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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

**South Africa:** On May 7<sup>th</sup> South Africans go to the polls for the fourth time since the end of white rule twenty years ago. Over 2 million young voters will be voting for the first time since independence. The African National Congress (ANC) is expected to retain control of the government and parliament, perhaps with a slightly reduced majority. With persistent high unemployment (25.2%), widely publicized charges of corruption against President Jacob Zuma, and memories of police violence leading to the deaths of 34 unarmed striking miners at the Marikana platinum mine in August 2012, disillusion with the status quo has led to the rise of a new party and a more activist union movement. The main challenges come from the new Economic Freedom Fighters party led by radical youth leader Julius Malema, the COSATU union movement angered by the government's failure to prevent the attacks at Marikana, and the Democratic Alliance led by Helen Zille appealing to liberal mostly white voters. The latter floundered when efforts to create a new broader opposition party led by Dr. Mamphela Ramphele and Zille fell apart over personal differences.

Pervasive poverty, continuation of de facto segregated residential zones, limited job opportunities for all but a small black elite, and the poor quality of education and medical care remain the legacy of apartheid for the great majority of South Africans, after 20 years of ANC rule. The May 7<sup>th</sup> election is unlikely to change these bitter realities.

**Mali:** Newly installed Prime Minister Moussa Mara, 39, formed a government following the resignation of Mali's first post-war Prime Minister Oumar Tatam Ly on April 5<sup>th</sup>. The outgoing prime minister quit just six months into office, along with the entire cabinet. The government's resignation reflected deep differences between President Keita and Ly, as the latter became frustrated at being unable to enact economic reforms. President Keita is also facing growing criticism over the lack of progress in brokering a settlement in the north. So far, little of the \$4 billion in international aid, which was meant to be disbursed following last year's elections, has been forthcoming—in part because of procedural and governance problems in the country. Mara, who was a candidate in last year's presidential election, has stated that his top priorities will include strengthening governance and public services and improving relations between citizens and the state in post-coup Mali.

Middle East

**Egypt:** With the presidential election just over a month away, a third candidate has come forward to compete against former defense minister Abdel Fattah Al Sisi and leftist candidate Hamdeen Sabahy: Mortada Mansour, a controversial lawyer and former football club president. Mansour is a serious critic of the West and has already made vitriolic

accusations against various governments regarding their relationship with Egypt over the last three years. In the 2012 presidential elections, he attempted to run for president as a member of the Masr Al-Qawmi party but was ruled out by the elections committee. A number of local newspapers have interpreted the cartoonish campaign as an attempt to aid the Al Sisi bid by splitting the remaining votes. On April 15<sup>th</sup>, the Al Sisi campaign submitted 200,000 signatures of support to the election committee (eight times the required amount) while an Egyptian court ruled to ban current or former members of the Muslim Brotherhood from running in both the presidential elections and the parliamentary elections that will follow. The latter has been interpreted as yet another attempt to crack down on Islamists and a step away from an inclusive political process in Egypt.

Security and the economy are the top challenges facing prospective candidates. At the IMF–World Bank meetings in Washington between April 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, IMF mission chief for Egypt Christopher Jarvis highlighted “big challenges” for Egypt’s economy, including low growth, high unemployment, and an aggravated budget deficit. This points to the importance of outside financial support, which will likely come from the Gulf or, if negotiations are to resume, from the IMF itself. Indeed, the IMF had been in talks with the Egyptian government regarding a \$4.8 billion bailout package for Egypt following the 2011 overthrow of Mubarak, but the negotiations ended inconclusively.

**Algeria:** Despite incumbent Bouteflika’s anticipated victory in the April 17 presidential election, Ali Benflis, ex-prime minister and leading opposition candidate—continued to ratchet up his presidential campaign until the final hour, as demonstrations by the nascent Barakat (Enough) movement and the Rally for Culture and Democracy party intensified.

Meanwhile, army forces were again rushed to the southern province of Ghardaia in an effort to stem the violence between the local Mozabite and Chaamba communities, which has persisted since December despite calls for understanding by elders from both sides. Such fighting, while often attributed to ethno-religious differences, is most likely due to a confluence of factors that include increased arrival of migrants, their illegal construction on traditional Mozabite lands, the growth of informal economic activity, and a perception that police officers (largely Arab) are not seriously addressing Mozabite concerns.

