

## Pacific Partners Outlook

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### Are Pacific Nations Helping the West Papuan Case for Greater Autonomy?

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Indonesia has experienced a separatist movement in its remote Papua and West Papua provinces since it took control of them in 1969. The provinces are usually referred to simply as West Papua by Pacific Islanders, who by and large continue to call for greater West Papuan self-determination.

Recent developments, and an impending visit by Pacific Island foreign ministers to Papua province, suggest those calls could play a role in incentivizing Jakarta to grant West Papua greater autonomy.

The members of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG)—Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia's Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS)—deferred an important decision at their 19th leaders' summit on June 19–21. They set aside an application for membership by the pro-independence umbrella group, the West Papua National Council for Liberation (WPNCCL).

Jakarta sought to head off a decision by inviting the MSG foreign ministers to visit West Papua and inspect the human rights situation on the ground. With Fiji supporting the Indonesian proposal, the [leaders' communiqué](#) noted that “the outcomes of the WPNCCL's application would be subject to the report of the [foreign ministers'] mission.” It also recognized the need for continued “dialogue and consultation” with Indonesia on the issue.

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*The independence “Morning Star” flag of West Papua. Pro-independence groups in the region frequently protest against Indonesian occupation by raising the banned flag. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/35231024@N05/3716666960/>*

But the communiqué reiterated that the MSG “fully supports the inalienable rights of the people of West Papua towards self-determination.” The clear implication is that if the foreign ministers do not like what they find, then the WPNCL can expect to join the group’s ranks, just as the pro-independence FLNKS did.

The MSG meeting highlighted the precarious state of Indonesia’s relationship with its neighbors over the West Papua issue. Jakarta engaged in a blitz of diplomacy in the lead-up to the meeting to try and block the WPNCL’s membership application, and it partially succeeded. Fiji vocally supported the Indonesian proposal, and Papua New Guinea’s head of state chose to skip the meeting altogether to make a trip to Indonesia. Both

countries have said they respect Indonesia’s territorial integrity, echoing the position of the United States and other international players. This was crucial in securing a delay of the MSG’s decision.

But the leaders’ communiqué shows that none of the MSG members have abandoned their calls for some form of West Papuan self-determination. Indonesia succeeded in convincing its neighbors to wait in part by holding up Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono’s recent [promise of enhanced special autonomy](#) for West Papua.

Indonesia’s legislature passed a law in 2001 granting its Papuan provinces a degree of special autonomy. But policies stemming from that legislation have done nothing to end the pro-independence insurgency, and are widely seen as a failure in both Jakarta and West Papua. In April, President Yudhoyono and Papua province governor Lukas Enembe agreed to explore a new arrangement for greater autonomy. Enembe’s team produced a draft autonomy law in October. In November, the governor shared it with his counterpart from West Papua province, Bram Atururi, who decided it needed work.

A recent [report from the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict \(IPAC\)](#) argues that Atururi’s team has produced a greatly improved document. It focuses on issues of economic growth, resource sharing, good governance, and improved public services. Interestingly, both drafts also

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ask for “limited foreign affairs authority” for the provincial governments of West Papua. Enembe’s draft specifically asks that West Papua be allowed to represent Indonesia in Pacific regional forums. Atururi does not specify that West Papua be given representation in multilateral forums, but asks for the right to develop relations with its “immediate neighbors.”

The failure of the 2001 special autonomy law and continued human rights abuses against Papuans means skepticism is high regarding the proposed new legislation. This is compounded by the historical lack of political will in Jakarta to tackle the West Papua issue and by Indonesia’s upcoming legislative and presidential elections, in April and July 2014, respectively.

The MSG foreign ministers’ visit is scheduled for December. As the IPAC report points out, the Indonesian government might argue that negotiations over the new enhanced special autonomy drafts make this an inopportune time for the trip. But that would be a mistake. Jakarta needs to find the political will to consider the West Papuan governor’s drafts seriously and to commit to reaching agreement on a new system of special autonomy. Making such a commitment now, while fully supporting the MSG foreign ministers’ visit, will send a message for the first time that Jakarta is committed to tackling the West Papua issue.

It is unlikely that Indonesia can keep the WPNCL out of the MSG for long. The umbrella group came to the leaders’ meeting bearing a letter signed by 30 West Papuan organizations in support of its membership, ensuring that it is seen as a legitimate representative of the people. Vanuatu, where the WPNCL’s leadership lives in exile, is the most vocal proponent of West Papuan independence and will not agree to further delays if Jakarta dithers. Vanuatu’s prime minister, Moana Carcasses Kalosil, put the West Papua issue on the international radar with an [impassioned call at the UN General Assembly](#) in September for the appointment of a special investigator into Indonesian abuses in and annexation of West Papua.

