

Zimbabwe:

The 2018 Elections and their Aftermath



SOLIDARITY PEACE TRUST

1 OCTOBER 2018

Contents

A. The 2018 Elections and Their Aftermath	3
1. Introduction	3
2. The Election: national perspective	4
B. Matabeleland and the Election	10
1. Main findings	11
2. Discussion of main findings	16
3. National relevance of the Matabeleland vote	21
4. What is behind the apparent swing to ZANU PF in Matabeleland?	23
5. Bulawayo – and the city council	25
6. Conclusion	26



Huge final rally for MDC-A, Harare, July 2018

Solidarity Peace Trust: www.solidaritypeacetrust.org

A. THE 2018 ELECTIONS AND THEIR AFTERMATH

1. Introduction

After the coup in November 2017, a central part of the coup leader's strategy was to move beyond the shadow of the coup through an election process that was seen to be peaceful and credible. As the Presidential spokesperson explained it, for ED Mnangagwa and his team July 30 'was not about winning votes qua votes, but about securing re-engagement and the myriad benefits flowing therefrom'.¹ Thus this 'open for business' mantra was accompanied by selective electoral reforms. These included: The introduction of the BVR voting system; the ensuring of a more peaceful and tolerant electoral environment; and an invitation to a wide range of international observers including the EU, US, SADC, AU, and the Commonwealth to monitor and report on the election. As part of the narrative of international re-engagement, national unity and reconciliation that marked his discourse since the coup, Mnangagwa also conducted a series of meetings with minority communities. In June, Chiwenga met with the Asian business community, and In July the Zanu PF President met with the representatives of the white community and invoked the language of reconciliation that Mugabe deployed in the immediate post 1980 period:

We should cease to talk about who owns farms in terms of colour. We should cease talking about that. A farmer-black farmer, a white farmer-is a Zimbabwean farmer. We should begin to develop a culture among our people to accept that we are one.²

The opposition, led by the largest party the MDC Alliance and its young leader Nelson Chamisa, made it clear from early on in its election campaign that there were serious problems in the election process that had not been dealt with. The problem areas included the partisan status of the Zimbabwe Election Commission, the late release of the voter's role, lack of transparency around the printing of the ballot papers, and the lack of equal access to the public media. Moreover Chamisa stated throughout his campaign that his party would not accept any result other than his Presidential victory. In addition to these challenges the opposition was also caught up in the outcome of a bitter succession battle after the death of Morgan Tsvangirai which resulted in yet another split in the MDC. Chamisa's victory over Thoko Khupe in a political battle marred by violence, misogyny and, at the very least, a questionable constitutionality, once again marred the image of the opposition.

Notwithstanding the differences between the two major parties their election manifestos converged around the need for macro-economic stabilisation and market-based reforms. Both were competing for international financial approval and investment promises.

¹ Under the Eaves with Igomombe, 'Zimbabweans armed with ideas'. *Herald*, 1 September 2018.

² ED meets White Community. *Sunday Mail*, 22 July 2018. ZBC, "We are all Zimbabweans, VP tells Indian community", 8 July 2018.

1. The Election: national perspective

The election witnessed a record turnout of 4.8 million voters, 85% of those registered. Mnangagwa received 50.6% and Chamisa 44.3% of the poll. Predictably most of Mnangagwa's support came from Zimbabwe's rural provinces Mashonaland, Midlands and Masvingo while Chamisa dominated the urban areas of Harare and Bulawayo. (See Table 1). Both Mnangagwa and Chamisa improved on the votes of their predecessors Mugabe and Tsvangirai in the 2013 elections. Mnangagwa gained 350,000 more votes than the former President while Chamisa doubled Tsvangirai's votes.³

On the other hand the Parliamentary vote resulted in a much more decisive for Zanu PF. The ruling party won 144 seats while the MDC Alliance figure was 64, giving Zanu PF a two thirds majority in the House of Assembly, before the allocation of proportional women's seats. As Table 2 shows while the MDC Alliance presidential candidate won in provinces such as Matabeleland North and Manicaland, Zanu PF gained the upper hand in these provinces. The contrast between the closeness of the Presidential vote and the major lead of Zanu PF in the Parliamentary results may have reflected the factionalism in Zanu PF as a result of which many voted for the party's Parliamentary candidates while voting against the Presidential nominee. The 'winner takes all' principle at parliamentary level also masked the fact that many rural voters did not vote for Zanu PF, and that many seats were lost to a divided opposition where the combined vote was larger than the Zanu PF vote.⁴



A proliferation of political parties on the walls of Bulawayo – in what ultimately remained a two-horse race. (July 2018)

³ International Crisis Group, *After Elections: Zimbabwe Government Legitimacy in limbo*. 2018.

⁴ See the next section for a more detailed discussion of this issue.

Table 1. Presidential Results 2018

	ED Mnangagwa	N Chamisa
Matabeleland South	107 008 (49.40%)	90 292 (41.69%)
Matabeleland North	111 452 (39.67%)	137 611 (48.98%)
Bulawayo	60 168 (27.69%)	144 107 (66.32%)
Mashonaland Central	359 576 ((75.83%)	96 063 (20.26%)
Midlands	352 027 (54.75%)	257 960 (40.12%)
Mashonaland East	334 617 (61.71%)	189 021 (34.86%)
Masvingo	318 964 (61.41%)	171 438 (33%)
Harare	204 719(26.52%)	548 895 (71.12%)
Manicaland	292 938 (47.12%)	296 429 (47.68%)
Mashonaland West	314 541 (56.15%)	220 111 (39.29%)
Total Votes	2,456,010	2,151,927

Table 2.Parliamentary Results 2018

	Zanu-PF	MDC Alliance	NPF	Independent
Mashonaland	57	5		1
Masvingo	25	1		
Matabeleland South	12	1		
Matabeleland North	8	5		
Midlands	22	5	1	
Bulawayo	1	11		
Harare	1	28		
Manicaland	19	7		
Total Seats	144	64	1	1



Consigned to the dustbin of history – many of the parties and presidential candidates of 2018.

However, the violence that followed the election on 1 August, in which six people were killed during an opposition demonstration, and the Constitutional Court challenge of the Presidential results by MDC Alliance leader Nelson Chamisa, once again raised questions around the legitimacy of the elections. Chamisa’s challenge was based on section 93 of the Zimbabwe Constitution accusing the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC) of ‘irregularity, involving a mistake or non-compliance with the law’. This irregularity in turn ‘affected the validity of the election meaning that it deprived citizens of a free and fair election’.⁵

The irregularities against the ZEC included several issues: Lack of independence; failure to provide a complete voters roll; counting of Presidential ballots; and undue influence on voters. The Constitutional Court dismissed Chamisa’s challenge on the basis of the lack of ‘clear, sufficient, direct and credible evidence that the irregularities that he alleges marred the election process materially existed’.⁶ Given the greatly politicised nature of the Zimbabwean judiciary this decision came as little surprise.

In their preliminary report the international observers both praised and criticised the election process. The EU noted that:

⁵ N. Chamisa, *Applicant’s Head of Argument in the Constitutional Court*, CCZ42/18.

⁶ Constitutional Court Decision, CCZ42/18.

The elections were competitive, the campaign was largely peaceful and, overall, political freedoms during the campaign, including freedom of movement, assembly and speech, were respected.

However the EU statement also included strong criticism and observed that:

...misuse of resources, instances of coercion and intimidation, partisan behaviour of traditional leaders and overt bias in state media, all in favour of the ruling party meant that a truly level playing field was not achieved, which negatively impacted on the democratic character of the electoral environment.⁷

The US Observer team had similar concerns noting that while the electoral process compared favourably with Zimbabwe's past elections, 'important problems gave rise to deep concerns that the process thus far has not made the mark.'⁸ In addition to these criticisms a joint statement by international observers also denounced 'the excessive use of force to quell protests and urged the police and army to exercise restraint'.⁹

Mnangagwa's response to these events and the scepticism of the international observers was to announce the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry into the Post-Election Violence on the 1st August 2018. The terms of reference for the Commission include:

- To inquire into the circumstances leading to the 1st August 2018 post-election violence.
- To identify the actors and their leaders, their motive and strategies employed in the protests.
- To inquire into the intervention by the Zimbabwe Republic Police in the maintenance of law and order.
- To investigate the circumstances which necessitated the involvement of the military in assisting in the maintenance of law and order.

