

## SPLITS IN BURUNDI'S MILITARY?

By Dr. Alexander Noyes

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Protests in Burundi. (Source: Paul Nantulya "Stopping the Spiral in Burundi," Spotlight, Africa Center for Strategic Studies, January 28, 2016, <http://africacenter.org/spotlight/stopping-the-spiral-in-burundi/>.)

Dr. Alexander Noyes is an Adjunct Research Staff Member in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

## SOUTH AFRICA: AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AT A CROSSROADS

By Sarah Graveline

South African President Jacob Zuma's decision to fire Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan on March 30, 2017, pitched the country into political turmoil. Gordhan was widely regarded a check on state corruption, and his ouster helped lead the Standard and Poor's (S&P) and Fitch credit agencies to [downgrade](#) South Africa's debt to junk status. South Africa's parliament has announced a no-confidence vote on Zuma's government. A date for the vote has not been set [pending](#) a Constitutional Court decision on whether the ballot may be secret. If Zuma survives the vote, which seems likely given that he has weathered [five](#) previous no-confidence votes since 2014, he will have eight months before the African National Congress's (ANC) National Conference to build support for his preferred successor as ANC President and likely [candidate](#) in upcoming 2019 elections. [more...](#)



Demonstrators protest against South African President Jacob Zuma in Pretoria, South Africa, on Tuesday, April 4, 2017. (Source: AP Photo.)

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IDA's Africa team focuses on issues related to political, economic, and social stability and security on the continent.

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## Background

Burundi is a small, landlocked country of 11 million bordering Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Rwanda in east-central Africa. It has a long history of intense ethnic conflict and military coups. Since the end of the country's civil war in 2000 until recently, Burundi was [hailed](#) by academics and practitioners as a rare post-conflict and security-sector reform success story. Indeed, as highlighted in the March 16, 2017, [edition](#) of *Africa Watch*, military governance and [reform](#) were crucial components of the Arusha Agreement, the wide-ranging peace agreement that put an end to Burundi's civil war in 2000. Scholars have [attributed](#) Burundi's military reform achievements to long-term international support (led by the Netherlands), a focus on governance, local ownership, and high-level political engagement.

In addition to military reform, the Arusha Agreement and new 2005 constitution included a number of significant power-sharing arrangements that guaranteed the country's Tutsi minority a share in governing institutions. These mechanisms, along with the reconstituted military, helped to shift Burundi's political dynamic away from ethnic politics. As scholar Filip Reyntjens [argued](#) in 2015, "Burundi's main divide is now between parties rather than ethnic groups, and when violence occurs it is political rather than ethnic." Even after the 2015 crisis erupted, the military, despite the coup attempt, was largely [lauded](#) by outside observers for its [professionalism](#) and behavior during mass protests, which stood in contrast to the conduct of the heavily politicized police.

## Military Cohesion Fraying

More recent developments suggest that a troubling new dynamic is now taking hold within Burundi's military. After the May 2015 military coup attempt, a series of [killings](#) and retaliations within the military have taken place, and [dozens](#) of Burundian officers serving in peacekeeping roles overseas have defected, including a number of soldiers serving in Somalia under the banner of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Two recent reports by the International Crisis Group (ICG) and the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) highlight these shifting dynamics within the military. The ICG [report](#) asserts that Burundi's political crisis and intra-military violence have created political and ethnic rifts in the heretofore cohesive armed forces. As the report [argues](#), "the army today is a microcosm of the country's crisis" and the "2015 crisis easily broke the key consensus on which the stability of the regime was based: between the army and civilian power, and within the army between the former rebels, most of whom come from the ruling party, and the old guard."

The ACSS report details similar developments and points to a new bill in parliament that seeks to rename and reorganize the armed forces. According to the [report](#), this shows that Nkurunziza and his political allies are actively seeking to roll back the Arusha Accords and reorganize the military to consolidate his power: "Military reorganization is evidently an effort to increase the regime's control over the army's apolitical posture." It goes on to [underscore](#) how rifts have begun

to evolve around ethnic lines: “After the failed 2015 coup, efforts to stamp out disloyalty in the ranks have been perceived to have particularly targeted Tutsi officers, eroding the level of trust” between Tutsi and Hutu elements of the armed forces.

