



Weekly Geopolitical Report

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

Coverage Period: Jan 19 – Jan 25

Publication Date: January 26, 2026

Issue No. 4 | 2026

For analytical and informational purposes only

Horn Review: Weekly Report

Jan 19 – Jan 25, 2026

1. Ethiopia

In a significant move to strengthen international legal cooperation, the House of People's Representatives has approved new proclamations on the extradition of convicted persons and the transfer of wanted criminals with China, Brazil, and South Africa. Lawmakers said the measures will facilitate effective rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals convicted abroad, align with international legal frameworks, and support bilateral cooperation, including trade and investment opportunities.

Ethiopia's aviation sector took center stage this week as the Ethiopian Air Force was widely recognized as a continental model for military excellence and cooperation. African military attachés praised the Air Force's rapid modernization, growing self-reliance, and contributions to regional peace and security during the Aviation Expo 2026, part of celebrations marking 90 years since its establishment. Delegates highlighted Ethiopia's experience in aircraft maintenance, engineering, and defense capability building as valuable for other air forces across Africa.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed emphasized the strategic importance of the Aviation Expo 2026 in reinforcing Ethiopia's role as a leading aviation hub on the continent. Reflecting on the event's theme, "Flying into the Future, Building a Shared Tomorrow," he noted that the expo brought together local and international stakeholders to advance aviation technology, enhance professional skills, and strengthen regional and global cooperation, showcasing Ethiopia's ambitions in the aviation sector and its broader economic and technological leadership.

Addis Ababa, January 26, Ethiopia's National Dialogue Commission continues to gain recognition as a continental model for conflict resolution, with the Commission increasingly cited for its locally driven framework to address deep-seated political and identity-based issues. Officials highlighted that the process prioritizes internally led solutions and broad citizen engagement aimed at fostering sustainable peace and national cohesion.

On the diplomatic front, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ambassador Hadera Abera met with Sudhakar Dalela, Secretary for Economic Relations at India's Ministry of External Affairs, to explore avenues for strengthening strategic and economic cooperation between Ethiopia and India. The discussions reaffirmed commitment to implement agreements reached during recent high-level visits and emphasized cooperation within multilateral platforms, including BRICS.

Ethiopia's role in regional peace and security was underscored during a joint press briefing with German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepful, who commended Ethiopia's

contributions to peace and security in the Horn of Africa and highlighted its importance to maritime stability in the Red Sea. He also noted Germany's interest in expanded cooperation across political, economic, and development sectors with Ethiopia.

In related engagements, African Union Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf met with the German Foreign Minister and described Germany as the AU's largest bilateral partner, emphasizing its significant financial and programmatic contributions to continental initiatives.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed held talks with Minister Wadephul, focusing on reaffirming and deepening the longstanding partnership between Ethiopia and Germany, with both sides pledging to strengthen cooperation across key bilateral priorities.

Ethiopia's bilateral ties with Norway also saw progress, with Ambassador Hadera Abera holding discussions with Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Andreas Kravik aimed at consolidating cooperation on shared interests, including climate-resilient development and investment opportunities aligned with Ethiopia's economic liberalization efforts.

Domestically, the Council of Ministers, chaired by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, approved a range of significant economic and policy decisions during its 52nd regular session. These decisions include reforms to the Customs Proclamation to support manufacturing growth, the establishment of performance-based investment incentives, and the endorsement of a new entrepreneurship development policy designed to strengthen Ethiopia's innovation and business environment.

Ethiopia and Belarus signed a bilateral memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enhance military cooperation, signed by Ethiopia's Minister of Defense, Engineer Aisha Mohammed, and her Belarusian counterpart, Pantus Dmitry Aleksandrovich. The agreement is intended to advance military technology collaboration and strengthen defense industry capacities, laying the groundwork for expanded cooperation as Ethiopia prepares to celebrate the 90th anniversary of its Air Force. Belarusian participation in the Air Force anniversary events is expected to contribute to these ongoing defence ties.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed emphasized the central role of Ethiopians in safeguarding national interests, noting that while international support can be helpful, the primary responsibility for protecting and advancing Ethiopia's aspirations rests with its people.

2. Sudan

This week saw continued mass-casualty violence, renewed diplomatic activity, and Sudan's conflict entered a further escalatory phase this week, marked by intensified military activity across new fronts, mounting evidence of mass atrocities, deepening humanitarian collapse, and accelerating environmental and institutional degradation. The war continues to expand geographically and structurally, reinforcing a trajectory of fragmentation rather than stabilization.

The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) launched a renewed offensive in Blue Nile State, interpreted by analysts as a strategic diversion from sustained pressure on RSF positions in Kordofan. Fighting in the region underscored the RSF's ability to open secondary fronts, stretching SAF response capacity and widening civilian exposure. Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) later announced that they repelled an RSF attack in Blue Nile, highlighting continued volatility and the absence of durable control on either side.

The expansion of hostilities into the Blue Nile added to an already complex multi-front war, reinforcing concerns that Sudan's conflict is no longer confined to core urban or Darfur theatres but is increasingly national in scope. Regional security assessments continued to emphasize Sudan's role within a broader transnational conflict ecosystem, with RSF-linked networks, arms flows, and militia coordination extending across borders and complicating containment.

Fresh reporting brought renewed attention to mass graves in Khartoum, described as exposing a "dark chapter" of the war. Investigations and survivor accounts reinforced allegations of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and systematic violence against civilians. International humanitarian leaders described the level of abuse in Sudan as "grotesque," underscoring the scale and severity of violations taking place largely beyond effective monitoring or accountability mechanisms.

The United Nations reiterated grave concern over continued attacks on civilians and warned that ongoing violence, obstruction of aid, and impunity risks entrenching mass atrocity patterns. Rights advocates stressed that without credible accountability pathways, abuses are likely to persist or intensify.

Sudan marked nearly 1,000 days of war, with humanitarian agencies warning that the country's crisis has moved beyond emergency response into a prolonged catastrophe. Displacement, hunger, and disease continue to rise, while access constraints and insecurity limit effective humanitarian reach. International NGOs warned that civilians are enduring extreme deprivation under conditions of sustained violence, with little prospect of relief.

Climate and environmental stress compounded the crisis. Reports highlighted how state neglect and illegal logging are accelerating the destruction of Sudan's forests, eroding livelihoods, increasing flood and drought vulnerability, and undermining long-term recovery prospects. Environmental degradation emerged as both a consequence of conflict and a multiplier of future instability.

Sudan's energy crisis deepened, with conflict-related damage, fuel shortages, and governance breakdown disrupting electricity supply and basic services. Infrastructure degradation continued to undermine economic activity, public service delivery, and humanitarian operations, reinforcing a cycle of institutional collapse.

Beyond infrastructure, Sudan's cultural heritage remained under threat. Reports

documented looting and destruction of museums and historical collections, signaling the erosion of Sudan's collective memory alongside its physical and political disintegration.

Diplomatic maneuvering around Sudan continued across regional and international arenas. Analysts highlighted competing external engagements and shifting alignments involving Egypt, Gulf states, Turkey, and Western actors, raising concerns about policy incoherence and selective engagement. Commentary suggested that Sudan's war is increasingly shaped by broader geopolitical calculations, including Nile diplomacy and Red Sea security, rather than centered on civilian protection or political transition.

At the continental and regional levels, official messaging emphasized stability and dialogue, but developments on the ground continued to outpace diplomatic initiatives.

Assessment

This week reinforces Sudan's trajectory toward deepened national fragmentation. The opening of new fronts in Blue Nile, continued mass grave discoveries, extreme levels of civilian abuse, environmental destruction, and systemic infrastructure collapse reflect a war consuming the foundations of statehood itself. While diplomatic activity persists, it remains disconnected from battlefield realities and civilian protection, leaving Sudan trapped in a prolonged, multi-dimensional crisis with no credible pathway toward resolution.

3. Egypt

Egypt's past week reflected diplomatic engagements. On January 18, 2026, Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty hosted consultations in Cairo with Greek and Cypriot counterparts, emphasizing deepened cooperation in energy, migration, and security within the Eastern Mediterranean. This trilateral framework not only reinforced mutual economic ties but also addressed shared concerns over Gaza's humanitarian crisis, Libya's sovereignty, and Sudan's unity, highlighting how collaborative efforts can mitigate broader geopolitical risks without escalating conflicts.