One of the major challenges that the Commission faces will be to resolve the conflict over which element in the command structure of the political and military hierarchy gave the order for the army to take control of the demonstration on the 1st August. Hitherto none of the leadership in either the political or military structures have been willing to take responsibility for the actions of the military. This has led to some speculation about possible succession battles between President Mnangagwa and his Vice President and Minister of Defence during that period, Constantino Chiwenga. However the dynamics around these events have yet to be unveiled.

⁷ EU Observer Mission Republic of Zimbabwe Harmonised Election 2018. *Preliminary Statement*, 1 August 2018.

⁸ 'US Observers say that Zimbabwe vote marred by abuses and bias'. Bloomberg, 2 August 2018.

⁹ Joint Statement by International Observation Missions to Zimbabwe's Harmonised elections 30 July 2018. 2 August 2018.

Mnangagwa also continued the pro- business, neo- liberal narrative that marked his election campaign. In his inaugural address the new President promised to ‘facilitate business, trade and investment.’¹⁰ This was a continuation of the messaging in the Zanu PF Manifesto which called for a ‘free enterprise-free market economy’. In his first address to the Parliament of Zimbabwe Mnangagwa promised to ‘continue to accelerate the international engagement and re-engagement policy’ of his administration. In line with this policy he also pledged that comprehensive plans will be put in place to expedite the desired outcome towards the external debt arrears clearance strategy under the LIMA Plan’.¹¹

Early indications from the Western countries are that although they are still adopting a cautious approach to the new regime they are likely to continue the strategy of re-engagement in the near future. During her visit to South Africa in early September British Prime Minister Teresa May stated that she was pleased to hear about Mnangagwa’s Commission of Inquiry into the election violence viewing it as ‘an important step for Zimbabwe.’¹²As the UK prepares for its very difficult Brexit process, trade deals and a ‘growing, if belated, realisation of Beijing’s clout in Africa’s financial, political and security matters,’ are likely to mark future relations with Zimbabwe.¹³

In August Germany’s Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development visited Zimbabwe to discuss further economic cooperation. For both the UK and the EU growing tensions with the US over trade deals as well the migration challenges facing the EU mean that aid will more than ever be used to stem migration as well as opening up markets in Africa for EU and British exports. With regard to the US the Mnangagwa administration still has a long way to go in the normalisation of relations. Just before the elections the Trump administration signed into law the ‘Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Amendment Act of 2018’ which sets out a series of economic and political reforms that will need to be carried out by the Zimbabwe government as a prerequisite for further economic cooperation with the US.

As part of this charm offensive there have been reports of behind the scenes discussion between Zanu PF and the MDC Alliance on future cooperation. This is not likely to include the option of another Government of National Unity, nor have any MDC leaders been included in Mnangagwa’s new cabinet. However it could include some financial inducement for the MDC leadership as Mnangagwa attempts to mould an opposition that he will be more comfortable with. The Presidential spokesperson laid out the plan behind this move:

A key paradoxical assignment for ED is going to be one of drawing in a closer, immature and disloyal opposition, while not bringing them in by way of an inclusive Government which no

¹⁰ ‘ED Promises a new Zimbabwe’. *Herald* 27 August 2018.

¹¹ Address by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, His Excellency Cd. E.D. Mnangagwa, on the occasion of the State of the Nation Address and the Official Opening of the ninth Parliament of Zimbabwe, 18 September 2018.

¹² ‘Europe boost for ED’. *Herald*, 29 August 2018.

¹³ ‘How Britain changed sides’. *Africa Confidential* Vol 59, No 15, 27 July 2018.

one in Zanu PF countenances at this stage. This needs great creativity, even greater courage, bearing in mind it is on this basis that ED either stumbles or else over-leaps, the latter allowing him to lay an enduring basis for a lasting legacy.¹⁴

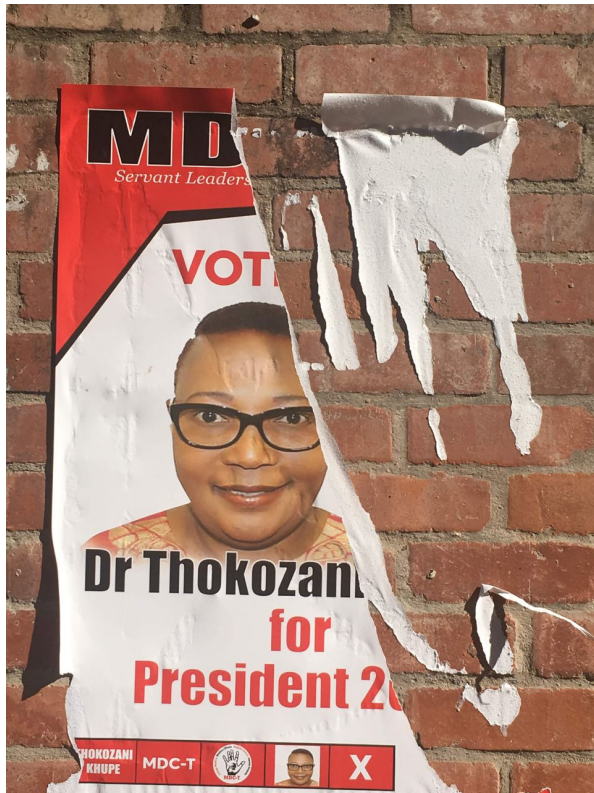
In the same opinion piece Nelson Chamisa was warned that having been given the green light by his National Council to engage with Mnangagwa he should do so 'while the hand is still outstretched'. The opposition faces major challenges going forward. These include dealing with poor and often undemocratic party structures and processes, internal violence and misogyny. Given the poor financial state of the MDC Alliance and other opposition parties, there could be a real temptation for parts of the opposition to be drawn into some form of Zanu PF's attempt to reconfigure the opposition in the interest of the ruling party. The long terms effects of such a development would be disastrous for the democratic movement in Zimbabwe.

However, given the current economic challenges facing the Mnangagwa government it is unlikely that the regime will have the resources to carry out such a hegemonic project in which the opposition are brought under a more manageable form of rule. The neo-liberal, 'open for business' frame in which the Government's policies have been cast, already led to major challenges in the first half of 2018. This was particularly the case in the public sector which is composed of the largest number of formal sector workers, and where the Government has pledged to reduce public expenditure. In March 2018 doctors in the public sector went on strike demanding better conditions of service as well as the provision of adequate hospital equipment and essential drugs for patients. The action by the doctors was followed by a nurses' strike in April 2018, resulting in Vice President Chiwenga ordering the firing of all striking workers. This clumsy and illegal decision was immediately challenged in the High Court by the Zimbabwe Nurses Association and Chiwenga's decision was later withdrawn after further negotiations with the Government.

The continued debilitating state of the public health sector led to a further national health crisis in September as an outbreak of cholera and typhoid struck the city of Harare in which 49 citizens have already died. This central crisis in the state provision of public health and other services, along with the catastrophic devaluation of labour and deconstruction of formal employment in the country, place the current administration in a very precarious political position.¹⁵ Mnangagwa's introduction of more technocratic expertise into his cabinet is aimed at an attempt to address these problems. Whether the current opposition with all its challenges will be able to formulate an alternative vision of the political and economic future in the country remains to be seen.

¹⁴ 'Zimbabweans armed with ideas'. Under the Eaves with Igomombe. *Herald* 1 September 2018.

¹⁵ For an in depth discussion of this process see L.Sachikonye, B.Raftopoulos and G.Kanyenze (eds), *Building from the Rubble: The Labour Movement in Zimbabwe since 2000*. Harare, Weaver Press, 2018.



Khupe and Mujuru were among the few female candidates in this election: Khupe drew key votes from the main MDC-A in Matabeleland, costing them at least 4-7 parliamentary seats (Graph 8). Mujuru has since the election disbanded the Rainbow Coalition which performed dismally.

