

From: Office of Terje Rod-Larsen <[REDACTED]>
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IPI Regional Insights
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The International Peace Institute's (IPI) Regional Insights covers select regional and thematic developments based on information from a variety of sources. It draws on the research of IPI experts and is provided exclusively to major donors and members. Each monthly issue covers challenges and opportunities related to international peace, security, and development.

Africa

Great Lakes Region: The heads of state from the Great Lakes region gathered in Kampala again on October 8th and discussed, without reaching agreement, the composition of a possible "neutral" force to deploy in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where the M23 rebels have been fighting since last spring. It remains difficult to envision such a force being generated and deployed when the UN already has in place its biggest peacekeeping operation in the world (MONUSCO) composed of approximately 19,000 peacekeepers at a cost of \$1.4 billion a year. Rwanda and DRC's respective presidents, Kagame and Kabila, both participated in the summit, but remain estranged over the UN expert report pointing to Rwanda as supporting the M23 rebels in eastern DRC. Rwanda's President Kagame challenges the allegations, and in a speech to Rwanda's parliament on October 4th said that the aid suspensions by Western donors will only harden the Rwandan position. He advised the international community to look inside the DRC for the sources of the violence. In the DRC, President Kabila takes a hardline as well, refusing to negotiate with the M23. The international community will have to calculate its next steps carefully, especially with Kagame as a key regional actor and given that Rwanda is a likely member of the Security Council in 2013.

South Sudan/Sudan: Sudan and South Sudan signed a major cooperation agreement on September 27th in Addis Ababa. The agreement concluded over a month of negotiations led by the African Union High Implementation Panel (AUHIP) and a four-day summit that brought together Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir and South Sudanese President Salva Kiir. The agreement covers eight specific arrangements dealing with security, oil, nationals from the other country, border, trade, banking, post-service benefits, and certain economic matters. Widely acclaimed, the agreement highlights a positive coordination effort by the AU and the UN Security Council; the latter had threatened to impose sanctions on the two countries should they fail to reach an agreement. Concerns remain about the unresolved status of Abyei and other disputed regions. Other potential obstacles to lasting peace, stability, and development in both countries include the lack of progress in addressing the destructive conflict between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) in the border regions of Blue Nile and South Kordofan, and reservations in both Sudan and South Sudan over the agreement. While a major step forward, implementation will be challenging, and continued international pressure from the Security Council will be required.

Latin America

Haiti: Laurent Lamothe, the fourth prime minister since President Martelly took office in 2011, has declared Haiti "open for business," pledging to combat corruption and smuggling, create jobs, and attract foreign investment. However, Haiti remains vulnerable to setbacks linked to political instability, lack of respect for the rule of law, and unmet social grievances. Fulfilling Lamothe's vision thus represents a daunting challenge, with top priorities being improved security and rule of law. At this point, nearly three years after the devastating 2010 earthquake, Haiti does have the strong,

continuing, united support of the international community, as demonstrated by the Security Council in early October. The council unanimously approved extending the mandate of the 8-year-old UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for one year. While the peacekeeping forces are being downsized with a planned departure after the 2015 presidential election, the mission's priority and international community's focus is currently on strengthening the Haitian National Police (HNP). The police, which has a new director at its head since August, remains the only national security force in Haiti. The police force grew from 3,500 in 2005 to 10,000 officers in 2012, despite being strongly affected by the January 2010 earthquake. It is now both visible and active, while continuing to rely heavily on the peacekeepers. The national police's performance will be monitored and further growth fostered to at least 15,000 officers by 2016, when a handover of full security responsibilities to Haiti is foreseen.

