

Africa Trends

Volume 2, Issue 1
January-February 2013

A Bimonthly Newsletter on Africa



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE
STUDIES & ANALYSES

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Editor's Note

In this year's first issue of *Africa Trends*, we turn the spotlight on a conflict area that has absorbed regional and global attention in the past two months—Mali. Melissa Cyrill provides an insight into the numerous challenges—security, social, political, and humanitarian—facing the country today, and points to several factors that may be crucial for Mali to move towards peace; Princy Marin George studies the consequences of the northern Mali crisis on neighbouring Algeria, its long struggle against extremism, and its current role in striving for regional stability. As the ripples of the Arab revolutions continue to course through northern Africa, Sneha Bhura reviews Vijay Prashad's *Arab Spring, Libyan Winter* for our readers.

Our most significant News Track stories capture reports on instability in the Maghreb region and the expanding presence of international actors in Africa. The Maghreb faces widening instability as a consequence of the Malian crisis, with fighters and arms reported to be moving freely across borders in the region. Concerns about a spill-over of the Malian crisis have magnified after al-Qaeda-linked militants claiming to be operating under the banner "Signed-in-Blood Battalion" took workers at an Algerian gas facility hostage for four days. An intervention by Algerian Special Forces brought the crisis to a violent end, with 32 militants and 23 hostages killed during the operation.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan completed a three-nation tour of West Africa, along with a 250-member business delegation. The visit demonstrates Turkey's increasing economic interest in Africa, with the country looking to strengthen bilateral relations in the areas of economy, energy, and agriculture.

India is also extending ties with several countries on the continent. A globally renowned Indian-based eye hospital has started operations in Rwanda; a centre of Dr Agarwal's Eye Hospital aims to reduce referrals for eye treatment outside Rwanda. In Seychelles, a US\$10 million line of credit extended by India's EXIM Bank to the Development Bank of Seychelles will now make it possible for entrepreneurs in that country to apply for loans under this facility. India is also working with Tanzania to boost the latter's agriculture sector with a US\$40 million loan to purchase equipment for small-scale farmers.

We hope you enjoy this issue!

Country Watch

TOWARDS A JUST PEACE - UNDERSTANDING MALI'S MULTIFACTED CHALLENGES

The Malian security crisis is yet another manifestation of its long-entrenched problems rooted in its post-colonial reality.

MELISSA M. CYRILL*

The recent spurt of analysis and reportage relating to the West African state of Mali and the Sahel region in the media reveals familiar patterns of conflict and terror. The most common perception is that Mali is merely a new front in the war on terror. This analysis makes quick assumptions about the actors involved, ignores their congruent yet conflicting interests, and shows little understanding of the reasons for the growth and spread of the conflict in the region.

Such thinking only scratches the surface of the Malian problem, ignoring in particular, the entrenched post-colonial structural problems and the failure to achieve a credible internal political process. It is the failure of governance compounded by the lack of inclusive socio-economic development in the region that has provided a fertile ground for terrorism and the further weakening of the state. Hence, significant internal issues of poverty and development, the prevailing power vacuum, institutional disarray, porous borders and ethnic tensions need to be addressed in conjunction with acknowledging the mushrooming of terrorism and other external threats. This is why understanding the depth and overlapping nature of Mali's multifaceted challenges is prerequisite to analysing the present-day manifestation of old troubles afflicting the country.

Security Challenges

Considering the French reluctance for a long-term commitment in Mali, the threat of renewed insurgency is very real. Despite the claimed military successes, the character of the conflict has so far seen the rebels give up and retreat into their hideouts in the tough desert region or the rugged hills in the northeast. Several hundred fighters formed convoys, which then escorted the leaders, weapons and fighters¹ away from their strongholds. The past few weeks have seen fresh hostilities arise with residual jihadist rebels launching attacks on patrolling Malian and French forces, so much so that the French defence minister Jean-Yves Le Drian labelled the conflict a "real war"². Moreover, concerns regarding the protracted fighting spilling over to neighbouring states have already led to Niger, for instance, allowing the US to deploy drones to police the difficult vast

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desert terrain³. With the imminent French withdrawal, the African troops need to be prepared to deal with targeted attacks from militants emerging from their hideouts and using unconventional methods and guerrilla warfare to regain their previous spheres of influence. Mali's armed forces need to be better trained and equipped to tackle increased resistance from the rebels. Their past failures, despite assistance from the US in the form of military training, have indeed discredited them, and their ability to defend and secure the Malian state.

Militancy across North Africa, particularly in Mali, Algeria, Libya, Niger and Mauritania has long been linked to local grievances and negligible governance in the region, with the numerous armed groups splintering, shifting goals, colluding and contesting against each other for dominating the booming drug trafficking, banditry and ransom trade. The interventionist anti-jihadi understanding of the situation is subversive and could convert these blurred identities and complex motives into something more unified and radicalised⁴. These need to be kept in mind as the French military progressively hands over responsibilities to an African military presence. After all, it is Mali's security scenario than any resource potential that defines its strategic value.

... the failure of governance compounded by the lack of inclusive socio-economic development in the region ... has provided a fertile ground for terrorism and the further weakening of the [Malian] state.

Social Challenges

According to Dr. Judith Scheele, a social anthropologist, social life in northern Mali is organised in ascribed hierarchies by descent and some people with a historically low-status have recently grown rich through smuggling and trade. Given that religious practice is also an important social marker, Islamic extremism may simply be a case of opportunism, as a connection with any kind of religious movement or family enables social mobility.⁵ While the desecration of Sufi shrines and introduction of Sharia law in strongholds of the Ansar Dine and Mujao along with the increased presence of the Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) cannot be entirely ignored, they need to be contextualised in the background of serious economic turmoil and underdevelopment. As one Bamako based blogger writes: "At its core, the conflict in Mali is not between Muslims and non-Muslims; it's between Muslims with different visions of Islam, and religion is by no means the most important issue at stake".⁶

The capital has over the past few decades experienced a total disintegration of governance with a multitude of alliances allegedly developing between the political elite and smugglers and drug dealers, wrecking any prospects of economic and political stability. Further, Mali is similar to several other post-colonial states that have diverse ethnic groupings spread across borders. The Tuareg like other minorities in the Sahelian states have long been stigmatised and marginalised which has led to militancy and radicalisation. However, ethnic groups in the region have a tendency to cast certain visions of the past that opportunistically highlight their particular victimhood and therefore, fundamentally diverge from other groups' perceptions. For instance, the Tuareg community is itself divided on the basis of racial and lineage categories and are hostile to one another with little or no interest in Tuareg nationalism.⁷ There are numerous reports of the abuse and torture of the Tuareg by Malian forces just as there are reports of war crimes committed by the MNLA as well as other rebel groups. Thus, the binary attitudes of popular media need to be changed as one of the central challenges in the post-conflict resolution phase will be to overcome the systemic violence⁸ and race-based injustices⁹ in the Malian state.

Political and Humanitarian Challenges

Critical to Mali's security concerns should be the restoration of its political process and the effective reconstitution of its failed government. The Malian people have witnessed a steady weakening of the state into a hollow democracy with rampant corruption in the administration and the absence of any legitimate economy, in addition to last year's military coup. . Without the formation of an accountable government based on free, fair, inclusive, transparent and periodic elections, the

A government based on free and transparent elections that is responsive to the burgeoning needs of ...Maliens is crucial for the nation to successfully counter its problems, build its economy and achieve a confident peace.

Malian state is bound to lose its sovereignty to opportunistic non-state actors – terrorists, criminal networks, rebels and extremist insurgents. Further, a renewed political process has to be conducted within the framework of a national reconciliation process as different communities need to hold a dialogue to discuss their expectations from the state and each other. Malians will be able to hold onto their homeland only if they address the toxic environment of racial violence and religious extremism. If such a process is not initiated, the country will not just become a failed state but yet another pawn in the machinations of international terror networks and face the consequences of further foreign interventions. External actors have been wreaking havoc on its society and economy for too long but without national reconciliation leading to electoral democracy and social cohesion, such manipulation by rebel and foreign terrorist

alliances will continue to nullify any prospective developmental and reconstruction efforts. The conflict has birthed a terrible humanitarian crisis exacerbating the long-term suffering in the region due to chronic food insecurity with poor harvests, drought as well as flooding.

More than 400,000 people have become refugees or internally displaced since the start of the conflict in Mali and include¹⁰:

- 282,548 people displaced within Mali¹¹;
- approximately 175,211 refugees in Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Algeria;
- 22,000 new refugees who have fled Mali¹²;
- more than 14,000 newly displaced persons within Mali since the extremist offensive and Operation Serval¹³.

In view of such mounting challenges, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has issued a consolidated appeal for \$370,434,258 to help 4.3 million vulnerable Malians of which only 0.75 per cent (\$2.8 million) has been committed as of January 29.¹⁴ The food situation is steadily deteriorating due to disrupted food supplies, restricted market supplies, dwindling food stocks, increasing prices and diminishing cash resources.¹⁵

Moving Forward

A government based on free and transparent elections that is responsive to the burgeoning needs of the vulnerable and conflict ravaged Malians is crucial for the nation to successfully counter its problems, build its economy and achieve a confident peace. The recent offensive against the extremists and rebels provides a window of opportunity to the Malian government to re-assert civilian rule and strengthen its institutions. The political road map as approved by the Malian

National Assembly on January 29 is a vital step in the right direction as is the interim president Dioncounda Traore's commitment to implement this roadmap and hold presidential elections by July 31, 2013. The framework states that members of the current transitional government are not eligible to run for office, as called for by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)¹⁶. Mali's political stakeholders need to commit themselves on propelling the political process forward based on social and legislative legitimacy; any intimidation or interference by military or other forces will only serve to herald past mistakes and repeat their ugly consequences. This will be the only way to address the country's multiple and overlapping challenges, and secure a just peace based on the people's sovereignty.