B. MATABELELAND AND THE ELECTION OF 2018

The intention of this section of the report is to analyse the major electoral outcomes in the three Matabeleland provinces and to understand them. At the national level, precise numbers of votes cast in the 2018 elections remain a contested arena for MDC-A and others. However, there were no election appeals lodged by the opposition in Matabeleland. Our own observations are that while there were violations in rural Matabeleland prior to the election, such as unseasonably early distribution of agricultural inputs, the votes cast were most likely as counted in this part of the country. This is one reason that this report focuses on the three Matabeleland provinces, staying away from more contentious provinces where appeals have been launched. Another is that the authors have monitored elections here since 2000, and are more familiar with party politics in this region. Matabeleland also remained free of intimidation in the post-election space, unlike other parts of Zimbabwe. In Harare, soldiers shot dead citizens on the streets, in the context of protests about the election outcome, and soldiers were also documented beating citizens in the suburbs of

Chitungwiza.¹⁶ A contentious inquiry into these events is currently underway.¹⁷ There have been well documented reports of opposition polling agents and others having their homes burnt down, and of *ad hoc* attacks on opposition supporters in ZANU PF rural strongholds.¹⁸ However, in Matabeleland, the very limited political violence has involved different factions of the MDC attacking one another on the streets of Bulawayo, as well as protests among the opposition around the mayoral election.¹⁹



Protests from MDC-A supporters on the streets of Harare on 1 August, and a deadly response by the army: who gave the order remains unclear (images Tafadzwa Ufumeli and timeslive.co.za).

1. Main findings

Bulawayo

- The MDC-A received the most votes at **House of Assembly** level. However, for the first time since 2000, the MDC-A vote was **below 50%** (at 49.5%).
- ZANU PF received 25.1% of the vote.
- Khupe's MDC-T received 8.6%.
- The combined total vote for all the other parties was 16.8%. Factoring in votes for MDC-T, the votes for parties other than the two major ones, totaled 25.4%.
- There was an average of 17 candidates in each constituency in Bulawayo, with Nkulumane having 23 candidates.
- Despite having received not quite half of the vote, MDC-A won 11 out of 12 seats in Bulawayo. The 12th seat was lost to ZANU PF on a divided opposition vote: there were two MDC-A candidates here, whose combined vote would have won the seat, plus the MDC-T candidate won votes.

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, *Zimbabwe: at least 6 dead in post-election violence*, 3 August 2018.

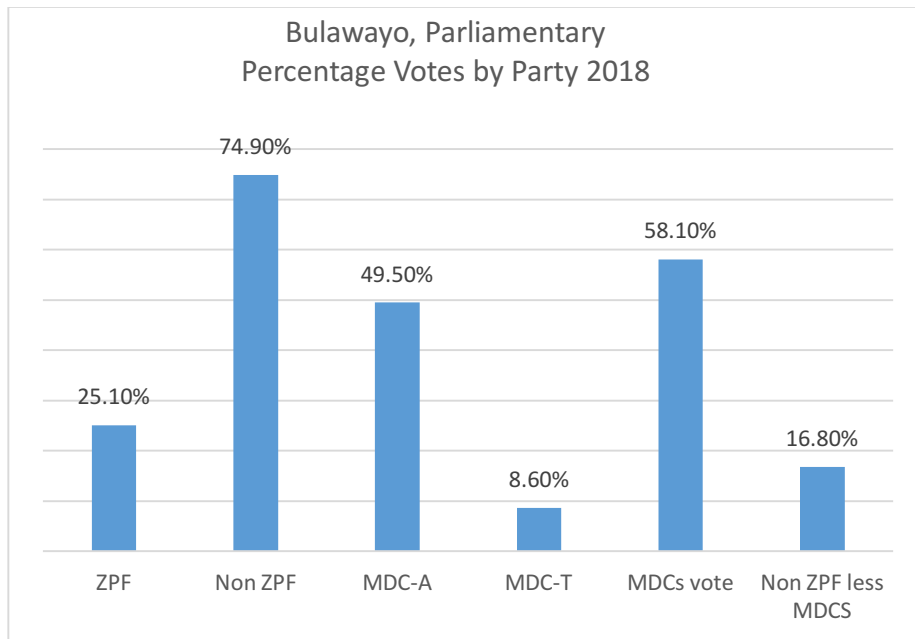
¹⁷ Veritas, statement: *Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence on 1 August 2018*, 1 September 2018. <http://veritaszim.net/node/3189>. Accessed 26 September 2018.

¹⁸ Obey Manayiti, "Post-election violence spirals", *Newsday*, 28 August 2018.

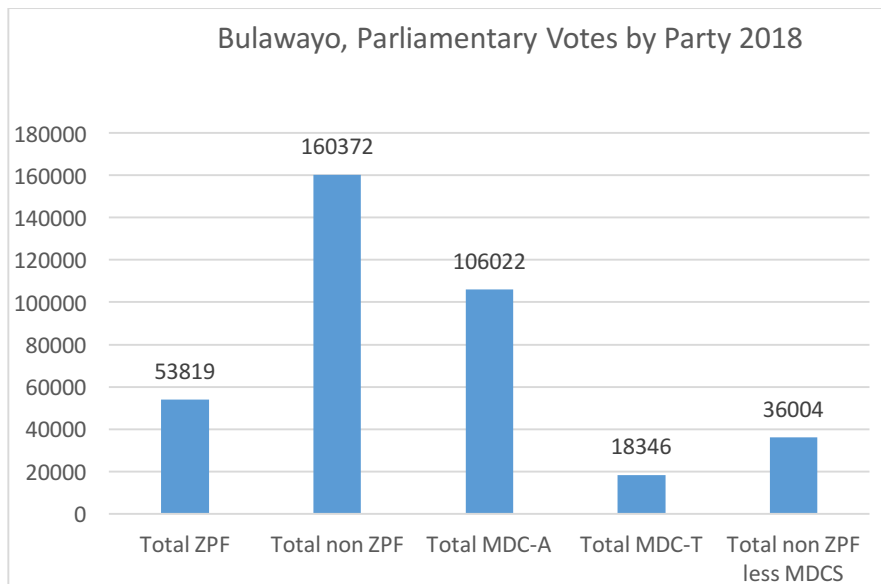
¹⁹ Nqobani Ndlovu, "Bloody Clashes rock MDC-T", *Newsday*, 5 March 2018. See ahead for mayoral election.

- Chamisa received 66.3% of the votes at **Presidential** level, showing that he won a third more votes than his MDC-A coalition at House of Assembly level in Bulawayo. This is consistent with the pattern nationally, where Chamisa received more votes than the MDC-A coalition.

Graph 1



Graph 2



- Mnangagwa received 27.69% of the Presidential vote, which was slightly more votes than ZANU PF. Khupe, representing MDC-T, received a 2.67% vote in Bulawayo, showing that

more than two-thirds of those who voted for MDC-T at House of Assembly level, did *not* vote for Khupe.

- All other candidates combined won 3.3% of Bulawayo's presidential vote.
- All candidates other than Chamisa and Mnangagwa won 6% of the presidential vote in Bulawayo, which is higher than the national percentage, which showed that 4.7% of votes were for other candidates.

Matabeleland North

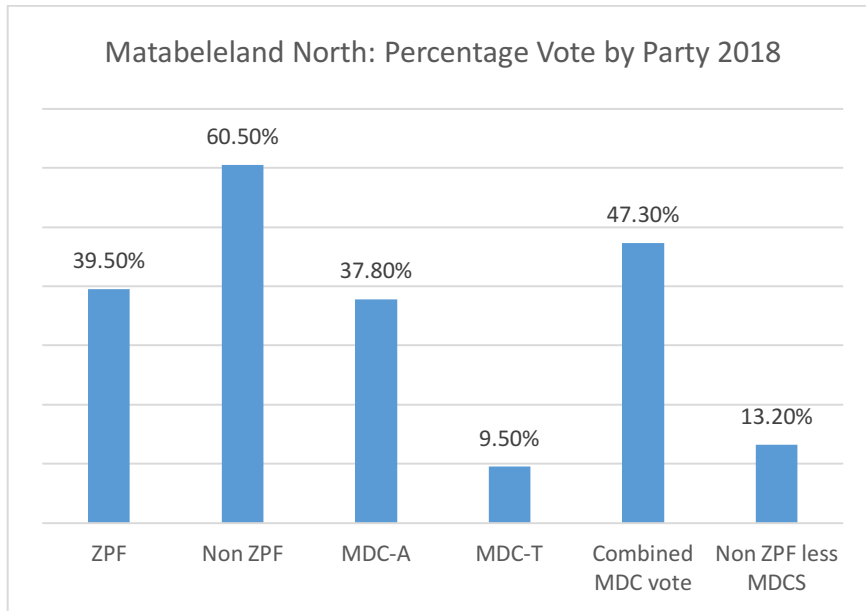
- **ZANU PF** won the most votes in Matabeleland North, with **39.5%** of votes.
- MDC-A won 37.8%, and MDC-T won another 9.5% of votes, meaning that **the combined MDC vote was 47.3%**, which was 7.8% more than the ZANU PF vote.
- A further 13.2% of voters, did not vote for either MDCs or ZANU PF.
- Altogether, the non-ZANU-PF vote adds up to **60.5%**.
- ***It is apparent that a clear majority of voters in Matabeleland North at House of Assembly level, did not want ZANU PF candidates to win.*** This is important to remember in a context where there has been a widespread backlash against rural provinces on social media, where rural voters have been represented by those supporting the MDC-A as responsible for ZANU PF's and Mnangagwa's win nationally. It was simply a divided opposition that allowed ZANU PF to win most seats in Matabeleland North province.
- MDC-A won 5 seats in the northern half of Matabeleland North – in Hwange and Binga.
- ZANU PF won 8 seats, but 3 of these seats were won by ZANU PF on a divided opposition vote.
- In Lupane West and Nkayi South the combined MDC-A and MDC-T vote was comfortably greater than the ZANU PF vote. In Lupane East, the combined non-ZANU PF vote was greater than the ZANU PF vote. Certainly two and probably three seats were won by ZANU PF in this province because of the divided opposition.
- This means that a united opposition would have won control of this province, with either 7 or 8 out of 13 constituencies.
- In the context of Mnangagwa asserting that there will be devolution in keeping with the constitution during the next few years, the divisions in the opposition mean that ZANU PF will be in the running to make key appointments in Matabeleland North, instead of the opposition.
- At **presidential** level, Chamisa won the vote with 50.2%, and Mnangagwa received 40.7% of the vote. Khupe won 4.7%, and other candidates combined won 4.4%. Altogether, votes other than for the two main presidential candidates amounted to 9.1%, more than double the national figure.