Jakarta’s best option, given the unlikelihood of passing and implementing a new law on expanded special autonomy without delay, is to take steps to



*Vanuatu prime minister Moana Carcasses Kalosil, who has called on the United Nations to appoint an investigator into Indonesian abuses in and annexation of West Papua. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/42121221@N07/10920047805/in/photolist-hCY6Li>*

## Are Pacific Nations Helping the West Papuan Case for Greater Autonomy? *(continued)*

convince its neighbors and the world that it is committed to improving the lot of West Papuans. This should start with supporting the MSG ministers' trip. It also means taking steps to improve human rights in the region, including by easing travel restrictions on foreigners and press. Most of all, it means progress, even if slow, on autonomy.

For their part, the MSG foreign ministers should see their trip as an opportunity to effect some change in their larger neighbor and, hopefully, get the ball rolling on removing the major irritant in the region's relations with Indonesia. They should assess the human rights situation in West Papua honestly, but also be receptive if Jakarta signals movement on greater autonomy. ▲

# The Month That Was



*Australian foreign minister Julie Bishop speaks at CSIS on November 20 during her visit to Washington for the annual Australia-United States Ministerial consultations. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/48745748@N06/11194350985/in/photolist-i4cYxt-i4d7gJ-i4daFi-i4dEkn-i4d7cL>*

## AUSTRALIA

**Foreign, defense ministers visit Washington for annual talks.** Foreign Minister Julie Bishop and Defense Minister David Johnston met with their U.S. counterparts, John Kerry and Chuck Hagel, in Washington for the annual **Australia-United States Ministerial (AUSMIN)** consultations on November 19–20. The four officials committed to enhancing security cooperation, including the enlargement of the U.S. marine training rotation in northern Australia to 2,500 personnel. They also reiterated both nations' commitment to completing negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement. Bishop followed the consultations with a **speech at the CSIS Banyan Tree Leadership Forum.**

**Indonesia accepts Australian explanation for surveillance, but is not ready to resume cooperation.** Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on November 26 accepted Australian prime minister Tony Abbott's explanation of Canberra's surveillance activities in Indonesia but said that full ties would not be restored until the two countries reach a code of conduct on information gathering. Yudhoyono ordered a halt on November 20 to all bilateral military and law enforcement cooperation with Australia following revelations that Canberra used its embassy in Jakarta to collect intelligence, including tapping the phones of Yudhoyono and other top officials.

**Treasurer rejects takeover bid for GrainCorp.** Treasurer Joe Hockey on November 29 rejected a \$3.1 billion bid by U.S. agriculture company Archer Daniels Midland to acquire GrainCorp, Australia's largest grain handler. The attempted buyout sparked tension within the governing Liberal-National party coalition, with the Liberal Party supporting the deal as part of an effort to increase foreign investment and the National Party opposing any foreign ownership of agricultural assets.

**Government fights to implement agenda in Parliament.** Australia's Parliament opened its new session on November 12, with the government of Prime Minister Tony Abbott unable to effectively pursue its legislative agenda. Abbott's coalition campaigned on promises to repeal the unpopular carbon and mining taxes implemented by the previous

government, but lacks the seats to do either. Abbott has resorted to creating YouTube videos to pressure opposition legislators into supporting repeal of these taxes, and on December 3 he threatened to keep Parliament sitting until Christmas.

#### Employees face uncertainty after aid agency merges with foreign

**ministry.** Employees of the abolished Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) are in limbo after the agency was merged with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) on November 1. The merger was part of the government's decision to slash annual foreign aid by \$4.1 billion in an effort to balance the national budget. A DFAT official said on November 21 that the ministry will need up to seven months to decide which of AusAID's nearly 7,000 employees to terminate.

#### United Nations denounces Australia's treatment of asylum seekers.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on November 26 criticized Australia's policies to deter asylum seekers. In two reports—one on Australian-run facilities in [Nauru](#) and one on Papua New Guinea's [Manus Island](#)—the agency concluded that Canberra's policies of detaining and resettling asylum seekers offshore are inhumane. UNHCR spokesperson Volker Türk called the shift in asylum policy in the lead-up to Australia's 2013 elections a "sharp deterioration."

### NEW ZEALAND

**Key leads business delegation to Thailand.** Prime Minister John Key traveled to Bangkok with representatives of 22 New Zealand companies on November 20 for discussions with Thai officials, including Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra. The two leaders expressed their desire to double bilateral trade by 2020. Thailand is currently New Zealand's 10th largest trading partner, with bilateral trade having doubled since the signing of a comprehensive economic partnership in 2005 that will remove all tariff and quota barriers between the two nations by 2025.

#### New Zealand downplays disagreements revealed by leaked TPP documents.

Trade Minister Tim Groser on November 15 downplayed disagreements over the intellectual property chapter of the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement that Wellington is negotiating with 12 other countries. Wikileaks released negotiating documents on November 13 that show the U.S. and Japanese governments seeking far stricter protection for intellectual property, especially in the medical sector, than New Zealand and other negotiating nations are willing to accept. Groser said the agreement still carries "wonderful upsides."

**Key attends Sri Lanka conference amid human rights criticism.** Prime Minister John Key attended the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Sri Lanka on November 15-17 despite international criticism of that country's human rights record. The leaders of Canada and India boycotted the biannual meeting, which brings together members of the British Commonwealth to discuss common issues including human rights and development. Sri Lanka's government is accused of marginalizing the Tamil ethnic minority and intimidating the press.