Venezuela: Presidential elections in Venezuela on October 7th drew international attention because as Hugo Chavez sought a third term, he faced serious opposition for the first time, in the form of Henrique Capriles. Chavez won by about 10 percent, and in an uncharacteristic, conciliatory gesture he said he would cooperate with the opposition going forward. Capriles reportedly appealed to the Venezuelan business and middle classes and conceded graciously after maintaining a focus on the future throughout the campaign rather than attempting to counter Chavez's stinging commentary. This demonstration of the democratic process challenges the historic *caudillo* (strongman) politics, which once characterized the region.

Middle East

Egypt: On taking office, Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi made bold promises—on 64 different issues—to improve the daily lives of Egyptians in his first 100 days in office. Now, press reports indicate that nine of the promises have been kept and another 23 are in progress, according to a civil society group monitoring the president's progress (██████████). Making his mark with bold strokes, as demonstrated thus far in his short tenure, President Morsi issued a pardon to all those charged or convicted of acts in support of the Egypt's uprising. The pardon is a reversal of the legacy of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces, the military authorities that held interim control of Egypt. The military's arrests of protesters in 2011 and the first half of 2012 sparked fears of a return to the suppression that characterized the regime of Hosni Mubarak. The amnesty also coincides with an order by Morsi to release two Coptic boys who had been accused of desecrating the Quran. Looking to the future, the constitutional committee in Egypt is facing delays as conservatives and liberals clash over references to sharia law, the role in governance of the Sunni institution al-Azhar, and proposals to introduce blasphemy laws and a separate legal system for non-Muslims. The Egyptian public is livid at the acquittal on October 10th of 24 Mubarak era officials for what has become known as the "battle of the camels," when thugs riding camels and horses attacked protesters and killed more than 20 people. Apparently, the prosecutor general did not introduce available incriminating evidence. Following the public outcry, President Morsi moved to appoint the prosecutor general as ambassador to the Vatican. The prosecutor general backed by the judicial community pointed out that under Egyptian law the president does not have the authority to remove him. Morsi did not press the matter.

Jordan: King Abdullah dissolved the Jordanian parliament on October 4th and named an interim caretaker government a week later, as an election process gets underway framed by a new law passed in July 2012. Elections are expected within the next four months. The new legislation aims to introduce political reforms offering more opportunities for political participation, including for the opposition Islamic Action Front, the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan. The Islamic Action Front, however, maintains that the reforms are insufficient and plans to boycott the election, unless further reforms are introduced. The opposition, seeing an opportunity in the political transitions of the Arab Spring, is demanding sweeping reforms, including changes to the 1959 constitution, which would involve a shift of executive power from the monarchy to an elected government.

Iran: Following the roughly 40 percent drop of the rial against the dollar in late September and early October, influential Iranian bazaar merchants closed their stores in protest on October 3rd. Authorities acted swiftly to crack down on unlicensed currency traders in a desperate attempt to stop the rial from plummeting further. The newly imposed regulations provoked a surge of people wanting to buy dollars at the better rate offered by the government and thus threatening foreign reserves. The related inflation is causing widespread dissatisfaction. The pressure on the rial is seen as a direct result of international sanctions that restrict Iranian petroleum exports, the main source of foreign exchange.

Kuwait: The parliament in Kuwait has also been dissolved in a decree issued by the emir on October 7th. Elections will take place in early December, which will be the second time elections are held in less than a year. 2012 started with elections and the seating of an Islamist majority parliament in February. The constitutional court closed this parliament down in June, ruling it was elected based on illegal procedures. The earlier (2009) parliament was recalled, but never met because it lacked a quorum. The opposition revived the claims of corruption that had originally closed this parliament down in late 2011. The opposition is pleased with the emir's call for new elections, seeing it as an opportunity to regain their briefly held positions. It is actively supporting the electoral procedures used in early 2012, which brought them a majority, and is closely monitoring the situation for any inkling of procedural changes.