Matabeleland South

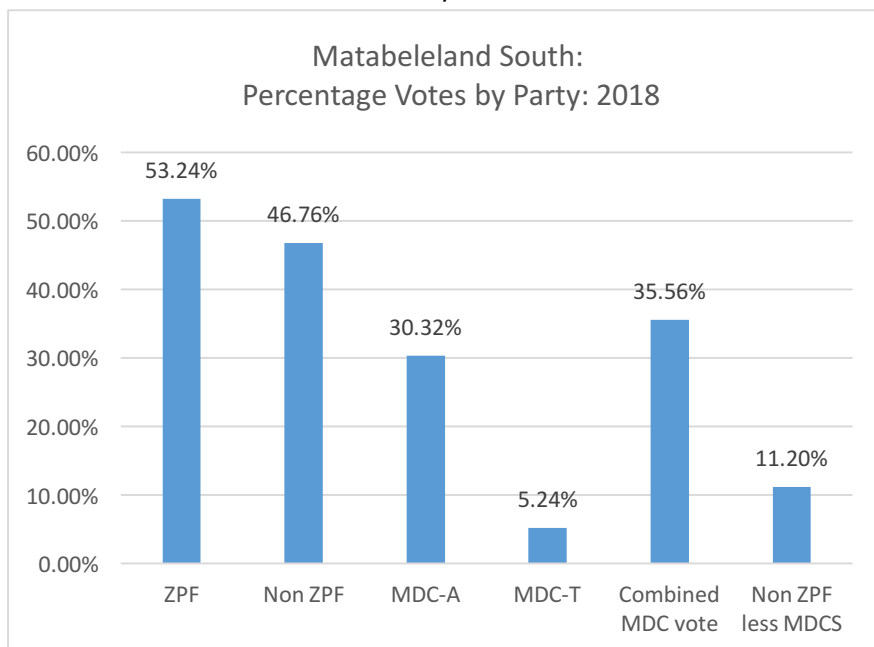
- ZANU PF won 53% of the vote, showing a simple majority of votes.
- MDC-A won 30.3%, and MDC-T won 5.2%, or a combined vote of 35.5%.

- All other opposition parties combined, won 11.5% of the vote.
- In spite of ZANU PF winning the province as a whole, at constituency level, MDC-A won one seat, Gwanda Central.

Graph 3



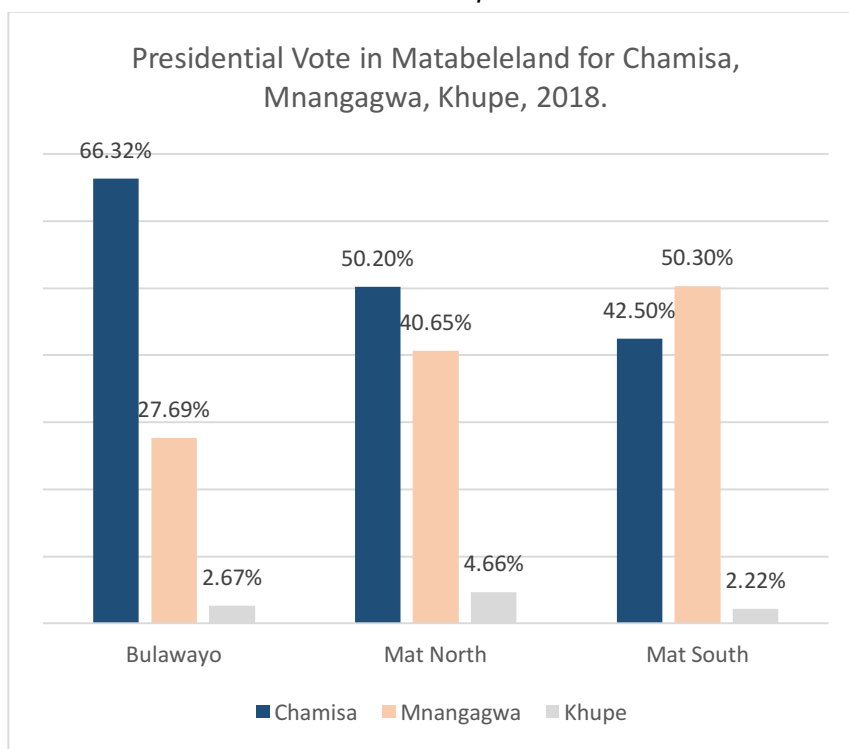
Graph 4



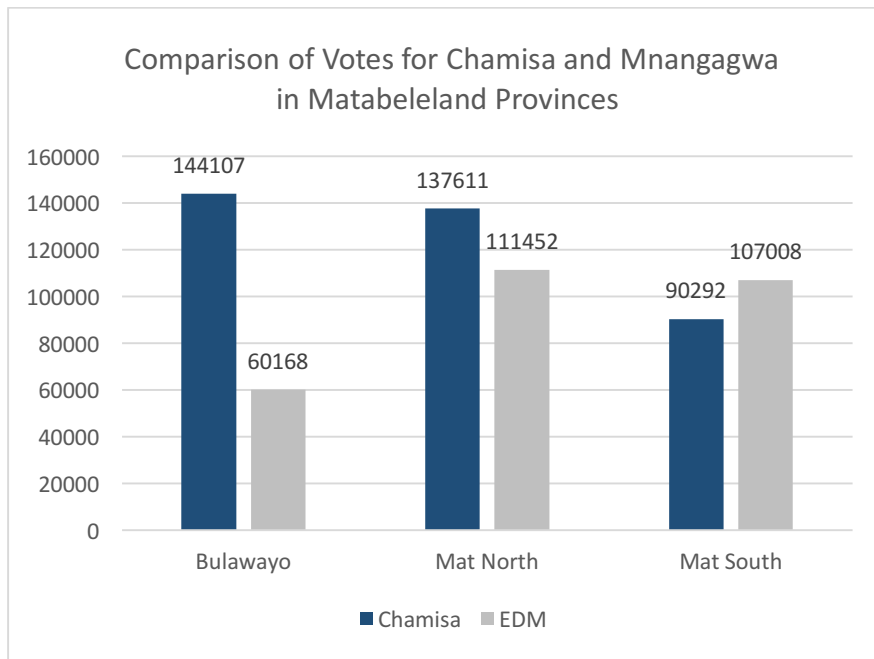
- Additionally, **Gwanda North, Gwanda South and Matobo South** were lost on a divided opposition vote. This means that a combined opposition would have won 4 out of 13 constituencies in Matabeleland South, or one third, which would have been a better representation of the total opposition vote here.

