



Weekly Geopolitical Report

Policy, Security, and Strategic Affairs in the
Horn of Africa and Beyond

Coverage Period: Jan 12 – Jan 18

Publication Date: January 20, 2026

Issue No. 3 | 2026

For analytical and informational purposes only

Horn Review: Weekly Report

Jan 12 – Jan 18, 2026

1. Ethiopia

President Trump's January 16 letter revives the U.S.-centered mediation framework on GERD that had largely lost momentum, signaling Washington's renewed interest in shaping Nile politics. By foregrounding drought-time releases and U.S. monitoring, the proposal reintroduces external oversight into what Ethiopia has treated primarily as a technical and sovereign water-management issue. The move reflects how GERD remains entangled in broader geopolitical bargaining rather than purely hydrological cooperation.

The seizure of a significant ammunition cache in Amhara and Ethiopia's accusation against Eritrea marks a sharp deterioration in already fragile bilateral ties. The claim suggests that local insurgencies are being viewed through a regional security lens rather than solely as internal conflicts. This development deepens mistrust along a historically militarized frontier and raises the stakes of any future confrontation.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's visit to Djibouti on January 16 reinforced the strategic importance of Ethiopia's access to the Red Sea through the Djibouti corridor. Discussions focused on port operations, logistics, and regional security cooperation, emphasizing the interdependence between economic lifelines and security coordination amid a volatile regional environment. The visit also showcased Ethiopia's diplomatic initiative to stabilize a critical external connection that underpins trade and regional integration.

Unification of Amhara Fano Factions: The consolidation of multiple Fano groups into the Amhara Fano National Movement represents a significant organizational shift from fragmented militancy to centralized leadership. This unification enhances their command structure, political messaging, and operational coherence. It also complicates the federal government's security strategy by transforming localized unrest into a more structured challenge.

Ethiopia's observer participation in the BRICS+ "Will for Peace 2026" naval drills reflects a cautious but deliberate engagement with emerging multipolar security platforms. Although non-operational, the presence signals Addis Ababa's interest in maritime strategic conversations despite being landlocked. It also aligns with Ethiopia's broader effort to diversify its security partnerships beyond traditional Western frameworks.

Ethiopia–Japan Business Forum in Addis Ababa :The high-level Ethiopia–Japan forum showcased Addis Ababa's strategy of broadening its economic and security partnerships amid shifting global alignments. Discussions on infrastructure, investment, and cooperation signal Tokyo's cautious but growing engagement in the Horn. For Ethiopia,

the forum reflects an intentional move away from overreliance on a narrow set of external partners.

The suspension of several international NGOs in Welkait-Tegede-Setit Humera highlights the growing securitization of humanitarian space in contested territories. While justified on security grounds, the move risks limiting aid access to vulnerable populations. It also reflects the deep political sensitivity surrounding governance and territorial control in the zone.

President Isaias Afwerki's public criticism of Ethiopia on January 12 intensified an already tense bilateral atmosphere. The rhetoric reflects unresolved disputes over borders, security, and strategic access to the Red Sea. Such public exchanges increase the risk of miscalculation in an already volatile relationship.

FRUD-Afar fighters' obstruction of key roads linking Ethiopia to Djibouti exposed the vulnerability of Ethiopia's primary trade artery. The incident highlights how local insurgencies can have national economic consequences. Ethiopia's call for mediation suggests a preference for political management over military escalation.

The formation of the Somali People's Alliance for Self-Determination in Jigjiga introduces a new organized political actor advocating greater autonomy. The alliance adds complexity to Ethiopia's federal dynamics and center-periphery relations. It signals that political contestation in the Somali region is becoming more structured rather than purely security-driven.

2. Sudan

This week saw continued mass-casualty violence, renewed diplomatic activity, and escalating international concern over atrocities, as Sudan's war further entrenched civilian suffering.

On the military front, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) carried out a drone attack in southeastern Sudan that killed at least 27 people, according to local reporting, underscoring the expanding use of aerial capabilities beyond traditional frontlines. In Darfur, violence intensified sharply, with reports that RSF attacks killed more than 100 civilians and razed villages, reinforcing patterns of collective punishment, forced displacement, and scorched-earth tactics. Separate reporting indicated that RSF operations continue to target civilian populations rather than solely military objectives.

International accountability concerns escalated further. The International Criminal Court's deputy prosecutor stated that the RSF used mass graves to conceal war crimes, including killings of civilians, adding to mounting evidence of systematic atrocities. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights described conditions in Sudan as "horror and hell," warning that widespread abuses, including killings, sexual violence, and forced displacement, are occurring with near-total impunity.

Humanitarian indicators continued to deteriorate. UN agencies warned of worsening civilian protection risks, ongoing mass displacement, and severe shortages of food, health care, and shelter. Reporting highlighted that Sudanese civilians are enduring extreme conditions both inside the country and as refugees. In eastern Chad, Qatar Charity delivered humanitarian assistance to Sudanese refugees, reflecting continued regional burden-sharing as displacement spills across borders.

Diplomatically, Sudan featured prominently in regional and international maneuvering. Egypt and Sudan welcomed a U.S. offer to resume mediation over Ethiopia's Nile dam, signaling renewed engagement on a long-stalled dispute that intersects with Sudan's broader security and economic vulnerabilities. At the same time, external military dynamics remained in focus. Analysis and reporting examined whether Pakistan could expand its military footprint across the Arab world, including Sudan, amid evolving security partnerships and arms relationships involving Saudi Arabia.

Additional Sudan Tribune reporting this week highlighted continued clashes, displacement, and governance strain, reinforcing assessments that neither side is positioned for a decisive victory and that civilian costs continue to rise. UN reporting further stressed that violence, hunger, and rights abuses are mutually reinforcing, creating conditions of protracted humanitarian emergency with limited access for aid actors.

Assessment:

This week's developments reflect intensifying civilian targeting, deepening accountability concerns, and parallel diplomatic activity disconnected from battlefield realities. RSF mass-casualty attacks, allegations of mass graves, and UN warnings point to escalating atrocity risks, particularly in Darfur and peripheral regions. While renewed Nile mediation and external humanitarian support offer limited diplomatic and relief channels, they do little to offset the conflict's core trajectory, which remains defined by violence, impunity, and sustained civilian suffering.

3. Egypt

During the past week, Egypt's foreign and security policies took center stage amid escalating regional tensions, with a series of military, diplomatic, and economic moves underscoring Cairo's assertive role in Africa and the Middle East.

The period opened with Egyptian forces conducting airstrikes on a Rapid Support Forces convoy in Sudan, an action timed just days before Saddam Haftar's scheduled visit to Cairo, signaling Egypt's deepening involvement in Sudanese affairs to curb instability along its southern border and protect strategic interests in the ongoing civil conflict.

This military escalation flowed into broader diplomatic engagements, as President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi met with a senior adviser from the Trump administration in Cairo to

deliberate on the Sudan crisis, exploring avenues for U.S. support in stabilizing the region while advancing Egypt's red lines on territorial integrity and refugee flows.

Complementing these, Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty participated in the fifth peace coordination meeting, where he reiterated Egypt's unwavering positions on Sudan, emphasizing the need for unified international action to prevent further fragmentation and humanitarian deterioration that could spill over into neighboring states.

Shifting focus eastward, Egypt strengthened ties with Djibouti through reaffirmations of support for Somalia's unity, coupled with agreements to deepen bilateral cooperation, including a pact on developing a new container terminal that promises to enhance trade logistics and economic interconnectivity in the Horn of Africa.

These initiatives gained urgency following reports of Egypt bolstering its military presence in Somalia in response to Israel's recognition of Somaliland, a move perceived as threatening regional stability and prompting Cairo to counterbalance foreign influences in the strategically vital area.

Amid these developments, signs emerged of a forming military bloc involving Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Somalia, aimed at addressing shared security challenges and tensions in the Red Sea corridor, reflecting a collective strategy to safeguard maritime routes and deter adversarial encroachments.