The conflict in Ghardaia may prove to be of increasing significance given the area’s proximity to Algeria’s rich oil and gas resources to the east and south. Further, Algeria’s unreliable hydrocarbon production and surging domestic consumption are squeezing export volumes, compounding the longstanding risk of lower oil prices and further complicating the job of Algeria’s future president.

**Morocco:** Morocco’s will to assert its influence on regional security and economic issues was again highlighted during the fourth EU-Africa Summit earlier this month, as was its continued rivalry with Algeria. During the summit, Morocco’s role as a regional partner for the EU was put into focus when the spokesperson of the EU’s Catherine Ashton stated that “cooperation between Morocco and the European Union is very close in matters of peace, security and conflict resolution, because this is a pre-requisite for stability in the region.”

Beyond Europe, Morocco is building its ties to West and sub-Saharan African countries—particularly through financial and banking sectors—that have been long-estranged from Morocco over the Western Sahara conflict. The Western Sahara is a key point of contention between Morocco and Algeria, which supports the Polisario Front. Building ties to the south of the Sahara may strengthen Rabat’s position both on that issue and in its ongoing rivalry with Algeria. The mandate for the UN peacekeeping mission in the Western Sahara (MINURSO) is up for renewal at the end of this month, and while many within the UN have argued that the mandate should be expanded to include a human rights monitoring component, Morocco, backed by France, has resisted the idea.

**Yemen:** While violence has subsided in the north following locally negotiated ceasefires between Houthi and Salafi elements, violence in the southern and eastern provinces, particularly Hadramat, has surged. During the first quarter of 2014, according to one Interior Ministry account, one police officer and 41 soldiers were killed and 113 soldiers injured. Most attacks were attributed or linked to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

This spike in insecurity seems to have prompted a spree of high-level meetings over the country’s future and the implementation of the National Dialogue Conference outcomes. Senior Yemeni military personnel discussed military and security cooperation with both the US and Qatar. UN Special Envoy Benomar—possibly in an effort to maintain balance

among Gulf Cooperation Council competitors—conducted a two-day visit to Riyadh, during which he discussed Saudi's support Yemen's political transition with the Kingdom's foreign and interior ministers. On April 29<sup>th</sup>, the next iteration of the Friends of Yemen meeting will be held in London, co-chaired by the UK, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. In addition to security issues, the need for sustained economic and development support and political support for Yemen's upcoming first constitutional draft will likely be discussed.

**Saudi Arabia:** Following months of speculation, Saudi Arabia announced on April 15<sup>th</sup> that its veteran intelligence chief Prince Bandar bin Sultan would be replaced, "at his own request," by his deputy Yousef al-Idrissi. Bandar, who was appointed in July 2012, has had a special responsibility for the Levant, providing instrumental strategic thinking on the Saudi position vis-a-vis the Syrian crisis. He formerly served as Saudi ambassador to the US for 22 years. Local press hinted that the replacement may have also been instigated by recent health setbacks, which kept Bandar away from Riyadh for months at a time, leaving the intelligence agency—and the Syrian portfolio—in the hands of Interior Minister Mohammed bin Nayef. This is the latest of reshuffles taking place in Saudi Arabia following the high-profile appointment of King Abdullah's half-brother Moqren bin Abdul Aziz on March 27<sup>th</sup> as the second in line to the throne.

## Central and South Asia

**Afghanistan:** Initial, partial results are putting the spotlight on two frontrunners following for the April 5<sup>th</sup> presidential and provincial elections: Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani. Both were presidential contenders in 2009, both served previously as ministers in the Karzai government, and both had ethnically balanced tickets. They represent more continuity than change, are expected to sign the bilateral security agreement with the United States, and are likely to continue some form of outreach to the Taliban. Turnout was strong for this first round, but concerns persist over complaints of fraud during the election and the potential for fraud during vote counting. Violence on election day appeared to be worse than initially reported, and the possibility remains that any one of the losers might violently challenge the results. If a runoff takes place, officials say it will not happen before May 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Pakistan:** Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's counterterrorism strategy appears to be limping along, while his government is under pressure from the right and the left. On the right, the Army chief of staff's recent public comments and press reports indicate the Pakistani military is chaffing against the current circumstances it finds itself in, which include required restraint towards militants as the negotiations with the Tehreek-i-Taliban and perceived slights to the army as the treason trial of former president (and general) Musharraf proceeds. Thus, the government's united front on its security strategy is showing some cracks. In addition, the left (Pakistan People's Party) are in an uproar over the government's proposed new counterterrorism law, which is seen as threatening free speech.

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