Bloodless Coup in Zimbabwe

Why in news?

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- The military in Zimbabwe launched a coup on November 15.
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- The motive is claimed to target “criminals” surrounding long-time popular leader Robert Mugabe.
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Who is Robert Mugabe?

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- Mr.Robert Mugabe has been at the helm in Zimbabwe’s politics for 37 years, since its independence from British rule in 1980.
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- At 93, Mr. Mugabe is the world’s oldest head of state and also the last of Africa's generation of state founders who still wield power.
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- His lengthy rule has been marked by brutal repression of dissent, mass emigration, vote-rigging and economic collapse.
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- Despite this, he is popularity among the masses is relatively high and has seen him in wield near total control.
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- His poor health has fuelled a bitter succession battle as potential replacements jockey for position.
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What triggered the current stand-off?

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- Recently, Mr. Mugabe sacked long-time ally and Vice-President Emmerson

Mnangagwa.
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- Notably, he was widely expected to succeed the Mr.Mugabe and take control of the ruling ZANU-PF party.
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- This move was seen as an attempt to install his Mr.Mugabe's wife Grace (52) for succeeding to the helm.
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- Mr. Mnangagwa fled the country after his dismissal and many long term regime loyalists are said to have sided with him.
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- Days later, the Army warned Mr. Mugabe to exhibit restrain in a serious of political purges, which wasn't heeded to.
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What is the state of the Zimbabwean economy?

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- Mr.Mugabe's populist land reforms of 2000 saw black Africans seizing large tracts of agricultural land from the European settlers.
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- These moves led to a production collapse in agriculture and eventually plunged the country into an economic crisis.
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- Millions of economic refugees have streamed out of the country, mostly to neighbouring South Africa.
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- Eventually in 2007-08, the country saw hyper-inflation that forced the abandonment of the local currency and a switch to dollars.
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- In 2016, fears of economic downtown reappeared with inflation rating at around 50% for a month.
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- Notably, the sacked vice-president Mr.Mnangagwa is said to have been planning to revitalise the economy through radical measures.
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- He is even said to have vouched for rectifying the mistakes of the radical land reforms and patching up relations with the World Bank and IMF.
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Is it an actual military coup?

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- Though the action is in effect a bloodless coup, the Zimbabwean military chose to call it a bloodless political correction.
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- Considering Mr.Mugabe’s popularity with the masses, it is also not clear whether this military action would end to his reign.
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- The main goal of the generals appears to be ‘preventing Mugabe's 52-year-old wife Grace’ from succeeding him.
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- But irrespective of the outcome, it is likely to mark the end of the total dominance of the country by Mugabe.
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- Notably, even the main opposition MDC party calling for civilian rule to be protected.
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What next?

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- Various countries have asked its nationals in Zimbabwe to stay cautious due to the prevalent uncertainty.
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- Mr.Mnangagwa’s promised return would be a major event.
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- The actions of the ZANU-PF’s party youth wing, which is aligned to Ms.Grace is also being closely watched.
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- The army has promised to retreat as soon as its stated vision has been accomplished.
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- Further actions of the military would decide the direction the current turmoil would take.
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Source: The Hindu, Business line

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