

DEMOCRACY DELAYED IN SOMALIA

By Hilary Matfess

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Somali soldiers stand near a destroyed building after a suicide attack that targeted a convoy escorting a senior military general in Mogadishu, Somalia, Sunday, Sept. 18, 2016. (Source: AP Photo/Farah Abdi Warsameh.)

Hilary Matfess is a Research Associate in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

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A man drives past a burnt vehicle after a recent protest against a delay of the presidential elections in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tuesday, September 20, 2016. (Source: AP Photo/John Bompengo.)

Sarah Graveline is a Research Associate in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

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The Institute for Defense Analyses is a non-profit corporation operating in the public interest.

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In response to the initial postponement, the United Nations expressed “disappointment,” but Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said he hoped that the new timetable would be tenable and underscored that these elections would be an “[important milestone](#)” for the war-torn country. Unfortunately, the combination of delays, renewed attacks by al-Shabaab, and increased restrictions on the political opposition suggest that Somalia may be headed toward a constitutional crisis.

What’s the Significance of One Man, One Vote?

One-person, one-vote elections would have been a significant milestone in the country’s history. Somalia has had only two such elections in its history, in 1964 and 1969. Direct elections would signify that Somalia is stable enough to hold popular elections and manage a major political transition. Following the creation of a new federal government in 2012, many were optimistic that the government would put in place the necessary institutions and security for popular elections. Instead, however, the country has maintained a convoluted indirect system based on clan representation. According to [Saferworld](#), “many in Somalia sought to leave behind” a clan-based political process. The report concludes that such a system has become a boon to the government—in the absence of a strong state and national identity, the government relies on clan-based representation and traditional authority “to inject a modicum of legitimacy into the political transition.”

In lieu of popular elections, the voting that was scheduled to begin September 24 is [a process](#) in which Somali clan elders pick roughly 14,000 delegates, who will then be organized into “electoral colleges” that will select the 275 members of the Parliament. According to Ty McCormick, writing for [Foreign Policy](#), the clan rivalries that underpin this electoral system “have made everything from drafting a new constitution to federating the country to drawing up a plan for the current election . . . excruciatingly difficult.”

Why the First Delay?

The first decision to delay the elections in August came from the National Leadership Forum (NLF), a consortium of state and federal leaders tasked with helping institutionalize and harmonize the country’s political system. Moving the national elections from August to October was justified on the basis of the country’s inadequate preparation for elections.

The NLF has been accused of politicizing the elections. The Coalition for Change, a platform for opposition political parties in the country, is “[deeply concerned](#) about the independence and effectiveness of the electoral commission and the lack of transparency in the electoral process.” The NLF has been criticized for its role in the redistribution of parliamentary representation. The body has continued to use the controversial, informal “[4.5 formula](#),” a power-sharing system that aims to assuage clan dynamics through mandated representation.

Analysis done by [Somalia Newsroom](#) found that the funds allocated for the elections in the 2016 budget were

inadequate for elections “without heavy or complete donor support.” Even with the international community’s financial support for the Somali elections, ensuring both security and political freedom remain pressing challenges.

Why the Second Delay?

The series of delays throughout August and September seem to corroborate claims that the country’s supposedly independent electoral bodies have been politicized. Some [analysts](#) suggest that the delay may be part of an effort by the incumbent government to extend its tenure in office. The Coalition for Change released a statement condemning the delay as “an utter [violation](#) of Article 91 of the Provisional Constitution,” which establishes limits on time in office. The current government has been in power since 2012, when it was inaugurated as the country’s first internationally recognized permanent government in 22 years. Over time, the optimism about President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and his government has given way to frustration in many circles as the war against al-Shabaab has continued and the country’s stability remains uncertain.

The [Federal Indirect Elections Implementing Team](#) and its state-level counterparts justified the delay as a result of elders’ failing to submit lists of representatives to the electoral body. The body also claimed that clans were not respecting the 30 percent quota system for women.