- At Presidential level, Chamisa received 40% more votes than his coalition MDC-A, with 42.5% of the vote. Mnangagwa received slightly fewer votes than ZANU PF at House of Assembly level, with 50.3% of the vote.
- Khupe received only 2.2% of the vote, while all other candidates received 5% votes.
- In Matabeleland South the combined vote outside of the two main presidential candidates was 7.2%, which is higher than the national figure of 4.7%.
- **It is worth noting that in Matobo North, Umguza and Umzingwane, the MDC-A candidates do not live in Zimbabwe!** All three currently reside and work in South Africa. Additionally, in Matobo South, the MDC-A candidate returned only a year ago from the UK, and many voters here were under the impression that he still lives overseas. *If the MDC-A or any opposition party in the future wishes to win rural seats, they should at the very least not take rural voters so much for granted that they impose functionally absent candidates on the electorate.*
- **The total vote for Chamisa in Matabeleland’s three provinces was 372,010.**
- **Mnangagwa’s total vote in Matabeleland’s three provinces was 278,628.**

Graph 5.



Graph 6



2. Discussion of main findings

Matabeleland has historically and more recently been considered a political opposition stronghold. During the war of liberation, this western, Ndebele-speaking region became predominantly ZAPU supporting over the years, in contrast to the dominance of ZANU PF in the rest of the country, as reflected in the elections of 1980. It is not the intention of this report to discuss in detail how the regional divisions of support for ZAPU and ZANU PF developed, or led to what has become known as the “Gukurahundi era” lasting from 1982 to 1987, when the notorious 5 Brigade was sent into Matabeleland to quell support for ZAPU and to control disturbances being caused by dissidents in rural areas.²⁰ This was a brutal period, when many thousands of innocent civilians died in rural Matabeleland, leaving a legacy of bitterness and a sense of regional neglect. This violent and divisive era ended with the signing of the Unity Accord in December 1988, which also led to the absorbing of ZAPU into ZANU PF.

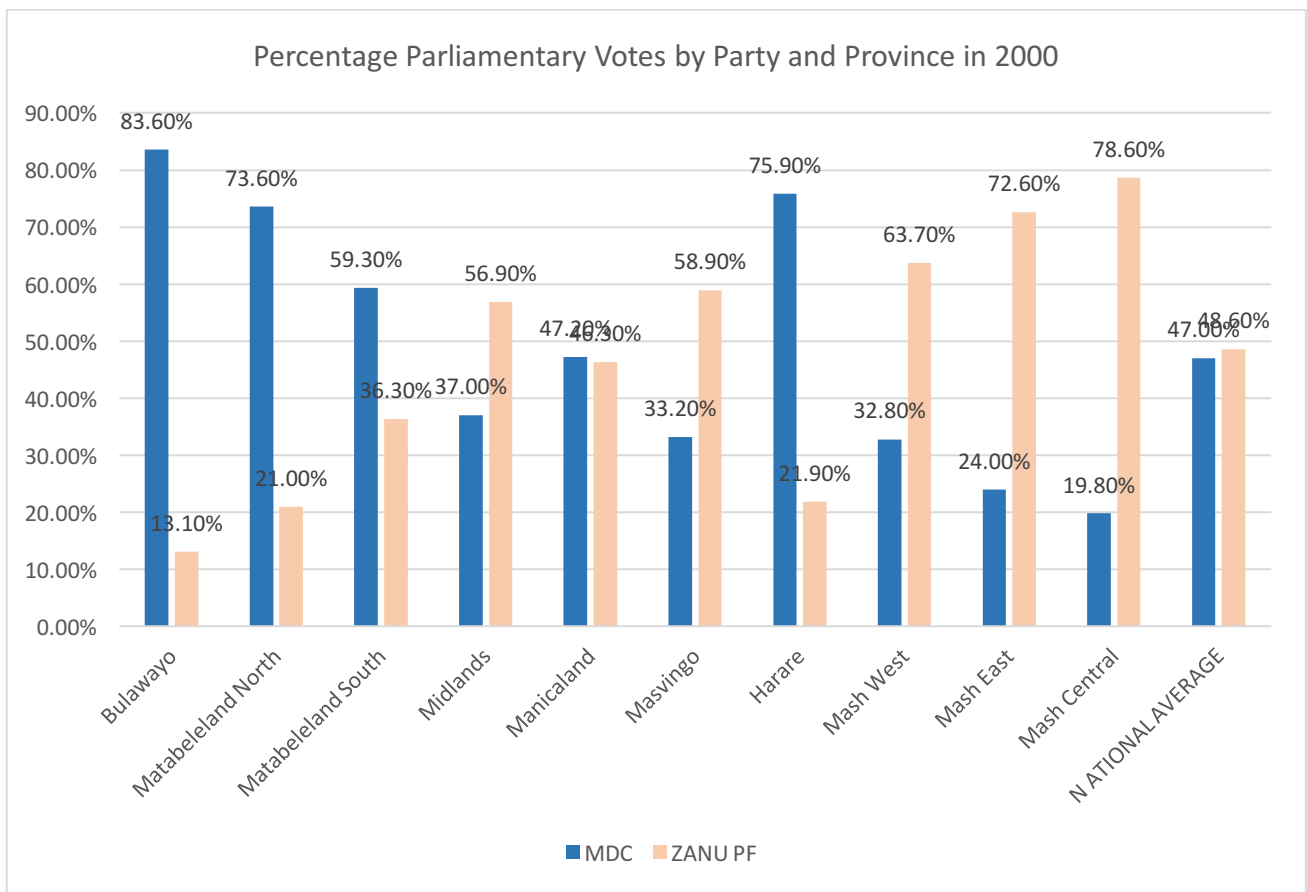
In 1999, the formation of the MDC marked the entry into the political domain of the first meaningful opposition since ZAPU. In the general election of 2000, in the three western provinces of Bulawayo and Matabeleland North and South, 21 out of 23 parliamentary seats were won by the

²⁰ Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Legal Resources Foundation, *Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace: a Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980-1988*, (CCJP and LRF, Harare, 1999), for a detailed history of this era.

MDC.²¹ **Bulawayo had the highest percentage opposition vote in the country, with 83.6% voting MDC.** This was even higher than Harare’s opposition vote of 75.9%. Only two other provinces nationwide had more than a 50% vote for the MDC: these were rural Matabeleland North and South provinces. Matabeleland North voted 73.6% for MDC, and Matabeleland South voted 59.3%.²²

In a context where around 70% of voters live in rural areas nationwide, in 2000 the Matabeleland rural vote was an obvious and important anomaly compared to the other six rural provinces. This vote was seen as an indication that the bitterness of Gukurahundi had left ZANU PF without a genuine rural support base in Matabeleland. However, the last few elections have seen a steady erosion of opposition-held parliamentary seats in these three western provinces. To what extent, and why, have voting patterns here shifted since the 2000 election?