On the domestic front, Egypt marked a milestone in infrastructure with the inauguration of its first semi-automated container terminal at Sokhna Port, a project set to boost operational efficiency, attract foreign investment, and solidify the country's position as a key logistics hub in global trade networks.

Internationally, Egypt's alliances expanded through commendations from its foreign minister on enhanced cooperation with NATO during a meeting with the alliance's envoy, highlighting mutual interests in counterterrorism and Mediterranean security.

In parallel, Cairo welcomed the U.S. designation of the Muslim Brotherhood as a global terrorist entity, along with its branches in Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan, viewing it as a validation of long-standing domestic policies to dismantle Islamist networks and foster internal stability.

This endorsement intertwined with heightened U.S. engagement in the region, culminating in President Trump's offer to mediate the longstanding Nile dam dispute between Egypt and Ethiopia, an initiative promptly embraced by President Sisi as a potential breakthrough to resolve water security concerns and avert downstream impacts on agriculture and energy.

Overall, these interwoven actions portrayed Egypt's multifaceted approach to navigating geopolitical complexities, from proactive military postures and alliance-building to

economic advancements and diplomatic leveraging, all aimed at reinforcing its influence while mitigating threats in a rapidly evolving landscape.

4. Eritrea

On Monday, January 12, President Isaias Afewerki appeared on state media to address several issues. Most notably, he discussed the Sudanese civil war, Middle Eastern geopolitics, and the ongoing tensions with Ethiopia.

On Sudan, Isaias continued his accusations against the UAE, stating that Abu Dhabi bears primary responsibility for the continuation of the conflict. In contrast, he spoke positively of Saudi Arabia, which he has previously encouraged to assume a “leadership role” in the region.

Regarding Ethiopia, rhetoric against the leadership in Addis Ababa has grown noticeably sharper. Isaias accused the federal government of being responsible for instability in several Ethiopian regions, going as far as to claim that it is conducting a “war” against “its people.” This language suggests that Asmara continues to maintain a hostile posture toward Addis Ababa, with prospects for a diplomatic resolution appearing increasingly remote.

On January 16, Ethiopia’s Federal Police Commission released a statement claiming it had seized ammunition allegedly sent by Eritrea to Fano forces. According to the statement, the operation was part of a broader effort involving Eritrea and “historical enemies”—a likely reference to Egypt. The release also claimed that the TPLF is serving as a “bridge” for these arms transfers. The weapons were reportedly destined for the North Shewa zone, where an active Fano insurgency is underway.

While Eritrea’s use of proxy forces inside Ethiopia remains unproven, the statement reflects Addis Ababa’s assessment of the situation and further heightens already elevated tensions between the two countries.

President Isaias opened his January 12 interview by addressing Eritrea’s relationship with the United States. His remarks, alongside previous statements, indicate that the Asmara regime is seeking improved ties with Washington. Referred to by PFDJ diplomats as a “reset,” this effort aims to encourage greater U.S. engagement with Eritrea.

However, a new travel ban issued by the U.S. State Department on January 14 included Eritrea on its list. Eritrea had already been subject to a comprehensive visa ban prior to this extension. Taken as an indicator, the ban suggests that Eritrea’s outreach to Washington has thus far yielded little progress, and the country remains a low priority in U.S. foreign policy.

On January 12, Ynet, an Israeli-based media outlet, published an article claiming that the Afar community is seeking Israeli support in relation to Eritrea. Citing an unnamed source, the report alleged that recent Afar opposition movements against the Eritrean

regime are attempting to attract Israeli backing amid concerns over Iranian expansion in the region.

The Afar, who inhabit a strategically significant area along the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, are reportedly seeking to leverage this geography to draw Israeli interest. Asmara is widely understood to maintain established relations with Iran, having previously served as a transit point for Iranian military shipments to the SAF, and has publicly criticized Israel's actions in Gaza.

Israel remains the first and only country to recognize Somaliland and is increasingly viewed as prioritizing the Horn of Africa, seeking alliances and a strategic foothold in the region.

On January 15, the European Union called for de-escalation between Ethiopia and Eritrea, urging dialogue and economic cooperation amid rising Red Sea tensions. Speaking in Addis Ababa, EEAS Deputy Secretary-General Olaf Skoog stated that the EU is willing to act as an "honest broker" and warned against renewed conflict. He reiterated the EU's neutrality on the GERD and reaffirmed support for Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, explicitly rejecting recognition of Somaliland.

On January 18, an op-ed published by *DW* examined the ongoing tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The article identified Assab and Ethiopia's quest for access to the sea as the central flashpoints in the current standoff and reviewed the broader dynamics shaping relations between the two countries.

5. Djibouti

Djibouti maintained a focus on economic stability and strategic diplomacy during the reporting period. Key developments included the conclusion of a constructive IMF assessment, the deepening of partnerships with Egypt and China, and the hosting of a regional climate forum. Unconfirmed security reports involving the opposition group FRUD-Armé circulated on social media but were not corroborated by official sources.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty met with his Djiboutian counterpart, Minister Abdoukader Houssein Omar in Cairo on 14 January. The discussions, held on the sidelines of talks concerning Sudan, covered bilateral cooperation in trade, energy, and infrastructure. A key point of convergence was the mutual reaffirmation of support for Somalia's unity and territorial integrity, reflecting a shared stance on regional stability in the Horn of Africa.

High-level engagement with Ethiopia continued as a priority. Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed visited Djibouti with a high-level delegation around 11-12 January with follow on analyses reported on 13 January. The talks focused on safeguarding Ethiopia's trade corridor through Djibouti's ports particularly Doraleh. Discussions emphasized the

importance of the Ethio-Djibouti Railway, port usage agreements and strategic cargo transport highlighting the interdependence between the two nations.

Unconfirmed reports regarding activity by the Afar opposition group FRUD (Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy) circulated prominently from 16 January onward. The armed wing, FRUD-Armé (FRUDA) issued a statement from Brussels on 16 January reaffirming its decades long support for Somaliland's independence and condemning President Guelleh's government for alleged domestic repression and regional interference.

Subsequent claims on social media and regional outlets around 18-19 January alleged clashes between FRUD elements and government forces in northern areas such as Garabtiisa in the Tadjourah region. These reports which remain unverified by official sources included claims of military casualties, the capture of outposts and related communal tensions in Djibouti City. The government has not commented on these allegations. The reports also mentioned the revocation of passports for an estimated 1,400 Djiboutian-Somaliland dual nationals, a move interpreted by critics as political intimidation ahead of elections.

A green industrialization investment was announced on 19 January. Minister Dawaleh revealed that a consortium of five Chinese companies, led by Sinochem plans to invest over USD 1 billion in Djibouti by the end of 2026-2027. The project focuses on renewable energy, salt industry development and enhancing local value addition and job creation, aligning with President Guelleh's Vision 2035 for economic diversification.

6. South Sudan

This week, South Sudan experienced escalating political and security volatility, rising international alarm, and deepening humanitarian access constraints, as fighting in Jonglei and governance fractures intensified pressure on the fragile peace process.

On the security front, opposition forces reported battlefield gains in Jonglei State, prompting calls for a march on Juba and heightening fears of renewed large-scale confrontation. Fighting in Jonglei triggered a series of political and security responses, with President Salva Kiir dismissing senior security officials and ministers following rebel advances. Opposition figures interpreted the shake-up as a sign of confusion and desperation within the government, while authorities sought to project control. Separately, an army general who had been rumored dead appeared publicly, underscoring the atmosphere of misinformation and uncertainty surrounding battlefield developments.

The deteriorating security situation prompted renewed international concern. A UN rights body warned of a potential catastrophic escalation as rebels advanced, citing risks of mass civilian harm. The UN Security Council scheduled closed consultations on South Sudan, reflecting growing alarm over the trajectory of violence and the potential collapse of political arrangements. In parallel, the African Union's C5 mechanism proposed a retreat

in South Africa for South Sudanese leaders, aimed at de-escalation and political dialogue, while Human Rights Watch called for decisive African Union action to address accountability gaps and prevent further abuses.

