

African Conflict Prevention Programme (ACPP) –Pretoria



ACPP Daily Briefings

Week 19

Thursday, 24 May 2012

The ACPP Daily Briefings are held weekday mornings in the ACPP 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

North Africa

Egypt: The dynamics of the Egyptian election

Remark: The notes related to this theme are based on the contribution of Mr Abdelkader Abderrahmane, from the ACPD division at the ISS Addis Ababa office.

Fifteen months after President Hosni Mubarak was ousted, Egyptians went to the polls in their first free presidential election. Twelve candidates are contesting the elections but there are three front runners, namely former foreign minister and Arab League chief Amr Moussa, Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Mursi and Muslim Brotherhood dissident Abdelmumein Al Futuh. This highlights a division in terms of the possible outcome of the election between the need for continuity, with Moussa and Al Futuh, and the need for change, with Mursi.

The common impression is that this election will represent a massive change in the Egyptian political system, but there are still a lot of economic and political challenges ahead. The Arab Spring is often viewed as a revolution and the assumption is that such a revolution will usher in a rapid change for the people of Egypt. This, however, is not true, as a revolution is often a long and complex process, as was the case in France, for example, where it took 50 years to complete.

The new Egyptian president will have a lot to deal with, namely economic challenges such as unemployment and the formulation of a new Egyptian constitution. The protests on Tahrir Square, 15 months ago, were largely based on people's dissatisfaction with their economic situation and this sentiment has not changed in their motivation for the votes they cast over these two days. The new president will need to address people's concerns, especially their hope for an improvement in their economic situation.

Having an election without a constitution in place that outlines the duties of the President can have adverse effects on the success of the presidency. Firstly, without clear guidelines with regard to the president's power, there might be an abuse of power. The need to bring stability to the country may cause the president to extend his power through the constitution and so revert to Mubarak's presidency style. Secondly, the lack of guidelines for the presidency could undermine the decisions taken before a constitution is finalised. This could delay the consolidation of democracy within Egypt.

Over the last 15 months, the role of the military has come into question. In the case of Egypt, we find that the military is integrated within both the political system and the economy. Therefore, it will be a determining factor in the success of the election. The candidate who wins will determine the military's role within government. If Moussa wins the relations between the presidency and the military could remain the same, where the military controls its own budget and determines its own interests. In contrast, if Mursi wins the tension between the Muslim Brotherhood and the military may continue and lead to more protests. This was evident when the Muslim Brotherhood won the outright majority in the parliamentary elections and the military tried to delay the formulation of a constitution.

Egypt is seen as an important role player in the Middle East and therefore international actors and regional powers will be paying close attention to the outcome of the election. The United States is at the forefront of international interests and might aid the military in contesting the elections if the Muslim Brotherhood should win, whereas Qatar and Saudi Arabia will also be concerned with the outcome of the elections, for different reasons. Qatar is seen as a supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood for a pro-Islamic government and Saudi Arabia will possibly support Moussa for continuity within the political processes.

The Egyptian election is the first election where there has not been an outright favourite and therefore it will probably run into a second round of elections, which is set to take place mid-June. There are various issues that will need to be addressed if a clear winner is determined by the results, namely the role of the military, the formulation of the constitution and the approach to the economic problems the country is experiencing. Therefore, as stated before, a revolution is a long and complex process and the election outcome is only the beginning of the process. The approach that the chosen president will use will determine whether democracy is successfully consolidated.

The End