Graph 7

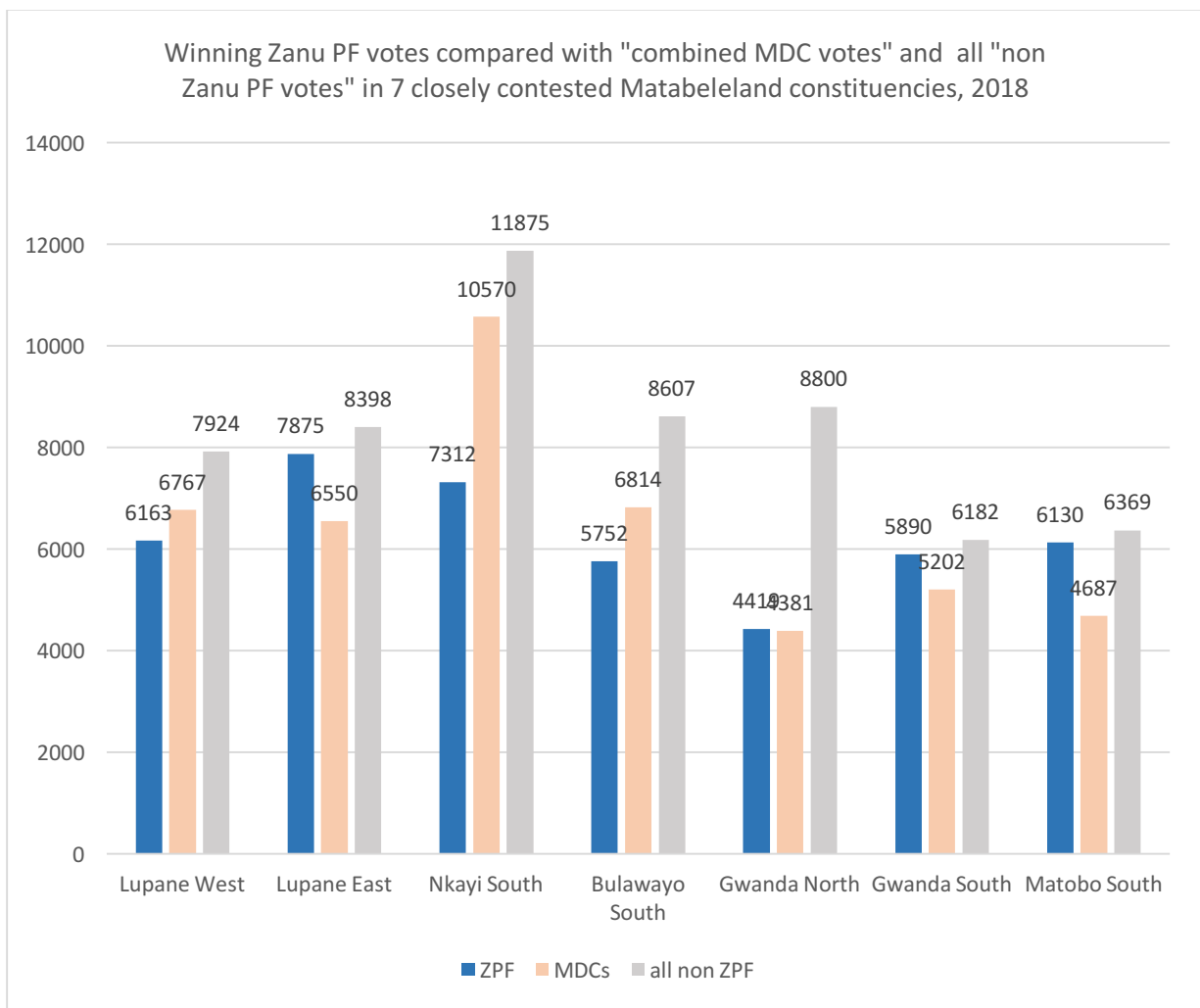


²¹ <https://www.zimbabwesituation.com/old/results.html> for results cited in this paragraph. Two seats in Beitbridge, in deep Matabeleland South, were won by ZANU PF.

²² Manicaland, also a predominantly rural province, also showed a slightly higher vote for MDC than ZANU PF (47.2% for MDC and 46.3% for ZANU PF. MDC won only eight rural seats outside of the two rural Matabeleland provinces. Manicaland (4), Midlands (2), Masvingo (1) and Mashonaland West (1).

In 2000, voters had a simple voting choice – ZANU PF or MDC with no other viable party political alternatives. Since then, the number of political parties has grown with each election: these new parties have at times been a product of splits in the MDC, and in Matabeleland, each split has seen the loss of significant and respected Ndebele leadership from the main MDC party. The 2018 election presented voters with a never-seen-before proliferation of parties and candidates. *This was nowhere more obvious than in Bulawayo, in which the average number of House of Assembly candidates was the highest nationally, at 17 per constituency, with Nkulumane fielding 23 candidates.* The presidential election was also contested by 23 candidates, although apart from Chamisa and Mnangagwa, who both had more than 2 million votes, only 5 other candidates achieved more than 10,000 votes nationwide, and all of these received fewer than 100,000 votes individually.²³

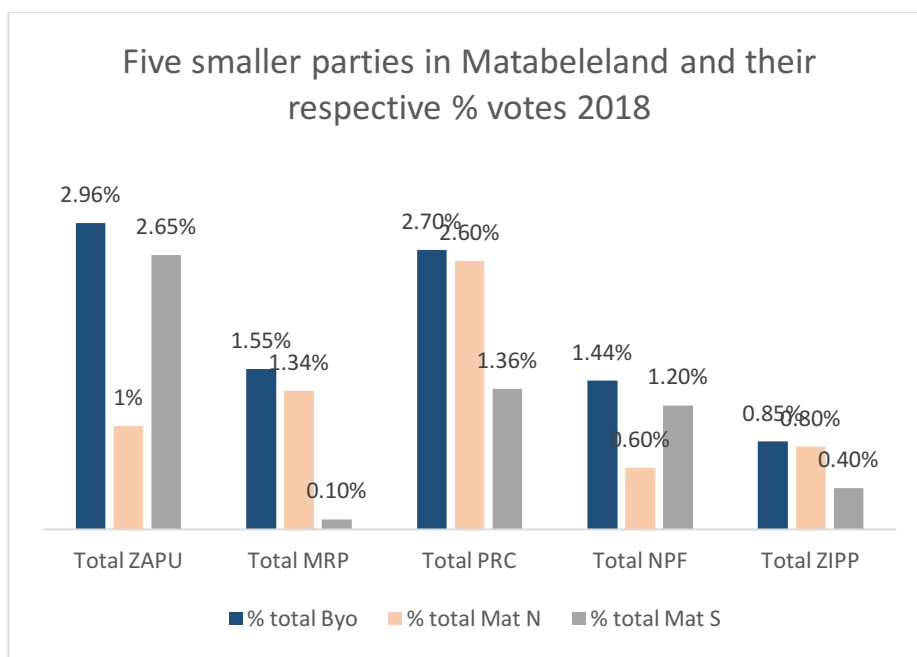
Graph 8



²³ Cumulatively, however, this vote added up to 4.7%, which was key in allowing Mnangagwa to show a clear advantage over Chamisa - although whether ED's vote added up to more than 50% remains an area of conjecture in some arenas.

Similarly, with the House of Assembly vote, two parties dominated: the MDC Alliance and ZANU PF won 208 out of 210 constituency seats, with ZANU PF winning 144 of these and MDC-A winning 64. An Independent and a National Patriotic Front candidate won the other two, confirming that Zimbabwe remains effectively a two-horse race.²⁴ Taking into account the women’s proportional vote in the House of Assembly, ZANU PF was proportionally awarded 35 seats, MDC Alliance 24 and MDC-T was awarded 1 seat.

Graph 9



Votes for ZAPU, Mthwakazi Republic Party (MRP), People’s Rainbow Coalition (PRC), National Patriotic Front (NPF) and Zimbabwe People’s Party (ZIPP)

The existence of more than a score of smaller parties, while they failed to gain representation in the House, may have cost the MDC Alliance dearly, where these smaller parties managed collectively to gain a key percentage of votes. This percentage varied from one constituency to another. ***Certainly in Matabeleland, the split opposition vote once more meant multiple seats were lost on a divided vote, in particular on the vote divided between the MDC-A and MDC-T***, led by Thoko Khupe.²⁵ Altogether, the vote outside of the two main parties, ZANU PF and MDC-A, was a notable factor in the Matabeleland provinces, as shown in Graphs 1, 3 and 4, also Graphs 8 and 9. In Bulawayo, the vote for parties other than MDC-A and ZANU PF was a crucial **25.4%**. For the first

²⁴ Electoral petitions currently before the courts may shift the exact allocation of these seats between MDC-A and ZANU PF, although from years of experience this seems unlikely, with the courts either never ruling, or ruling in favour of ZANU PF in such petitions.

²⁵ The split between Khupe and Chamisa followed the death of Morgan Tsvangirai early in 2018, when both claimed the legitimate right to succeed him. Instead of proceeding to a congress to resolve the issue, Chamisa relied on a vote by the executive of the party, which may well have been unconstitutional, leading to Khupe’s split. Khupe was attacked at Tsvangirai’s funeral, and there was other violence between the two factions in Bulawayo during 2018. Khupe herself held a congress to re-elect leadership for what she claimed remained the legitimate part of the MDC-T.

time since 2000, the main MDC party failed (just) to achieve 50% of the vote in Bulawayo at House of Assembly level. They nonetheless won all but one constituency, as the ZANU PF vote, while almost double their 2000 vote, only represented 25.1%.

Khupe's MDC-T gained nearly 162,000 votes in the House of Assembly elections, which was 3.42% of the vote. In the Matabeleland provinces, MDC-T won 8.6% of the vote in Bulawayo, 9.5% of the Matabeleland North vote, and 5.24% of the Matabeleland South vote.

In none of the three Matabeleland provinces did the MDC-A manage to gain 50% of the vote at House of Assembly level. Only in Bulawayo did the combined MDC-A/MDC-T vote achieve more than 50%. However, in both Matabeleland North and Bulawayo, the combined 'non-ZANU PF' vote exceeded 50% comfortably, with 74.9% in Bulawayo and 60.5% in Matabeleland North. While it might be argued that not all those voting against ZANU PF could have been persuaded into a broader MDC Alliance, this should also be set against the provincial voting pattern for Chamisa, who consistently won more votes than the MDC-A, not just in Matabeleland, but nationally. The votes do show convincingly that in Matabeleland North, the majority of voters did not want to be represented by ZANU PF (graph 3).