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- ¹ "Mali: The worst is yet to come", *The Guardian Africa Network*, February 20, 2013 at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/feb/20/mali-worst-yet-to-come>
 - ² "As Mali Fighting Persists, France Vows to Exit in Weeks", *The New York Times*, February 2, 2013 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/07/world/africa/france-mali-militants.html>
 - ³ "Mali: The worst is yet to come", *The Guardian Africa Network*, February 20, 2013 at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/feb/20/Mali-worst-yet-to-come>
 - ⁴ "Why the Sahara is not the 'new Afghanistan'", *BBC News*, February 5, 2013 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-21299153>
 - ⁵ Ibid.
 - ⁶ "Behind Mali's Conflict: Myths, Realities and Unknowns", *Bridges from Bamako*, January 16, 2013 at <http://bridgesfrombamako.com/2013/01/16/behind-mali-conflict/>
 - ⁷ "Understanding Mali's 'Tuareg Problem'", *Bridges from Bamako*, February 25, 2013 at <http://bridgesfrombamako.com/2013/02/25/understanding-malis-tuareg-problem/>
 - ⁸ Ibid.
 - ⁹ Ibid.
 - ¹⁰ Johnnie Carson, "The Crisis in Mali: U.S. Interests and the International Response", *U.S. Department of State*, February 14, 2013 at <http://www.state.gov/p/af/rls/rm/2013/204778.htm>
 - ¹¹ "Mali - Complex Emergency Situation Report No. 30", *ReliefWeb*, April 10, 2013 at <http://reliefweb.int/report/mali/mali-complex-emergency-situation-report-no-30-10-april-2013>
 - ¹² Johnnie Carson, "The Crisis in Mali: U.S. Interests and the International Response", *U.S. Department of State*, February 14, 2013 at <http://www.state.gov/p/af/rls/rm/2013/204778.htm>
 - ¹³ Ibid.
 - ¹⁴ "Mali - Complex Emergency Situation Report No. 23", *ReliefWeb*, January 29, 2013 at <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Mali%20Complex%20Emergency%20Situation%20Report%20No.%2023%20%28as%20of%2029%20January%202013%29.pdf>
 - ¹⁵ Ibid.
 - ¹⁶ Johnnie Carson, "The Crisis in Mali: U.S. Interests and the International Response", *U.S. Department of State*, February 14, 2013 at <http://www.state.gov/p/af/rls/rm/2013/204778.htm>

Commentary

MALI'S WAR AND ALGERIA'S STRUGGLE FOR PEACE

Algeria has a central role to play in the intricate web of actors and events that are shaping the western Sahel today.

PRINCYMARIN GEORGE

In the summer 1995 issue of *Foreign Policy*, Andrew J. Pierre and William B. Quandt wrote:

The conflict in Algeria seems distant ... but what happens in Algeria in this struggle over power, ideas, and revenge will have repercussions beyond Algeria's borders. Algeria's fate will influence the future of its immediate neighbors ... as well as democratization and development efforts in the Arab world ...

Their view of Algeria's future at the time still holds, close to two decades later, in an Arab world infused with revolutionary fervour. The one-year old crisis in northern Mali is as much a spill-over of the Libyan revolution as it is the result of other long neglected regional issues. And Algeria has a central role to play in the intricate web of actors and events that are shaping the western Sahel today.

Algeria's history is one of harsh excesses – in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres – and the struggle to be liberated from them. Following independence, the country's Islamist movement along with the newly emerged political elite, continued the excesses of the French colonial era, by waging war against their own people. The fallout of that decade of war has imprinted themselves on the developments in Algeria and its neighbourhood even today. The multiple socio-cultural¹ and economic crises gradually evolved into a political crisis by the late 1980s. When a degree of political relaxation took place under President Chadli Benjedid, following a period of authoritarian rule by the sole legitimate political party, the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), one opposition grouping quickly gained a following. The Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) rallied against governmental corruption and ineptitude under the slogan "Islam is the solution". Like other Islamist organisations before it, the FIS dominated the country's social fabric by organising the delivery of essential goods and services around mosques, and assuming the responsibilities of the state. When the Benjedid government acceded to calls for greater democracy and allowed local elections in June 1990, the FIS won control over a majority of the country's municipalities. In parliamentary elections held in December 1991, the FIS won enough votes to take it to victory in the second round.

Governance in Algeria was dominated by those who had played key roles in the national liberation struggle. This gradually led to a system of government in which the party and the military not only shared power, but also continually competed for it. Following the FIS' stunning showing in the first round of the elections, hard-line members of the military, suspecting a deal between the president and the Islamists, forced Benjedid to resign, banned the FIS, imposed a state of emergency, and set up an interim government. The political crackdown on the FIS in 1992 led to a more radicalised Islamist movement, with internal splits separating the hard-liners from the

moderates. Most of the FIS' leaders were jailed or in exile while others along with their followers defected to more radical Islamist groups. Political violence now became an everyday affair. Successive transitional governments struggled against the growing challenge of an armed Islamist opposition, and attempts to secure a political resolution to the crisis failed. By 1994, the increasingly brutal contest for the state led to the formation of the Groupe Islamique Armée (GIA) or the Armed Islamic Groups - a loose umbrella group of consisting of various disparate movements that were fighting against the Algerian government. The GIA is believed to have been beyond the control of the FIS leadership and was responsible for routine violence against the harsh government offensive on the Islamist movement, killing not only security forces but also civilians, including intellectuals, doctors, journalists, foreigners, and citizens who were seen to be cooperating with the state. An impasse was reached - the government could not be toppled, and the armed Islamists could not be rid of. By 2001, an estimated 200,000 people had lost their lives.²

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Although the Islamist movement, as it was during the civil war, lost popular support in the succeeding elections because of the blunt violence it perpetrated against civilians, it inevitably led to the rise of an unwelcome Islamist extremism in Algeria. The Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (GSPC) or the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, emerged as a key actor in this narrative. It grew out of the GIA in the late 1990s and gained support, largely in Algeria's rural areas, by pledging to avoid the excesses that the GIA had become notorious for, and refrain from attacks on civilians. It is a promise the GSPC did not entirely fulfil. The group shot on to the international scene in 2003 with the kidnapping of 32 European tourists in Algeria's southern desert region. It was suspected to have had extensive links in Europe, the US, and the Middle East, but is also known to have raised money for its operations through the successful smuggling and trafficking networks in the vast, ungoverned deserts of the western Sahel. The GSPC included a large number of young Muslims who had returned from fighting the war in Afghanistan, among them the 'one-eyed', Mokhtar Belmokhtar. Its stated aims in its early years were to topple the Algerian government and create an Islamic state in Algeria. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the apparent success of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) may have served as a catalyst for the expansion of the GSPC's goal to embrace al-Qaeda's ideology of global jihad. In January 2007, the GSPC announced its new avatar - Qa'idat al-Jihad fil-Maghrib al-Islami, or al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Just as it had emerged from its own 'La Sale Guerre' - the dirty war, as the civil war came to be called, Algeria found itself swept into the midst of a duel between the 'global jihad' and the 'global war on terror'. AQIM quickly adopted al-Qaeda's signature tactics: refusing national reconciliation with the Algerian government; targeting foreign or foreign-linked organisations and individuals; and moving its operations beyond Algeria's borders into the Sahara-Sahel region, particularly neighbouring Mali and Mauritania. Apart from having provided favourable conditions in its domestic political and social conditions, Algeria itself did not particularly witness an escalation in violence as a result of the evolution of the GSPC.³

A key turning point in the war between the Algerian government and the Islamists came in February 2006 when after a national referendum, the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, came into effect. The charter invited armed Islamists to surrender in return for immunity from prosecution (with some exceptions) for crimes committed during the conflict in the 1990s. It also offered protection from prosecution for state agents and members of the country's security forces, in addition to restricting, and making punishable, any continued debate or scrutiny of atrocities committed during the war. Many Algerians who were victims of the war saw the charter as the

coming together of the state and the Islamists, both of which were seen as having perpetrated much violence against innocent civilians. The war itself was the subject of much speculation and theories relating to links between the country's security services and the GSPC (and the GIA before it); the charter may have reinforced this belief.

AQIM's most dramatic works came soon after the announcement of its formation. Borrowing from the tactics of Iraqi insurgent groups, AQIM launched suicide attacks in March and December 2007 inside Algeria, a form of violence that was new to the country. Apart from attacks on Algerian military and police targets, AQIM replenished its coffers by kidnapping foreign nationals mainly in Mali, Mauritania, and southern Tunisia, for ransom, and contraband trafficking. The next time AQIM presented itself in the international limelight would be following a dramatic military coup in Mali in March 2012.

Among the many groups that emerged from the chaos in northern Mali, some are worth examining in the context of the tangled web of relationships that seems to bind Algeria with actors in the Sahara-Sahel. One is Ansar Dine, a key militant group that was part of the loose alliance that was holding northern Mali hostage. The group was formed sometime between 2011 and 2012 by Iyad

For Algeria, the crisis in northern Mali may have marked the beginning of another phase in its long struggle to contain the influences of extremist Islamist groups within its borders and in its neighbourhood.

Ag Ghali, a Tuareg and former Malian diplomat. After failing the bid to lead his tribe in its quest for autonomy, Ag Ghaly formed Ansar Dine as a more religiously conservative alternative to the secular Tuareg movement. Despite its history of intolerance for radical Islamist militants, the Algerian government is known to have nurtured Ag Ghaly, possibly hoping to gain inside knowledge of his group's operations in northern Mali and also as a counterweight to the possibility of an independent Tuareg state that could inspire its own minorities. (Algeria has also played a key role as a mediator in negotiations between Mali's government and Tuaregs, most recently as part of the Algiers Accord signed in 2006). The strategy however backfired. The Algerians are said to have been taken by surprise by the chain of events in northern Mali. Reports referred to during the writing of this piece provide disputing evidence that

Ansar Dine is linked to AQIM - a 'sworn enemy' of Algeria. A link however might explain Algeria's decision to open its airspace for use by France at the start of the military intervention in Mali, after its initial hesitation to back a foreign intervention force.

Ansar Dine is not the only reason for Algeria to stay on its toes. The Movement for Oneness and Jihad for West Africa (MUJAO), a splinter group of AQIM, formed in early 2012, was responsible for the April 2012 kidnapping of seven Algerian diplomats from the Algerian consulate in Gao, Mali. Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the former member of the GSPC, reappeared under the new banner of the Signed-in-Blood Battalion earlier this year and claimed responsibility for the deadly raid on an internationally operated natural gas facility in In Amenas in south-eastern Algeria in mid-January.⁴ The incident was eerily familiar - the GSPC was responsible for a 2006 attack near Algiers on a bus carrying foreign employees of an engineering and construction firm jointly owned by the US-based Halliburton, and the Algerian national oil company, Sonatrach. A bigger concern for the Algerian strategy to suppress any aspirations for autonomy within its own minority communities might be another new group that split from Ansar Dine in late January this year. The Islamic Movement for the Azawad (MIA) is led by a prominent Tuareg leader and is believed to have been formed in order to participate in negotiations to settle the northern Malian crisis.⁵ For the secular Tuareg nationalist movement, however, the evolving conflict and the consequent proliferation of armed Islamist groups may have hijacked their decades-old cause. Many Malians

also view claims by groups such as the MIA who support independence for the Tuaregs as a ploy for spreading a more extreme form of Islam - one that is alien to a country that has practiced a relatively moderate form of the religion for more than a millennium.⁶

For Algeria, the crisis in northern Mali may have marked the beginning of another phase in its long struggle to contain the influences of extremist Islamist groups within its borders and in its neighbourhood. The Malian conflict has been shaped by many more factors than just the Tuareg issue. As a recent *New York Times* report notes, the web of “personal ambitions, old rivalries, tribal politics, the relationship between militants and states, and even the fight for control of the lucrative drug trade” lies at the centre of stabilising the Sahara-Sahel.⁷ An alliance of the newly formed groups in the Sahel could prove a major threat to regional and global security; the splintering of existing groups might thus work in favour of broader security in the region, at least for the short-term.