Building on these multilateral discussions, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan initiated phone calls with Egyptian, Saudi, and Jordanian officials on January 19, focusing on Gaza's developments and regional de-escalation. Such communications reflect a collective Arab push for coordinated responses to humanitarian challenges, ensuring that diplomatic channels remain open to prevent further instability in the Middle East, where Egypt's border proximity amplifies its stake in sustainable resolutions.

In parallel, Egypt ramped up its military footprint in Somalia on January 19 by sending troops and advisors, reacting to Israel's Somaliland recognition. This deployment aims to contain Ethiopian influence in the Horn of Africa, protect Red Sea trade routes vital to Cairo's economy, and preempt threats to Nile water security, prioritizing Egypt's hegemonic interests over true Somali unity.

Egypt endorsed the Syrian ceasefire and Syrian Democratic Forces' integration into state structures on January 19, framing it as vital for unity and anti-terrorism. In reality, this support advances Cairo's agenda to weaken external powers in Arab affairs, allowing Egypt to meddle in reconstruction for strategic leverage and to prevent alliances that could challenge its dominance in the region.

Shifting to high-level bilateral ties, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi met U.S. President Donald Trump at the Davos World Economic Forum around January 20-21, where Trump voiced hope for Nile dam talks with Ethiopia. Sisi pressed for U.S. backing on water rights, using the encounter to pressure Ethiopia into concessions, driven by Egypt's fear of losing control over Nile resources essential to its survival and regional clout.

Following the Davos meeting, Sisi accepted Trump's invitation to the Gaza 'Board of Peace' on January 21, joining a multilateral peace initiative. This participation lets Egypt assert its mediator role, not for harmony but to influence truce outcomes in its favor, exploiting historical ties to Gaza to secure border control and counter threats from rivals like Iran or Hamas.

Amid these talks, Egyptian Water Minister Hani Sewilam demanded compensation from Ethiopia for 38 billion cubic meters of Nile water lost due to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. This aggressive stance underscores Cairo's self-serving campaign to hobble Ethiopia's development, framing it as equity while actually aiming to monopolize the river and contain Addis Ababa's growing regional power.

Complementing resource diplomacy, Sudanese ministers toured Egypt's Future Authority for Sustainable Development on January 20, seeking reconstruction aid for war-torn infrastructure. Egypt offers technical help in agriculture and industry to deepen ties, but this is calculated to bind Sudan economically, ensuring alignment with Cairo's interests amid fears that shifting alliances could undermine its influence in Nile and Red Sea affairs.

Extending support to Sudan, Sudanese army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan met Egypt's intelligence director Hassan Rashad in Port Sudan on January 24 to address counterterrorism and Red Sea security. Egypt uses this to reinforce support for the Sudanese Armed Forces, fearing the Rapid Support Forces might not toe Cairo's line, thus risking Egypt's strategic edges in curbing Ethiopian and UAE influences.

In a related vein, Egypt and Saudi Arabia pressured Libyan commander Khalifa Haftar around January 24 to block UAE supplies of arms and fuel to Sudan's Rapid Support Forces. This meddling seeks to tilt Sudan's conflict toward factions loyal to Cairo, preventing RSF gains that could disrupt Egypt's alliances and expose vulnerabilities in its quest to dominate regional proxy dynamics for self-preservation.

Meanwhile, Egypt and Libya progressed their partnership via talks on energy and mining, inking memorandums for joint ventures. This builds on old connections to boost Cairo's

economic reach, countering fragmentation only insofar as it serves Egypt's power plays, allowing it to exploit Libya's resources while containing threats from Ethiopia and others in volatile North African geopolitics.

4. Eritrea

Starting last week, the Ministry of Information rolled out the English transcript of President Isaias Afewerki's interview, conducted on January 12th. Interestingly, many media outlets missed his remarks on "the role of the Diaspora". In it, there appears to be a hint that the PFDJ regime might be working to open itself up to the Diaspora population. Increasingly lacking in manpower and capital to adopt to the changing regional landscape, tapping in the resources of exiled Eritreans presents a vast array of opportunities for the regime, particularly in terms of survival and securing continuation in a post Isaias scenario.

A report by Horn Review, citing internal sources, reported that Eritrean Intelligence Officers had defected over to the Ethiopian Intelligence service. The development, as explained in the publication, marks a significant development, particularly with regards to Eritrea's security architecture. The highly closed off state relies heavily in its security assets to maintain its posture and influence its neighbouring states. Should the reverse be occurring for Asmara, it represents a major rift in the regime's security and its survival strategy.

An op-ed piece by Michael Rubin, an American Intellectual with ties to Washington, was published in January 17, calling for Trump to pursue regime change in Eritrea. Although the article stretches the priorities of Trump's foreign policy, and argues for an unlikely outcome, it nonetheless prompted an extensive response from PFDJ associated voices, including the Minister of Information himself. Asmara is understood to be pursuing a strategy to appeal to the Trump administration and foster some sort of relationship, hence the strong response to an article which argues for the contrary.

In addition, the Eritrean Embassy in Washington released a statement criticizing an article published by the Conversation, focusing on the ongoing Ethiopia-Eritrea tensions. The official response was likely due the article's balanced narrative into the causes of tensions, and a sober analysis of the Red Sea access question coming from Addis Ababa and Eritrea's proxy strategy currently in place.

Asmara's Embassy in Addis Ababa has been proactive this week. Charge of Affairs Biniam Berihe, holding meetings with several African Diplomats, including that of Burundi's, which is expected to take the chairmanship of the Permanent Representatives Committee of the African Union this year.

Mentioning Horn Review and State Think Tank Institute of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Information Yemane Geberemeskel attacked what he called "media campaigns against

Eritrea”, and claimed they were intended “to deflect attention from the chronic internal security quagmire”

5. Djibouti

Djibouti undertook measures against the self-declared Republic of Somaliland. In a move first reported on January 19 and widely covered thereafter, the Government of Djibouti announced the cancellation of approximately 1,400 passports it had previously issued to Somaliland officials, elders, journalists, and members of parliament.

This action constitutes a severe punitive and logistical measure against Hargeisa as Djiboutian passports serve as a vital travel document for Somaliland's political and business elite due to the non recognition of Somaliland's own travel documents internationally. This decision followed Djibouti's earlier closure of Somaliland's liaison office within its territory. In response to the passport cancellations Somaliland authorities reciprocated by banning all Air Djibouti commercial flights from its airspace.

Parallel with its bilateral dispute, Djibouti actively advanced its role as a hub for regional security cooperation and institutional integration. On January 23, Djibouti and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia signed a formal military cooperation agreement. The pact is specifically designed to enable joint operations against cross border security threats including terrorism, arms and human trafficking, and organized crime. This agreement deepens the longstanding strategic security partnership between the two nations.

On January 21, IGAD headquarters in Djibouti issued an official statement warmly welcoming the ratification of the updated IGAD Treaty by the Federal Parliament of Somalia. This ratification, passed with 141 votes in Somalia's House of the People was noted as critical to achieving the two-thirds threshold required for the treaty's full implementation, which focuses on peace, security, and economic integration across the Horn of Africa.

Djibouti maintained its active engagement with diverse international partners. Demonstrating a continued focus on sustainable infrastructure President Ismail Omar Guelleh met with a delegation from Chinese state owned enterprises on January 20. The discussions centered on potential Chinese investment in large scale renewable energy projects, including solar and wind power generation.

The United States Department of State announced on January 23 that Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Landau would include Djibouti in a multi-nation regional tour with other stops in Egypt, Ethiopia, and Kenya. The visit is intended for discussions on shared priorities encompassing regional security, counter-terrorism cooperation, economic partnership, and broader stability in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea region.

6. South Sudan

Security conditions across South Sudan deteriorated sharply this week, with renewed fighting, mass displacement, and escalating rhetoric triggering grave international concern. Heavy clashes in Jonglei State, including around Bor and surrounding areas, resulted in multiple civilian deaths and the displacement of over 180,000 people, according to humanitarian and media reports. Violence near the Bor IDP camp included a fatal shooting outside the site, underscoring growing insecurity even around displacement shelters.