**Government sells 20 percent stake in Air New Zealand.** The New Zealand government sold a 20 percent stake in national carrier Air New Zealand to private investors on November 20, earning just under \$300 million. Wellington now holds only a 53 percent stake in the airline. The share sale was part of Prime Minister John Key's broader plan to help balance the national budget by privatizing large state-owned enterprises for \$4 billion.

**Broadband network operator at risk of default.** The New Zealand Commerce Commission on November 5 ruled that telecommunications company Chorus, which is responsible for the construction of a planned national broadband network, must lower by 22 percent the price at which it leases its copper lines to retailers. The ruling has reduced Chorus's revenue, putting the company at risk of default. It is now calling on the federal government to intervene.

#### PACIFIC ISLANDS

**China increases aid package to Pacific countries.** Chinese vice premier Wang Yang unveiled a \$1 billion increase in low-interest loans to eight Pacific nations during the November 8 China-Pacific Islands Countries Economic Development and Cooperation Forum in Guangzhou. Wang also announced the elimination of Chinese tariffs on 95 percent of goods from developing Pacific nations, as well as 2,000 scholarships for Pacific students. China's increased aid is challenging Australia's historic dominance of the Pacific development agenda.

**PNG government, opposition exchange accusations.** Papua New Guinea prime minister Peter O'Neill referred opposition leader Belden Namah to a parliamentary committee on November 18, accusing him of making defamatory allegations of corruption. Namah has accused O'Neill of corruption in multiple dealings, including \$25 million in fraudulent payments to a law firm. O'Neill requested that the committee enlist two psychiatrists to assess Belden's suitability for public office.



*An Air New Zealand Boeing 767. The government sold a 20 percent stake in the airline for \$300 million on November 20. [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Air\\_New\\_Zealand\\_767-300\\_landing.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Air_New_Zealand_767-300_landing.jpg)*



*A funeral for four people killed by tribal violence in Kainantu, Papua New Guinea. The country's opposition has called for the military to end an uptick in tribal violence in the highland provinces. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/kahunapulej/3821055211/>*

**PNG considering compulsory military service.** Papua New Guinea prime minister Peter O'Neill on November 18 proposed the introduction of mandatory military service for high-school graduates. He said the proposal would reduce crime, citing compulsory service in Israel as an example of how the policy can be successful. The PNG government has proposed increasingly drastic measures, including reintroducing capital punishment, to fight the country's alarmingly high levels of violent crime.

**Opposition calls for military intervention after tribal violence kills 14 in PNG highlands.** Papua New Guinea deputy opposition leader Sam Basil on November 22 publicly called for the deployment of military personnel to highland provinces affected by recent flare-ups of tribal violence. A tribe armed with assault weapons and a hand grenade attacked a rival village in the Southern Highlands on November 13, killing 14 people and burning down more than 600 homes.

**Typhoon Haiyan causes widespread damage for Pacific nations.** Recovery efforts from Typhoon Haiyan began November 14 in Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia and continue weeks after the storm damaged buildings and forced the evacuation of dozens on November 7. The storm caused severe damage but no fatalities in the former U.S. territories. Water and electricity have been restored in most areas.

**European crew fined \$1 million for illegal fishing.** A Nauruan court has fined a Spanish fishing crew \$1 million after it was caught fishing in the country's waters illegally. The captain and crew of the *Albacora Uno* pleaded guilty to fishing without permission from local authorities, but claimed they believed they were in Kiribati waters. The judge upheld the \$1 million fine, citing the need to deter damage caused to local economies and fish stocks by illegal fishing. ▲

# Looking Ahead

**Event on private antipiracy efforts.** The Heritage Foundation will host John-Clark Levin on December 6 to talk about the recent trend of private maritime security companies being used to fight piracy. The talk will run from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Heritage Foundation's Lehrman Auditorium, 214 Massachusetts Ave., NE. For more information and to RSVP, click [here](#).

**Discussion on military modernization and the U.S. rebalance.** Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Welsh III will speak at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) on December 11 about the difficulties of modernizing the military to meet the challenges of the U.S. rebalance to the Asia Pacific. General Welsh will discuss the particular burdens of a tightening defense budget. The event will be held from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. on the 12th floor of AEI, 1150 17th St., NW. For more information, click [here](#).

**Panel discussion on U.S.-China tensions in the Western Pacific.** The Woodrow Wilson Center will hold a panel event on December 11 looking at the past year of relations between the United States and China, as well as tensions between them in the Western Pacific. The event will run from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. on the sixth floor of the Wilson Center, One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW. For more information and registration, click [here](#).

**Exhibition of indigenous Australian art.** The Embassy of Australia is hosting an exhibition of early Aboriginal Australian paintings from the Papunya community in the Northern Territory until January 31. The exhibit, entitled "Icons of the Desert," features works from the private collection of John and Barbara Wilkerson. The embassy, located on 1601 Massachusetts Ave., NW, is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For more information, click [here](#). ▲

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