The lack of a clear strategy to resolve the Tuareg issue, not just in Mali, but also in Algeria and Niger that are home to restive Tuareg communities, is a major obstacle to the establishment of long-term security in the region. Following the start of the Malian conflict, Algeria has sought to distinguish between the Tuareg groups who have legitimate demands, and other armed groups, as well as the need to establish a dialogue between the Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and the government in Bamako.⁸ How these negotiations evolve will be significant for the stability of Mali and its neighbours. A glaring aspect of the recent crisis has been lack of inter-state security cooperation in the western Sahel. The 2009 Tamanrasset Plan provided a platform for officials from Algeria, Mali, Libya, Niger, and Mauritania to share intelligence and conduct joint military patrols to tackle terrorism, and other organised crime in the region. This is also the vehicle for coordination that Algeria prefers. Although Algeria has maintained security cooperation with the United States in the region, its emphasis on its sovereignty and its desire for taking a leadership role in the region has often conflicted with direct intervention by the US in counterterrorism operations.⁹ The Tamanrasset Plan in addition to strengthening security in ungoverned Sahelian spaces could also help counter criticism that the US-Algerian security cooperation has exaggerated the threat of al-Qaeda linked groups in the Sahara-Sahel to establish greater security control over the region. Further, Algerian reactions to the French-led military intervention in northern Mali indicate “some level of discomfort” regarding France’s motives in the region, and its own role in the crisis, particularly, in view of Franco-Algerian relations.¹⁰ In addition, the key challenge in any approach involving the ECOWAS is ensuring the integration of neighbouring Algeria and Mauritania – both non-member states of the ECOWAS – into a regional strategy for conflict resolution.¹¹

¹ Following independence, the government tried to push mass ‘Arabisation’ programmes in the education sector. The move however lacked the necessary resources. In addition, more significantly, the intrinsic identification of the masses with their Arab identity conflicted with the secular outlook of the “children of France”, as the ruling elite were described, thus linking them with French colonial rule.

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- ¹¹ "Northern Mali: Key is Strengthening Bamako; ECOWAS Plan Harbors Risks", *Global Observatory*, September 14, 2012 at <http://theglobalobservatory.org/analysis/349-northern-mali-key-is-strengthening-bamako-ecowas-plan-harbors-risks.html>. Also see Yahia Zoubir, "Algeria and the Sahelian Imbroglia: Preventing War and Fighting Terrorism", *Aljazeera Center For Studies*, November 25, 2012 at <http://studies.aljazeera.net/ResourceGallery/media/Documents/2012/11/25/2012112595728720580Algeria%20and%20the%20Sahelian%20Imbroglia.pdf>, Paul Rogers, "Algeria, Mali and Beyond", *openDemocracy*, January 21, 2013 at <http://www.opendemocracy.net/paul-rogers/algeria-mali-and-beyond>, and Gamal Nkrumah, "Saharan quicksand", *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 12-18 April 2012, Issue No. 1093 at <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2012/1093/in2.htm>

Book Review

Vijay Prashad, *Arab Spring, Libyan Winter*

Leftword Books, New Delhi, 2012, ISBN: 978-9-3801-1807-9, 271 pp.

SNEHA BHURA*

The author in his evocatively titled book, *Arab Spring, Libyan Winter*, opens his narrative on the most path-breaking uprising of the 21st century by invoking the image of a 'mole' which was originally employed by Karl Marx to describe the sudden outbreak of a revolution, as a "well burrowed, old mole." The unceasing burrowing in the land of one-party states in the Arab world led to the inevitable fracture of the edifice of monolithic despotism. Tunisia and Egypt in 2011 exemplified the angry outburst of frustration simmering for too long in the common man, denied of his most basic rights as a citizen. And this resulted in a more accommodating political order in place of the older, more uncompromising one. The phenomenon of Arab Spring generated a desire for a future devoid of repressive dictatorial regimes where the common man could live with freedom, equality and dignity. In Libya, however, the winds of revolution sweeping the far corners of the Arab landscape took a different turn and for the worst. Vijay Prashad, who currently serves as the Director of International Studies at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut and is a well-known commentator on imperialism and post-colonial nations, has come out with a meticulously researched and concisely presented account of how the Atlantic powers managed to sabotage the dynamics of the revolution in Libya as they used it as a pawn in the bigger game of securing their own national interests; the interest of the multinational oil firms and the so-called reformers of a neo-liberal hue.

Arab Spring, Libyan Winter is divided into two sections and within this framework, it deftly manages to underline the harsh difference between the hopeful sequence of events in countries like Egypt and Tunisia as they seek to establish a semblance of democracy, and the worrying levels of bloodshed with the unfortunate manipulations of political and economic players in Libya. The author predicates a major chunk of his work on highly significant questions such as: why did events in Libya lead to different consequences; and why Libya in particular exert such a great pull on Atlantic powers for urgent intervention, compared to other Arab countries reeling under the same revolution. The author through his painstaking and thorough research effectively demonstrates that the Atlantic forces in sly collaboration with elites from Qaddafi's inner circle, postponed any plans to bring in a democratic reform, and instead channelled all their resources towards upstaging Qaddafi. The book primarily seeks to investigate and consequently castigates the disparity between the hollow claims of NATO's "responsibility to protect" and how it was actually realised on the ground. In a very nuanced piece of work, the author has dexterously juxtaposed historical, political and cultural drivers to elucidate his case of how Libya failed to benefit from this moment in history. Although the book could have dwelled on events in Libya during the Arab Spring at much greater length instead of devoting the first half of an already

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condensed book on providing excessive background information on Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, it does succeed in going beyond the media propaganda influenced by Western storylines.

The crowning achievement of Prashad's book is that it provides an exhaustive historical backdrop of the events that led to this revolt that was primarily driven towards attaining social and political dignity. Sifting through the brouhaha generated by the most popular rationalisations like the role played by Facebook and Twitter or the force of Obama's captivating speech in Cairo in 2009, or the readymade Western media narratives about atrocities committed by the Qaddafi regime on the hapless populace in Libya, the author has managed to analyse the real factors that spurred the people to rise up against their autocratic rulers. With the revolution gaining momentum, Internet coverage was effectively barred. Prashad writes: "In fact, the closing down of Facebook provided new opportunities to reach new constituencies and to broaden the movement." Prashad goes back to the era of colonialism and traces the coming into being of tyrannical regimes post decolonisation in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya in order to analyse the internal and external power balances in the region of West Asia and North Africa. It is in this contextual background that the author has attempted to make sense of the Libyan maze and how the Atlantic powers got involved in the war and the future implications for the well-intentioned ideas of humanitarian intervention.

To explain his title of a Libyan Winter in the blooming of Arab Spring, the author harks back to the time when Libya, considered to be one of the wealthiest countries in Africa, was severely affected by the 1992 UN sanctions over the 1988 Lockerbie bombings. However, with the invasion of Iraq and the resulting chaos thereafter, the Atlantic powers felt highly insecure about their access to sources of oil. This led to a renewed engagement with Libya where the Western powers shrewdly incorporated their neoliberal agenda within the Libyan establishment, including with Qaddafi's son, Saif al-Islam. When the eastern region of Cyrenaica rebelled, the Atlantic powers got an excuse to upstage an unpredictable Qaddafi who already had a long-standing dispute with Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia became convinced of the unwarranted claims in the Western media of genocide and mass rape perpetrated by Qaddafi's backers and fully supported the UN-mandated no-fly zone over Libya. Thus, Libya became hostage to the vicious power play hidden under the overarching Arab Spring, which subsumed within its chaos the legitimate aspirations of the everyday man.

The author does not offer any helpful prescriptions for reversing the current political turmoil gripping Libya as the neoliberal reformers installed by Western powers wrestle with Islamist fighters for political ascendancy. This book will, however, serve as an excellent briefing on how and why Libya was assaulted and made a victim of the Arab Spring.

News Track

Northern Africa

Mali conflict threatens Maghreb security

The head of the Arab League mission in Paris, Ambassador Nassif Hitti, has reviewed the security situation in the Maghreb region in an online editorial posted on January 14. Hitti has noted diplomatic efforts by the Algerian government to dissociate rebel factions with a political or ethnic agenda from those linked to the al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The prime ministers of Tunisia, Libya, and Algeria met on January 12 to review the security situation on their common borders; Algeria in particular faces concerns that Islamist movements will become active in the country again. Fighters and arms are reported to be moving freely in and out of Mali and across the neighbouring Maghreb countries that are themselves undergoing transitions as a result of the Arab Spring. Hitti also points to the complex nature of the Mali war that now involves several external regional and non-regional actors.¹

Algeria

Mali crisis spills over into Algeria as militants besiege gas facility

Following a four-day standoff with Islamist militants who had taken hostage a large number of workers at a gas facility in Algerian town of Ain Amenas, Algerian Special Forces stormed the plant on January 19 in a violent end to the crisis that left at least 32 militants and 23 hostages dead. The attack was claimed by an al-Qaeda-linked group operating under the banner "Signed-in-Blood Battalion" and led by a well-known one-eyed warlord named Mokhtar Belmokhtar. (Chadian forces in Mali have claimed in late February/early March that Belmokhtar was killed in a raid in northern Mali).² Audio recordings that later emerged indicated that the hostage takers wanted to organise a prisoner swap with Algerian authorities.³ The militants were of various nationalities, including Algerian, while the hostages included nationals of Britain, Japan, France, and Algeria.⁴

Egypt

Egyptian president changes parliamentary election date, opposition to boycott polls; Qatar to double funding to Egypt

Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak has advanced the start of parliamentary elections in the country

¹ "Mali Conflict Threatens Security in Maghreb Region", *Al-Monitor*, January 14, 2013 at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/01/mali-conflict-threatens-security.html>

² "Profile: Mokhtar Belmokhtar", *BBC News*, March 3, 2013 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-21061480>

³ "Death toll climbs in Algerian hostage crisis", *France 24*, January 21, 2013 at <http://www.france24.com/en/20130120-algeria-hostage-crisis-death-toll-expected-rise>