Israel/Palestinians: Cross-border incidents between Gaza and Israel, and Lebanon and Israel, and the ongoing trouble with extremists in the Sinai demonstrated the high level of tension in the region in recent weeks. But it was the lack of consensus on a government budget, not security, which led Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to call for early elections in the beginning of 2013. Netanyahu is in a strong political position to face the voters, so the timing favors his re-election. While the Israeli-Gaza cross-border shelling has been seen before, it was the downing of a drone-like aircraft over northern Israel that drew significant attention. Hezbollah claimed ownership of what appears to have been an Iranian-built aircraft.

Syria: Concerns are escalating over the conflict in Syria's spillover effects, especially since cross-border artillery fire between Syria and Turkey began on October 2nd. Turkey accused Syria of starting the attacks when mortar rounds killed five Turkish civilians. Many regional commentators interpret the widening circle of violence, including its spillover into neighboring countries, as being in Syria's interest. Meanwhile, fighting continues in Syria, especially in Aleppo, Homs, and Dara'a. Large swaths of these cities have been destroyed by the government's aerial bombardments. Reports continue to name Saudi Arabia and Qatar as the providers of weapons to Syrian rebels, but the arms flows have apparently not included any heavy weapons for fear they may end up in the hands of radical groups. Car bombs and suicide attacks continue. One such attack in the city of Aleppo earlier this month killed an estimated forty people. The al-Qaida affiliated Jabhat Al Nusra claimed responsibility. In Damascus, car bombs and suicide attacks are targeting security and government facilities. The ongoing violence overshadows any attempt at a negotiated resolution. The latest idea to emerge, offering a future role in a new government to the sitting Syrian Vice President Farouq Al Shara'a, appears farfetched at this juncture, when the Assad government remains confident in its position and hold on power. The opposition is unlikely to go along with this idea unless the Assad family gives up control of the military.

Central and South Asia

Afghanistan: President Karzai is once again blaming Pakistan for Afghanistan's security problems, while both countries share the problem of continuing extremist attacks. In his most recent outcry on October 4th, Karzai also critiqued the NATO International Security Assistance Force, claiming that it is not doing enough to go after the extremist threat coming from Pakistan. Although Afghanistan and Pakistan are discussing a possible bilateral strategic partnership, the simmering Afghan distrust of the Pakistani authorities is ever present. This latest outcry is perhaps the result of recent cross-border incidents, which have led each country to decry the other, and of Afghan legislators' perceptions of Karzai as an easy target for criticism for even considering a Pakistani-Afghan strategic partnership. The bottom line is that Karzai is letting off steam with these statements, given the constant Western pressure to improve governance and fight corruption, and equally intense domestic pressure to deliver on security for the Afghan people, an objective which remains elusive.

Pakistan: Pakistan is reeling from the latest attack in a Taliban campaign to silence moderate voices. The Taliban shot a 14-year-old girl education and peace activist, Malala Yousafzai, in the head in Swat, Pakistan, on October 9th. She is now in a serious condition in a hospital in the United Kingdom. The Taliban attack and claim that she was targeted for "promoting secularism" drew Pakistani and global outrage. Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar called the attack a wake-up call for Pakistan. In other political activity, cricket star turned politician Imran Khan and American peace activists organized a march to the tribal areas of Waziristan on October 6th to draw attention to what they claim is the significant, debilitating psychological impact of US drone attacks targeting terrorists on the local civilian community. The Pakistani authorities, outlining the dangers ahead in Waziristan, blocked the road with shipping containers and turned the marchers back before nightfall. In a separate, surprising development, it appears that the Supreme Court and the executive branch may

be near a compromise regarding the corruption investigation against President Asif Al Zardari—the court wants the executive branch to ask Switzerland to re-open the case. It is unclear why the government is caving in to the Supreme Court; perhaps the current Prime Minister is less principled than his predecessor and willing to take the risk that the process of re-opening the old case will be a smoldering headache, but one more easily managed than the migraine being produced by the Supreme Court.

For more information please contact:

Maureen Quinn at [REDACTED]

or

Camilla Reksten-Monsen at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

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