



# AFRICA'S AUGUST ELECTIONS

AKE SPECIAL REPORT: JULY 2017

## OVERVIEW

In August 2017 the citizens of Rwanda, Kenya and Angola head to the polls to vote in presidential elections. Amidst a global trend of democratic backsliding, holding free, fair and peaceful elections would send a powerful message about Africa's nascent democracies.

While the recent experiences of Ghana and The Gambia offer hope, the failure to hold elections in Democratic Republic of Congo and third termism points to the continued difficulties countries face in consolidating democratic systems. Voter intimidation, incumbency bias and quasi-authoritarian governance remain, to varying degrees, endemic in Rwanda, Kenya and Angola. This Special Report analyses the prospects and risks for their upcoming elections.

### AKE FORECAST: INCUMBENTS SWEEP TO VICTORY

#### Rwanda: A foregone conclusion

*Projections: President Kagame wins third term  
Key risks: opposition suppression, policy continuity*

#### Kenya: High stakes, high rewards

*Projections: Kenyatta consolidates incumbency bias  
Key risks: post-electoral violence, rising public debt*

#### Angola: After dos Santos

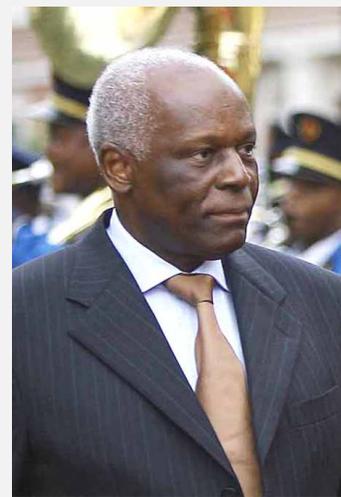
*Projections: Succession crisis averted with MPLA win  
Key risks: popular dissatisfaction; party factionalism*

### ELECTION TIMETABLE

4 August: Rwanda

8 August: Kenya

23 August: Angola



Current incumbents: Paul Kagame (Rwanda), Uhuru Kenyatta (Kenya), Jose Eduardo dos Santos (Angola) (from left)

## ABOUT US

AKE is a political and security risk consultancy firm, supporting organisations operating or investing in challenging environments. We have over 25 years of experience of working with clients in the finance, extractives and media sectors to monitor, manage and mitigate risks. Our flagship Global Intake platform contains country political and security risk profiles, ratings and violent incident mapping, and sends clients daily risk updates and twice-weekly analytical briefings on key developments – all written by regional experts. We also provide bespoke consultancy services, including tailored reports on specific country risks. Contact us for further information or a free trial.

# RWANDA: A FOREGONE CONCLUSION

When rebel commander Paul Kagame led the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) into Rwanda to stop the genocidal slaughtering of his Tutsi kin he said he had no political ambitions. In 2010, President Kagame, fresh from re-election with 93 per cent of the vote, said he had no intention of staying on for an un-constitutional third term: "those who seek a third term seek a fourth and fifth term", he said. The constitution was later amended. Kagame is now eligible to seek a third term on 4 August, and then a fourth, and a fifth. Given his firm grip on Rwandan politics, Kagame could conceivably remain in power until 2034.

That MPs, after nationwide consultations, found just 10 people, out of a population of 11 million, that opposed the proposed constitutional amendments is illustrative of the control the RPF exerts. The harsh repression of critics and opposition figures, including arbitrary detention, disappearances, intimidation and assassinations in foreign countries is legitimised, in the eyes of the RPF, by their role as protectors of the peace. Dissenters are charged with incitement to genocide.

**"those who seek a third term seek a fourth and fifth term"**

President Paul Kagame

That is not to say Kagame does not enjoy popular support. Many who vote Kagame on 4 August would do so regardless. He has presided over rapid economic growth that, unlike many other sub-Saharan countries, has translated into a better life for citizens. Rwanda ranks among the top countries for human development progress over the past decade. It provides health care coverage, free schooling and has a higher percentage of female MPs than anywhere else in the world - amid a backdrop of relative peace in an otherwise volatile region. The government has worked to make Rwanda one of the easiest places to do business on the continent as it seeks to become a regional services hub. His vision is to make Rwanda the 'Singapore of Africa'.

Kagame's critics claim the economic miracle which has seen Rwanda become a donor darling is instead a mirage, with achievements overstated and impressive growth sustained by donor financing. Aid contributes more than a third of the budget and could conceivably be withheld akin to 2012 when aid was halted over Rwanda's backing of rebels in Democratic Republic of Congo, although Kagame's interventionist foreign policy has since been tamed somewhat.



Inequality is also growing,, while allegations of cronyism related to the RPF's investment arm, Crystal Ventures, grow louder. Kagame insists it is simply a vehicle to invest in strategic sectors foreign investors won't.

Kagame's only challengers are Frank Habineza of the Green party and Philippe Mpayimana, a former journalist who recently returned from exile . Three other candidates, including the only female candidate, were disqualified in dubious circumstances after allegedly failing to garner enough signatures of support. Kagame's opponents can do little more than hope to shine a spotlight on Rwanda's problems and encourage broader political participation during the designated three weeks of campaigning. Kagame, meanwhile, must continue to offset a lack of political space with rapid development; otherwise citizens may become increasingly emboldened to challenge the status quo should Kagame seek his fourth and fifth terms.