Security Challenges Compound Other Issues

In the run-up to the election, the country has experienced a spate of attacks by al-Shabaab. A spokesman for the terrorist group claims that the elections serve “[foreign interests](#)” and vowed to disrupt them. The detonation of a car bomb in Mogadishu in mid-September, which killed a Somali general and at least five others; an attack on a Kenyan border town; and a suicide bombing near the presidential palace on August 30 that killed at least 20 people all suggest that the group remains a [potent threat](#).

Security concerns have been used as justifications for limitations on political rallies and public protest. In late September, the city government of Mogadishu banned demonstrations without the mayor’s approval in response to a plan by the political opposition to protest peacefully against incumbent President Mohamud’s government. [Mogadishu’s mayor](#) claimed that the decision “was not political, but based on security fears.” The political opposition, however, asserts that the ban restricts freedom of expression and is a way of preventing the opposition from gaining support.

Conclusions

The combination of a mistrusted electoral system, persistent delays, restrictions on political opposition, and security concerns is a potent mixture, which could continue instability in Somalia.

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Watershed Protests End in Violence

On September 19, [thousands](#) of Congolese citizens took to the streets of Kinshasa to protest the postponement of presidential elections, which according to the DRC constitution, were [supposed to be called](#) for by that date. These protestors were met with repression; between 17 and 50 [protestors died](#) after Congolese security forces fired into crowds, while three opposition groups' headquarters were [destroyed](#) by arsonists. Security forces were also [targeted](#), and one police officer's body was set on fire by protestors.

Although last week's demonstrations were not the first public protests against delayed presidential elections, [analysts](#) believe the scale and violence of the protests has generated a level of animosity that changes the nature of the crisis. Before the protests, attempts at political dialogue were ongoing, albeit with challenges. After the protests, however, it seems increasingly unlikely that stakeholders will be willing to seek a political solution through dialogue.

Are Attempts at Dialogue Too Weak to Succeed?

As [Africa Watch](#) previously reported, although DRC president Joseph Kabila is constitutionally mandated to leave office following the December 2016 elections, these elections are unlikely to happen on time due to government obstruction. While Kabila has continued to delay progress toward elections, he has [supported](#) the development of a national dialogue to discuss electoral issues. Kabila may have intended the dialogue as a public relations maneuver to give a veneer of legitimacy to his power grab. The international community, however, has sought to turn the dialogue into a legitimate endeavor.

In [April](#), the African Union, supported by the United Nations, the European Union, and the International Organization of La Francophonie, appointed Edem Kodjo to lead the national dialogue. Almost immediately the dialogue's legitimacy was challenged when the DRC's most prominent opposition leaders, Etienne Tshisekedi and Moïse Katumbi, [objected](#) to Kodjo's appointment and refused to participate. The dialogues [began](#) on September 1 with 280 other participants, but the overall impact of discussions was disputed.

This legitimacy was further challenged by the September 19 protests. Citing the government's violent response to protestors, several [civil society](#) organizations, including the [Catholic church](#), pulled out of the AU-led dialogue. Their departure means only the government and minor opposition groups and civil society organizations continue to participate.

Despite this shrinking number of participants, the national dialogue process has continued. On September 23, the AU [distributed](#) the text of a draft agreement outlining potential steps to resolve the election standoff. Without the participation

of important opposition and civil society organizations, however, the dialogue may not have the legitimacy to make proposed solutions tenable to the public or the opposition.

Can the International Community Intervene?

Even though efforts to peacefully resolve Congo's election crisis appear increasingly remote, the international community maintains some leverage over the government's willingness to negotiate in good faith. In June, the United States imposed [sanctions](#) on a senior official in Kabila's government.

The DRC government has invested in efforts to avoid further sanctions. On September 2, the DRC government [signed](#) an \$875,000 contract with the American lobbying firm BGR Group to improve its image with the U.S. Congress. On September 16, a senior advisor to Kabila reportedly [traveled](#) to Washington, DC, to lobby against further sanctions. Despite these efforts, on September 28 the Treasury Department [sanctioned](#) Gabriel Amisi Kumba, a Congolese general responsible for suppressing political demonstrations in Kinshasa, and John Numbi, an advisor to Kabila and former National Inspector for the Congolese National Police.

