Cameroon: Incumbent's electoral victory will not mend political risks | Credendo

Event

Early August, opposition leader Kamto was rejected by the Constitutional Council from participating in the presidential election of 12 October. Without a unified opposition behind a single candidate, the odds for an opposition win are virtually lost. Hence, the 92-year-old Paul Biya is likely to secure an eight presidential term next month, maintaining his position as the oldest sitting head of state and the longest serving non-royal leader in the world.

Impact

Despite ample frustrations among the population over economic hardship and lacking political freedom, the opposition struggles to offer a credible alternative for the ruling alliance. Although youth protests are expected around the October vote, the real moment of truth for Cameroon's political future will occur whenever President Biya departs from power after ruling the country since 1975 (first as prime minister and since 1982 as president). Because of the great centralisation of power around his person, an important risk of destabilisation stems from the absence of a succession plan for when Biya gets incapacitated or dies. Biya's coalition is showing increased cracks with certain long-term allies turning against him. Therefore, the post-Biya political struggle will likely lead to serious unrest and possibly a military intervention into the political scene. In addition to the risk of a political vacuum, the armed conflicts raging in the anglophone regions and the far north are expected to escalate whenever the political situation reaches a boiling point. Cameroon continues to be the leading economy of the CEMAC (Central African Economic and Monetary Union) and is supported by a relatively well diversified exports base. The country is nevertheless confronted with falling oil revenues, disrupted agricultural production related to violent conflict and a weakening fiscal position reflected in domestic arrears accumulation.

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