Humanitarian conditions worsened amid continued fighting. UN reporting indicated that while overall conflict-related deaths declined, abductions increased, highlighting shifting patterns of violence affecting civilians. Access constraints deepened across multiple regions, with humanitarian access maps showing significant restrictions due to insecurity and bureaucratic impediments. A flash update from Jonglei State detailed the immediate civilian impact of hostilities, including displacement and disrupted aid delivery. Church leaders from Sudan and South Sudan jointly urged sustained global attention to the mounting humanitarian crises in both countries.

Economic and institutional pressures compounded instability. South Sudan's cash shortages intensified, with reports warning that financial stress is affecting both the public sector and private institutions, including banking operations. These constraints continue to undermine service delivery and exacerbate public frustration amid insecurity.

External and regional dimensions also featured prominently. China's military reporting highlighted continued engagement through UN peacekeeping-related cooperation, reinforcing the international security presence amid growing instability. Separately, South Sudan continued efforts to secure strategic assets linked to regional spillovers, including earlier deployments aimed at protecting critical oil infrastructure affected by neighboring conflicts.

Assessment:

This week's developments point to heightened risk of political and security rupture in South Sudan. Rebel advances in Jonglei, opposition mobilization rhetoric, and leadership shake-ups underscore the fragility of command and control. At the same time, rising international concern, including UN Security Council engagement and AU mediation efforts, reflects fears of rapid escalation. With humanitarian access shrinking, abductions rising, and economic pressures mounting, South Sudan's stability outlook remains increasingly precarious absent urgent political de-escalation and civilian protection measures.

7. Somalia and Somaliland

Somalia

The FGS Cabinet following a ministerial review announced the immediate annulment of all bilateral agreements with the UAE. This decision encompassed high profile commercial contracts for port operations in Berbera (Somaliland), Bosaso (Puntland), and Kismayo (Jubbaland) as well as all formal security and defense cooperation pacts. The official rationale cited reports and evidence that the UAE had engaged in activities undermining Somalia's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence.

On 13 January President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud addressed the nation providing political context for the cabinet's decision. He stated his administration had terminated all agreements with the United Arab Emirates after concluding they posed a threat to the country's nationhood and sovereignty. He contrasted Somalia's "good faith" engagement with an alleged UAE failure to treat Somalia as "a single independent government framing the rupture as a necessary defense of national unity.

The State Minister for Foreign Affairs elaborated on the government's position in a published opinion piece on 14 January. He characterized the decision not as a sudden shift but as the culmination of years of perceived UAE interference accusing Abu Dhabi of fostering political and economic fragmentation by strengthening parallel relations with Somalia's Federal Member States, thereby weakening the central government's authority.

In the immediate practical aftermath of the agreement annulments, a logistical arrangement was required for the UAE to repatriate its personnel and assets. Initial FGS resistance to the involvement of Ethiopian aircraft was overcome through Ethiopian mediation. On 15 January a final agreement authorized four Ethiopian government planes to conduct the evacuation from Terminal 23 at Aden Adde International Airport with two aircraft dedicated to personnel and two to equipment all exempt from Somali inspection. This outcome allowed for a face saving orderly withdrawal for both parties, temporarily de-escalating the crisis on the ground in Mogadishu.

In a televised interview on 11 January, Defence Minister Ahmed Moalim Fiqi explicitly called for foreign military intervention against Somaliland. He urged Saudi Arabia to replicate its Yemen campaign against the Southern Transitional Council to dismantle the Somaliland administration led by President Abdirahman Irro. This statement represented a significant escalation in the FGS's public rhetoric seeking to externalize and internationalize the conflict with Hargeisa.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's visit to Las Anod from 16 to 18 January marked a significant federal political engagement in northern Somalia. As the first visit by a sitting Somali head of state to the city in several decades the trip was widely noted for its

symbolic weight occurring in a region that has experienced sustained territorial contestation between local SSC-Khatumo forces and Somaliland's military.

The central official purpose of the visit was to preside over the inauguration of Abdulqadir Ahmed Aw-Ali as president of the newly established Northeastern Regional State, a federal member entity encompassing the Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn regions. During his stay, the President engaged with local traditional elders, participated in ceremonial activities including the display of the Somali national flag, and publicly affirmed the federal government's commitment to supporting security and development initiatives in the area. The visit was interpreted by observers as a deliberate demonstration of federal presence and authority in a strategically important locality.

Bloomberg and regional media reported on 16 January that the FGS was in advanced discussions with Saudi Arabia and Egypt to form a new trilateral security coalition. This initiative reportedly in response to the UAE rift focuses on Red Sea security and would represent a strategic realignment of Somali foreign policy towards Riyadh and Cairo, potentially as a counterbalance to perceived Emirati and Turkish influence in the Horn.

On 18 January Al-Shabaab militants launched a dawn assault on four Somali National Army bases in the Jabad-Godane area of Middle Shabelle, near the coastal town of Warsheikh. The terrorist group claimed via its propaganda channels to have overrun positions destroyed several military vehicles including technicals mounted with anti-aircraft guns, and seized weapons. The Somali Ministry of Defense issued a counter-statement, asserting that SNA forces including U.S. and Turkish trained units successfully repelled all attacks retained full control of their bases and were conducting follow up operations.

U.S. Africa Command publicized a series of precision airstrikes conducted in close coordination with the FGS. Strikes on 12 January targeted Al-Shabaab elements near Godane ~60 km NE of Mogadishu, while a follow-up strike on 14 January hit targets in Lower Shabelle ~55 km SW of the capital. These actions are part of a sustained partnered campaign to degrade the group's leadership and tactical capabilities.

In one of the larger ground operations of the period, the SNA and troops from the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) conducted a coordinated offensive against a major Al-Shabaab base near Bulunagaad in Lower Shabelle. The operation, supported by international air assets, resulted in over 30 militants killed and the destruction of the base, demonstrating continued, if challenging, momentum in clearing key areas.

The regional governments of Puntland and Jubbaland issued coordinated rejections of the FGS's UAE agreement annulment on 13 January. Both administrations declared the decision null and void within their territories arguing that the commercial and security pacts they signed with Abu Dhabi notably the Bosaso and Kismayo port deals were legal

agreements of their sovereign regional governments beyond the FGS's unilateral authority to cancel.

Puntland's security forces held a public display in Garowe on 18 January parading approximately 50 captured foreign fighters affiliated with the Islamic State in Somalia (ISS). The prisoners captured during Operation Black Lion in the Calmiskaat mountains of Bari region, included nationals from various regions highlighting the transnational nature of the ISIS threat in the Horn and Puntland's role in combating it independently.

On 13 January The U.S. Department of Homeland Security formally announced the termination of Temporary Protected Status for Somalia effective 17 March 2026. The decision, citing improved security and political conditions in Somalia places an estimated 2,000-3,000 Somali nationals in the United States at risk of deportation, prompting significant concern from migrant advocacy groups about returning individuals to an still-volatile environment.

Somaliland

The Government of Somaliland responded to Mogadishu's announcement with a statement from its Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It declared the FGS's action to be legally invalid and politically irrelevant to Somaliland. The statement emphasized that the Berbera Port Corridor development agreement, the Berbera military base pact, and other economic partnerships with the UAE were legally concluded instruments of a sovereign government for the benefit of its people. It reaffirmed that these agreements remain lawful, valid, and fully binding, asserting Hargeisa's exclusive right to manage its international relations.

Somaliland's government issued a formal diplomatic condemnation of Somali Defence Minister Fiqi's call for a Saudi-led military invasion on 12 January. The statement characterized the remarks as a serious and irresponsible escalation and a clear violation of the United Nations Charter and fundamental principles of international law. It served as a direct appeal to the international community to censure what Hargeisa views as belligerent and destabilizing language from a member state.

Authorities in Hargeisa announced the implementation of security measures across the territory on 12 January. This heightened alert status was attributed to "escalating threats" from a confluence of actors, the FGS, Al-Shabaab, and Yemen's Houthis due to Somaliland's partnership with the UAE and Saudi-led coalition. The context for this alert is directly linked to the strategic gain of Israel's formal recognition in December 2025, an achievement that Somaliland celebrates but which it anticipates will provoke hostile reactions from its adversaries.