In Upper Nile and Unity states, armed confrontations continued between government forces (SSPDF) and opposition groups, including SPLA-IO elements. Reports confirmed the overrunning of SSPDF positions near the Sudan border and the fall of a government garrison in Unity State, while renewed attacks targeted military and police installations. The government ordered evacuations of civilians, NGOs, and UN personnel from opposition-controlled areas ahead of a major military offensive, raising alarms among humanitarian actors over civilian exposure and access constraints.

The humanitarian situation worsened significantly. The United Nations, UNMISS, and multiple rights organisations warned of a credible risk of mass violence against civilians, citing inflammatory statements by senior political and military figures. UN experts warned that rhetoric encouraging violence — including language interpreted as “spare no one” — could precipitate mass killings, ethnic targeting, and atrocities. UNMISS publicly condemned threats of indiscriminate violence and reiterated that attacks on civilians, IDPs, or humanitarian personnel may constitute war crimes.

Human rights groups documented mass arbitrary arrests, abusive anti-gang operations, and alleged scorched-earth tactics, including village destruction and forced displacement. Civil society organisations urged the UN Security Council to impose targeted sanctions on individuals accused of incitement and command responsibility for abuses. Separate reports warned of rising abductions even as overall conflict-related deaths showed a marginal decline, indicating shifting violence patterns rather than de-escalation.

Politically, President Salva Kiir undertook further security and cabinet reshuffles, dismissing senior ministers and top security officials following rebel advances in Jonglei. Opposition figures described the shake-up as evidence of confusion and desperation within the government. Rebel forces publicly called for marches toward Juba after reporting battlefield gains, prompting heightened security concerns in the capital.

Preparations for the 2026 elections appeared increasingly fragile. Analysts and opposition figures warned that escalating violence, shrinking civic space, and institutional weaknesses make credible elections unlikely under current conditions. President Kiir publicly called for peace, while parallel reports highlighted intensified persecution of activists and witnesses, further constraining political participation.

International pressure mounted. The United States halted or reviewed aid to parts of South Sudan, citing government interference, obstruction, and abuse. While Juba denied formal notification of suspensions, multiple outlets confirmed aid reviews and partial halts, particularly in Ayod County and parts of Western Bahr el Ghazal. Activists warned that aid disruptions could accelerate food insecurity and famine risk, especially as conflict continues to disrupt humanitarian access in Upper Nile and Jonglei.

At the UN level, the Security Council prepared closed consultations on South Sudan amid warnings of catastrophic escalation. UNMISS, humanitarian agencies, and church leaders jointly urged sustained global attention to both Sudan and South Sudan, warning that regional spillover, militarization, and the war in Sudan are compounding instability, particularly around oil infrastructure and border areas.

Regionally and externally, South Sudan continued diplomatic engagement, including preparations to host Nile Basin Initiative–related meetings and Nile Day celebrations in Juba. China’s 12th peacekeeping infantry battalion completed UN induction training for deployment to South Sudan, reinforcing UNMISS capacity amid deteriorating security. Meanwhile, international financial pressure intensified as liquidity shortages and banking constraints deepened, affecting both public sector salaries and commercial operations.

Assessment

This week marks a clear escalation trajectory. Large-scale displacement, direct warnings of mass atrocities, evacuation orders ahead of offensives, and deepening political fragmentation collectively point toward a high-risk phase. With elections approaching under unresolved conflict conditions, shrinking humanitarian space, and rising international scrutiny, South Sudan faces converging security, political, and humanitarian fault lines rather than stabilization.

7. Somalia and Somaliland

Somalia

The FGS formally invited the principal opposition alliance the Somali Future Council (SFC) to a national consultative conference in Mogadishu. This invitation issued on 19 January is scheduled to commence on 1 February. Managed by a ministerial committee led by the Minister of Justice, this initiative aims to break the deadlock over the electoral framework for 2026 and related political disputes.

The SFC announced its agreement to attend the Mogadishu talks however in its announcement on 24 January its acceptance was explicitly conditional. The Council demanded an immediate halt to the ongoing process of amending the provisional constitution and stipulated that the conference must focus on core national priorities reaching consensus on an electoral model, enhancing the fight against Al-Shabaab and ISIS, addressing severe drought and reinforcing national unity.

Parallel with the FGS's diplomatic fulcrum Puntland President Said Abdullahi Deni undertook a visit to the United Arab Emirates for high level talks beginning 19 January. This move follows the FGS's cancellation of agreements with the UAE and occurs amidst on going friction between Mogadishu and several Federal Member States including Puntland and Jubaland, over constitutional and power sharing issues.

Security forces engaged in intense clashes with Al-Shabaab in the Lower Juba region resulting in significant claimed casualties. Al-Shabaab militants launched a major assault, capturing the strategic coastal town of Kudhaa following a heavy attack on a Jubaland security forces base on 21 January.

Somali National Army units notably the Danab commandos alongside Jubaland Security Forces and with support from international partners mounted a vigorous counter operation. They announced they had retaken full control of Kudhaa by 22 January. The Ministry of Defense initially reported over 130 Al-Shabaab fighters killed. This figure was subsequently revised upward to more than 250 militants neutralized as of 25 January according to officials. The operation was described as a significant tactical blow to the group's capabilities in the region.

In a separate but related incident, Al-Shabaab claimed on 22 January that US airstrikes killed 17 Jubaland regional forces whom the militants had captured during the initial assault on Kudhaa. This claim remains unverified by US or Somali authorities. Furthermore, in a joint operation in southern Somalia, Somali forces reported killing a senior Al-Shabaab commander indicating continued targeting of the group's leadership structure.

Somalia's foreign policy exhibited a realignment strengthening ties with some partners while severing others alongside broader diplomatic activities. This recalibration is centered on national sovereignty and a decisive regional alliances.

In a decisive move the Federal Government of Somalia publicly defended its earlier decision to scrap defense and port management agreements with the United Arab Emirates citing imperatives of national sovereignty and rejecting foreign interference. This rupture was immediately followed by a significant recalibration. On 20 January in Doha Somali Defense Minister Ahmed Fiqi and Qatari Defense Minister Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman Al Thani signed a comprehensive defense cooperation agreement. The pact focuses on military training, expertise exchange, and enhancing Somalia's defense capabilities solidifying Qatar's role as a primary security and political ally for the FGS. As a direct strategic countermove this realignment signals a clear axis in Mogadishu's security partnerships moving from the UAE to Qatar which has been a consistent political ally and was among the first to reject Israel's recognition of Somaliland.

The regional backlash against Somaliland's engagement with Israel is not limited to Mogadishu. Djibouti has taken concrete punitive measures against Somaliland

significantly escalating tensions. In January 2026, Djibouti cancelled approximately 1,400 passports it had issued to Somaliland officials, elders, journalists, and members of parliament. This is a severe blow as Somaliland's own travel documents lack international recognition and Djiboutian passports have served as a vital lifeline for official and medical travel. This move followed Djibouti's earlier closure of Somaliland's liaison office in the country. In response, Somaliland recalled its representative and banned all Air Djibouti flights from its airspace.

In parallel, Somalia advanced several other key diplomatic initiatives. On 21 January, Somalia's House of the People ratified the new Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Treaty. This ratification approved by majority of 141 legislators is a crucial step for deeper regional integration in the Horn of Africa. IGAD welcomed the move noting it helps achieve the required two thirds threshold for the treaty's full implementation which focuses on peace, security, and economic development.

On 24 January Somalia and Pakistan signed a bilateral agreement abolishing visa requirements for holders of diplomatic passports. Signed in Islamabad and witnessed by Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari, the agreement is designed to strengthen official mobility and accelerate high level diplomatic engagement between the two nations. Somalia's Interior Minister, Ali Yousuf, delivered a message from President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud reaffirming Somalia's commitment to deepening ties with Pakistan.

Furthermore, the FGS announced it had successfully resolved a public dispute between its embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The nature of the dispute was not detailed in public statements but the government's announcement emphasized the restoration of unity and coordination between the two foreign missions scoring the importance of presenting a cohesive diplomatic front.

Somaliland

Somaliland's leadership focused intensely on high profile international advocacy to advance its quest for recognition. Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi Irro conducted a series of meetings on the side lines of the World Economic Forum in Davos. He held two high profile separate meetings on the side lines of the forum.

