

## **SOUTH AFRICA AFTER MANDELA**

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More than 91 world leaders gathered in Johannesburg for the farewell to former South African President Nelson Mandela, in a celebration easily comparable to those of Pope John Paul II and JFK. With South Africa now gathering world's media attention for the loss of one of its most prominent political figure of the XX century, a question may arise: how will South Africa be looking like in the post-Mandela era? This issue is of paramount importance if taking into account the upcoming general elections in 2014.

Over the past twenty years, South Africa has made giant steps forward in terms of both development and democracy. Apart from the elimination of apartheid, the country has been able to develop a wide range of infrastructures and services like providing access to water and electricity to a wide range of the population, social grants and employment to more than 3.5 million people and a strong improvement in economic performances; including an increase in average real wages by 150 percent in the industry and mining sector. All this has turned into a huge popularity on behalf of Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) party, in the past years at least.

Nevertheless, the ANC has still several challenges to face. The first and foremost is the decreasing popularity of its current leader: President Jacob Zuma. President Zuma has gone through a long series of incidents and scandals that have strongly affected his image and popularity. In August 2012, the Marikana massacre marked one of the lowest points in Zuma's popularity, when 44 miners were killed by the

South African Police Service during a protest break up. The incident was the bloodiest since the end of the apartheid, with the main difference that both police and the politicians authorizing the intervention were mostly black people. In addition, the police have also been accused of committing other crimes against the population, hence fostering feelings of mistrust and fear. Although this has not yet become an election issue, it could easily turn into one if other cases will happen in the months heading to the election and of course the ruling party will be retained responsible for the police behavior.

Another controversy that could cost significant votes to the ANC in the next elections is the scandal related to the use of public funds for the upgrading of President Zuma's private house in Nkandla. According to South African media, President Zuma has spent more than \$ 21 million (about € 15 million) in "security upgrades" for its private residence. However, it is believed that a great part of this money was spent for non-security related facilities like a swimming pool, an amphitheatre and a visitors' lounge among others.

More recently, the ANC has managed to upset the Congress of SA Trade Unions (Cosatu), the party's most important ally, by demanding about 2.5 million motorists to pay e-tolls fees for using upgraded highways across the Gauteng Province. Cosatu Gauteng Secretary, Dumisani Dakile, has recently told media that the Union will keep supporting the ANC, but such support could be reconsidered in 2015 if the ANC does not withdraw the e-tolling, he said: *«We will still encourage people to vote and we will encourage them to vote for ANC. [...] Is that disingenuous? We don't believe so. But in 2015 the congress must assess if it is worth it for Cosatu to continue to support the ANC. That doesn't lie with us. It lies with members of the federation».*

Taking all this into account, the ANC is subjected to strong pressure coming from its own electorate, trade unions and of course opposition groups. The declining popularity of President Zuma could also trigger an internal competition within the party to replace Zuma as the party's chosen candidate. This scenario could fragmentize the ANC with the creation of new small parties of ANC's "dissidents", as has already happened with the Economic Freedom Fighters of Julius Malema, the former leader of the ANC Youth League.

In addition, one should take into account the role of those 1 million new voters (i.e. youngsters who will vote for the first time) who did not experienced the ANC golden age in the 1990s and might express all their dissatisfaction with the current situation of unemployment (about 25 percent), inequality and criminality. These new generation of voters could bring new socio-political demands in the election campaign arena, hence moving votes toward other parties than the ANC.

Consequently, although the ANC is likely to win the next election, its share in the parliament could be strongly reduced and the South Africa's political landscape could see a declining major party surrounded a constellation of small ones, with direct effects on the long-term political stability. All this will depend on the ANC's ability to propose itself again as a reformist party, led by a new leader inspiring itself to Mandela's ideals and, most importantly, to his revered line of conduct.