8. Yemen

The Previous week, the war in Yemen had undergone an enormous shift. A swift Saudi Backed offensive by the PLC had been able to retake most of the territory previously held by the STC. Following that the STC's leader, Aidarous al-Zubaidi fled the country, reportedly the United Arab Emirates. Following that, on January 9th, declaration of the STC's disbandment was made in Riyadh by some of its leadership, this statement was later disputed by some of the STC's leadership.

The STC leader, Aidarous al-Zubaidi, has issued a statement saying that he is “committed to establishing a Southern Yemeni state”

The STC however has now lost all its seats in the Presidential Council, the last remaining one being replaced on January 15th.

However, as things stand, the PLC maintains it has full control of Southern Yemen.

The PLC, in momentum of its victory over the STC, is reportedly eyeing the Houthi controlled north. On January 10, it had announced the creation of a Supreme Military Committee (SMC), which plans to integrate all “anti-Houthi” forces in the country. And the president has issued a statement calling for the need of a monopoly on violence, leading many to speculate that a campaign against the Houthis maybe in the works.

Following the military success, the PLC president Al-Alimi met with Saudi Crown Prince bin Selman and Saudi's defence minister. Saudi Arabia appears to be deepening its support for the PLC, with a reported developmental assistance and investments being provided for the government.

The Houthi's in the north issued a statement saying that they will target possible Israeli presence in Somaliland. The leader, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi said Friday that his group is “serious” about targeting any Israeli military presence in Somaliland. This follows Israel's recent recognition of Somaliland, which was likely motivated partially by the need to confront the Houthi's more approximately.

9. The Gulf Countries

Saudi Arabia

Following the PLC's victory in Southern Yemen—widely viewed as a proxy win for Riyadh—Saudi Arabia has moved to institutionalize its influence. On January 15, Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan held high-level calls with Qatar, Oman, and France, focusing on ensuring that the newly formed Supreme Military Committee (SMC) in Yemen has sufficient diplomatic backing to deter a Houthi counter-offensive.

Simultaneously, on January 11, the Saudi Capital Market Authority announced it would fully open its equity markets to all non-resident foreign investors by February 1. The

move signals Riyadh's intention to convert military and security gains into economic credibility, projecting itself as a stable, "open-for-business" regional anchor.

Tensions with the UAE remain high. Following Abu Dhabi's complete withdrawal from Yemen on January 9, Saudi Arabia has reportedly pressured UAE-aligned figures within the PLC to align with the "Unity" agenda or risk political exclusion, underscoring Riyadh's determination to consolidate control over Yemen's post-war power architecture.

UAE

Following what many analysts describe as a seismic shift in Yemen, the UAE has pivoted from direct military engagement toward a maritime-focused and diplomatically defensive posture. After withdrawing from Socotra and Perim, Abu Dhabi spent the week of January 11–18 reassessing and reinforcing its interests across the Horn of Africa.

In response to Houthi threats against what they describe as Israeli-linked presence in Somaliland, the UAE is reportedly strengthening logistical and infrastructural support for the Port of Berbera. Analysts suggest this reflects a broader recalibration, with Abu Dhabi shifting its arc of influence away from Yemen's mainland toward a maritime "string of pearls" across the Bab el-Mandeb to safeguard trade routes and strategic chokepoints.

Qatar

Qatar is positioning itself as the technological and diplomatic neutral ground of the Gulf, carefully avoiding entanglement in Saudi-UAE frictions. On January 13, Doha and Washington signed the "Pax Silica" Declaration, a landmark agreement centered on advanced technology and AI cooperation that cements Qatar's role as a primary US technology hub distinct from the militarized security arrangements of its neighbors.

On January 14, Qatar announced the launch of the second phase of the Gaza ceasefire agreement. Doha is leading coordination on humanitarian assistance and reconstruction, leveraging its established mediation role to sustain diplomatic relevance as the southern Red Sea becomes increasingly securitized and contested.

Bahrain

Bahrain experienced a notable diplomatic week as it moved closer to the US–Saudi security umbrella. On January 14, Manama marked its "Diplomatic Day" by preparing for its 2026–2027 term as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, a step that elevates its international profile beyond Gulf-centric diplomacy.

On January 17, Bahrain received an official invitation from the United States to join the newly established "Board of Peace" for Gaza. The move is widely seen as an effort to diversify Bahrain's foreign policy credentials while remaining firmly aligned with Saudi Arabia's broader regional security objectives.

Kuwait

Kuwait continues to act as a quiet observer, prioritizing internal stability amid regional turbulence. Between January 11 and 18, the government intensified work on subsidy reforms, signaling renewed emphasis on fiscal discipline and domestic resilience.

Unlike Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, Kuwait has maintained a cautious silence on the PLC's assertion of a monopoly on violence in Yemen. While remaining a key financial contributor to humanitarian efforts, Kuwait has deliberately avoided joining the Supreme Military Committee, preserving its traditional role as a potential mediator between GCC states and Iran-aligned actors.

10. Africa and The Sahel Region

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

In eastern DRC, the Congolese army's return to the key town of Uvira after M23 rebels' withdrawal marks a tactical shift amid ongoing clashes, as reported by Reuters, even as peace efforts persist through US, Qatari, African Union, and Togolese mediation channels building on last year's Doha framework agreement.

Diplomatic tensions simmer with the DRC's recall of envoys from Rwanda and regional Great Lakes coordination pushing for dialogue, per Anadolu Ajansı and Critical Threats, while analysts critique MONUSCO's limited mandate for failing civilian protection and political space amid rampant humanitarian violence and displacement, and Chatham House underscoring the long-running peace process's fragile path forward.

Mali

Mali's protracted jihadist insurgency, led by groups like JNIM, continues to disrupt logistics, fuel supplies, and civilian life across central and southern regions, compounding economic erosion and undermining the junta's military legitimacy amid widespread insecurity. Reciprocal visa bans with the United States escalate diplomatic friction over security disputes, while tensions with neighboring Algeria highlight political and military rifts that isolate the regime further within Sahel dynamics. Though no major diplomatic breakthroughs emerge, ongoing regional bloc discussions probe joint security frameworks, yet Mali's deteriorating stability signals deepening international pressures without immediate resolution.

Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea has officially relocated its capital from Malabo on Bioko Island to Ciudad de la Paz in Djibloho Province on the mainland, a presidential decree affirmed by President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo for strategic security reasons, including protection from external maritime threats and past attacks. The move enhances administrative accessibility, national unity, and territorial balance by alleviating urban

pressures on Malabo and Bata while fostering modern infrastructure in a more defensible continental location. This development aligns with recent diplomatic gains, such as the ICJ's 2025 ruling favoring Equatorial Guinea in its territorial dispute with Gabon over oil-rich Gulf of Guinea islands, bolstering its regional leverage.

Burkina Faso

During the past week, Burkina Faso's junta maintained a firm stance on security amid lingering regional tensions, highlighted by a collaborative move with Mali to impose a travel ban on U.S. citizens as retaliation for similar restrictions, escalating diplomatic frictions with Western powers while underscoring alliances within the Alliance of Sahel States.

Efforts to bolster military capabilities continued as the regime pursued acquisitions of aircraft and helicopters from the United Arab Emirates, dispatching intelligence operatives to Dubai for negotiations involving Turkish, Brazilian, and UAE-based suppliers to enhance operations against jihadist insurgents in the Sahel.

International relations saw reinforcement through Egypt's reaffirmed commitment to Burkina Faso's anti-terrorism and development initiatives, following a high-level phone discussion that emphasized expanded trade, investments in key sectors, and ongoing training programs, signaling broader African solidarity.

Domestic stability measures included the approval of a new direct air route on January 19, aimed at improving connectivity, while the government navigated post-coup challenges with investigations into high-profile incidents and gestures like prisoner clemency to project control.