The American government's willingness to use more aggressive tactics, like sanctions, may help force the DRC government to make real changes. If Kabila can be persuaded to agree to some of the opposition's preconditions, perhaps key opposition leaders and civil society organizations can be persuaded to come back to the table and continue a legitimate dialogue.

Conclusion

The example of neighboring Burundi, which has descended into conflict following a similar election crisis, should give Congolese stakeholders pause. Having been the site of two of the most destructive wars in African history, the DRC can ill afford another nationwide conflict. Although it is mired in political challenges, the national dialogue seems the DRC's best opportunity to resolve its election crisis.

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Navigating Low Commodity Prices

For the past several years, Mozambique's government has invested heavily in developing its extractive industries. At around 15 percent of GDP annually, Mozambique's [public investment spending](#) has been higher than in other emerging resource-rich countries such as Uganda and Tanzania. During most of this period, rising commodity prices and economic growth produced sufficient revenues to finance the high level of public investment. More recently, commodity prices for natural gas, coal, and bauxite, Mozambique's primary natural resources, have fallen, and regional markets in other Southern African countries have withered. As a result, Mozambique's current account deficit has progressively widened during the current commodity price downturn.

Unwise Borrowing Has Consequences

The previously undisclosed borrowing already noted seems to be based on the assumption that Mozambique would quickly become a global natural gas exporter and therefore able to carry an increased debt load. Since Mozambique is estimated to possess [85 trillion cubic feet of natural gas](#), mostly offshore, that assumption was plausible at a time when worldwide demand for gas was rising rapidly. The [loans](#) were used to procure, on a noncompetitive basis, naval vessels and equipment for maritime security and logistics and a tuna fishing fleet.

In the intervening period, the timeline for exploitation of the natural gas reserves has been extended, and the tuna fishing venture has encountered great difficulties. With government resources already strained by these negative developments, the [suspension of aid](#) to Mozambique by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the United Kingdom in the wake of the lending disclosures was a heavy blow. In May, a state-owned asset management firm [missed a loan payment](#) of \$178 million. In July, one leading credit rating agency cut [Mozambique's sovereign debt rating](#) to one of the lowest rungs on the junk-debt ratings ladder.

Prospects for Natural Gas

Anadarko, an American natural gas and oil exploration and production company, made its first discovery of natural gas in Mozambique's Offshore Area 1, one of six offshore blocks, in 2010. The company has reported that the discoveries have the [potential](#) to make Mozambique the world's third-largest exporter of natural gas. Several other global oil and gas giants are also involved in work on the offshore blocks.

Although [preliminary agreements](#) for the purchase of Mozambique's natural gas have reportedly been made, none of these agreements have reached the final, binding stage. Potential buyers are apparently reluctant to complete gas purchase agreements in the absence of final investment decisions on the part of the exploration and production firms responsible for building the infrastructure needed to bring the resources on line. The investors, in turn, have hesitated in making final decisions at the current depressed market prices for natural gas.

This chicken-and-egg situation has persisted for some time. As a result, the production schedule has been stretched considerably. In November 2015, the [Economist Intelligence Unit](#) reported that Eni, the Italian firm that is one of the major players in the Mozambican fields, was hoping to make a final investment decision in early 2016 on a project that would have brought gas on line by 2019. That decision has been delayed. A final investment decision is now expected by the end of 2016, perhaps by the end of October, with [initial output delayed](#) until 2021.

Will Natural Gas Rescue Mozambique?

Mozambique is currently caught in a vise, with low gas prices on one side and ballooning debt on the other. The debt load could prove manageable if investors have confidence that Mozambican gas will come on line without further significant delays. [One study](#) estimates that liquid natural gas production could spur growth in the Mozambican economy of 24 percent annually from 2021 to 2025.

Increased gas prices would help the needed investment decisions come together. Currently, [natural gas prices](#) are recovering from the lows reached in early 2016, but are still only around half the prices of 2013–2014. Continued price increases would make final investment decisions more likely. Conversely, continued stagnation in prices and demand for natural gas could leave Mozambique in a difficult economic situation that could require increased engagement by both multilateral economic institutions and bilateral donors.

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