The first was with Israeli President Isaac Herzog representing the highest level public engagement since Israel's recognition of Somaliland in December 2025. Discussions focused on advancing bilateral cooperation in security, defense, technology, agriculture, water management, and mining. Somaliland officials indicated that President Irro is expected to travel to Israel following Davos to potentially formally sign the Abraham Accords which would pave the way for expanded political, economic, and security ties.

In a nearby hotel conference room, President Irro also met with Eric Trump, son of U.S. President Donald Trump and an executive of the Trump Organization. The meeting

centered on pitching investment opportunities in Somaliland. President Irro emphasized the deep water Port of Berbera as a logistics hub and detailed opportunities in livestock, agriculture, energy, and minerals. This engagement is part of Somaliland's strategy articulated during the forum where the leadership framed its engagement not as a request for aid, but as an offer of partnership and resources based on mutual economic interest and shared goals in the Red Sea region. The presidential delegation returned to Hargeisa on 24 January concluding what was described as a historic working visit.

Adding to that, Somali religious scholar, Sheikh Mustafe Hajji Ismail Harun publicly warned on 24 January that Somaliland would gain no benefit from its engagement with Israel. He framed the outreach as a betrayal of Somaliland's own history and the broader sentiments of the Somali people injecting a potent religious and nationalist narrative into the political dispute.

8. Yemen

After his absence from the media, Houthi leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, gave a speech in January 15nd discussing several developments. Primarily, he issued warning to Israel against any plans to move into Somaliland, and stated that the group will take military action if done so.

Al-Houthi also gave a speech on the 22nd. He rejected Trump's Board of Peace, with the Houthi spokesperson stating on the 25th that the group will take military action against the U.S, aircraft that is speculated to be used in a possible strike on Iran.

The fall of the Islamic Republic would present a tremendous blow to the Houthis, as Tehran is considered the primary backer of the group. The "axis of resistance" is already facing strain as it has been weakened by military action by Israel.

Criticisms also extend to Saudi Arabia, where despite the kingdom's efforts to come to some sort of an agreement, the Houthis in the north remain in their hard-line position

9. The Gulf Countries

The Board of Peace – Gulf monarchies: the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are amongst some nine Muslim majority countries to have joined the Trump's new initiative thus far. The likely rationale behind their membership in the controversial board is likely to maintain the good favour of Donald Trump and get a closer reach to Washington in general. Also, the Palestinian issue, the original issue that led to the formation of the board of peace, is a matter of concern for the Gulf.

Saudi Arabia

The ongoing tensions between Saudi Arabia and the UAE has been a topic of media discussion for the past week, with the Horn of Africa in particular coming into the frame of the dispute. An analysis published by Addis Standard loosely linked the Saudi Arabia

move to curb UAE influence in the region as a sort of wake-up call to the TPLF to take a more organized and coherent position. Although the article is vague on how exactly the Gulf spat affects Tigray, the media company could be urging the TPLF to make use of Saudi Arabia's more assertive move in the region to counter the supposed UAE partnership with the federal government.

An analysis released by middle east eye Khalifah Haftar, head of the national liberation army, and an ally of the UAE and the Rapid Support Forces, has continued to facilitate the flow of arms to the RSF despite the pressure from Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Saudi Arabia has been increasingly proactive in in Sudan and is working to cut of the supplies stemming from the UAE to the RSF.

Following the reports an "Islamic NATO" in the works as Turkiye is reportedly working to join a defence pact between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, Riyadh is confirmed to be working to form another military pact with Egypt and Somalia. The latter, which has been a major element in the UAE-Saudi dispute, is hedging closer to a de facto Saudi axis involving Turkiye and Egypt.

UAE

A report published by the Middle east Eye, on the 21st this month, made conclusions that UAE cargo flights to Ethiopia, which in recent weeks have been numerous, are likely transporting arms to the Rapid Support Forces in Sudan. The report connects military flights from Israel to the UAE with these shipments and determined that Ethiopia is perhaps serving as a new route for UAE's logistical support for the RSF amidst the push back it is facing from Somalia and regional actors like Saudi Arabia. The report is part of a larger thread that links Ethiopia with the UAE's support for the RSF.

An unconfirmed report by an OSINT reporter on X claimed that the United Arab Emirates "set to donate nearly 20 Mirage 2000 multirole fighter jets to Ethiopia". This report amidst amidst the ceremony of the Ethiopian Air Force commemorating its 90th anniversary. The event is featuring a large attendance form the UAE's Air Force, with Abu Dhabi dispatching a significant number of assets for the air shows conducted at the ceremony.

Jamar Baker, the newly appointed ambassador to Abu-Dhabi, has been proactive this week particularly and since his appointment in general. Addis Ababa's dispatch of a top diplomat had hinted at a deepening cooperation between the two countries, and the ambassador's activities appear to be confirming that strategy.

On January 19th, the UAE and India signed a "mega-defence pact" which includes nuclear cooperation. A deal on natural gas also now makes India the largest customer of the UAE in that regard. This comes after the report that Turkiye is set to join a defence pact signed by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in December. The UAE and Saudi Arabia are currently amidst a growing tension and Abu Dhabi's moves appears to be a counter to what has

been described as “Islamic NATO”. The UAE has also receded from its plans to manage Pakistan’s Islamabad Airport as its tensions with Riyadh continue to force it to scale back its extensive economic networks, (similar to its decision to leave Somalia and port Bosaso).

Another aspect of Gulf rift (Primarily between the UAE on one side and Saudi Arabia on the other), is the situation in Iran and the U.S.’s increasingly likely involvement. Trump has dispatched The USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier to the Arabian sea and the President is set to decide whether to strike Iran or not. Saudi Arabia and other actors such as Turkiye and Qatar are against a U.S. intervention as they want to avoid the total collapse of the Islamic Republic. However, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan appear to be in favour of U.S. action, with reports citing that the countries are prepared to provide support in that scenario.

Abu Dhabi last week hosted Ukrainian and Russian delegates in what was the first trilateral peace negotiations between the two countries, the BBC reported earlier on Monday January 26, that the peace talks had ended and fighting has resumed. Regardless, Abu Dhabi hosting the dialogue boosts its diplomatic standing among the west and also Russia too.

Qatar

On the 20th, Qatar inked a defence pact with Somalia which reportedly includes “military training, the exchange of expertise, development of defence capabilities, and enhanced security collaboration”. This comes after Israel’s recognition of Somaliland and the federal governments push to exert more pressure on Somaliland and actors like the UAE and Israel, which the de facto state enjoys a relationship with.

Qatar, which had its own spat with Saudi Arabia in 2017, is now edging closer to Riyadh as interests converge along several issues, primarily, the UAE’s regional posture and a consensus by other middle eastern states on the need to curb it.

10. Africa and The Sahel Region

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

On January 17, 2026, France participated in a high-level meeting in Lomé to support the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Great Lakes region. The meeting, initiated by Togo's President Faure Gnassingbé, aims to address the ongoing conflict, particularly following M23's offensive, supported by Rwandan forces. France emphasized the need for a ceasefire and compliance with the Washington agreements and Doha Framework. Following the Paris Conference for Peace and Prosperity in October 2025, France reported that €850 million of the promised €1.5 billion for humanitarian efforts had been disbursed to address the urgent humanitarian crisis. France called for the removal of obstacles to aid and plans to assist in reopening Goma

airport for humanitarian flights. A national dialogue in the DRC was emphasized as vital for achieving lasting peace and unity.

Mali

Mali's government has implemented fuel rationing amid severe shortages triggered by al Qaeda-linked militants attacking supply routes since September, destroying over 100 trucks and reducing imports from 6,000 to just 2,000 tankers monthly. Russian Africa Corps troops now escort convoys, while vehicle refueling limits—every 72 hours for cars and 48 for motorcycles—aim to ensure equitable distribution ahead of Ramadan, though taxi drivers worry about livelihood impacts. Building on efforts to combat the militants disrupting fuel supplies, Mali's army conducted airstrikes on Saturday targeting a significant insurgent movement near Mourdiah in the southwest. This operation, part of a decade-long campaign against fragmented groups like JNIM and separatist alliances, underscores the junta's shift toward Russian alliances after severing French ties, amid ongoing retaliatory attacks on infrastructure.