Chad

Chad grapples with mounting internal security tensions within its apparatus, raising alarms among Western embassies and underscoring the fragility of stability amid accusations of government crackdowns on opposition voices. This domestic strain coincides with remarkable diplomatic recognition, as the nation receives the African Peace Prize for its pivotal role in managing the Sudan refugee crisis, hosting surging arrivals that stretch humanitarian resources along the eastern frontier vulnerable to spillover from the RSF conflict. Bolstering its regional posture, Chad opens an embassy in Benin to expand diplomatic ties, while its strategic Sahel position sustains involvement in Central African and broader security dialogues, even as cross-border threats and political pressures demand vigilant coordination without fresh peace accords to anchor progress.

11. North Africa

Morocco

Morocco's diplomatic landscape highlighted a surge in international support and strategic planning, centering on bolstering its position in global forums while advancing resolutions to longstanding territorial disputes.

A key moment unfolded midweek when Suriname reaffirmed its unwavering backing for Morocco's sovereignty over the Western Sahara, formalized through a joint communiqué issued after high-level talks in Rabat between Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita and his Surinamese counterpart, Melvin Bouva. This declaration, dated January 15, emphasized Suriname's endorsement of Morocco's autonomy plan as the sole credible framework for a political settlement under UN auspices, aligning with the momentum from the UN Security Council Resolution 2797 adopted in late October 2025.

Building on this, the communiqué praised the growing global consensus driven by King Mohammed VI's initiatives, including Suriname's prior establishment of an embassy in Rabat and a consulate in Dakhla, which underscored deepening bilateral ties and encouraged further cooperation through a new memorandum of understanding between Morocco's Dakhla region and Suriname's Commewijne district to enhance economic, cultural, and institutional exchanges.

Concurrently, Morocco intensified its broader foreign policy agenda by projecting an ambitious slate of international accords for the year, anticipating the signing of 645 agreements and treaties—a notable increase from the previous year's 630—to strengthen political, economic, and cultural partnerships, particularly across Africa and the Arab world. This escalation directly supported Morocco's campaign for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2028-2029 term, positioning the kingdom as a reliable actor on issues like migration, counterterrorism, and climate security while decentralizing diplomatic efforts to empower regional authorities in trade and investment.

These developments collectively illustrated Morocco's proactive stance in weaving regional alliances with global ambitions, leveraging endorsements on sensitive issues like the Western Sahara to build leverage ahead of pivotal UN engagements and foster sustainable international collaboration.

Algeria

Algeria's foreign policy and regional influence came under scrutiny amid heightened tensions in the Western Sahara, where its support for the Polisario Front manifested in a deliberate escalation of military activities aimed at challenging U.S. interests and Morocco's territorial claims.

The buildup traced back to early January, with U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary Bryan J. Ellis's visit to Morocco from January 11 to 13 reinforcing bilateral military ties and affirming American backing for Rabat's sovereignty over the Sahara, a stance that directly conflicted with Algeria's position.

This diplomatic reinforcement prompted an immediate response from the Polisario's Sahrawi People's Liberation Army, which, under Algerian political and logistical patronage, launched targeted strikes on January 12 against Moroccan military installations in the Mahbès sector, including a command post in Rouss Lahtiba, a tactical group in Oum Lagta, and a logistics base in Guelta, inflicting reported significant losses on Moroccan forces.

These actions, orchestrated during the U.S. official's presence in the region, underscored Algeria's strategy under President Abdelmadjid Tebboune and General Saïd Chengriha to use the Polisario as a proxy in undermining U.S.-Moroccan relations, mirroring tactics seen in other conflict zones and amplifying concerns over Algiers' role in destabilizing the Maghreb.

Compounding this, Algeria's growing alignment with Iran and its vocal opposition to Israel further positioned it as a counterforce to Western alliances, drawing implicit criticism from Washington and heightening the stakes for broader Sahel security.

Overall, these developments highlighted Algeria's assertive maneuvering in a polarized geopolitical environment, blending military provocation with diplomatic defiance to assert its influence while navigating the implications of a resurgent U.S. engagement in North Africa.

Libya

During the past week, Libya's diplomatic and security landscape emphasized enhanced border cooperation with neighboring states amid persistent calls for peaceful resolutions to its internal divisions, reflecting a strategic push toward regional stability in a post-conflict environment.

A central achievement materialized on January 15, as Chad announced the forthcoming establishment of a joint unit with Libya to oversee their shared border, stemming from a high-level meeting in N'Djamena that brought together Chad's Minister of Public Security and Immigration, Lieutenant General Ali Ahmad Aghabash, Libya's ambassador Othman Fadel, and the acting Head of Chad's Chief of Staff.

The session delved into the prevailing security conditions, pinpointing vulnerabilities from cross-border criminal activities, smuggling operations, and unregulated migration flows, which culminated in a consensus to form a dedicated monitoring and consultation mechanism designed to amplify joint oversight and collaborative responses.

In the dialogue, Aghabash lauded Libya's forward-thinking stance and the synergistic partnership between N'Djamena and Tripoli as vital for upholding tranquility across the region, while Fadel echoed this sentiment by affirming Libya's resolve to fortify mutual relations, positioning robust security measures as the cornerstone for sustainable progress and economic vitality.

This engagement represented a milestone as the inaugural such gathering since the amicable closure of a bilateral detention dispute earlier in January, which had seen the liberation of nine Libyan merchants seized in northern Chad on December 30, 2025, thereby paving the way for renewed trust and operational alignment.

Echoing broader international advocacy, sentiments from Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El Sisi's earlier interaction on January 10 with EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas lingered into the week, where he underscored the imperative of non-violent pathways to navigate Libya's protracted crisis, prioritizing the safeguarding of national cohesion and resource integrity to avert escalatory risks with far-reaching consequences.

Although predating the period slightly, this position reinforced ongoing global initiatives aimed at de-escalation and unity, with both sides advocating for concerted efforts to foster enduring peace without notable advancements reported within the seven days.

Collectively, these interconnected strides illustrated Libya's deliberate navigation of geopolitical intricacies, harmonizing immediate border safeguards with diplomatic overtures to mitigate entrenched instabilities and cultivate a conducive atmosphere for reconstruction and cross-regional harmony.

12. Middle East

Israel

During the week, Israel's diplomatic landscape shifted amid escalating tensions with international organizations and ongoing regional negotiations, reflecting a broader realignment in Middle Eastern geopolitics under renewed U.S. influence.

As the United States withdrew from 66 global bodies, Israel followed suit by announcing its intention to exit seven UN agencies, a move that intensified scrutiny on its policies and prompted a comprehensive review of ties with other international entities.

This decision built on earlier actions where Israel severed relations with several UN bodies, signaling a deepening rift driven by criticisms over its handling of humanitarian affairs in conflict zones. The fallout extended to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), with the UN Secretary-General issuing a stern warning that Israel's legislative measures against the agency could lead to a referral to the International Court of Justice, heightening concerns about legal repercussions and further isolating Israel on the global stage.

Amid these strains, efforts toward stability in Gaza gained momentum through U.S.-brokered initiatives, as Envoy Witkoff declared the commencement of the second phase of a ceasefire plan, aiming to consolidate fragile gains from initial agreements and pave the way for sustained de-escalation.

This progress aligned with discussions between Turkish and Saudi foreign ministers on advancing the same phase of the Gaza peace framework, underscoring a collaborative regional push to address humanitarian needs and rebuild infrastructure in the besieged area.

Complementing these diplomatic strides, former U.S. President Trump expressed backing for a newly established Palestinian Technocratic Government in Gaza, despite the ongoing Israeli siege, which suggested a potential shift in external support structures to foster governance amid persistent challenges.

Parallel to these developments, Israel's strategic consultations with the U.S. highlighted cautious approaches to broader threats, with reports indicating that Prime Minister Netanyahu urged Trump to delay any strikes on Iran, advocating for increased pressure on the regime before escalation.

