

Conflict Prevention and Risk Analysis (CPRA) –Pretoria



CPRA Daily Briefings

Week 27

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The **CPRA Daily Briefings** are held weekday mornings in the CPRA Pretoria's Situation Room and the Briefing Notes are the minutes of this meeting during which each regional expert of the Programme reports on the latest human security developments in his/her region, followed by general discussions around the table. An intern then compiles a summary of the meeting, which is reviewed by the respective researchers, and a senior researcher edits the report and provides quality control before returning it to the intern to prepare it for dispatch to the mailing list to which you have subscribed.

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**Today's Briefings
Compilation**
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Summary of Briefings

Southern Africa

Angola: the pre-electoral environment becomes tense

The current political scene in Angola indicates that the country will face several challenges related to the conduct of elections, which are set for 31 August. The ruling Peoples' Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) has been accused by the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) of preparing to rig the upcoming polls. The MPLA has ruled Angola since it gained independence from Portugal in 1975. UNITA initially fought alongside the MPLA against Portugal, but after independence the two parties turned on one another. Today, UNITA is the second largest party in Angola and the main opposition to the MPLA.

UNITA has written a letter to the National Electoral Commission (CNE) over its concerns, which include the current state of the voters' roll, the way in which votes will be observed and counted and how the diaspora vote will be accommodated. One of UNITA's main concerns is that the CNE will not truly be in charge of the elections, but that instead the process will be controlled by the MPLA. UNITA has threatened to stage protests if the CNE does not address the alleged irregularities. The Southern African Development Community Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC), which was inaugurated last year, has not been very vocal on Angola's upcoming election. SEAC is mandated to advise SADC members on elections and advancing democracy. It is specifically meant to encourage SADC member states to respect the independence of electoral management bodies. In the case of Angola, suspicion over the independence of the CNE is certainly something that SEAC should address. There also has not been any clear response from SEAC on the brutal fashion in which the Angolan government deals with protestors. Significantly, however, SADC remains constrained by its advisory mandate and cannot enforce the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections in SADC of August 2004, which seek to promote democratic electoral processes in Angola and elsewhere in Southern Africa. In any case, Angola currently chairs the regional body and the MPLA government operates there with the same lack of transparency as it does domestically.

For now, set against the backdrop of a fragmented opposition, it appears as though the MPLA, which had garnered a landslide victory in the 2008 elections with 82 per cent of the vote, will win the upcoming elections as well. However, the possibility that UNITA may not accept the outcome should not be ignored. Considering the recent protests by destitute war veterans for cash welfare assistance and the fact that the grievances of these veterans also resonate with the youth of Angola, it is possible that the country will see more uprisings. The student protest movement accuses the MPLA government of mismanaging Angola's oil revenues, suppressing human rights and doing too little to end widespread graft, unemployment and poverty. How the government responds to these protests will be key in setting the tone for the country's democratic future. Up to now, the government has chosen a swift crackdown on the dissenters and instead staged pro-government marches.

Meanwhile, selfish strategic and economic interests inform the international community's muted response to Luanda's clampdown on protests and suppression of human rights. For example, a large element of the strategic partnership between the United States (US) and Angola is related to economic relations. Beyond ensuring a steady supply of oil, the US national interest was defined by its desire to create a stable business environment in Angola to allow its companies to trade easily and invest there. The US sees Angola as a potential economic hub of Southern Africa and supports Angola's goal of playing a larger role in the region and internationally. For now, it would appear as though strategic considerations have trumped concern over Angola's poor human rights and democratic record, which will eventually have to improve. Meanwhile, the

European Union's engagement in Angola has been limited. Amid the current European financial crisis, fortunes and tables turned as Angola offered to bail out its cash-strapped former coloniser, Portugal.

At the moment it appears unlikely that President Jose Eduardo dos Santos will step down. Leadership succession in the MPLA is seen as one of the greatest possible sources of instability in the country. Manuel Domingos Vicente, the former head of state-owned oil company Sonangol, whom President dos Santos appointed as Minister of Economic Coordination in January 2012 and is number two on the MPLA's election list, against the wishes of some party stalwarts, is widely tipped. Some fear President dos Santos may anoint his son, José Filomeno, as the next leader, but there are various elements within the MNLA who are against this.

In terms of Angola's future economic stability, it is very important that it starts diversifying economically as soon as possible, so that the economy is not dominated by oil and gas, which make the country susceptible to the 'Dutch disease'. New sectors take time to become profitable, and these should be up and running by the time Angola runs out of oil reserves. Angola is Africa's second-largest oil producer after Nigeria and should more vigorously address problems of corruption, lack of transparency, and economic mismanagement to facilitate socio-economic development in order to stem social unrest. Despite abundant natural resources and rising per capita Gross Domestic Product, it was ranked 148 out of 169 countries on the 2011 United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index.

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