Burkina Faso

Amid regional security challenges, economic partnerships are emerging as vital for stability, with Vietnam and Burkina Faso discussing ways to boost bilateral trade averaging \$95 million annually through cooperation in agriculture, industry, and energy during a recent Hanoi meeting. This initiative reflects Burkina Faso's efforts to diversify international ties amid internal strife. Political tensions in Burkina Faso intensified with the extradition of former President Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba from Togo on January 20, facing accusations of plotting to assassinate successor Ibrahim Traoré, alongside charges of embezzlement and corruption. The move highlights ongoing instability under the military junta, potentially deepening divisions while jihadist threats persist.

Chad

Egypt has pledged support to the Multinational Joint Task Force in combating terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin, with Ambassador Tarek Youssef commending the force during a visit to its headquarters in N'Djamena. This cooperation includes training and equipment, building on Egypt's ties with regional countries to enhance stability amid ongoing insurgencies. As rival terrorist groups Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province clash over Lake Chad islands for control of trade routes, hundreds have died in recent battles, with Boko Haram gaining ground through mercenary support. These conflicts exacerbate civilian displacement and highlight the need for stronger multinational interventions in the area. Meanwhile, tensions along the Chad-Sudan border have escalated after a clash that killed seven Chadian soldiers, prompting Sudan's Rapid Support Forces to express regret over the unintentional incident while blaming fleeing Sudanese army elements. This event underscores the spillover risks from Sudan's civil war into neighboring Chad, affecting regional security efforts.

11. North Africa

Morocco

On January 21, 2026, Morocco's security director Abdellatif Hammouchi met ambassadors from the UK, Gabon, and Malaysia in Rabat to strengthen cooperation against transnational threats. UK focused on border policing and counter-terrorism, Gabon on Sahel-Saharan security via joint training against migration and extremism, Malaysia on technical aid and data sharing. This underscores Morocco's role as a regional hub for coordinated responses.

Building on these alliances, a Modern Diplomacy report released that week highlights Morocco's 2026 diplomatic pivot, blending political realism with economic pragmatism to enhance its global position. Maintaining EU and US ties while expanding to China, Russia, the Gulf, and Africa, it emphasizes energy, green industries, and infrastructure projects in West Africa and the Atlantic to affirm sovereignty.

Complementing this strategy, Morocco and the United States commemorated nearly 250 years of diplomatic friendship through events in Tangier on January 23, 2026, spotlighting security cooperation, educational exchanges, and cultural ties. As a key ally in Africa and the Mediterranean, this milestone reinforces mutual commitments to stability and prosperity, evolving historical bonds for contemporary geopolitics.

In parallel, an Institute for Strategic Dialogue report published January 20, 2026, examines how Morocco elevates religious governance into strategic statecraft, influencing the Sahel to Europe. Acting as a connective node for African stabilization and Mediterranean security, this approach legitimizes authority, reinforces sovereignty, and reshapes regional alignments beyond mere cultural outreach.

Algeria

On January 20, 2026, Algeria's Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf co-chaired the Algerian-Greek Economic Forum in Athens, signing a tourism pact to enhance bilateral ties through joint promotions. This strengthens Mediterranean diplomacy, blending economic pragmatism with global partnerships in a shifting geopolitical landscape.

Extending African outreach, Algeria featured as guest of honor at Chad's SEMICA 2026 exhibition in N'Djamena from January 20-22, where Minister Mohamed Arkab inked hydrocarbons and mining deals with President Mahamat Deby Itno. These affirm continental commitments, fostering resource-based stability amid AU-driven unity.

Leveraging its African Union Peace and Security Council seat for 2025-2028, Algeria positions to shape peace decisions in 2026, emphasizing credible mediation against evolving threats. This role underscores diplomatic prowess, enabling proactive influence in Sahel and beyond for collective African security.

Confronting Sahel instability, Algeria eyes a pivotal mediator role in 2026 per reports, tackling linked terrorism, crime, and migration through non-interventionist diplomacy. This strategy bolsters North African pillars, aligning with global calls for regional actors to curb escalating conflicts.

Tensions with France escalated as Algeria's Senate demanded on January 23, 2026, reparations in a law criminalizing 1830-1962 colonial crimes, including nuclear tests. This push for accountability highlights enduring postcolonial frictions, impacting Euro-African relations in broader global politics.

Further straining ties, Algeria denounced a mid-January 2026 French TV documentary as provocative falsehoods on covert operations, issuing a formal protest. Such media clashes reveal persistent historical sensitivities, influencing diplomatic discourse in international arenas.

The U.S. Council on Foreign Relations' 2026 conflicts report spotlights Algeria's vulnerability in North Africa and Sahel, portraying it as a key stabilizer amid multipolar shifts. This analysis urges strategic adaptations, tying local security to global threat dynamics.

Libya

Libya's quest for unity gained international backing as the United States emphasized its critical role in regional stability during a January 2026 meeting between Senior Adviser Massad Boulos and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in Cairo. This dialogue highlighted how a cohesive Libyan state could bolster political processes and counter instability in neighboring areas like Sudan and the Horn of Africa, underscoring that fragmented governance invites external exploitation and perpetuates cycles of conflict.

Such endorsements pave the way for deeper bilateral ties, as evidenced by Libya's Oil and Gas Minister Khalifa Abdulsadek's discussions with Egypt's Chargé d'Affaires Tamer El-Hefny in Tripoli around mid-January, focusing on expanding energy and investment partnerships. This collaboration not only harnesses shared resources for economic growth but also fortifies strategic alliances against common threats, proving that mutual interests can transcend borders to foster enduring prosperity amid volatility.

Yet, external influences complicate these efforts, with the sanctioned Russian cargo vessel *Mys Zhelaniya* delivering military shipments to Tobruk in eastern Libya on January 22, escorted by a naval destroyer from Baltiysk. This operation, linked to supporting Russia's African Corps, reveals how great-power rivalries exploit Libya's divisions, risking escalation in regional security dynamics and challenging international sanctions' efficacy in curbing proxy engagements.

Compounding internal strains, Sudanese refugees in Libya confront a humanitarian collapse due to severe funding shortfalls in early 2026, threatening basic aid provisions

amid Sudan's broader crisis. This shortfall exposes the interconnected vulnerabilities of displacement, where inadequate global response amplifies suffering and instability, urging a reevaluation of aid priorities to prevent cross-border humanitarian spillovers from undermining fragile recoveries.

Further entangling Libya in Sudan's turmoil, weapons continue flowing to the Rapid Support Forces via eastern Libyan routes despite Egyptian and Saudi pressure on commander Khalifa Haftar to halt UAE-backed supplies in January. This persistent trafficking illustrates the limits of diplomatic leverage against entrenched proxy networks, emphasizing that unchecked arms proliferation erodes sovereignty and prolongs conflicts, demanding unified international enforcement for true de-escalation.

12. Middle East

Israel

Israel's recognition of Somaliland marks a strategic expansion in the Horn of Africa, enhancing intelligence-sharing and defenses against piracy and terrorism, while securing maritime routes amid regional instability. This move recalibrates alliances, potentially escalating proxy conflicts in a volatile area.

Building on territorial assertions, Israeli authorities demolished the UNRWA headquarters in occupied East Jerusalem, citing land ownership and alleged Hamas links. The UN condemned the action as a violation of international law, threatening essential aid for Palestinian refugees amid ongoing tensions.

This demolition echoes broader confrontations, as Israel's UN ambassador issued a stark warning to Iran against testing its military resolve, amid Tehran's internal unrest and concerns over ballistic missiles and nuclear ambitions, heightening fears of escalation.

Shifting to diplomacy, Israel accepted Donald Trump's invitation to join the Board of Peace as a founding member, alongside Azerbaijan and Kosovo, though European nations like Norway and Sweden declined, highlighting divided global approaches to Gaza stability.

Amid these alliances, the UN reported that Israeli restrictions on steel pipes have disrupted 70% of Gaza City's water production, exacerbating humanitarian crises by hindering pipeline repairs and affecting civilian access to essentials.

Compounding regional pressures, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan stated that only Trump possesses the leverage to compel Israel to end the Gaza war, emphasizing his unique position in influencing negotiations where others have failed.

Fidan further warned that Israel is seeking an opportunity to strike Iran, urging caution to avert a broader conflict, as Tehran shows openness to dialogue but prepares for potential aggression.