This advice echoed similar sentiments from Israeli sources suggesting a timed strategy to amplify internal unrest in Iran prior to military action, illustrating Israel's preference for coordinated, measured responses to regional adversaries while navigating its evolving international position.

Turkey

During the week, Turkey's foreign policy centered on intensifying diplomatic efforts across the Middle East and Africa, with Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan playing a pivotal role in addressing ongoing regional crises while advancing bilateral partnerships.

The period began with coordinated discussions on the Gaza ceasefire, as Fidan held a phone call with his Egyptian counterpart, Badr Abdelatty, to align positions on the escalating situation in the Gaza Strip, emphasizing the need for regional and international collaboration to solidify the truce and progress to the second phase of the US-backed peace plan, which includes forming a temporary Palestinian technocratic committee to manage daily affairs alongside an international stabilization force under UN Security Council Resolution 2803.

This conversation seamlessly extended to broader concerns, including the crisis in Sudan and tensions in Somalia, where both nations firmly rejected Israel's recognition of Somaliland, underscoring a shared commitment to stability in the Horn of Africa amid fears of external interference exacerbating local conflicts.

Building on this momentum, Fidan engaged in a separate dialogue with Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, focusing on the intricacies of Gaza's phase two

implementation while reviewing avenues to strengthen ties between Ankara and Riyadh, reflecting Turkey's strategic positioning as a mediator in the evolving peace framework.

These exchanges culminated in Turkey joining Egypt and Qatar in endorsing the newly established Palestinian National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, a technocratic body led by Dr. Ali Abdel Hamid Shaath that convened its inaugural session in Cairo, tasked with overseeing civil affairs, internal security, and reconstruction efforts as part of the broader transition toward Palestinian self-rule, with Ankara's involvement highlighting its influence in bridging diverse stakeholders despite underlying sensitivities in regional alliances.

Concurrently, Turkey signaled a firm stance on Syrian developments, with Fidan indicating that Damascus might resort to military action against the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces amid clashes in Aleppo, framing it as a potential pathway to resolution if dialogue fails, while expressing hope for peaceful integration of Kurdish-led groups into Syria's national structure to counter lingering threats from remnants of ISIS and prevent further fragmentation.

Shifting to bilateral advancements, Turkey formalized enhanced cooperation with Somalia through the signing of a joint labor commission protocol and a 2026-2027 action plan in Ankara, spearheaded by Labor Minister Vedat Isikhan and his Somali counterpart Salim Alio Ibro, which outlines sustainable initiatives in labor inspections, occupational health and safety, migration management, and vocational training to foster mutual economic growth and expert exchanges.

The week's activities peaked with Fidan's visit to the United Arab Emirates, where he met President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan to deepen relations and tackle shared global challenges, an engagement that coincidentally overlapped with Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar's presence in Abu Dhabi, igniting speculation about discreet channels for dialogue amid persistent Middle East tensions, though no official confirmation emerged.

Overall, these interconnected moves illustrated Turkey's proactive diplomacy in navigating complex geopolitical landscapes, balancing crisis response with long-term collaborative frameworks to promote regional harmony and its own strategic interests.

Iran

Iran faced the tail end of massive anti-regime protests triggered by economic collapse and currency devaluation, which had drawn crowds across all provinces chanting against both theocracy and monarchy before fading under heavy suppression. The regime's response escalated into a brutal crackdown, with security forces using live fire and raiding hospitals to target the wounded, leading to widespread reports of deaths and injuries among protesters, alongside arrests and claims of sexual assaults on detainees, including minors.

Authorities imposed a near-total internet blackout to stifle communication, though Starlink provided limited leaks of protest footage, and while some phone restrictions eased for international calls, online curbs persisted, allowing hackers to breach state media and broadcast dissent. By week's end, the government regained control in major cities, but underlying tensions lingered amid leaked internal divisions over the violence's justification.

Internationally, the UN human rights chief condemned the repression, urging a halt to attacks on peaceful demonstrators, as Germany and Switzerland protested diplomatically, and the EU prepared tougher sanctions with calls to expel Iranian envoys. The U.S. kept communication channels open despite threats of military action, with Iran's foreign minister seeking de-escalation and expressing readiness for nuclear talks, while Oman mediated between Tehran and Washington, and regional powers like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, and Turkey pursued diplomacy toward the U.S., with Turkey's president hoping for peaceful resolution. Russia denounced foreign meddling, aligning with Iran's accusations of U.S. and Israeli instigation to exploit post-war economic woes.

Security-wise, the IRGC threatened further deployments, Hezbollah voiced regime support, the U.S. bolstered military readiness without immediate strikes, Israel stayed alert but viewed the unrest as internal, and Argentina labeled the IRGC a terrorist group, amplifying global pressure as regime fractures hinted at potential ongoing instability.

Syria

During the week of January 13 to 20, 2026, Syria's security landscape evolved through a blend of heightened military preparations and diplomatic overtures, as regional powers like Turkey and the United States sought to influence the trajectory of post-conflict stabilization amid lingering threats from groups such as the SDF and ISIS remnants.

The period saw intensified Turkish engagement, beginning with Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan hosting U.S. Ambassador to Türkiye Tom Barrack, who doubles as the special envoy for Syria, in a closed-door meeting in Ankara on January 13 that underscored ongoing bilateral coordination on Syrian affairs without disclosing specific outcomes.

This interaction paved the way for broader Turkish pronouncements on Syria's future, as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan emphasized during a party meeting that the expulsion of SDF forces from Aleppo city marked a crucial advancement toward enduring peace, framing it as a historic chance to enact prior agreements and facilitate the repatriation of up to three million Syrian refugees to a designated safe zone in northern Syria.

Complementing these statements, Turkey's Defense Ministry on January 15 reaffirmed its solidarity with Damascus, declaring Syria's security as intrinsically linked to its own and pledging assistance in combating terrorist entities under the banner of a unified Syrian state, provided such support was solicited, thereby signaling Ankara's commitment to

Syria's territorial integrity while positioning itself as a key ally in regional counterterrorism efforts.

On the ground, Syrian forces responded to perceived threats by elevating their alert status in eastern Aleppo following drone-detected SDF reinforcements, including armed groups and heavy weaponry, arriving at the Deir Hafer front on January 11, with reinforcements deployed to counter potential escalations amid uncertainties over the SDF's intentions.

This vigilance culminated in the Syrian army's establishment of a humanitarian corridor on January 15 in the Deir Hafer and Maskana areas, operational from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., to enable civilian evacuations ahead of anticipated military operations against SDF positions, highlighting Damascus's strategy to minimize civilian harm while addressing security challenges in Aleppo province.

Internationally, U.S. forces-maintained pressure on extremist elements through expansive airstrikes on January 10 targeting over 35 ISIS sites across Syria, deploying more than 90 precision munitions from a fleet exceeding 20 aircraft, including joint operations with Jordanian F-16s, as part of Operation Hawkeye in response to a prior deadly ambush, reinforcing Washington's resolve to eradicate terrorist threats and safeguard allied personnel.

Meanwhile, economic dimensions gained traction as Egyptian investors and business figures expressed eagerness to bolster Syria's recovery by expanding trade and joint ventures, a sentiment voiced in recent discussions that aligned with broader regional aspirations for reconstruction and mutual prosperity.

Collectively, these developments portrayed Syria at a crossroads, where military prudence intertwined with diplomatic maneuvering to foster stability, drawing in influential neighbors and global actors to navigate the complexities of reconciliation and threat mitigation in a fragile post-war context.

13. Europe

The EU is preparing retaliatory options, including up to €93 billion in tariffs (reactivating suspended measures from a prior U.S.-EU deal) and invoking the Anti-Coercion Instrument against geopolitical blackmail, in response to Trump's threatened 10% tariffs (escalating to 25% by June) on several EU countries, the UK, and Norway over their opposition to his Greenland plans. EU ambassadors met on January 18 to discuss; no final action yet.

