangirai, had outpolled President Mugabe but failed to secure a majority of votes. A runoff election was scheduled for 27 June 2008; however, Tsvangirai withdrew his candidacy on 22 June 2008 following a campaign of violence and intimidation by ZANU-PF supporters. Mugabe was declared the winner and sworn in for a sixth consecutive term. International condemnation and pressure, combined with severely deteriorating conditions within Zimbabwe, brought President Mugabe into direct, brokered talks with the opposition to negotiate terms for a power-sharing government; talks began on 24 July 2008. On 15 September 2008 a formal agreement was signed by ZANU-PF and the MDC to form a power-sharing government; however, disagreements, particularly over control of the Home Ministry and its police forces, forestalled implementation of the agreement.

Following years of internal tensions and international pressure, including severe economic sanctions, particularly strong since the flawed elections of 29 March 2008, President Robert Mugabe and the ruling party (ZANU-PF) finally accepted a power-sharing agreement with the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) on 30 January 2009. Morgan Tsvangirai, the leader of the main branch on the MDC, was sworn in to the newly created post of prime minister on 11 February 2009. Despite the arrangement, Mugabe and the entrenched ZANU-PF leadership continued to harass and intimidate the opposition.

Executive Constraints: Slight to Moderate Limitations (3)

The executive branch dominates all other branches of government in Zimbabwe. Through a series of constitutional amendments enacted since 1980, President Mugabe has systematically consolidated his power vis-à-vis both the legislative and judicial branches of government. For virtually all of the post-colonial era the National Assembly, which has been dominated by members of Mugabe's ZANU-PF party, has simply served as a rubber-stamp body for executive initiatives. While the electoral gains made by the opposition MDC in the June 2000 elections has led to increased pressure for democratic transparency and

¹ The research described in this report was sponsored by the Political Instability Task Force (PITF). The PITF is funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. The views expressed herein are the authors' alone and do not represent the views of the US Government.

horizontal accountability in Zimbabwe, nevertheless, the opposition MPs have been unable to significantly reduce the powers of the executive branch. Executive dominance was displayed in early 2002 when a series of controversial bills were pushed through the National Assembly that effectively silenced the privately owned media, limited the rights of unions to strike, and made it illegal to criticize the president. Moreover, in an attempt to seal Mugabe's electoral success in the March 2002 elections, an electoral bill was passed that aimed to ban independent election monitors and allow only a government-appointed commission to conduct voter education. However, under increasing MDC pressure, in August 2004 the President signed a constitutional amendment which provided for a more independent electoral commission and, in theory, a more transparent electoral process within Zimbabwe. While the MDC accepted this amendment as a step in the right direction, nevertheless, they have continued (unsuccessfully) to pressure the President for a complete constitutional overhaul.

While the 2009 power-sharing agreement between Zanu-PF and the MDC weakened the power of Mugabe to act in an arbitrarily dictatorial manner, nonetheless, the entrenched power of Mugabe's followers throughout government and society ensured that his will continued to be largely followed. The inability of the MDC to limit Mugabe's unilateral appointment of judicial and political nominees throughout the federal and regional governments has been a constant source of friction within the unity government.

The judiciary, while nominally independent from the executive branch, has traditionally provided only a limited constraint on presidential actions. In November 2000, in an attempt to show its independence from the executive branch, the Supreme Court ruled that President Mugabe's land reform program to hand over white-owned farms to landless blacks was illegal. As such, the Court ordered all illegal squatters to be evicted from these lands. However, President Mugabe sidestepped this court injunction by ordering the police not to enforce the High Court ruling. Moreover, in an attempt to avoid future acts of institutional insubordination within his administration, President Mugabe has used his constitutional powers to stack the Supreme Court with political allies. After appointing three new judges to the bench in July 2001, in December of that year the Court overturned its earlier ruling and deemed Mugabe's land reform program to be lawful.

Political Participation: Factional/Restricted Competition (6)

While the 1979 Constitution provides for the formation of a competitive multiparty political system in Zimbabwe, the opposition parties in this country have traditionally been small, economically strapped and generally poorly organized. Controlled by political intimidation, state patronage and electoral manipulation, these parties have provided little threat to the dominant position of President Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party. However, under increasing international and domestic pressure to liberalize the political system in Zimbabwe, in late 1997 President Mugabe amended the election laws to allow for increased public funding for opposition parties and candidates. Taking advantage of the liberalization of the electoral process, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was established in 1999 and provided a strong challenge to the ZANU-PF in the National Assembly elections of June 2000. Despite facing intense government intimidation and harassment, the MDC, which has substantial urban support and appeals primarily to the sixty-five percent of the population born after 1980, won fifty-seven out of the 120 seats in the National Assembly.