In parallel demographic strategies, Israel aims to limit Palestinian reentries through the Rafah crossing, ensuring a net outflow to alter Gaza's population dynamics amid preparations for border reopenings.

Internal Israeli dynamics surfaced when Prime Minister Netanyahu reportedly barred President Herzog from Trump's Board of Peace unveiling in Davos, prioritizing personal invitations and revealing power tensions in foreign representations.

These frictions extended to alliances, as an Israeli official criticized US envoy Steve Witkoff post-Netanyahu meeting, labeling him a lobbyist for Qatari interests, particularly over pushes to reopen Rafah and strengthen Doha ties.

Turkey

Turkey's endorsement of the January 18, 2026, agreement between Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa and the Syrian Democratic Forces marks a strategic pivot toward Syrian unity, despite lingering concerns over YPG/SDF's handling of ISIS detainees. By supporting SDF integration into state structures and withdrawals from key areas like Raqqa, Ankara prioritizes territorial integrity, fostering a framework where cultural rights for Kurds could heal historical divides, ultimately bolstering regional counterterrorism without compromising sovereignty.

This commitment seamlessly aligns with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's January 19 phone call to al-Sharaa, where he underscored the imperative of eradicating terrorism entirely from Syria to ensure lasting peace. Pledging amplified Turkish aid in counterterrorism while upholding Syria's unity and stability, such dialogues reveal how sustained bilateral support can transform volatile alliances into pillars of security, preventing extremist resurgence amid fragile transitions.

Reinforcing this stance, Türkiye's Center for Combating Disinformation on January 20 firmly dismissed allegations of backing Syrian army releases of ISIS terrorists, highlighting Ankara's unrivaled efforts against the group. By clarifying these baseless claims, Turkey not only safeguards its reputation but also underscores the dangers of misinformation in undermining genuine anti-terror collaborations, emphasizing that true alliances thrive on factual integrity to counter shared threats effectively.

Extending its global footprint, Turkish naval forces from January 20 to April 23, 2026, engage in NATO exercises like Steadfast Dart and Neptune Strike across European waters, fulfilling command roles assumed since July 2025. Deploying key vessels such as TCG Anadolu, this participation enhances alliance interoperability, demonstrating how maritime prowess contributes to collective defense, ensuring that NATO's strategic agility deters aggression in an interconnected world.

In tandem, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan's January 20 discussion with US Secretary Marco Rubio on Syrian progress and the Gaza 'Board of Peace' initiative reflects

deepening transatlantic coordination. With Erdogan invited to the board by President Trump, these talks affirm mutual dedication to stability, illustrating that inclusive diplomacy can bridge divides, turning multilateral forums into catalysts for resolving entrenched conflicts through shared vision and action.

Further afield, Turkey's parliamentary approval on January 22 extends naval operations in the Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea until February 10, 2027, empowering President Erdogan with flexible authority. Aimed at protecting commerce, combating piracy via missions like CTF-151, and aiding humanitarian efforts, this renewal highlights how proactive seafaring safeguards vital trade routes, weaving national interests into global maritime harmony amid evolving security landscapes.

Iran

Iran's prosecutor dismissed U.S. President Trump's claim that his warnings prevented the executions of 800 protesters as false, amid ongoing nationwide unrest driven by economic woes like rial devaluation and inflation. With over 5,000 deaths reported, including 4,700 from security forces during internet blackouts, the regime denies foreign influence while labeling dissenters as enemies, highlighting the limits of external pressure on internal crackdowns.

Building on this denial, President Masoud Pezeshkian warned that any attack on Supreme Leader Khamenei equates to war, blaming U.S. sanctions for fueling deadly protests. As internet restrictions ease and calm returns unevenly, such statements underscore Iran's defiance, illustrating how threats to sovereignty unify regimes but risk escalating international conflicts.

In a linked legal fallout, 32 Iranian and Sudanese immigrants, including doctors and researchers, sued the Trump administration over frozen work permits under an expanded travel ban citing security after a shooting. Claiming violations of rights, this challenge reveals how foreign policy-linked immigration curbs discriminate and block talent, echoing ongoing equity debates in global mobility.

Heightening rhetoric, Trump threatened to "blow up" Iran entirely if assassinated, tying it to alleged Tehran threats and criticizing past U.S. inaction amid protests with 4,000 deaths and 26,000 arrests. This personal warning exemplifies how leader-targeted threats can propel diplomatic tensions toward existential risks, necessitating balanced responses to avert crises.

Amid nuclear concerns, IAEA chief Rafael Grossi stated the standoff over Iran's inspections cannot endure, with no access to sites like Natanz and unaccounted 440.9 kg of near-weapons-grade uranium. Urging NPT compliance by spring, this impasse erodes trust, emphasizing verification challenges in unstable regions prone to proliferation.

Echoing defiance, General Abolfazl Shekarchi vowed to "set fire to their world" if Khamenei is targeted, responding to Trump's removal calls amid protests causing over 4,500 deaths and execution fears. With U.S. naval moves, this posturing strengthens internal unity but edges toward catastrophic brinkmanship in power dynamics.

In a de-escalatory note, Trump praised Iran for halting 800 executions, crediting his threats while noting self-decision against strikes despite ally pressures. As activist-reported deaths rise, this highlights how personal leadership restraint can sustain fragile peace in volatile confrontations.

Capping the week, Trump announced a U.S. naval "armada" including USS Abraham Lincoln nearing Iran to pressure the regime, where official deaths are 3,100 but rights groups say over 5,000. Denying Tehran's refutations on executions, this show of force aims at change yet invites retaliation, embodying deterrence's perilous balance.

Syria

The Syrian government extended its ceasefire with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) for another 15 days to facilitate the transfer of ISIL prisoners from SDF-held facilities. This extension follows an initial four-day truce, aiming to integrate SDF members into national army and police forces as individuals.

Building on diplomatic engagements, Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa and US President Donald Trump discussed the situation in Syria, affirming shared commitment to the country's unity and counterterrorism efforts. The call also addressed regional issues, highlighting mutual interests in stability.

Amid these talks, US Senator Lindsey Graham issued warnings to al-Sharaa as Syrian troops entered Kurdish-held areas despite the truce. Concurrently, the presidents emphasized guaranteeing Kurdish rights, reflecting US concerns over potential violations and the need for inclusive governance.

In related security moves, US forces began transferring up to 7,000 ISIS detainees from northeastern Syria to Iraq following a recent jailbreak, seeking to preempt the group's resurgence amid advancing Syrian forces and SDF challenges.

However, tensions escalated as Syria accused the SDF of ceasefire violations hours after the deal, reporting 11 soldiers killed and over 25 wounded. The SDF disputed the claims, underscoring mutual accusations that threaten the fragile truce.

Complementing these transfers, Iraq announced it will prosecute the incoming ISIS detainees under national law, preparing courts to handle security risks posed by these prisoners in the context of regional instability.

Echoing calls for cohesion, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan emphasized that Syria's unity is crucial for regional security, asserting the YPG/PKK does not represent Syrian Kurds and urging realistic approaches to foster lasting stability.

In a key development, the US military negotiated the safe withdrawal of over 400 SDF fighters from Raqqa's al-Aqtan prison, enabling Syrian government control. Both sides accused each other of releasing ISIS prisoners, revealing persistent distrust amid the ceasefire.

13. Europe

European leaders closed ranks against U.S. pressure, with Chancellor Merz (Germany) stating the EU wants to "avoid escalation" while standing firm on sovereignty. Denmark, supported by allies (France, Germany, UK, Nordics), rejected any negotiation over Greenland's status ("cannot negotiate about our sovereignty").

EU mulled retaliation options (e.g., reactivating suspended tariffs or Anti-Coercion Instrument) amid outrage over Trump's threats; European shares dipped initially due to trade fears.

Trump walked back the tariff threats (10% from February, rising to 25% by June on Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, UK), citing a "framework deal" or future talks reached after meeting NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte at Davos. European leaders claimed a "victory" and relief rally ensued in markets; EU suspended approval of a key U.S. trade deal in protest earlier but shifted to cautious business-as-usual.

Skepticism persisted in Greenland/Denmark over the vague "framework" (no sovereignty concessions); Europe stepped up military deployments/exercises in the Arctic (Danish-led with France, Germany, Sweden, Norway) to demonstrate allied commitment to security and deter future coercion.