Behold the New! Young candidates stood across the board in 2018



Zapu drew the fourth biggest number of votes in Matabeleland in 2018, after the MDCs and ZANU PF: their vote remained less than 3% (graph 9).

3. National relevance of the Matabeleland Vote

Approximately 17% of Chamisa’s alleged²⁶ national vote was cast in the three Matabeleland provinces. This shows the erosion of the power of the Matabeleland voter to affect the national outcome at the presidential level. There are ten provinces in Zimbabwe, meaning that the expectation could be that the three western provinces would have a 30% impact on the national outcome. As these three provinces are among the four or five – Harare and Manicaland being the other two - that are seen as strongly supportive of the opposition, the erosion of Matabeleland’s voting power has long term consequences for any future opposition presidential candidates. This erosion of the power of the opposition to be represented nationally, points to a broader issue of democracy nationwide being eroded, and of Zimbabwe moving once more towards a de facto one party state.

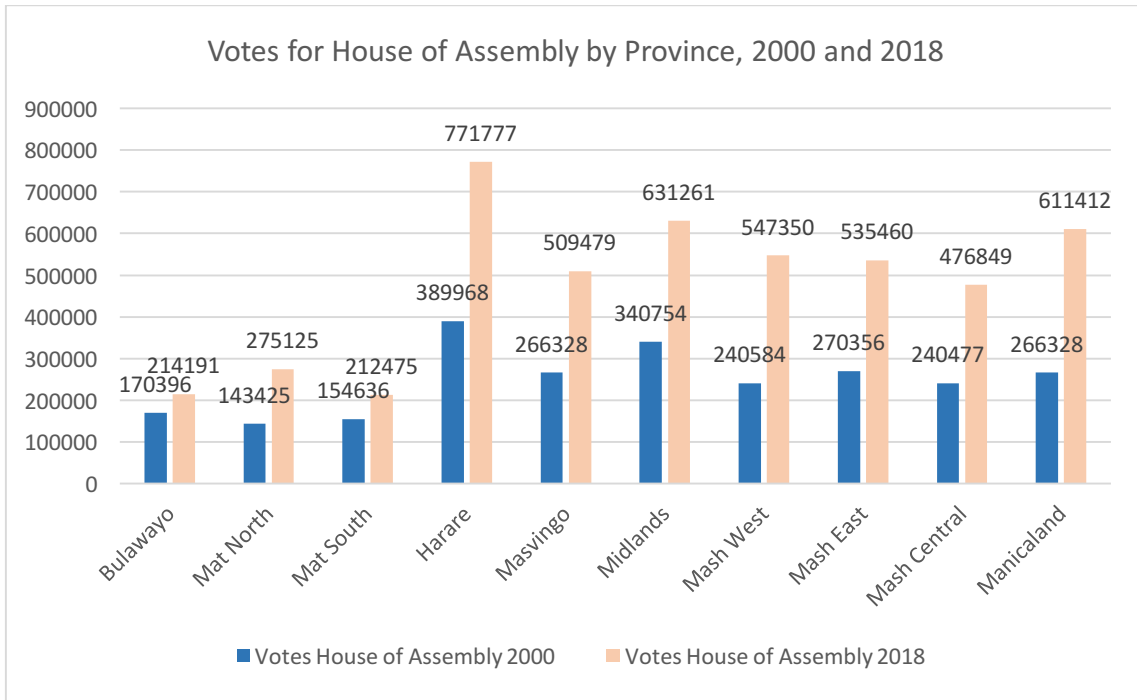
However, as our previous report on the biometric voter registration (BVR) exercise pointed out,²⁷ the proportion of voters registered in Bulawayo and Matabeleland South in particular, were the lowest in the country, with Bulawayo being the only province nationally that failed to achieve 60% of the projected voter registration. Matabeleland South was second lowest in BVR registrations.

²⁶ As mentioned before, the figures were contested in Chamisa’s court appeal, although the court ruling was not in his favour.

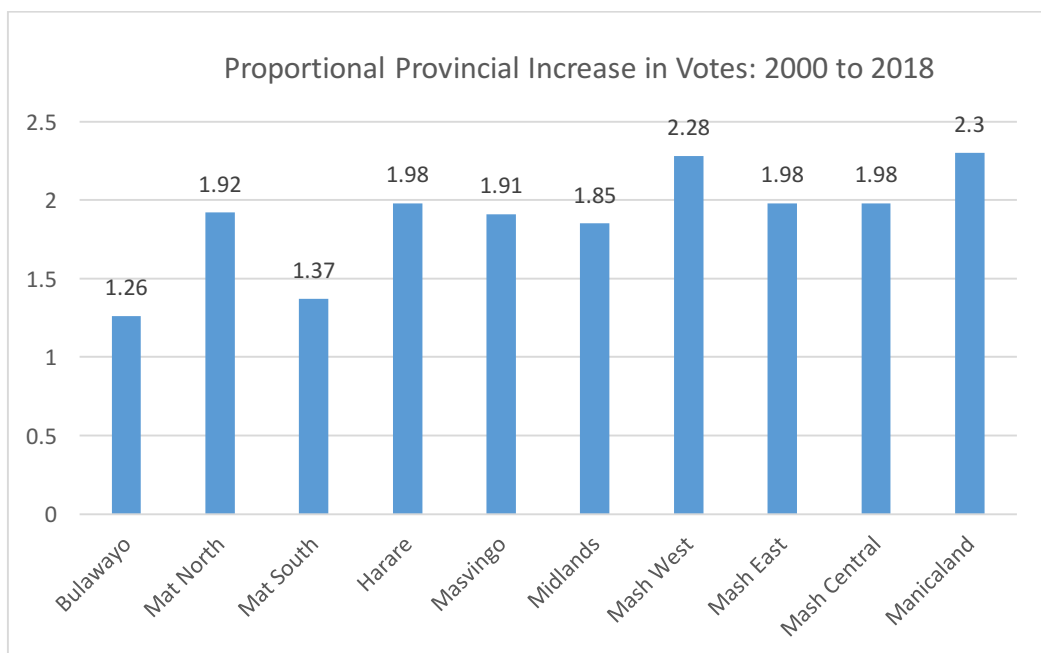
²⁷ *Old Beginnings*, Solidarity Peace Trust, 2018. <http://solidaritypeacetrust.org/1791/old-beginnings-the-political-context-of-zimbabwe-and-a-report-on-biometric-voter-registration-bvr-a-national-and-matabeleland-perspective/>

Graphs 9 and 10 show that the Bulawayo vote in 2018 was 126% of its 2000 vote, compared to the almost doubled voting figure of 198% in Harare, and more than doubled figure of 230% in Manicaland. Matabeleland South showed the second lowest increase in voting power, with the 2018 figure being 137% of their 2000 voting figure. Matabeleland North has shown an increase both in voter registration and actual voting figures that are more in line with the national trends – with its 2018 vote increasing to 192% of its 2000 vote - an anomaly yet to be fully explored.

Graph 9



Graph 10



4. What is behind the apparent swing to ZANU PF in Matabeleland?

Discussions with residents of the three provinces suggest that Bulawayo and Matabeleland South are the two provinces most acutely affected by the massive diasporisation that has affected the whole nation since 2005.²⁸ This impacts in two ways: firstly, many assumed residents of Bulawayo and Matabeleland South are now effectively living outside of the country; secondly, many others live in a state of ‘circular migration’, now being in South Africa and then back in Matabeleland, with seriously divided loyalties and less sense of national belonging. Such citizens, feeling abandoned by the state and fed up with seeing no benefit to the region out of voting for the opposition in multiple elections since 1980 and again since 2000, have not bothered to register or vote.

Matabeleland South has moved since 2000 from having a 59% vote for the MDC at House of Assembly level, to almost half this figure: MDC-A won 30.3% of the vote in 2018. As previously indicated, only one seat was won by MDC-A out of 13 seats in this province, while a further three were lost on a divided opposition vote (graph 8). Overall, however, the *non-ZANU PF* vote in Matabeleland South was around 47%, indicating that *almost one out of two voters did not want to be represented by ZANU PF* at House of Assembly level. This is nonetheless a significant decrease by 26% in the opposition vote, from 59% in 2000.