## Conclusion

The undermining, and attempted restructuring, of Burundi’s largely apolitical military does not bode well for the prospects of a peaceful resolution to the country’s drawn-out crisis. Indeed, according to some [accounts](#), the professionalism of Burundi’s military was one of the key reasons why the country has not yet descended into a renewed civil war. Regional and international entities could consider increasing diplomatic and economic pressure on the Burundian government to reach a new settlement that includes recommitting the country to the Arusha Agreement, as urged by both the ICG and ACSS reports, and to military reform and integration efforts.

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Demonstrators protest against South African President Jacob Zuma in Pretoria, South Africa, on Tuesday, April 4, 2017. (Source: AP Photo.)

## Cabinet Shuffle Highlights Political Crisis

Jacob Zuma is widely unpopular. In a November 2016 nationally representative [poll](#), respondents gave his performance an average rating of only 4 on a scale of 1 to 10. More recently, a March survey of urban South Africans found [71 percent](#) disapproved of his performance. And on April 7, [tens of thousands](#) of South Africans responded to the decision to fire Gordhan by protesting in cities across the country.

Despite this show of opposition, Zuma remained [defiant](#), calling the protestors “racist” and pointing out [counter-protests](#) led by the ANC Youth League. Zuma's posture reflects his political strength. As [Africa Watch](#) previously reported, Zuma has built a cadre of loyalists within the ANC who have ensured his political survival despite his being implicated in numerous corruption scandals.

The ANC leadership's response to Gordhan's firing conformed to this pattern. Although ANC Deputy President [Cyril Ramaphosa](#) called Gordhan's firing “totally unacceptable,” ultimately, ANC leadership publicly accepted Zuma's decision. ANC Secretary General Gwede Mantashe even suggested that criticism of Zuma was [improper](#), saying, “their [Ramaphosa and Zuma's] public dissonance on the matter was a mistake that should not be committed again.”

## “State of Capture” and the Fight against Patronage Politics

The ANC's refusal to censure Zuma undermines its ability to oppose corruption within its ranks. The scale of this corruption became public in “State of Capture,” the November 2016 [publication](#) of South African Public Protector Thuli Madonsela. The report contained numerous allegations of financial impropriety in the relationship between Zuma and the Gupta brothers—a family with extensive business interests in South Africa.

Most notably, the report [alleged](#) that Zuma's December 2015 appointment of David van Rooyen as Finance Minister was recommended by the Gupta brothers with the understanding that van Rooyen would green-light investment in a nuclear plant that would benefit the Gupta's investment in uranium mining. Political pressure forced Zuma to [reverse](#) this decision and appoint Gordhan to replace van Rooyen as Finance Minister. With Gordhan now gone, [observers](#) worry that corrupt deals, including investment in the nuclear power plant, will continue.

It remains to be seen whether South Africa's political institutions can curb this brand of patronage politics. There have been some positive signs. The South African Communist Party (SACP) and Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which formally support the ANC through a [Tripartite Alliance](#), have both [publicly called](#) for Zuma to step down.

In addition, South Africa's judiciary remains [independent](#). It has made a variety of decisions that challenged political impunity, including ruling that Zuma violated the constitution by refusing to pay back money owed for upgrades to his Nkandla property and by rejecting a politically motivated legal case against Gordhan.

### **The ANC's Struggle for Reform**

Ultimately, the fight against corruption will be effective only if it is embraced by the ANC. Although other political parties have begun to make [electoral gains](#) in urban areas, the ANC remains the dominant player in South African politics. It controls a majority in parliament and has won the popular vote in every election since 1994.

Through its own bylaws and [history](#), the ANC has internal checks and balances that require decision-making by consensus. Some party figures have opposed Zuma. It was Deputy Finance Minister Mcebisi Jonas who acted as a whistleblower for "State of Capture" by [reporting](#) being offered a bribe to accept a cabinet position. Some leaders, such as former President Kgalema Motlanthe, have also [publicly criticized](#) Zuma.

Collectively, however, the ANC's response has been weak. In April 2016, ANC parliamentarians [voted against](#) impeaching Zuma, thus ensuring he retained the presidency. Public outrage is louder now than last year, and a secret ballot would provide plausible deniability to ANC MPs who vote against Zuma. Nevertheless, analysts believe it is [unlikely](#) that enough ANC parliamentarians will vote with the opposition to remove Zuma.

### **Conclusion**

If South Africa's parliament does not vote to impeach Zuma, he will likely survive to lobby for the nomination of his preferred successor at the ANC National Conference in December. Reports suggest that Zuma favors his [ex-wife](#), Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. Were she to win, her close ties to Zuma would be a concern for many South Africans, who are increasingly frustrated with a government that has proven unable to address the country's economic challenges and unwilling to end corruption.

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