President von der Leyen delivered a special address reaffirming Europe's commitment to security, Ukraine support, and transatlantic ties despite strains; NATO Secretary General discussed defense investments and Ukraine aid.

Zelensky addressed Davos, urging Europe to stop trying to "change" Trump, criticizing perceived weakness on Ukraine support, pushing for a Special Tribunal on Russian aggression, and noting security guarantees terms finalized but territorial issues unsolved. No major U.S.-Europe breakthroughs on peace.

Trump dominated discussions with "shock therapy" on tariffs, NATO, and peace deals; European leaders left "shaken but healthier," recognizing need to address chronic dependencies (e.g., U.S. security reliance) and boost own defense capabilities.

This week highlighted no ceasefire progress; Russia maintained hard line on territorial objectives despite U.S. envoy talks. Europe expressed concerns over U.S.-led trilateral discussions (U.S.-Russia-Ukraine in Abu Dhabi, January 23) excluding European input, fearing sidelining of EU/NATO roles.

Zelenskyy highlighted lack of progress on tribunal and guarantees at Davos; European analyses warned of bleak security environment with transatlantic strain potentially emboldening Russia.

EU foreign policy arm raised concerns about Trump's "concentration of powers" in the Gaza "Board of Peace" proposal, questioning U.S. dominance in post-conflict governance.

U.S. withdrawal from WHO (effective January 22) prompted European regret and warnings of risks to global/influenza surveillance; some EU states (e.g., new collaborating centers) moved to fill gaps in evidence-based health policy.

Emmanuel Macron warned of rising autocracy vs. democracy, record 60+ wars in 2024, hybrid threats (cyber, space, trade), and Russian aggression in Ukraine entering year 4. Criticized U.S. trade coercion/tariffs undermining European interests and sovereignty. Advocated European economic sovereignty and strategic economy. Mentioned France/Europe joining mutual defense exercise in Greenland to support Denmark without threats. Called for restored G7 dialogue on global imbalances (U.S. overconsumption, China underconsumption, Europe underinvestment) to avoid trade wars.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged Europe to form "coalition of action" and build united armed forces (less reliance on U.S./NATO). Criticized Europe's perceived weakness and dependence. Pushed stopping Russian oil tankers, bypassing sanctions on missile components, and countering threats.

Keir Starmer called Trump's initial tariffs "completely wrong" in calls; welcomed walk-back as relief. Reinforced support for Ukraine guarantees and Arctic solidarity.

Friedrich Merz (Chancellor) stood firm on sovereignty during Greenland tensions and emphasized avoiding escalation while maintaining transatlantic ties.

Giorgia Meloni Participated in European unity front and supported strategic autonomy and Ukraine commitments. Other European attendees (e.g., Poland, Nordics, Spain): Aligned with von der Leyen on Arctic/Greenland solidarity and defense spending.

The EP debated and voted on a report addressing military drones and counter-drone systems as a priority for EU defense readiness. This tied into broader strategic autonomy push amid hybrid threats (cyber, space, trade) and Russian influence, with calls for accelerated EU production and interoperability to reduce U.S. dependence.

In Abu Dhabi Trilateral Talks (U.S.-Russia-Ukraine, January 23–24, 2026) concluded without breakthrough or agreements; focused on "dignified and lasting peace" parameters

but stalled on territorial concessions (Russia's hard line on Donbas/Crimea). European leaders/EU officials voiced explicit frustration over exclusion from the format (U.S.-brokered, no EU/NATO direct involvement), fearing it sidelines European input in postwar architecture and guarantees. Zelenskyy called the discussions "constructive" publicly but highlighted ongoing Russian attacks during talks as cynical; Europe (via von der Leyen channels) urged inclusion in future rounds to avoid a U.S.-Russia bilateral deal that weakens collective deterrence.

14. The United State

Trump maintained pressure on Greenland acquisition as a "national security priority," rejecting off-ramps and insisting U.S. control would strengthen NATO/Arctic defense against Russia/China. On January 19–20, he linked the issue to a perceived Nobel snub and doubled down on threats, prompting European leaders to warn of a "dangerous downward spiral." Tariffs (10% starting February, rising to 25% by June) on eight NATO allies (Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, UK) remained in force unless a deal is reached; UK PM Starmer called them "completely wrong" in direct calls.

Trump delivered a high-profile special address at Davos, opening with praise for U.S. economic achievements under his administration and framing himself as the "tariff king." He outlined bold visions for NATO (stronger burden-sharing), trade (aggressive reciprocity), and peace initiatives (e.g., Gaza Board). He criticized multiple leaders and countries: French President Macron (drug pricing), Canadian Mark Carney, Spain, China ("loser" windmills), and others for unfair practices. He invoked historical references (e.g., WWII German invasion of Denmark to justify U.S. Greenland claims), called America "stupid" for past concessions, and doubled down on territorial ambitions while ruling out military force later in the speech.

Trump hosted and signed the founding charter of the "Board of Peace" for Gaza post-conflict governance/reconstruction. He described it as a flexible mechanism that could "do pretty much whatever we want." The event invited Gulf states, Egypt, and others to \$1B permanent seats, tying into UNSC Resolution 2803 and technocratic proposals (Hamis signaled willingness to dissolve under it, despite Netanyahu opposition). Trump framed it as U.S.-led alternative to traditional multilateralism.

Zelenskyy spoke separately (January 22), urging Europe to stop trying to "change" Trump, criticizing perceived weakness on Ukraine support, and pushing for progress on a Special Tribunal for Russian influence with no major U.S. breakthroughs announced.

Trump continued monitoring with softened claims that killings had slowed and no executions were planned. Sanctions on Iranian officials persisted, with G7/EU signaling more if crackdown worsened. Khamenei blamed Trump for deaths/damages; protests remained volatile but subdued in areas due to repression/blackouts.

The U.S. repositioned Navy and Air Force assets to the Middle East region, per national defense priorities. Officials described it as routine readiness rather than imminent action, amid lingering Iran volatility and proxy concerns. No direct link to new strikes, but it reinforced power projection in the area.

U.S. control of oil operations solidified indefinitely during transition, with additional tanker seizures enforcing quarantine. Trump discussed potential drilling expansions and peace talks in interviews; regional Latin American condemnation continued over sovereignty violations.

Trump blamed Zelenskyy as an obstacle in preparatory remarks. Davos speeches highlighted ongoing frustrations, with Zelenskyy seeking firmer U.S. commitments to Paris framework amid Russian strikes.

The January 14 announcement of an indefinite pause on immigrant visa issuances for nationals of 75 high-risk countries (effective January 21) took effect without reversal. Interviews continued, but no visas issued pending public charge/self-sufficiency review; dual nationals from non-listed countries exempted. Nonimmigrant visas remained unaffected.

Gaza "Board of Peace": Phase 2 advanced with signals of potential global mandate; funding invitations (\$1B for permanent seats) to Gulf states, Egypt, others continued, tied to UNSC Resolution 2803 and technocratic governance proposals. Hamas indicated willingness to dissolve under the plan, though Netanyahu opposition lingered.

Analyses described Trump's first-year return as a "mixed bag" of hard power (e.g., Venezuela, Iran strikes legacy) and transactional improvisation straining alliances. CFR and others noted global views of U.S. sprinting into surprising actions, with warnings of growth risks from U.S.-EU tensions (IMF), nuclear hedging, and hemispheric focus. No new military escalations in Asia or Middle East; U.S.-South Korea command and Mexico security ties reinforced.

The United States officially completed its withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO) on January 22, 2026, fulfilling President Trump's executive order from January 20, 2025 (his first day back in office), which started a one-year notice period. The U.S. ceased all participation, funding, and personnel involvement, citing the WHO's alleged mishandling of COVID-19, lack of reforms, and deviation from its core mission—leaving the agency with a funding gap and unpaid U.S. dues of approximately \$280 million. The WHO expressed regret, warning that the move makes both the U.S. and global health security weaker, while critics (including Democrats and health experts) highlighted risks to pandemic preparedness, influenza surveillance, and U.S. leadership (potentially ceded to China).