Residents who were asked why they think there was an increased vote for ZANU PF had various explanations.

- There were too many oppositions, and none of them were very convincing. Most of them had no more than token Ndebele representation in their presidiums, compared to the original MDC of 2000. If there had been an outstanding Ndebele leader with national potential among any of them, the modern equivalent of Joshua Nkomo, it would have been very different.
 - This also explained the more diffuse vote in Matabeleland, which generally had a bigger vote for the myriad of oppositions than was nationally the case. The *combined opposition vote* in the three provinces, *less the MDC-A and ZANU-PF vote* in this predominantly two-horse race was as follows:
 - Bulawayo: 25.4%
 - Matabeleland North: 22.7%.
 - Matabeleland South: 16.44%

Comprising around a quarter of Matabeleland votes, these voters and the parties they voted for need to be courted by the dominant parties ahead of the next election. Already ZANU PF is drawing in dissenting factions such as the G40 and the National Patriotic Front. While the

²⁸ See multiple previous publications on this by current authors and others, including, <http://solidaritypeacetrust.org/1724/hoping-without-hope-murambatsvina-ten-years-on/>.

MDC-A is solidifying themselves from an alliance into one party, they will need to do more if they are to win back these crucial votes.

- Voting for the opposition has failed to help Matabeleland, particularly in a context where the nation as a whole continues to be run by ZANU PF: having an opposition MP in such a situation is in fact disempowering, as your constituency then may have nobody able to intervene at Politburo or Cabinet level in defence of your development needs.
 - Even at the provincial level, it can be useful to have a ZANU PF MP, who might be able to intervene to protect constituents from violence or promote development that might be instigated at that level.
- It is the route of least resistance to give in to pressure to vote for ZANU PF, and people are tired and demoralised.
- There was a perception that with Mugabe gone, voters should “give ED a chance” to create a different kind of ZANU PF, which his campaign claimed he could do.
- The opposition was not visible during the campaign period and what they represented was not clear. ZANU PF was very visible and campaigning throughout the area.
- In three constituencies in Matabeleland South, *the MDC-A candidates were not even currently resident*, and were known to be living and working in South Africa, while a fourth was only recently returned from UK and was not considered that rooted in the community. Voters felt they were not being taken seriously, being expected to vote for someone they had never heard of and were unlikely to ever see locally.
- The government provided seeds and fertilizer and introduced a ‘free cow/heifer’ system throughout the rural Matabeleland provinces during the campaign period.²⁹ This was widely perceived as ‘gifts’ from ‘ZANU PF’, the conflation of ‘state’ and ‘party’ being almost universal, it appeared. This was seen as simultaneously a carrot and stick:
 - a carrot, reminding one that ZANU PF has the power to provide resources, which the opposition, never having held the levers of power, patently has never had to date.
 - a stick, reminding one that ZANU PF has the power to withhold resources from those not perceived to support it, which in a region that every single year requires food relief, is a large stick indeed. While there was no reported political bias in distribution of seeds and other inputs in Matabeleland during the campaign period, such political bias has certainly existed in the past and could, in people’s minds, do so again.

²⁹ Voice of America, “Mnangagwa ‘dishes’ out cows ahead of forthcoming general elections”, 23 June 2018. <https://www.voazimbabwe.com/a/mnangagwa-dishes-out-cows-ahead-of-elections/4451338.html>. Accessed 26 September 2018. Also authors’ own observations of seed and fertilizer distribution in Matabeleland.



Seeds distributed in Matobo South, two days before the vote, and four months early!

5. Bulawayo - and the City Council

All House of Assembly seats were won by MDC-A, except for Bulawayo South, which was lost to a divided vote. There were two MDC-A candidates here, whose combined vote would have won the seat. One of these MDC-A candidates currently faces theft charges. There were complaints of rigged primaries in Bulawayo, and of unsuitable candidates being thrust on the voters. Gift Banda of the MDC-A, who won a House of Assembly seat in this election, was allegedly involved in corruption around fraudulently allocating himself vast tracts of council land during 2016. He was previously the Deputy Mayor, and is now head of Bulawayo Province for the MDC-A. Banda was accused of imposing his own candidates at all levels, including the Senate and Council.³⁰

There were protests and demonstrations in Bulawayo ahead of the council's election for Mayor.³¹ This year for the first time, a large proportion of elected councillors are of Shona origin, in a town that considers itself to be predominantly Ndebele-speaking.³² There was chaos when the council tried to conduct the mayoral elections, leading to the intervention of the town clerk and their postponement.³³ There were many complaints that the MDC-A primary elections for council were rigged ahead of the election, and that voters were not happy with the final list of candidates, who were accused of forging letters of endorsement among other things.³⁴ Many voted grudgingly for

³⁰ Vusuamuzi Dube, "Report details massive corruption at City Council", *The Chronicle*, 22 September 2016.

³¹ Jeffrey Muvundusi, "Bulawayo finally elects mayor", *Daily News*, 8 September 2018.

³² Paul Nyathi, "Tribal storm brewing ahead of Bulawayo mayoral elections", *ZimEye*, 4 September 2018. Jeffrey Muvundusi, "Chaos as councillor takes oath in Shona", *Daily News*, 1 September 2018.

³³ Vusamusi Dube, "Bulawayo mayoral election deferred as confusion reigns", *The Chronicle*, 5 September 2018.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

the MDC-A at council level, acknowledging that it was a two-horse race and feeling they had little option. While the winning candidates undoubtedly won and were justified in accusing those protesting as being undemocratic, this did not prevent a great deal of ill feelings around the mayoral election. Ultimately, an mayor of Ndebele origin was elected, 35 year old lawyer Mguni, while Kambarani was elected Deputy, in defiance of a directive from Chamisa.³⁵ The resentment around what were seen as somewhat undeserving and rather young council candidates is one factor resulting in MDC-A failing to achieve a 50% vote in Bulawayo for the first time.

6. Conclusion

The three Matabeleland provinces, once considered key by the opposition in any election, have dwindled both in their support for the opposition, particularly at House of Assembly level, and in their national relevance in terms of the power of their vote to bolster the presidential ambitions of any opposition candidate. Numerically, the voting population of these three provinces has not increased at the same rate as that in other provinces, particularly in Bulawayo and Matabeleland South. Whereas Manicaland's vote has increased to 230% of its 2000 vote, and Harare's vote has increased to 198%, Bulawayo's vote has increased only to 125% of its 2000 vote.

This year for the first time since 2000, the main MDC opposition grouping failed to achieve a 50% vote in all three Matabeleland provinces. The reasons for this are multiple, including that many voters were convinced by ZANU PF's representation of itself as a new party, capable of reinventing itself with Mugabe gone at last. The failure of the main MDC-A opposition to be visible beyond its star rallies, or to convey what it stood for that would be any different to the neo-liberal economic message of ZANU PF, also played a role in its failure to secure votes in this part of the country - as did the perception that many candidates were imposed, absent, or untried. On the other hand, Chamisa personally won a clear majority of votes in Matabeleland North and Bulawayo. Chamisa consistently did better than the MDC-A in almost all constituencies, and clearly many voters voted for other parties at the level of House of Assembly level, and for Chamisa at the presidential level.

It is a poorly assessed assumption for rural areas to be judged as having supported ZANU PF *en masse*, even where ZANU PF won most of the seats: in Matabeleland South, where ZANU PF won 12 out of 13 seats, 47% of the votes cast were not for ZANU PF, and in Matabeleland North, more than 60% of votes were not for ZANU PF.

This election has served to underline that while there were scores of opposition parties registered to take part in this election, it remained effectively a contest between MDC-A and ZANU PF. However, in Matabeleland, around a quarter of votes did not go to either of these two parties at constituency level, indicating that there is much work to be done by these dominant parties to

³⁵ *ibid.*

secure this crucial proportion of voters in future elections. There is now an engrained suspicion that politicians, regardless of party, do not have the interests of the impoverished rural or urban voter at heart, and are more interested in having their turn at the trough than in ensuring legislation and national budgets that will lead to development in rural areas. It is now the responsibility of Zimbabwean citizens nationwide, as well as for civic groupings, to monitor the parliamentary and council performances of Zimbabwe's elected representatives, and to seek ways of insisting that election manifestos are adhered to.



One of many promises made by ZANU PF during its campaign....



Voting in Bulawayo, 2018



ZANU PF won most rural seats, while MDC-A won the cities