Stunned by the political success of the MDC since 1999, President Mugabe subsequently embarked on dangerous strategy of racial nationalism to revive his image as a revolutionary leader. In a strategy designed to weaken the MDC and increase his populist appeal, starting in early 2000 President Mugabe conducted a campaign of confiscating white-owned farms throughout the country. Over one thousand farms have been seized since February 2000. Opponents of this strategy were labeled enemies of the revolution and subjected to increasing levels of government repression. Hundreds of MDC supporters, black and white alike, have been beaten and killed as a result of this policy. In an effort to bring an end to the escalating conflict in Zimbabwe, the so-called Abuja Agreement was signed in September 2001. Under the terms of this agreement the government consented to end all land seizures in the country. However, President Mugabe has refused to implement this agreement. Mugabe's policy of "indigenization" was further extended to all facets of the economy whereby fifty-one percent indigenous ownership of all enterprises is required. This nationalization policy has been a principal factor in triggering a fairly comprehensive array of "targeted sanctions" by Western interests, including the British Commonwealth, EU, and United States. These sanctions, in turn, have contributed to rampant inflation and have further exacerbated the political crisis in Zimbabwe. In 2007, South African officials estimated that over 100,000

illegal immigrants from Zimbabwe were crossing the border each month. The economic crisis has induced the government to implement some radical policies, such as the May 2005 “Operation Marambatsvina” (drive out rubbish) whereby thousands of black marketeers were arrested and shantytowns in the capital and other cities were forcibly cleared of their inhabitants and demolished. Rampant inflation led the government to impose price controls in late June 2007 and a wage freeze on August 31.

The acrimony and intense rivalry between the MDC and ZANU-PF has sharply divided the nation and was responsible for increasing levels of factional conflict during the 2002 presidential elections. “War veterans,” the police, and the scores of unemployed youths that have been indoctrinated under Mugabe’s National Service Initiative spearheaded the president’s call for “total war” against opponents of ZANU-PF. Over sixty deaths from politically motivated violence were documented in 2002. Further limiting the political capacity of the opposition was the draconian set of legislative bills pushed through the National Assembly at the end of 2001 and early 2002 which, for all practical purposes, “outlawed” all legal means of opposition to the Mugabe regime. Many leaders and supporters of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change have been harassed and arrested since 2002. The Mugabe government continued to tighten its clamp down on opposition activism and harassment of activists in 2006 and 2007. In response to protests in February 2007, the government issued a ban on party rallies and protests and moved forcibly against public displays of civil disobedience. In March 2007, it began to clamp down on international non-governmental organizations, which it accused of being agents of Western efforts to undermine the regime. On the other hand, regional organizations such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have been actively engaged in mediating the crisis in Zimbabwe.

In 2004 the MDC threatened to boycott legislative elections scheduled for March 2005 unless Mugabe agreed to make the electoral process more transparent and free. President Mugabe effectively forced the MDC’s hand. After the March 2005 elections for the House of Assembly demonstrated that Mugabe had no intention of liberalizing the electoral process, the MDC decided to boycott the Senate elections scheduled for November. This decision fragmented the MDC and, while a majority adhered to the party line and did not run, enough MDC members ran for election that they were able to secure seven opposition seats. The elections of March and November 2005 were widely seen as unfair and, not surprisingly, produced an electoral victory for the President’s ruling party. Clinching over two-thirds of the seats in the National Assembly, ZANU-PF’s electoral victory was condemned as a sham by the MDC. For its part, the MDC’s presence in the Parliament dropped from fifty-eight to forty-one seats. The electoral success of ZANU-PF, along with the President’s constitutional prerogative to select an additional thirty deputies, now provides Mugabe with the votes to enact constitutional changes at will. The split in the MDC was formalized in February 2006 when the dissident “Pro-Democracy” faction elected Arthur Mutambara as their leader; the majority faction of the MDC continues to be led by Morgan Tsvangirai. In late 2007, the main faction of the MDC was again threatening to boycott elections scheduled for March 2008. The 29 March 2008 legislative election resulted in a victory for the MDC over the ruling ZANU-PF; the final tabulation gave the MDC a slim majority in the lower chamber.

Tsvangirai’s Movement for Democratic Change party agreed to share power with President Robert Mugabe’s Zanu-PF after the 2008 elections, which were marred by violent attacks on MDC supporters. Under their coalition deal, the longtime rivals agreed to draw up a new constitution followed by a referendum and then fresh elections. In the interim, Mugabe continued on as president while Tsvangirai assumed the new post of prime minister. In late March 2011 the Zimbabwean parliament re-elected a close ally of Prime Minister Tsvangirai, Lovemore Moyo, as Speaker of the Parliament after his 2008 election was nullified. This vote took place in an atmosphere of rising tensions between the Prime Minister and the President. As the country prepares for possible elections in 2011, MDC MPs and supporters have experienced increased harassment and detention. Earlier in the month Tsvangirai had called for a “divorce” from his national unity government colleague. President Mugabe had previously called for the dissolution of the power-sharing arrangement in December 2010 after Tsvangirai said that his MDC party would not recognize any key government or judicial appointments made by Mugabe since February 2009.