⁴ "Final assault on Algerian gas plant ends hostage crisis", *France 24*, January 20, 2013 at <http://www.france24.com/en/20130119-algeria-army-kills-islamists-gas-plant-assault>

from April 27 to April 22 following complaints from Coptic Christians that the original date coincides with the Christian festival of Easter. The opposition group, the National Salvation Front (NSF), has announced that it will boycott the elections because of concerns that it will not be free and fair. A boycott is likely to result in a parliament dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafists, and former members of the Hosni Mubarak government. The Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) has said that the polls will be held under "complete judicial supervision". The previous Egyptian assembly was dissolved after judges ruled that the polls were unconstitutional.⁵

Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani has announced that his country would lend Egypt an additional £1.25 billion and donate a further £300 million to help control the country's currency crisis. The announcement followed a meeting between al-Thani and Morsi in Cairo in the first week of January. The Egyptian pound has hit its lowest level in eight years following continuing political turmoil in the country. The credit agency Standard & Poor's has downgraded Egypt's long-term credit rating to B-, the same as that of Greece. The Egyptian economic crisis has been caused by stagnation and inflation, and has resulted in rising poverty and unemployment.⁶

Libya

British prime minister visits Libya on African tour

British Prime Minister David Cameron visited Libya on the second leg of his African tour in the last week of January. In addition to pledging the UK's support for the Libyan transition process, Cameron also announced that British police investigating the 1988 Lockerbie bombing would visit Libya after being granted permission by Libyan authorities. Libya faces a long road to stabilise security in the country; the UK has assisted in training the Libyan police and military. Earlier that week, the British Foreign Office had warned of a "potential threat" to the country's embassy in Tripoli, and had earlier warned British nationals to leave the city of Benghazi following intelligence on imminent threats to Westerners.⁷

Sudan

UNSC extends mandate of Sudan sanctions monitoring panel; Abyei community calls for South Sudan protection in disputed border area

The UN Security Council has extended the mandate of a panel of experts monitoring UN sanctions on Sudan for another year. The sanctions were imposed in connection with the Darfur conflict. The panel is tasked with monitoring travel bans, asset freezes, and an arms embargo, and informing the UNSC sanctions committee about individuals who violate international law or impede the

⁵ "Egypt's Morsi changes parliamentary elections date", *BBC News*, February 23, 2013 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-21559455>; Also see "Egypt opposition to boycott polls", *BBC News*, February 26, 2013 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-21590167>

⁶ "Egypt finance: Qatar steps in to ease Cairo cash crisis", *BBC News*, January 8, 2013 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20945844>

⁷ "We want to stand with you, David Cameron tells Libya", *BBC News*, January 31, 2013 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-21277683>

peace process. Darfur has been wracked by conflict since 2003 with government forces and allied militiamen pitted against rebel groups.⁸

Members of the Abyei community have accused the Sudanese government of using militiamen to raid cattle in the area. A UN resolution issued in 2011 following a forced takeover of Abyei by Sudan's army mandated both countries' forces to unconditionally withdraw from the area. A South Sudanese government official has said that the United Nations Interim Security Forces for Abyei (UNISFA) was no longer providing protection to citizens under their purview. The African Union has proposed a referendum to be held in October this year to decide the fate of Abyei.⁹

Western Africa

Turkey to expand economic presence in West Africa

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan began a six-day, three-nation West African tour on January 6. He was accompanied by a 250-member delegation consisting of businesspeople representing a range of sectors, including agriculture, mining, construction, and energy. Erdogan travelled to Gabon, Niger, and Senegal, with the focus of meetings on strengthening economic relations with these countries. Turkish officials and analysts have said that the tour demonstrates Turkey's increasing economic interest on the African continent, and the fact that this is Erdogan's first diplomatic visit of the year points to the continent's importance for Turkey. Energy was an important topic of discussion at the meetings, given West Africa's oil wealth; Turkey is expected to benefit from greater ties with these countries, in terms of diversifying its energy sources. Turkey has previously been influential as a soft power on the continent, mediating between South and North Sudan in 2005, and between Ethiopia and Eritrea following the end of the war in 2000.¹⁰

Japan to strengthen intelligence-gathering capabilities in Africa following Algerian hostage crisis, earmarks US\$120 million to help stabilise Sahel

The Japanese government has constituted a panel to assess the need for reinforcing security for its companies and nationals operating in Africa, following the hostage crisis in Algeria in January, in which 10 Japanese nationals were killed – the highest number of casualties of any country involved. The panel will consider ways to boost the country's intelligence gathering capabilities, with particular emphasis on the southern Sahara, including Mali and Algeria, and increasing the number of defence officials in its missions in this region. The Japanese foreign ministry also has plans to set up a communication network to coordinate information flows between companies

⁸ "Security Council extends mandate of experts monitoring Sudan sanctions", *UN News Centre*, February 14, 2013 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44143#.UUbFnBfg5CU>

⁹ "Abyei Community Asks South to Redeploy after UN Force Fails to Protect them", *Sudan Tribune*, February 27, 2013 at <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article45677>

¹⁰ "Turkey seen showing economic interest in West Africa", *Today's Zaman*, January 6, 2013; Also see "Turkish premier to tour African countries", *Anadolu Agency*, January 3, 2013 at <http://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/117849-turkish-premier-to-tour-african-countries>; See analysis at Abdullah Bozkurt, "Engaging in Africa without challenging others", *Today's Zaman*, February 1, 2013 at http://www.todayszaman.com/mobile_detail.action?newsId=305809

and local police and enhance its crisis management capabilities. According to reports, the country was almost entirely dependent on the United States and other countries for accurate information during the hostage crisis.¹¹

The government has also said it will contribute close to US\$120 million to help stabilise the Sahel region. The hostage crisis has prompted calls for the government to better protect its workers in the energy-rich countries in North Africa where many Japanese companies operate. Japan already contributed around US\$63 million in the past year to help combat the drought in the region, and the security situation in Mali. The additional aid is aimed at strengthening governance and security, including aid for peacekeeping operations. Experts say the move indicates a stepping up of the government's crisis management and resource diplomacy in the region.¹²

Cote d'Ivoire

China to fund construction of biggest hydroelectric dam in Cote d'Ivoire; French oil tanker hijacked off Cote d'Ivoire

Cote d'Ivoire has signed a loan agreement with China for construction of the Soubre hydroelectric dam in the country's southwest. The dam is part of a series that is being constructed to reinforce Cote d'Ivoire's energy generation capacity. The project is expected to cost around US\$600 million, with China funding 85 per cent and the Ivorian government bearing the remaining 15 per cent of the cost. The dam will be Cote d'Ivoire's biggest electricity generating plant. The Chinese ambassador to the country has said that the loan is the biggest China has given in 30 years. Construction work on the project was expected to begin in February this year.¹³

Ivorian port authority officials confirmed in the first week of February that a French-owned tanker had been seized by pirates off the country's coast, in international waters. The ship was carrying 19 Togolese crew members and was sailing under a Luxembourg flag. The International Maritime Bureau, commenting on the incident, has said that pirates have begun moving towards the Ivory Coast after Nigeria and Benin increased patrols in the Gulf of Guinea. Pirate attacks have increased in the region, particularly neighbouring Nigerian waters; Nigeria is Africa's largest oil producer.¹⁴

Ghana

Vice-President Mahama sworn-in as President

Ghana's Vice-President John Dramani Mahama was sworn-in as the new president of Ghana on January 7, in the presence of several African heads of state. Members of the opposition New

¹¹ "Japan to boost intelligence gathering in Africa after Algerian hostage crisis", *Kyodo News Service*, February 4, 2013; Also see "Hostage crisis highlights need to raise Japan's crisis management", *Asia News Network*, January 22, 2013 at <http://www.asianewsnet.net/Hostage-crisis-highlights-need-to-raise-Japans-cri-41766.html>

¹² "Japan to give \$120m to stabilise Sahel region", *ReliefWeb*, January 29, 2013 at <http://reliefweb.int/report/mali/japan-give-120m-stabilise-sahel-region>

¹³ "China to fund construction of biggest hydroelectric dam in Cote d'Ivoire", *Xinhua News Agency*, January 10, 2013 at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-01/10/c_132093641.htm

¹⁴ "French tanker hijacked off Côte d'Ivoire", *Radio France Internationale*, February 4, 2013 at <http://www.english.rfi.fr/africa/20130204-french-tanker-hijacked-cote-divoire>

Patriotic Party (NPP) boycotted the swearing-in ceremony.¹⁵ The NPP has challenged the presidential election results in the country's Supreme Court, alleging "massive and pervasive" irregularities in the results. International election observers have described the December polls as free and fair.¹⁶

Mali

Residents flee as rebels take over southern Malian town; French troops join Malian army in fight against armed rebels; African leaders hold emergency summit on Mali; French president visits Mali; France to begin troop withdrawal in March, UN force likely to take over in April; Malian interim president 'disqualifies' Islamist groups from dialogue effort

Reports on January 10 indicated that members of the Ansar Dine and other rebel groups that had been in control of the north of Mali over the past year, had now moved south and taken over the town of Konna, 55 km from central Mali. While Malian government officials held emergency sessions in Bamako to discuss the new development, residents of the neighbouring towns of Mopti and Sevare were fleeing as they anticipated rebel movement towards these areas.¹⁷ Radio France Internationale reports indicated that Tuareg and Arab residents of these towns, in addition to Gao, who earlier lived together peacefully, were fleeing as their shops and homes were being looted.¹⁸

Following the capture of Konna town by rebels and urgent appeals from the Malian government, France decided to intervene in the fight to retake northern Mali on January 11. The French mainly used air strikes to target bases, logistics depots, training camps and other infrastructure in Gao and Kidal which were being used by MUJAO and Ansar Dine. Reports indicated that residents welcomed the French intervention, which prevented rebels from advancing further south.¹⁹ A spokesman for at least one Islamist group involved in the northern Mali crisis has threatened reprisals against France; the French government has stepped up security across the country in response.²⁰

Although French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius had stated that France's involvement in the campaign would only last "a matter of weeks", over two months later, the French military continue its efforts to take back northern Mali from rebel hold. France's efforts are complicated by the fact that militants still hold several French nationals hostage in the region. In early February, around 1,800 Chadian soldiers joined the French in military operations in Mali, thus giving some shape

¹⁵ "John Mahama: Ghana's NPP boycotts swearing in", *BBC News*, January 7, 2013 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-20929592>

¹⁶ "Ghana's opposition in court to challenge presidential poll results", *Daily Graphic*, December 30 2012

¹⁷ "Panic in Mopti, Mali, as rebels move southwards", *UN Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN)*, January 11, 2013 at <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/97229/MALI-Panic-in-Mopti-as-rebels-move-southward>

¹⁸ "Mali Arabs, Tuaregs flee Gao town as homes, shops looted", *Radio France Internationale*, (in French), February 4, 2013

¹⁹ "Mali: France pledges 'short' campaign against Islamists", *BBC News*, January 14, 2013 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-21007517>

²⁰ "France joins fight against Mali Islamists, Hollande says", *France 24*, January 12, 2013 at <http://www.france24.com/en/20130111-france-hollande-prepared-intervene-mali-islamists-un-military-au>

to the planned African-led International Support Mission to Mali (Afisma).²¹ The Afisma will comprise around 8,000 troops, out of which 3,800 had been deployed by early February. Most recent reports indicate that French and Chadian forces have pushed to the Ifoghas mountain range in north-eastern Mali where Islamist fighters are suspected to be hiding along with the French hostages. Most of the key areas in northern Mali have now been cleared of rebels.²²

West African leaders held an emergency summit in the third week of January to call for greater international support to Mali and speed up deployment of African troops to the country. The summit, held in the Ivorian city of Abidjan was also attended by the French foreign minister, who urged that Africans must take over the Mali mission as soon as possible.²³ The African Union has pledged US\$50 million to fund the military intervention, which is estimated to cost around US\$460 million.²⁴ The crisis is costing the debt-laden France an average of 2.7 million Euro per day.²⁵

French President François Hollande visited French and Malian troops in Timbuktu on February 2, landing in the town to an outstanding welcome from local residents.

