

Conflict Prevention and Risk Analysis (CPRA) –Pretoria



CPRA Daily Briefings

Week 44

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CONTENTS

Southern Africa

- **South Africa: Opposition pushes for a vote of no confidence in President Jacob Zuma**

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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Summary of Briefings

Southern Africa

South Africa: Opposition pushes for a vote of no confidence in President Jacob Zuma

On 8 November 2012, most of South Africa's opposition parties, led by the country's largest opposition group the Democratic Alliance (DA), tabled a vote of no confidence in President Jacob Zuma of the ruling African National Congress (ANC), aimed at dislodging him from power. The other parties involved are the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), Congress of the People (COPE), Azanian People's Organisation (APO), Freedom Front Plus (FF+), United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP) and United Democratic Movement (UDM). Three other minority parties – the African People's Convention, Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and Minority Front, each with a single seat in parliament – did not support the motion. In tabling the motion the opposition parties indicated that issues such as the failure of the current dispensation to uphold the constitution, escalating public sector corruption, the Moody's and Standard & Poor's credit rating downgrades, the poor economy and the Marikana tragedy signalled the failure of President Zuma's government.

If successful, which is highly unlikely, President Zuma and his entire cabinet would have to resign. The ANC chief whip's office stated that such 'publicity-seeking gimmicks masquerading as motions' would be quashed. In order for the vote of no confidence to succeed, the entire opposition – less the three parties that do not seem to support the motion – and at least 68 ANC Members of Parliament (MPs) would have to vote in favour of it so as to garner the two-thirds majority that is constitutionally required. The call for a secret ballot on the vote of no confidence is an acknowledgment on the part of the opposition that there are difficulties in getting even disgruntled ANC MPs to vote with them on the matter. Besides this, ANC MPs would definitely not want to be party to any motion resulting in the collapse of an ANC government. Further, as a party, the ANC has shown that it does not take kindly to its own siding with the opposition, as illustrated by the call for ANC MP Ben Turok to be disciplined when he abstained from voting on the Protection of State Information Bill (the Secrecy Bill). Given the inability of the current opposition to successfully push through important motions in parliament, it is therefore necessary to consider other possible scenarios leading to a numerically significant opposition in parliament. Such an opposition would be in a position to counteract the strength of the ruling party and would require support from the electorate for it to be legitimate.

The first scenario would involve the DA over time chipping away at the ANC base and also hoping that the millions of South Africans who have stopped voting for the ANC would start voting for the DA. The second scenario is that of a united coalition of the opposition taking on the ANC, but this is unlikely given ideological differences and the schisms within some of the opposition parties. The third scenario would involve the emergence of a new party, which would be able to eclipse the problems (ideological, organisational and others) in the opposition and the ANC; disconnect itself from the dominant narratives on the political landscape; and carry the hopes and aspirations of the majority of South Africans. Such a party would also over time have to demonstrate that it has the political will to deal with issues such as corruption, a scourge that the ANC has failed to address adequately.

Recently the Public Service Commission (PSC) reported that the cost to government of public service graft totalled almost R1 billion and indicated that one way of addressing this would be for public servants to be banned from doing business with government. The PSC noted with worry the state of affairs where senior managers in government departments had interests in firms with business dealings with government. While it was not illegal for public servants to do business with government and there was a requirement for government employees to declare their interests, the PSC noted that the upsurge in financial misconduct among senior managers illustrated that there should be stricter and more enforceable rules and regulations to curb a prevailing 'culture of no consequence'. It is obvious that there are significant conflict of interests issues when senior managers on tender ward committees have interests in firms bidding for government contracts. The National Planning Commission (NPC) in its National Development Plan recommends the centralisation of bid adjudication for large tenders and those that go on for long periods of time. The NPC has also called for stronger whistle-blower protection policies and for robust prosecution of those committing tender fraud. It remains to be seen if South Africa will, in future, enter into a dispensation in which there is political will to transparently deal with public sector corruption.

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