EU leaders will convene an in-person emergency summit on Thursday, January 22, announced by European Council President António Costa after January 18 ambassadors' talks, to coordinate a response to Trump's threats to seize Greenland and impose tariffs on opposing countries.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen declared Europe "will not be blackmailed" by Trump's tariff threats over Greenland, stressing no desire for conflict and welcoming strong allied support (from UK, France, Germany, etc.) through dialogue. Eight nations (Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, UK) united in solidarity during a Danish exercise in Greenland.

French President Emmanuel Macron will push the EU to activate its "trade bazooka" — the Anti-Coercion Instrument (allowing punitive measures like investment restrictions and IP curbs) — against Trump's unacceptable tariff threats tied to Greenland. He calls for a united, coordinated European response to defend sovereignty amid transatlantic strains.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei blamed U.S. President Donald Trump for protest deaths, casualties, damages, and slander against Iran. Protests (sparked by economic woes in late December) escalated to calls for Khamenei's ouster; thousands killed (official ~5,000, estimates 3,308+), 24,000+ arrested, internet blackout; regime vows to crush "seditionists" without war.

On January 17 in Asunción, the EU and Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay) signed a 25-year-negotiated free-trade deal covering 700+ million people, phasing out 90%+ tariffs on EU exports while granting Mercosur agricultural access under quotas. Controversial (opposed by France, Poland, others; €45B EU farmer aid pledged); seen as strategic win for rules-based trade amid U.S./China uncertainties.

Denmark's top Arctic commander, Major General Søren Andersen, rejected immediate threats from Russia or China to Greenland ("We don't see a threat... today"), calling increased Danish/allied exercises precautionary for future risks (e.g., post-Ukraine Russian redirection). Contrasts with Trump's claims; stresses NATO unity and preparation.

EU debates allowing future members (e.g., Western Balkans) to join without full voting rights initially to avoid vetoes (unlike Croatia's 2013 full rights). Albania's PM Edi Rama supports temporary limits (no commissioner); Ukraine insists on full rights; proposals expected February/March 2026 amid enlargement pressures.

UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper rejected re-engaging Putin diplomatically until Moscow shows genuine peace interest in Ukraine, differing from France/Italy suggestions for talks. UK prioritizes sanctions, military aid to Ukraine, and diplomacy with Kyiv/U.S./Europe; amid EU fears of U.S.-led sidelining.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen emphasized the Arctic's huge importance to EU security, with doubled investments/support for Greenland and plans to double financial aid in the next budget. Arctic security is core for both NATO and EU; EU will work with allies (including U.S.) amid Greenland tensions.

France will deploy land, naval, and air military assets to Greenland in coming days (building on initial soldiers), joining a Danish-led exercise with Germany, Sweden, Norway. Macron frames it as defending sovereignty without escalation, criticizing "new colonialism" in reference to Trump threats.

Russia expelled British chargé d'affaires Danae Dholakia (giving two weeks to leave), accusing undeclared espionage and promising mirror responses. UK called accusations baseless/malicious; diplomat left amid anti-UK chants.

Yvette Cooper plans a standalone China visit to boost economic/diplomatic ties, stressing frank dialogue on complex relations (trade partner but security risks like espionage, repression, minerals). Rejects binary engagement/exclusion; notes security concerns seriously.

UK evacuated its ambassador and entire Tehran embassy staff on January 14, closing the embassy temporarily and operating remotely due to Iran's security situation amid protests. Foreign Office prioritizes staff safety; Cooper praised protesters and condemned regime violence/executions.

German Vice Chancellor Lars Klingbeil described EU-U.S. ties as "disintegrating" under Trump due to Greenland rhetoric and Venezuela actions (Maduro capture), signaling profound transatlantic upheaval. Polls show low German trust in U.S.; contrasts with Chancellor Merz's more cautious stance.

Ukraine and EU partners aim to secure Trump's clear endorsement of U.S. security guarantees for Ukraine (from prior Paris talks) at January 2026 Davos WEF. Zelenskyy preparing a document; leaders like Macron, von der Leyen attending; focus on postwar recovery amid U.S. envoy involvement.

Right-wing European figures (Meloni, Salvini, Le Pen, Weidel, Abascal, Kickl, Vučić, Babiš, Milei) and Netanyahu endorsed Viktor Orbán in a campaign video for Hungary's April 12 election. Praises sovereignty/cultural roots; Orbán (Fidesz) trails opposition Tisza (Magyar) in polls amid rule-of-law criticisms.

France will open its first consulate in Nuuk on February 6 (announced by FM Barrot), a "political signal" against Trump's seizure threats.

UK and Poland agreed enhanced air defense cooperation (joint helicopter pilot training, NATO missions, instructors at RAF Shawbury) amid Russian drone threats/incursions into Polish airspace. Announced during Polish President's UK visit; builds on prior missile deals.

Leaders including EP President Roberta Metsola, Chancellor Merz, and PM Martin vowed swift, targeted EU sanctions on Iran over violent protest crackdown (thousands killed/arrested since late December economic uprising). Metsola: effective sanctions, diplomat ban from EP; von der Leyen: fresh proposals soon.

Danish FM Lars Løkke Rasmussen and Greenlandic FM Vivian Motzfeldt will meet VP JD Vance and SecState Marco Rubio at the White House to oppose Trump's Greenland seizure threats (including his "we're going to have Greenland" statement). Follows broader U.S. actions like Venezuela raid; Denmark warns invasion would end NATO.

14. The United State

The White House continued planning for Greenland acquisition as a national security priority. Trump revived territorial ambitions, emphasizing options including diplomacy, economic pressure, or military measures. This jolted European allies and raised Arctic security concerns amid Russia and China influence fears.

U.S. officials met Danish and Greenland counterparts in high-stakes talks. Discussions ended in fundamental disagreement over sovereignty and control. Trump restated that Denmark cannot adequately protect Greenland long-term.

Trump signed an executive order on critical minerals security. It prioritized international cooperation with allies to reduce China dependence on processed minerals. Bilateral deals with partners like Ukraine, Saudi Arabia, and others were highlighted for supply chain resilience.

Trump declared U.S. non-control of Greenland unacceptable for national security. He stressed NATO effectiveness would improve with U.S. oversight of the territory. Warnings followed about Russia or China gaining influence if no action is taken.

On January 14, 2026, the U.S. Department of State announced it will pause all immigrant visa issuances for nationals of 75 high-risk countries starting January 21, 2026, due to concerns over potential public benefits usage. Applicants from these countries can still attend interviews, but no visas will be issued during an indefinite review of self-sufficiency policies. This measure applies only to immigrant visas and does not affect nonimmigrant visas or existing valid visas.

Trump escalated threats by announcing 10% tariffs on imports from Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the UK. Tariffs would rise to 25% by June 1 unless a Greenland deal is reached. He tied this to European military solidarity deployments in the Arctic.

European leaders condemned the tariff threats as blackmail and unacceptable intimidation. Denmark's PM Frederiksen stated Europe will not be blackmailed and welcomed allied support. Eight nations issued a joint statement warning of a dangerous downward spiral in transatlantic relations.

Protests erupted in Nuuk and Copenhagen against U.S. annexation plans. Greenlandic flags waved with slogans rejecting external control. Trump doubled down, calling Greenland vital for missile defense and countering adversaries.

EU ambassadors explored €93 billion in retaliatory tariffs and the Anti-Coercion Instrument. An emergency leaders' summit was scheduled for January 22 to coordinate responses. France pushed for activating its "trade bazooka" against geopolitical coercion.

Trump softened rhetoric on Iran, claiming killings appeared to be stopping with no execution plans. He cited good authority for de-escalation but kept all options open. This followed weeks of threats amid ongoing nationwide protests.

U.S. sanctions targeted five Iranian officials for protest crackdown roles. The G7 and EU signaled potential additional measures if repression continues. Trump urged protesters to persist while monitoring regime actions closely.

Iran warned any U.S. strike would trigger a harsh response. Supreme Leader Khamenei blamed Trump for protest deaths and damages. Protests subsided in some areas due to violence and blackouts, but volatility persisted.

Venezuela oversight solidified post-Maduro capture. Trump stated the U.S. would run oil operations indefinitely during transition. A \$500 million oil deal funneled proceeds to a Qatari bank under U.S. control.