Hollande has also won broad support at home for his decision to intervene.²⁶ In early February, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius announced that France plans to begin pulling its troops out of Mali in March and is now gradually handing over to the Afisma. The French air force is likely to remain present in parts of Mali.²⁷ France's ambassador to the UN has said that French troops would hand over control to a UN peacekeeping force "when security conditions allow it", and that his government would not formally propose the takeover by UN peacekeepers until at least April.²⁸

Malian interim president Dioncounda Traoré has said he would not hold talks with al-Qaeda-linked groups that took over northern Mali, "whatever clothes they are wearing". A week earlier in the last week of January, a breakaway faction of Ansar Dine, called the Islamic Movement of Azawad (MIA), had announced that it was ready to hold talks with the government on the group's demand for broad autonomy of the northern region.²⁹ Traoré has said he would be willing to

²¹ "French hostages complicate Mali mission", *France 24*, February 5, 2013 at <http://www.france24.com/en/20130205-mali-intervention-complicated-french-hostages-soldiers-military-hollande-biden>

²² "French-led forces push to Mali's rebel-held mountains", *France 24*, February 8, 2013 at <http://www.france24.com/en/20130208-mali-mujao-al-qaeda-france-chad-niger>

²³ "African leaders hold summit on Mali crisis", *France 24*, January 20, 2013 at <http://www.france24.com/en/20130119-mali-crisis-ecowas-france-summit-african-troop-deployment>

²⁴ "African Union pledges \$50 million for Mali intervention", *France 24*, January 28, 2013 at <http://www.france24.com/en/20130128-african-union-pledges-50-million-dollars-mali-intervention-france>

²⁵ "Mali war costs debt-laden France 70 million Euros", *France 24*, February 7, 2013 at <http://www.france24.com/en/20130207-mali-war-costs-france-70-million-euros>

²⁶ "Hollande praises French troops on Timbuktu visit", *France 24*, February 2, 2013 at <http://www.france24.com/en/20130202-francois-hollande-arrives-mali-support-french-military-war>

²⁷ "France to start withdrawing troops from Mali in March", *France 24*, February 6, 2013 at <http://www.france24.com/en/20130206-france-plans-withdraw-troops-mali-march>

²⁸ "French UN envoy: Mali peacekeeping force months away", *France 24*, February 28, 2013 at <http://www.france24.com/en/20130228-french-un-envoy-mali-peacekeeping-force-months-away>

²⁹ "Mali rebel group splits, one faction ready for talks", *France 24*, January 24, 2013 at <http://www.france24.com/en/20130124-mali-rebels-ansar-dine-split-ready-peace-talks>

meet with the Tuareg rebel group, the Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), on the condition that they give up all territorial demands.³⁰

Nigeria

Nigeria beefs up security following Islamist group threats

The Nigerian government has decided to strengthen security in the capital, Lagos, following threats from the Boko Haram and Ansaru groups in the last week of February. The two groups have threatened to carry out abductions and other attacks on Nigeria's capital city in response to the country's support to the French military intervention in Mali. Among other measures, security forces in civilian clothing have been placed at potential target areas.³¹ Reports indicate that the kidnapping of a French family in Cameroon has been claimed by Boko Haram, and that this is a new strategy for the group which has previously not targeted foreigners.³² Separately, Nigeria, the UK, and the US have placed an embargo on individuals and organisations suspected to be linked to the Islamist groups involved in the northern Mali crisis.

Senegal

Senegal resumes diplomatic ties with Iran

Following a meeting between the Senegal's president Macky Sall and Iran's Mahmoud Ahmedinejad on the sidelines of the Cairo summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), the two countries have announced that diplomatic ties will resume with immediate effect. Senegal severed ties with Iran following the discovery of a consignment of arms from Iran that was allegedly destined for neighbouring Gambia in November 2010. Gambia disputed the accusation and was the first to freeze its ties with Iran at the time. Iran is a leading investor and trade partner in Senegal, with investments worth over US\$2 billion including in education, health, tourism, and agriculture.³³

Eastern Africa

Comoros

Iran and Comoros agree to increase bilateral cooperation

The caretaker of Iran's Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs Mr. Assadollah Abbasi and the Comorian Minister of Employment, Labour, Vocational Training and Women's Entrepreneurship Sitti Kassim signed an agreement to increase bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

³⁰ "Islamists 'disqualified' from talks, Mali's president says", *France 24*, January 31, 2013 at <http://www.france24.com/en/20130131-mali-president-traore-rejects-talks-islamist-ansar-dine>

³¹ "Security said beefed up in Nigeria's Lagos following "jihadist" attack threats", *Radio France Internationale*, (in French), February 25, 2013

³² "French family's abduction marks change in Nigerian terror group's strategy", *Radio France Internationale*, (in French), February 26, 2013

³³ "Senegal and Iran resume diplomatic ties", *Africa Review*, Kenya, February 7, 2013 at <http://www.africareview.com/News/Senegal-and-Iran-resume-diplomatic-ties/-/979180/1687486/-/11g9h22z/-/index.html>

Mr. Abbasi said that Tehran is ready to boost all-out cooperation and share experiences with Comoros.³⁴

Ethiopia

Ethiopia sets up a National Economic Council; Canadian firm in Ethiopia ignores rebel threat to disrupt oil exploration

Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailmariam Desalegn launched the National Economic Council, a national body based on the United States model. The council comprises of two ministers and one senior advisor. Debretsion Gebremikael, minister of Communications & Information Technology, has been appointed the chairperson of the council. Sufian Ahmed, minister of Finance & Economic Development (MoFED) and Neway Gebreab, chief economic advisor to the Prime Minister, will serve as members. It is the first time for the Ethiopian administration to set up a separate entity, with elected officials serving as its members.³⁵

The Africa Oil Corporation, a Canadian company, has signed an oil exploration and production agreement with Ethiopia despite warnings from the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF). The rebel group has been earlier blamed for the killing of 65 Ethiopians and nine Chinese oil workers in 2007. The ONLF has accused the Canadian company of conspiring with the government to exploit oil resources in the Ogaden region. The parties in the agreement believe that the warning is a desperate propaganda by few remnant leaders of the group. The agreement covers 42,000 and 50,000 square kilometres on the East African nation's Rift Valley Block of South Omo and Ogaden regions respectively.³⁶

Kenya

IMF believes Kenya can withstand international sanctions; Kenya and Tanzania to manage shared ecosystems jointly

International sanctions on Uhuru Kenyatta government, if imposed, cannot affect Kenya much as it can survive. The IMF deputy director Domenico Fainizza visiting in Kenya said that the country's economy can weather the consequences of international sanctions. Kenya, according to him has exhibited its resilience during the world economic and the Euro crises. It is much less dependent on the European countries than before. The drivers of Kenya's economic growth have been domestic based, including the ICT and financial sector and increased investments by the growing number of the middle class. Fainizza said that Kenya has the capability to withstand any shocks from drastic actions by European Union countries.³⁷

³⁴ "Iran, Comoros ink agreement on bilateral cooperation", *Zawya*, February 16, 2013 at http://www.zawya.com/story/Iran_Comoros_ink_agreement_on_bilateral_cooperation-ZAWYA20130217052711/

³⁵ "Haile launches nation's first economic council", *Addis Fortune*, January 27, 2013 at <http://addisfortune.net/articles/haile-launches-nations-first-economic-council/>

³⁶ "Ethiopia: Canadian firm inks oil exploration accord amid rebel threat", *Sudan Tribune*, February 24, 2013 at <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article45635>

³⁷ "Kenya can survive international community sanctions, says IMF", *The Star*, February 15, 2013 at <http://www.the-star.co.ke/news/article-107587/kenya-can-survive-international-community-sanctions-says-imf>

Kenya and Tanzania have agreed that they would jointly manage their shared river and lakes. The two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the trans-boundary management of Lake Chala, Lake Jipe and Uмба River. The two countries agreed to cooperate in water supply and sanitation; integrated water resources management; natural resources, environment and ecosystems management and several other areas. These joint ecosystems are threatened by human activity, inadequate conservation initiatives and the lack of a joint management plan leading to increase in salinity, reduction in fisheries and increased poverty forcing migration of communities. The negotiations for the agreement had taken three years to conclude which have resulted in the signing of the MoU.”³⁸

Mauritius

India-Mauritius trade negotiations suspended; Mauritius woos Pakistani traders

Trade liberalisation negotiations for finalising a pact with Mauritius has been suspended by Indian authorities. India holds that the negotiations will resume only in case Mauritius accelerates revision of its double-taxation avoidance agreement (DTAA) with India. The two countries are stuck with the DTAA amendment process on the definitions of ‘enterprise’ and ‘shell companies’ while Mauritius has been pressing to separate the two issues of trade liberalisation through the comprehensive economic cooperation and partnership agreement (CECPA); and revision in DTAA.³⁹

The High Commissioner of Mauritius to Pakistan Muhammad Rashad Daureeawo has told Mr. Zafar Bakhtawari, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) that his country wishes to become a gateway to Africa for Pakistani products. He also called for an exchange of business delegations to increase bilateral trade and dissemination of trade-related information. Mr. Bakhtawari said that though geographically Mauritius is far from Pakistan, the two countries have strong social and cultural ties. They realised that the current volume of mutual trade is much below the potential which needs to be improved.⁴⁰