# KENYA: HIGH STAKES, HIGH REWARDS

Kenya's upcoming election increasingly represents a two-way contest between incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta and veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga. The presidential contest has become an increasingly tense prospect as a once 30-point lead for Kenyatta in the polls has shrunk to a mere 5 points. Odinga's advance, mobilising support across all ethnic lines, comes following his established reputation for fighting for the most economically and politically marginalised communities. While Kenyatta has stressed his developmental record, citing the completion of the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway as well as his dedication to technological development as part of the country's ambitious Vision 2030, Odinga's rhetoric of reform has attracted growing support in light of the endemic corruption in the country. While Odinga's surge into contention highlights Kenya's continuing democratic strides, the greater resources available to Kenyatta alone suggests that he remains the frontrunner for the presidency. Indeed, since the introduction of multi-party democracy, no incumbent in Kenya has been removed from power through the ballot box.



The elections will be the second time that Kenya has gone to the polls following constitutional reform in 2010. Devolving key fiscal and governmental powers, reforms have encouraged both greater political accountability and local participation, adding greater unpredictability into Kenya's electoral landscape. Local politics have become more aligned with the day-to-day lives of the population and August will see a record 14,525

candidates running for office. However, the success of emerging political accountability in combating Kenya's history of ethnic politics remains to be seen.



new Constitution adopted

A recent judicial ruling to overturn the tender of ballot-paper printing to a Kenyatta-linked Dubai firm highlights electoral malpractice's shadow over democratic proceedings in Kenya. Such allegations, together with growing logistical concerns over electoral mechanism, have overshadowed the lead up to the election, leaving public confidence in free and fair elections low. Fears of electoral violence remain high following the unprecedented violence and human rights abuse following the 2007/8 election. While Kenya has experienced peaceful elections since, unrest following party primaries in April has heightened anxiety over a violent response to August's result. Kenya has been subject to multiple reports which point to the use of inflammatory language, characterised by inter- and intra-ethnic profiling, by the political class as a driving force of politically-motivated violence.

**"The winner of August's elections will be tasked with leading a country characterised by both its opportunities and its challenges."**

The winner of August's elections will be tasked with leading a country characterised by both its opportunities and its challenges. Kenya, still the dominant economic force in East Africa, will require renewed commitment to developing infrastructure, economic diversification and foreign investment. Yet there are arguably bigger challenges: maintaining internal security in the face of al-Shabaab attacks, tackling corruption and the immediate prospect of post-electoral violence. Achieving credible and peaceful elections would signal Kenya's continuing strides towards established and protected democracy. However, elections characterised by ethno-politics, electoral malpractice and growing national insecurity could see a return to Kenya's tradition of concern and unpredictability around each election cycle.

# ANGOLA: AFTER DOS SANTOS

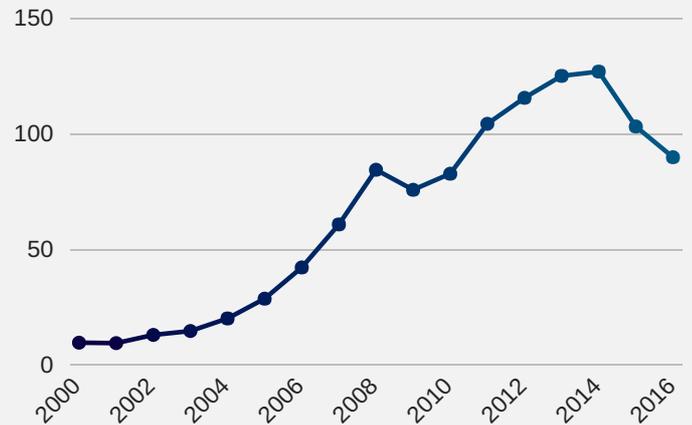
On 23 August, Angolans will go to the polls in a historic election following the decision of President Jose Eduardo dos Santos to stand down after almost 38 years in power, surpassed only by President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea. Presiding over an extended oil boom, dos Santos has amassed significant wealth and consolidated power to ultimately serve as the shaping force in Angolan politics.

However, despite the election's promise of democratic progress, the ruling Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) party is widely expected to win a majority. President dos Santos' appointed successor, João Lourenço – a party veteran and former defence minister – is widely perceived as a compromise candidate that will offer continuity over change. The managed transition will quell any fears of political instability associated with a succession crisis.

Dos Santos will still retain his firm grip within the MPLA and wider Angolan politics. He will maintain his ability to choose parliamentary candidates and appoint top posts in the army and police. Not only has dos Santos' time in office consolidated his own position and allowed for a managed succession, he has used it to entrench the power of his family. His son José Filomeno was appointed head of Angola's US\$5bn sovereign wealth fund in 2013, while daughter Isabel is now chief executive of Sonangol – the commanding height of Angola's economy.

In this context it is unlikely that the elections will facilitate necessary democratic reform, something that will likely fuel the increasing disillusionment of much of the population which, despite the country's vast oil wealth, live in poverty. Indeed, the challenges Lourenço faces over the coming years are substantial. The downturn in oil prices for Africa's largest producer of the commodity has led to flat-lining economic growth, eroded foreign exchange revenues and contributed to spiraling inflation. Economic diversification is necessary. Angola's capital Luanda is amongst the most expensive cities

in the world for expatriates and nationals alike. The country remains one of the most difficult countries in the world to do business, corruption is endemic, courts lack independence and much depends on personal connections with dos Santos and his inner circle.



GDP (US\$ billions) | Source: World Bank

Consequently, Angola's youth is increasingly disillusioned, and could serve as a nascent threat to the MPLA's hegemony over the long term. The song "I Am an Angolan Kamikaze Ready to Strike", sung by formerly detained rapper Mr. Beirao, has become a popular anthem amongst a disaffected generation. Nevertheless, protests continue to be violently suppressed by security forces, and it is not uncommon for dissenters and activists to be detained. The August election is no exception, likely to be accompanied by voter intimidation and suppression of the opposition as the MPLA continues to entrench its power.