U.S. seized more Venezuelan tankers enforcing oil quarantine. Opposition figures met symbolically with Trump administration officials. Regional condemnation grew from Latin America over sovereignty violations.

Trump blamed Zelenskyy as an obstacle to Ukraine peace. Ukrainian negotiators visited for talks on security guarantees. Discussions prepared for potential Davos commitments amid no breakthrough.

U.S.-South Korea established a permanent Combined Ground Component Command. This improved wartime transition and peacetime interoperability. It aligned with broader alliance strengthening in Asia-Pacific.

Trump's "Board of Peace" for Gaza advanced with funding invitations. Gulf States, Egypt, and others were offered permanent seats for \$1 billion contributions. Hamas signaled willingness to dissolve its government under a technocratic committee.

U.S.-Mexico security cooperation reaffirmed shared threat confrontation. Secretary Rubio emphasized partnership importance. This built on hemispheric focus post-Venezuela actions.

Trump attended preparatory talks eyeing Davos WEF influence. Ukraine and EU sought firm U.S. endorsements of Paris guarantees. Zelenskyy prepared documents for postwar recovery discussions.

Geopolitical uncertainty remained high as Davos approached. Europe showed unity against U.S. pressures on Greenland and elsewhere. Risks of miscalculation persisted in Iran, Arctic, and hemispheric spheres.

15. Eurasia

On January 12, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stated that Russia must demonstrate interest in peace for Ukraine talks to advance, while a Commission spokeswoman noted the inevitability of EU-Russia discussions. Russian President Vladimir Putin responded by reaffirming Moscow's commitment to a long-term peace addressing all parties' security needs, highlighting ongoing diplomatic posturing amid stalled negotiations.

On January 13, Iranian authorities partially lifted communications curbs during escalating protests with rising casualties, while maintaining internet controls. This step signals a tentative de-escalation effort to manage internal security challenges, amid broader regional diplomacy involving U.S. threats and Russian support.

On January 13, the Syrian army established a closed military zone east of Aleppo, indicating potential escalation against Kurdish-led forces. This development heightens security risks in the Middle East's Eurasian periphery, affecting regional alliances including Russia and Turkey.

On January 14, Syrian forces advanced into towns east of Aleppo, prompting Kurdish SDF withdrawals across the Euphrates. Syria's decree recognizing Kurdish language rights marks a historic shift, potentially easing ethnic tensions but raising concerns over broader Middle Eastern stability involving Eurasian powers like Russia.

On January 16, delegations from Baku and Yerevan jointly assessed the Sadarak-Yeraskh railway border section for restoration feasibility. This cooperative step advances peace-building in the South Caucasus, supporting infrastructure reconnection and confidence measures in the normalization process.

On January 16, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov met EU Special Representative Magdalena Grono to discuss political, economic, transport, and energy ties, while positively evaluating progress in the Azerbaijan-Armenia peace process. This engagement strengthens EU-Caucasus diplomacy for regional security.

On January 16, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan declared lasting peace in the South Caucasus a key 2026 priority, alongside Balkan cooperation. This stance reinforces Turkey's role in Eurasian diplomacy, potentially facilitating mediation in Armenia-Azerbaijan relations.

On January 16, Russian President Putin spoke with Iranian President Pezeshkian and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, offering mediation to ease escalating threats. This initiative highlights Russia's diplomatic influence in Middle Eastern security, with implications for Eurasian stability amid U.S. involvement.

On January 16, European countries sent small military contingents to Greenland following stalled U.S.-Danish talks, bolstering Arctic defense. Russia responded by

enhancing its own Arctic capabilities, escalating security competition in this strategic Eurasian frontier.

During January 13-18, Russia reportedly endorsed Iran's intercontinental ballistic missile test, deepening military ties. This development, amid Iran's protests and U.S. threats, signals strengthened Russo-Iranian security cooperation in Eurasia's southern flank.

On January 18, Ukrainian and U.S. delegations committed to ongoing discussions at the World Economic Forum in Davos (January 19-23), focusing on security guarantees. This follows recent negotiations, advancing potential peace frameworks despite territorial disputes.

Throughout the week, the EU explored accelerating Ukraine's membership process, including limited membership options amid two-tier EU debates. This diplomatic move aims to bolster Ukraine's security against Russian threats, reshaping European integration.

16. International and Regional Organizations

United Nation

The UN Security Council held urgent consultations on Southern Lebanon and Yemen, reiterating Resolution 1701 and condemning Red Sea maritime attacks. The Council reviewed insecurity in the Sahel, Colombia's peace process, and preparations for renewing the UNFICYP mandate.

Under China's presidency, the Council convened a high-level debate on artificial intelligence and international peace and security and held Arria-formula meetings on Women, Peace, and Security, peacebuilding, and Sudan. The Council also received ICC briefings on Darfur and reviewed developments in the fifth year of the Ukraine conflict.

Africa Union

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, commended the conduct of Uganda's presidential elections held on 15 January 2026 and congratulated President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni on his re-election with 71.61 percent of the vote, praising the Ugandan public's commitment to democratic consolidation, peace, and stability. He expressed appreciation to former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan for leading the Joint AU–COMESA–IGAD Election Observation Mission and reaffirmed the AU's continued support for democratic governance across the continent.

The Chairperson delivered keynote remarks at the Preparatory Working Session for the High-Level Meeting on the Coherence and Consolidation of the Peace Process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region in Lomé. He reaffirmed Africa's commitment to ending the eastern DRC crisis and welcomed President Faure Gnassingbé's acceptance of the AU mediator mandate, stressing African-led solutions amid continued violence in Goma, Bukavu, and Uvira. He underscored the need for

inclusive dialogue between the DRC and Rwanda, engagement with neighbouring states, respect for Congolese sovereignty, and coordinated international support, including from the United States and Qatar.

In Lomé, the Chairperson held consultations with President Gnassingbé alongside the AU Panel of Facilitators, comprising former Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo, Uhuru Kenyatta, Sahle-Work Zewde, Mokgweetsi Masisi, and Catherine Samba Panza. The AU also welcomed Libya's signature of the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation and reaffirmed support for its implementation alongside the UN roadmap.

The AU Commission congratulated Algeria on the successful launch of the Alsat-3A Earth observation satellite, highlighting its contribution to sustainable development and Agenda 2063. The Chairperson welcomed the U.S. House of Representatives' passage of a three-year extension of AGOA and reiterated the AU's commitment to strengthening U.S.–Africa economic cooperation. The AU further reaffirmed Somalia's territorial integrity, strongly condemning Israel's recognition of “Somaliland.”

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

IGAD, alongside the AU and COMESA, deployed election observers for Uganda's 15 January general elections and formally congratulated President Museveni following the announcement of results. Ahead of the polls, an IGAD delegation engaged domestic stakeholders to assess preparedness and inclusivity.

On 13 January, regional ambassadors met in Juba to urge dialogue between President Salva Kiir and First Vice President Riek Machar, emphasizing implementation of the Revitalised Peace Agreement ahead of South Sudan's planned 2026 elections. Eritrea announced its withdrawal from IGAD, effective 29 January 2026, citing institutional grievances.

Moreover, IGAD continued coordination on Sudan, launched the 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan seeking USD 2.3 billion, and advanced consultations on its 2026–2030 Peace and Security Strategy.

European Union (EU)

On 17 January, the EU and Mercosur signed a landmark trade agreement establishing a free-trade zone covering roughly 700 million consumers. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced plans for a new European security strategy in 2026, while the Commission presented its 2026–2027 financial support package for Ukraine.

The EU discussed additional sanctions against Iran, endorsed initial funding under the Security Action for Europe programme, and proposed revisions to the EU Cybersecurity Act. The European Parliament's Security and Defence Committee initiated a review of defence partnerships with the United States, the United Kingdom, and NATO.



HORN **REVIEW**

IDEAS CONNECTIONS SYNERGY

Ideas | Connections | Synergy