Mozambique

Special Air Service starts its next rotation of patrols in the Mozambican Channel; Russia to invest in development projects in Mozambique; More Gas discovered in Mozambique

Amatola, the Special Air Service (SAS), will commence with the next rotation for Operation Copper. Amatola is expected to be in Mozambique for a period of three to four months. The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) would continue with its operation in the Mozambican channel to support the Southern African Development Community (SADC) maritime strategy. It is important for the SANDF to maintain its presence in the area in order to ensure that no element

³⁸ “Kenya, TZ to manage shared lakes together”, *The Star*, February 16, 2013 at <http://www.the-star.co.ke/news/article-107838/kenya-tz-manage-shared-lakes-together>

³⁹ “India-Mauritius trade pact put on hold”, *Business Standard*, January 14, 2013 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-mauritius-trade-pact-put-on-hold-113011400048_1.html

⁴⁰ “Mauritius offers huge opportunities to Pak traders”, *The Nation*, January 24, 2013 at <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/business/24-Jan-2013/mauritius-offers-huge-opportunities-to-pak-traders>

undermine the passage of maritime traffic in the region. The SANDF has decided to remain seized with its responsibility and commitment to support its neighbouring countries to keep the seas open.⁴¹

Russia will give US\$144 million to be invested in development projects in Mozambique. Visiting the country, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that the money would be used in projects regarded as priorities for economic development in accordance with the Mozambican government's strategic development plan. Russia intends to train human resources in Mozambique and take part in projects to exploit mineral resources in Mozambique. The Russian companies would directly contact their Mozambican counterparts to determine in what areas and projects they can operate. It was said that if the initiative is successful, the Russians would multiply the experience throughout the southern African region.⁴²

Discovery of more natural gas in Mozambique's Rovuma Basin has been announced by ENI, an Italian energy company. The discovery has added at least four trillion cubic feet of gas to the already confirmed reserves in Area 4. The company operates in the area with a 70 per cent participating interest.⁴³

Rwanda

Plans to merge a future international force with MONUSCO in DRC; Rwanda and South Korea for better bilateral ties; Rwanda's economic growth rate is ninth on the globe; Indian eye hospital opens in Rwanda; France prepares to start first trial for Rwandan genocide; Rwandans demonstrate against ICTR decision; Norwegian court gives Sadi Bugingo 21 years in prison; Rwanda supports the new peace framework on the DRC

States of the Great Lake region are considering merging the 19,000-strong UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo's troubled areas with a future 4000 troops strong neutral force. Efforts are being made towards creating a formula that would amalgamate the MONUSCO mission, the UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda, with the international neutral force. Tanzania has already pledged troops for peacekeeping while other members of the Southern African Development Community have promised to contribute.⁴⁴

Kim Sung-Hwan, the Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, revealed that the Rwandan government and the Republic of Korea are seeking closer cooperation to promote trade and world peace during their tenure as newly elected non-permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC). Korea intends to increase bilateral relations with Rwanda, as well as exchange ideas on how to collaborate to promote peace and protect civilians. Both the countries have agreed to

⁴¹ "The Special Air Service (SAS) Amatola starts with the next rotation of patrols in the Mozambican Channel", *AllAfrica.com*, January 24, 2013 at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201301281584.html>

⁴² "Russian foreign minister visits Mozambique", *AllAfrica.com*, February 13, 2013 at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201302140117.html>

⁴³ "ENI discovers yet more gas in Mozambique", *AllAfrica.com*, February 26, 2013 at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201302261322.html>

⁴⁴ "Plans to merge Congo neutral force, Monusco underway - AU", *The New Times*, January 11, 2013 at <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/index.php?i=15234&a=62740>

mutually protect each other's traders and investors wishing to work in either country. Korea has been supporting various projects and a regional polytechnic centre in Rwanda.⁴⁵

The report of *The Economist* on global economic trends for 2013 indicates that Rwanda's economy is expected to grow at 7.8 per cent, making the country the ninth fastest-growing economy in the world and the second-best in sub-Saharan Africa. This conclusion comes despite the country faces challenges presented by aid cuts. The report appreciates Rwanda for tremendous progress made over the last decade and enabling to giving its economy the service-sector orientation. Responding to the report's conclusion, Rwanda Development Board (RDB) acting chief executive officer, Clare Akamanzi, affirmed that the country would achieve or even surpass its medium-term plan economic objectives this year.⁴⁶

One of India's major eye centres renowned globally, Dr. Agarwal's Eye Hospital, has started operating in Rwanda. The operation is an outcome of Rwanda's Investment Road Show that began in India in 2010. The Indian-based hospital has treated over 2000 eye patients since its inception in 2012. It is a specialist centre where all complicated eye cases like retina surgery, hi-tech cataract surgery, glaucoma, paediatric ophthalmology and corneal transplantation are done. The aim of this hospital is to cut down on referrals for eye treatment outside Rwanda. The hospital has also signed contracts with some health insurance schemes in the country.⁴⁷

France has indicated intent to try genocide suspect Pascal Simbikangwa, head of Rwanda's intelligence agency in 1994. The trial would take place later this year or in early 2014. Simbikangwa is suspected to have organised Interahamwe militia and prepared lists of the Tutsi to be killed during the Genocide in Rwanda. He is one of the 25 pending high-profile Genocide cases living on French soil since 1994.⁴⁸

The acquittal of two genocide convicts Justin Mugenzi and Prosper Mugiraneza by the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was protested by hundreds of Rwandans on street. Both the acquitted are former cabinet ministers. Some genocide convicts who had served under the 'genocidal' regime for some time also raised concerns on the acquittal. IBUKA, the umbrella organisation for Genocide survivors' associations, organised the demonstration. The trial Chamber of the tribunal had found both men guilty of conspiracy to commit genocide on September 30, 2011.⁴⁹

Sadi Bugingo received 21 years in prison, the maximum sentence which he could get from a Norwegian court, for his role in the massacre of more than 1000 Tutsis in the Rwandan Genocide

⁴⁵ "Rwanda, South Korea seek closer ties", *The New Times*, January 15, 2013 at <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/index.php?i=15238&a=62844>

⁴⁶ "Rwanda is ninth fastest growing economy globally", *The New Times*, January 18, 2013 at <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/index.php?i=15241&a=62944>

⁴⁷ "Indian eye hospital opens in Rwanda", *The Sunday Times*, January 20, 2013 at <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/index.php?i=15243&a=13267>

⁴⁸ "France to conduct first Genocide trial", *The New Times*, January 30, 2013 at <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/index.php?i=15253&a=63378>

⁴⁹ "Rwandans rally against ICTR acquittals", *The New Times*, February 12, 2013 at <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/index.php?a=63779&i=15266>

of 1994. He was accused of being responsible for the death of 2000 Tutsis in the former Kibungo province. More than 1 million Rwandans were killed in the 100-day Genocide. The trial, which was the first Genocide case in Norwegian court, ran for nineteen weeks.⁵⁰

A new framework on bringing peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of Congo signed by eleven countries of the Great Lake region in the presence of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has been welcomed by President Paul Kagame. He said that the Framework Agreement is an important step and opportunity to reaffirm the collective commitment to regional peace. According to the deal, the DRC will be required to deepen security sector reform, particularly with respect to the Army and Police; to consolidate State authority, particularly in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, including preventing armed groups from destabilising neighbouring countries. The pact also sets out a plan for the appointment of a United Nations Special Envoy to support efforts to reach durable solutions in a multi-track plan that allows the convergence of all initiatives in progress.⁵¹

Seychelles

Seychelles awarded for compliance to the Montreal Protocol on Ozone layer; Seychelles' entrepreneurs to gain from Indian line of credit; Seychelles and Mauritius get joint possession of potential oil zone; India delivers Dornier aircraft to Seychelles; RAPPIC in Seychelles to deal with maritime piracy

Seychelles has been given the 'Compliance to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer' Award for its compliance with an international treaty aimed at protecting the Ozone layer. The award is a significant milestone for Seychelles, a small island state proving to the rest of the world that islands can make a difference. Seychelles is one of the first countries to which ratified the provisions of the Montreal Protocol and the subsequent amendments. The country has also benefitted tremendously from the Montreal Protocol Multilateral Fund.⁵²

India's US\$10 million line of credit to Seychelles would help its entrepreneurs in many ways. They would soon be able to apply for loans under the new line of credit. The EXIM Bank of India will fund and operate the line of credit on the recommendation of the Government of India. The Development Bank of Seychelles (DBS) is the agency through which funds would be made available to suitable projects in Seychelles. This is the first credit facility provided by the Indian EXIM Bank to the DBS. The agreement for the line of credit was signed on December 18, 2012 in New Delhi.⁵³

Seychelles and Mauritius' joint claim on the Mascarene plateau ensured that they did not lose it to United Nations' (UN) control. The area is considered to be rich in hydrocarbons and falls outside

⁵⁰ "Norway hands maximum sentence to Sadi Bugingo", *The New Times*, February 15, 2013 at <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/index.php?i=15269&a=63923>

⁵¹ "Rwanda welcomes DRC peace deal", *The New Times*, February 25, 2013 at <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/index.php?i=15279&a=64260>

⁵² "Seychelles gets award for complying with treaty to protect ozone layer", *Seychelles Nation*, January 8, 2013 at <http://www.nation.sc/index.php?art=30076>

⁵³ "Local firms set to benefit from Indian line of credit", *Seychelles Nation*, January 16, 2013 at <http://www.nation.sc/index.php?art=30148>

the exclusive economic zones of both Seychelles and Mauritius. Each of the two countries could claim the zone separately as an extension of its continental shelf. Had they engaged in argument with each other about the claim, the UN would never have looked at either claim. The whole area, after a deadline, would have gone to the UN enterprise to be taken care of and managed.⁵⁴

The delivery of a new Dornier aircraft by India to Seychelles' has boosted its maritime surveillance capacity hugely. When Seychelles had approached India for help to fight piracy, Seychelles' economy was on the downturn from the scourge. India responded by dispatching one of its own aircraft immediately to do the job until it delivers a new to the Seychelles Government. Four Seychellois pilots are also being trained on the Dornier. It will be an important asset not only to fight against piracy but also in terms of fight against drug trafficking and illegal fishing wider maritime security.⁵⁵

A new anti-piracy coordination centre has been set up on the former Seychelles Coastguard base of Bois de Rose Avenue. The facility is named as the Regional Anti-Piracy Prosecution and Intelligence Coordination Centre (RAPPICC). It includes outstanding conference and training facilities within its building supported by wide range of high-definition information technology. The impact of piracy on Seychelles has been substantial from its national security perspective to maritime tourism, fisheries industry and port activities. Seychelles is determined to counter the piracy impacting its economy adversely.⁵⁶

Somalia

Ugandan rebel ADF has links with Al-Shabab; Puntland presidential elections to be held in January 2014; Kenya to transfer pirates to Somalia; Ban suggest review of arms embargo on Somalia; Somali Navy Reborn

A UN report has found links between Somalia's Al-Shabab and the Ugandan rebel group of Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Uganda has contributed hugely to the AU forces in Somalia. Despite the hatred of Al-Shabab on the presence of African union forces in Somalia, the Somali public fully accepts their presence and rejoices their sacrifices in restoring peace in Somalia. After the weakening of Al-Shabab, the links have become more important which tend to spread in eastern Africa.⁵⁷

Abdurahman Mohamed Farole, the President of the semi-autonomous region of Puntland in north east Somalia has announced that presidential election of the region would be held in January 2014. The announcement extended his current term which has already expired for about one year. Farole insisted that the constitution of the region permits his administration to extend one

⁵⁴ "Pact gives us access to potential oil zone", *Seychelles Nation*, January 30, 2013 at <http://www.nation.sc/index.php?art=30305>

⁵⁵ "New Dornier aircraft to boost maritime security", *Seychelles Nation*, February 4, 2013 at <http://www.nation.sc/index.php?art=30353>

⁵⁶ "New anti-piracy coordination centre opens", *Seychelles Nation*, February 26, 2013 <http://www.nation.sc/index.php?art=30603>

⁵⁷ "Ugandan rebel group has links with Somali militants, a report says", *Shabelle Media Network*, January 5, 2013 at <http://shabelle.net/ugandan-rebel-has-links-with-somali-militants-a-report-says/>

year to the normal term. A political storm has set in Puntland recently about the election of a new president as the politicians in this part of Somalia have accused Farole of breaking the rule of constitution by stalling the election process.⁵⁸

The Somali pirates serving their jail terms in Kenya would be transferred to Somalia. This is to be done on the request of the Somali government to Kenya. The Somali ambassador visited the Shimo la Tewa jail in the coastal region of Mombasa and met most of the detainees. The foreign forces fighting against piracy in the Somali waters had captured most of these pirates.⁵⁹

The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon suggested in a report that the Security Council should review the arms embargo on Somalia to help rebuild the country's security forces and consolidate military gains against Al-Shabab. The embargo was imposed in 1992 to cut the flow of arms to feuding warlords after the fall of Sian Barre in 1991. The embargo has been under discussion for some times but a final agreement has not been arrived.⁶⁰

The navy in Somalia has reborn after two decades. The commander of the Somalia Navy Admiral Faarah Qare said that the Somalia navy has broken the pirates and won the free movement of the boats and ships at the ocean after long period of troubles. The Somali navy, which requires heavy external assistance, is trying to prove its existence once again.⁶¹

Uganda

Uganda plans to build inland port as alternative; China-Uganda Friendship Association set up; Uganda's first space probe

To reduce its near total dependence on Kenya, Uganda plans to build an inland port on Lake Victoria near its capital Kampala. The port would take about three years to be built and would cost about US\$180 million. Ugandan businesses have complained port congestion in Kenya for long. Tanzania also plans to extend its rail network from Arusha to Musoma port to create an alternative route to be covered by both rail and marine transport.⁶²

A China-Uganda Friendship Association has been launched. It was recognised that China was among the first countries to recognise Uganda as a sovereign state. Over 7,000 Chinese live and operate over 100 businesses in Kampala alone. The association is expected to be a boost in bilateral trade relations between the two countries. The Ugandan government wishes an increased balance of trade with China and transfer of technology and scientific knowledge to its country from China.⁶³

Capt. Chris Nsamba, the chief executive officer and founder of the African Space Research Program (ASRP), revealed that Uganda would soon launch the first space observer called Cadimella. This has demonstrated that Ugandans can also participate in sophisticated programmes. Nsamba

⁵⁸ "Puntland president extends term and sets date for election", *Shabelle Media Network*, January 9, 2013 at <http://shabelle.net/puntland-president-extends-term-and-sets-date-for-election/>

⁵⁹ "Kenya to transfer Somali pirates in Kenyan jails to Somalia", *Shabelle Media Network*, January 15, 2013 at <http://shabelle.net/kenya-to-transfer-somali-pirates-in-kenyan-jails-to-somalia/>

⁶⁰ "U.N. chief suggests review of 21-year-old Somalia arms embargo", *Shabelle Media Network*, February 2, 2013 at <http://shabelle.net/u-n-chief-suggests-review-of-21-year-old-somalia-arms-embargo/>

⁶¹ "Rebirth of Somalia Navy", *Shabelle Media Network*, February 17, 2013 at <http://shabelle.net/rebirth-of-somalia-navy/>

revealed that the observer has self-defence, anti-time missile features, which protect it from being hit by missiles destined to destroy it. As the probe orbits the planet, it will also pick dust molecules for laboratory research. Cadimella will orbit the space twice and come back with samples.⁶⁴

Tanzania

India lends Dar es Salaam US\$40 m to boost agriculture; Tanzania to train Somali engineers; Ecobank to encourage and support trade with China; APRM rates Dar good in governance

The government of India has given a US\$40 million loan to Tanzania to purchase tractors to boost Kilimo Kwanza initiative. The initiative was designed to promote agricultural development in the country has not shown much progress since its inception in August 2009. The money will be used to purchase 1846 tractors which will be directed to small scale farmers for a reasonable price.⁶⁵

Tanzania is to conduct an International training programme on Labour Based Technology (LBT) for road works for 10 Somali engineers. The programme is being sponsored by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The training would comprise of Somali university staff members and Local Government staff members who would be trained in different engineering capacities. The training is aimed at strengthening Somali's capacity.⁶⁶

At the ushering of the Chinese Dragon year, Ecobank has geared to reduce the costs of doing business between Tanzania and China. It would facilitate it by providing affordable and convenient financial solutions and trading in Chinese currency. The bank said that it would start trading in the Chinese currency, a move expected to enable businesspersons to save millions in purchasing Yuan Renminbi (RMB) directly from Tanzania.⁶⁷

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) has recognised Dar es Salaam as a good performer in terms of good governance in Africa and the world at large. The Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete had presented the country's report, which would be used as reference, to his peers in Addis Ababa on January 26, 2013. However, challenges like bolstering the union and maintaining the country's peace and stability remain before the government. The peers have advised Tanzania that it should make good use of the Constitutional review process to build a better Tanzania. The

⁶² "Uganda to build inland port to reduce reliance on Kenya", *New Vision*, February 12, 2013 at <http://www.newvision.co.ug/news/639783-uganda-to-build-inland-port-to-reduce-reliance-on-kenya.html>

⁶³ "China-Uganda friendship association launched", *New Vision*, February 25, 2013 at <http://www.newvision.co.ug/news/640132-china-uganda-friendship-association-launched.html>

⁶⁴ "Uganda to launch its first space observer", *New Vision*, February 13, 2013 at <http://www.newvision.co.ug/news/639792-uganda-to-launch-its-first-space-observer.html>

⁶⁵ "India gives Dar es Salaam a \$40m agriculture loan", *East African Business Week*, January 20, 2013 at <http://www.busiweek.com/news/tanzania/4321-india-gives-dar-es-salaam-a-40m-agriculture-loan>

⁶⁶ "Tanzania to train Somali engineers", *East African Business Week*, February 2, 2013 at <http://www.busiweek.com/opportunities/4429-tanzania-to-train-somali-engineers->

⁶⁷ "Ecobank vows to Support trade with China", *Daily News Online*, February 5, 2013 at <http://www.dailynews.co.tz/index.php/biz/14352-ecobank-vows-to-support-trade-with-china>

review noted that the Tanzanians enjoy many freedoms including free speech and the right to form associations and elect leaders. The government has made it possible and the people should cherish that.⁶⁸

Zambia

Zambia seizes control of Chinese-owned mine amid safety fears

A Chinese owned coal mine was taken over by the Zambian government after revoking its licence for safety lapses. The Zambian government cancelled all three licences held by Collum Coal mine. The government would continue operating the mines until it finds a suitable investor. The authorities said that the overtaken mine had a poor safety, health and environmental record. It did not have emergency medical treatment facilities. Besides, the company had also failed to pay royalties or declare how much coal was produced. Chinese companies in Zambia have been controversial in China for some time.⁶⁹

Zimbabwe

When Zimbabwe's public account receded to US\$ 217

In the third week of January 2013, after paying its civil servants, Zimbabwe had only US\$217 left in its public account. The information was given by Zimbabwe's Finance Minister Tendai Biti. He also informed that a \$30m of revenue had been paid in the following day. He said that it was revealed to emphasise that the government was unable to finance elections, not that it was insolvent. The power-sharing government set up in 2009 used US dollars to cut years of hyperinflation but the economy is still fragile. Polls are due in 2013, with President Robert Mugabe's Zanu-PF fighting Mr Biti's Movement for Democratic Change.⁷⁰

Central Africa

Cameroon

French tourists kidnapped in Cameroon; Piracy attack on British ship in Gulf of Guinea; Jindal Steel drops plan to acquire Cameroons' iron ore firm; German firm to invest \$90 million in Cameroon

In the month of February, seven French tourists including four children were kidnapped in northern Cameroon and it is alleged that Islamist terrorist groups operating across the border in northeast Nigeria, including the Boko Haram were responsible for this. The kidnapping highlighted

⁶⁸ "Dar's APRM Performance Exemplary", *Daily News Online*, February 9, 2013 at <http://www.dailynews.co.tz/index.php/parliament-news/14519-dar-s-aprm-performance-exemplary>

⁶⁹ "Zambia seizes control of Chinese-owned mine amid safety fears", *BBC News*, February 20, 2013 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-21520478>

⁷⁰ "Zimbabwe says public account stood at \$217 last week", *BBC News*, January 30, 2013 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-21257765>

the danger to French nationals and interests in the region following the French intervention in Mali.⁷¹ Following the kidnapping, the gunmen threatened to kill them unless authorities in Nigeria and Cameroon freed Islamist militant but France refused to negotiate with the captors.⁷²

In West Africa's Gulf of Guinea, pirates attacked a British-owned cargo ship and took three crew members hostage. The crew was taken hostage between the Cameroonian port of Douala and the port of Malabo in Equatorial Guinea.⁷³ Meanwhile, it was reported that Cameroon will host a Summit of Heads of State on piracy and armed robbery in April to address the menace in the Gulf of Guinea.⁷⁴

In other India's Jindal Steel and Power announced that it dropped the plan to acquire iron ore firm, Afferro Mining Inc in Cameroon due to the company's low grade magnetite reserves and high costs involved in beneficiation of the ore.⁷⁵

Privately-held, German firm G Power Cement will invest about \$90 million in Cameroon to build an 800,000 tonnes a year plant in Cameroon. According to reports, the plant will first cater to Cameroon's markets and will eventually step up production to supply to markets in Central African Republic and Chad.⁷⁶

Central African Republic

Seleka rebels continue to attack and capture towns, new national unity government unveiled; Humanitarian agencies warn of looming food crisis

Just ten days after a peace agreement was signed between the Seleka rebel force and the government of President Francois Bozize, the rebels attacked and captured the towns of Dimbi and Kembe. The attacks signalled the first cracks in the Libreville peace accord. The attacks also suggested dissatisfaction among the rebels due to the few benefits that the previous deals with government allegedly brought them.⁷⁷ Following this, the leaders of the country unveiled a new national unity government as part of a power-sharing agreement with a rebel coalition.⁷⁸

⁷¹ "French family kidnapped in Cameroon", *The New York Times*, February 19, 2013 at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/20/world/africa/seven-members-of-french-family-kidnapped-in-cameroon.html?_r=1&

⁷² "France says will not negotiate with Cameroon hostage-takers", *Reuters*, February 26, 2013 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/26/us-cameroon-kidnapping-idUSBRE91P0G220130226>

⁷³ "Pirates kidnap three cargo ship crew in Gulf of Guinea", *Reuters*, February 8, 2013 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/08/us-pirates-ship-guinea-idUSBRE9170QN20130208>

⁷⁴ "Summit on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea", *Afriquejet.com*, February 14, 2013 at <http://www.afriquejet.com/201302141916/Summit-on-piracy-in-the-Gulf-of-Guinea.html>

⁷⁵ "Jindal Steel drops plan to acquire Cameroon's Afferro Mining", *The Economic Times*, February 7, 2013 at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-02-07/news/36972278_1_iron-ore-jspl-afferro

⁷⁶ "German cement company to build plant in Cameroon", *Reuters*, February 18, 2013 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/18/cameroon-cement-idUSL6N0BI7EQ20130218>

⁷⁷ "CAR peace deal yet to translate into reality", *Al Jazeera*, February 2, 2013 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/01/2013127133359846378.html>

⁷⁸ "Central African Republic unveils unity government", *VOA News*, February 3, 2013 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/central-african-republic-unveils-unity-government/1596332.html>

In other developments, humanitarian agencies warned of a looming food crisis in parts of the country due to insecurity that displaced thousands of people and disrupted cultivation and trade.⁷⁹

Chad

Chad to export oil through Sudanese pipelines; Chad's president urges West African leaders to speed up deployment of their forces to northern Mali; Chad ratifies the CTBT

In the month of February, Sudanese President, Omar al-Bashir who visited the country announced the export of oil to be produced in northern Chad using the Sudanese pipelines and oil installations of Port Sudan. He also announced that Qatar had agreed to finance the road connecting Abeche in Chad and El Geneina in Sudan.⁸⁰

Meanwhile, Chad's President, Idriss Deby, appealed to his West African counterparts to speed up the deployment of their forces to northern Mali to support the French and Chadian forces that are fighting the al Qaeda-linked rebels. President Deby also called on the ECOWAS' joint staff to be quicker in sending troops to protect the civilians in the liberated areas.⁸¹

In other developments, Chad became the 159th State to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in the month of February. Chad had earlier signed the treaty on October 08, 1996.⁸²

Democratic Republic of Congo

M23 rebels declare ceasefire; UN Peacekeeping department calls for surveillance drones in DRC; UN explores possibility of Intervention Brigade for the country; African leaders sign peace deal on DRC; DRC, Angola and Zambia to work jointly on the Lobito Corridor

In the early part of January, the M23 rebel group declared a unilateral ceasefire and called on the Congolese President, Joseph Kabila's government to do the same.⁸³ Meanwhile, the UN peacekeeping department asked the Security Council to back the use of surveillance drones for the first time in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The drones would monitor the eastern DRC border where Rwanda has been accused of helping the rebels fight the Congolese government.⁸⁴ A few days later, it was announced that the UN was set to expand its mission in the country by

⁷⁹ "Looming food crisis in the Central African Republic", *IRIN News*, February 22, 2013 at <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/97524/Looming-food-crisis-in-the-Central-African-Republic>

⁸⁰ "Sudan: Bashir announces oil export from Chad via Port Sudan", *AllAfrica.com*, February 10, 2013 at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201302110217.html>

⁸¹ "Chad calls for urgent African help to fight Islamists in Mali", *The Star*, February 28, 2013 at <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2013/2/28/worldupdates/chad-calls-for-urgent-african-help-to-fight-islamists-in-mali&sec=Worldupdates>

⁸² "The Republic of Chad ratifies the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty", *CTBTO.org*, February 11, 2013 at <http://www.ctbto.org/press-centre/press-releases/2013/the-republic-of-chad-ratifies-the-comprehensive-nuclear-test-ban-treaty/>

⁸³ "Democratic Republic of Congo's M23 rebels declare cease-fire", *Bloomberg Businessweek*, January 8, 2013 at <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2013-01-08/democratic-republic-of-congo-s-m23-rebels-declare-cess-fire>

⁸⁴ "UN seeks to deploy drones over DR Congo", *Al Jazeera*, January 9, 2013 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/01/20131941818393957.html>

creating a new special force to work alongside existing peacekeeping troops. With the UNSC authorising the use of surveillance drones in the eastern parts of the country, the intervention brigade and the drones are expected to be in operation in before May.⁸⁵ In the last week of January, African leaders who gathered in Addis Ababa to sign a UN-mediated peace deal aimed at ending two decades of conflict in eastern Congo failed to do so. The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon postponed the signing of the deal due to “procedural differences” and stressed that there were no fundamental differences on the agreement’s content among the states involved.⁸⁶

However, in the last week of February, African leaders signed a UN-mediated deal that will pave the way for the deployment of a new military brigade to take on rebel groups. Ban Ki-moon who witnessed the signing of the accord that did not include any representatives of rebel groups, hoped that it would bring “an era of peace and stability” for Congo and Africa’s Great Lakes.⁸⁷ The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the Great Lakes region defended military stability as the priority for the DRC.⁸⁸

In other developments, the DRC, Zambia and Angola will put together a joint plan for the repair, maintenance and operation of the Lobito Corridor railroad which will provide a shorter and more efficient route from the port to the DRC and Zambia copper belt. The railway network will also enable people and goods to be carried between the three countries and promote multi-modal international transport.⁸⁹

Southern Africa

Namibia

China to enhance ties with Namibia

China is all set to expand its trade ties with Namibia and will import more non-resources products from the country. This will help Namibia in reducing unemployment with the coming in of more labour intensive processing companies instead of relying on processing of raw materials. One of the ways suggested for attracting Chinese companies to Namibia is through the establishment of industrial parks or economic zones.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ “UN to expand DR Congo peacekeeping mission”, *Al Jazeera*, January 25, 2013 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/01/2013125224819653297.html>

⁸⁶ “Dispute over military command holds up Congo peace deal”, *Yahoo News*, January 28, 2013 at <http://news.yahoo.com/dispute-over-military-command-holds-congo-peace-deal-152031348.html>

⁸⁷ “African leaders sign deal aimed at peace in eastern Congo”, *Reuters*, February 24, 2013 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/24/us-congo-democratic-un-idUSBRE91N03H20130224>

⁸⁸ “Sadc Great Lakes prioritise military stability”, *Angola Press*, January 29, 2013 at http://www.portalangop.co.ao/motix/en_us/noticias/politica/2013/0/5/Sadc-Great-Lakes-prioritise-military-stability,8df56255-4c97-40cd-8c2f-4affaeceb676.html

⁸⁹ “Angola, DR Congo and Zambia to put together a joint plan for Lobito Corridor railroad”, *Macauhub*, February 19, 2013 at <http://www.macauhub.com.mo/en/2013/02/19/angola-dr-congo-and-zambia-to-put-together-a-joint-plan-for-lobito-corridor-railroad/>

⁹⁰ “China set to strengthen trade ties with Namibia: Commerce Minister”, *Global Times*, February 22, 2013 at <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/763495.shtml>

South Africa

India-SACU trade pact to limit tariff exchanges to select products; SA-Japan sign MoU to increase Japanese investment; UN Strategic Cooperation launched in South Africa

At a ministerial level meeting held between India and South Africa in the month of January, it was decided to limit the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) to tariff exchanges on a limited number of products. According to media reports, the list of products of preferential tariffs would be used to incrementally enhance the bilateral trade. This step was taken due to the concerns of business and labour in South Africa over the potential harm to the local industry.⁹¹

In other developments, South Africa and Japan have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate on increasing Japanese investment into the country. The agreement will also increase South African-Japanese collaboration in other areas such as platinum beneficiation and transport infrastructure.⁹²

According to reports, the United Nations Strategic Cooperation Framework 2013-2017 was launched in South Africa, which will provide the overall framework for the work of 17 UN organisations partnering with South Africa for the next five years. Four pillars for cooperation were identified which includes inclusive growth and decent work; sustainable development; human capabilities and governance; and participation.⁹³

⁹¹ "India-SACU trade pact may be restricted to a few products", *The Economic Times*, February 15, 2013 at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-02-15/news/37119394_1_southern-african-customs-union-preferential-trade-agreement-india-sacu

⁹² "South Africa, Japan sign investment pact", *SouthAfrica.info*, February 20, 2013 at <http://www.southafrica.info/news/international/japan-200213.htm#.UUgchxfe4y5>

⁹³ "Government of South Africa and United Nations sign new strategic cooperation framework", *StarAfrica.com*, February 27, 2013 at <http://en.starafrika.com/news/government-of-south-africa-and-united-nations-sign-new-strategic-cooperation-framework.html>

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Commentaries can range between 1,000-1,500 words (excluding footnotes) and book reviews between 600-1,000 words. Guidelines for contributors may be found at: <http://www.idsa.in/africatrends>. Submissions may be emailed to the Editor at idsa.africatrends@gmail.com.

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The Centre's research focus includes understanding developments in the African region and analysing various hotspots like Egypt, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, and the Indian Ocean Region. It also focuses on bilateral, regional as well as multilateral engagements between India and the countries of Africa. The Centre also endeavours to analyse India's engagement with Latin American countries, particularly in forums such as the IBSA and BRICS.

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