Officials confirmed planning for major upgrades to U.S. military facilities in Greenland, with troops on standby for possible deployment if tensions escalate further. This built on

Arctic strategic priorities (missile defense, countering Russia/China), even as diplomatic talks stalled. Reports highlighted it as a contingency amid the broader sovereignty dispute.

President Trump withdrew the threatened tariffs (10% starting February, rising to 25% by June) on the eight NATO allies (Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, UK). He ruled out the use of military force in Greenland and announced that a "framework deal" or immediate talks on U.S. acquisition had been reached with Denmark/Greenland. European leaders (including Costa and Starmer) expressed relief; markets reacted positively.

On January 21, 2026, at Davos, President Trump met Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and vowed to relaunch U.S.-mediated talks on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), describing it as a "dangerous issue" blocking Egypt's rightful Nile water share and offering to host the next round. El-Sisi expressed gratitude for Trump's renewed involvement and support, while both leaders reaffirmed Egypt's key role in the Gaza "Board of Peace" initiative, with el-Sisi welcoming the Board's charter signing and urging Trump to oversee its full implementation. The meeting highlighted U.S. efforts to mediate two major regional files (Nile water security and Gaza reconstruction).

15. Eurasia

Global diplomatic activity intensified around the World Economic Forum in Davos, where United States President Donald Trump suggested that a peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine may be approaching, following renewed discussions involving Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and several European leaders aimed at ending the four-year conflict. During the forum, Trump announced the establishment of a "Board of Peace" on January 22, initially conceived to address the situation in Gaza but later expanded to include broader global conflicts. Invitations were extended to major Eurasian powers, including Russia, China, and India, signaling an effort to promote wider international diplomatic engagement.

The European Union responded cautiously to the initiative, calling for clarity on the Board's mandate and that any new diplomatic mechanism must align with existing United Nations frameworks. EU officials underscored concerns regarding the initiative's implications for European security, particularly in relation to the ongoing war in Ukraine. In a related development, Russian President Vladimir Putin received an invitation earlier in the month to participate in a US-led "Peace Council" focused on Gaza, with Kremlin statements indicating that such initiatives could carry wider consequences for Eurasian diplomacy and Russia-Europe relations.

Azerbaijan also drew attention during Davos discussions held between January 21 and 23, with its leadership emphasizing the country's growing role in global energy security and regional peace initiatives in the South Caucasus. These engagements prompted increased

diplomatic interaction with both European and Asian partners. Meanwhile, EU leaders undertook a visit to India on January 23 and 24 to advance cooperation on trade, energy, and security, alongside discussions on regional stability in Asia and support for multilateral peace efforts.

In Southeast Asia, heightened security measures were observed in Hanoi from January 19 to 25 during high-level meetings of senior Communist Party officials, as discussions focused on regional peace in the Indo-Pacific and diplomatic responses to tensions in the South China Sea. On the Ukraine front, US envoy Steve Witkoff indicated on January 22 that a peace deal could be imminent ahead of a planned visit to Moscow, with talks reportedly involving economic incentives, including tariff-free arrangements for Ukraine, linked to broader European and Russian diplomatic considerations.

In the Arctic, European troops from France, Germany, and the United Kingdom continued deployments to Greenland during the week of January 18 to 25 as part of efforts to reinforce regional security amid renewed geopolitical tensions. These developments led to the formation of diplomatic working groups focused on cooperation in the High North. Elsewhere, Japan and the Philippines advanced defense cooperation, building on agreements signed earlier in the month and discussed during Davos, with a focus on logistical support and joint military exercises aimed at strengthening peace and security in the East and South China Seas amid rising regional tensions.

16. International and Regional Organizations

This week's developments across multilateral institutions reflected a convergence of institutional consolidation, strategic economic governance, and growing securitisation of geopolitical competition, particularly in Africa, the Arctic, and global trade governance. African institutions advanced constitutional normalization and mineral sovereignty frameworks, while Euro-Atlantic actors navigated trade tensions, Arctic security recalibration, and alliance cohesion. Parallel UN processes underscored rising humanitarian and climate governance pressures.

United Nation

The Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) formally entered into force, establishing a global legal framework for high seas governance, including marine protected areas and biodiversity conservation beyond national jurisdictions.

Addressing the World Economic Forum in Davos, Secretary-General António Guterres called for a renewed "Global Social Contract" and accelerated implementation of the Pact for the Future. On the same day, UNESCO released its 2026 global literacy report, warning that climate-induced displacement is disrupting education systems across East Africa and the Sahel.

OCHA launched the Global Humanitarian Overview for 2026, appealing for \$48 billion to support 190 million people amid escalating conflict, climate shocks, and economic fragility. Separately, the UNRWA Commissioner-General briefed the Security Council on the agency's 2026 Resilience Plan, focused on restoring essential health services in northern Gaza.

The UN Ad Hoc Committee finalized technical annexes for a Convention against Cybercrime, advancing the treaty toward global ratification. The Security Council also received a briefing from UNOWAS confirming Guinea's return to constitutional order, aligning with the AU's lifting of sanctions. Informal consultations continued on extending the Multinational Security Support mission in Haiti, with discussions on transitioning it into a UN peacekeeping operation by late 2026.

WHO reported a breakthrough in Pandemic Accord negotiations, reaching consensus on a framework for equitable vaccine access. Meanwhile, the UNFCCC Secretariat confirmed that 85% of parties submitted updated Nationally Determined Contributions ahead of the February 1 deadline for the 2026 climate cycle.

Africa Union

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, joined African heads of state in Conakry for the formal inauguration of General Mamadi Doumbouya as President of Guinea, marking the culmination of the country's transition roadmap.

The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) convened a virtual ambassadorial briefing on South Sudan, reviewing political and security dynamics under the Revitalised Peace Agreement. Separately, Chairperson Youssouf extended official congratulations to President Faustin-Archange Touadéra following his re-election in the Central African Republic.

Advancing Africa's resource governance agenda, the AU Commission and Chad's National Assembly agreed to jointly accelerate adoption of the African Minerals Development Centre (AMDC) Statute. In parallel, AU Commissioner Francisca Tatchouop Belobe engaged the CEN-SAD Executive Secretary to deepen regional mineral cooperation and promote African value-addition ahead of SEMICA Tchad 2026. The PSC also met in a physical session to assess the Half-Year Elections Report (July–December 2025), evaluating democratic trajectories for the remainder of 2026.

At its 1325th meeting, the PSC formally lifted Guinea's suspension from AU activities, citing the restoration of constitutional order. The AUC Chairperson additionally received Germany's Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, with discussions focusing on bilateral cooperation and continental stability.

Chad's Prime Minister Allamaye Halina received the AU Commissioner for Economic Development to align national mining policies with Agenda 2063. The AUC Chairperson also met India's Vice Minister for Economic Relations, reaffirming New Delhi's support for AU-led economic initiatives.

The AU concluded a critical phase of the 51st Ordinary Session of the Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC), finalising draft reports on the 2026 theme of Sustainable Water and Sanitation ahead of the February Summit. The PRC continued preparatory work for the 39th Ordinary Summit throughout the week.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

IGAD concluded its election observation mission in Uganda and deepened diplomatic engagement with the Netherlands. Somalia ratified the revised IGAD Treaty, strengthening institutional authority. The bloc advanced its 2026–2030 Strategy review, addressed Eritrea's impending withdrawal, and continued implementation of the Regional Trade Policy.

European Union (EU)

On 17 January, the EU and Mercosur signed a landmark trade agreement establishing a EU foreign ministers held emergency consultations on potential responses to threatened U.S. tariffs, signalling renewed transatlantic economic friction. Concurrently, the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement entered into force, with the EU moving to operationalise implementation mechanisms.

The European Parliament opened its first plenary session of 2026 in Strasbourg. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen addressed the World Economic Forum in Davos, calling for renewed dialogue in global governance. The Parliament also activated urgent procedures to implement a Ukraine Support Loan for 2026–2027.

The Commission adopted a new EU Anti-Racism Strategy and proposed amendments to the NIS2 Directive alongside revisions to the EU Cybersecurity Act. A €1.9 billion humanitarian aid budget for 2026 was announced, while von der Leyen signalled an upcoming EU Arctic security cooperation package, reaffirming Denmark and Greenland's sovereignty.

The Commission unveiled its Digital Networks Act proposal to modernise EU electronic communications infrastructure. The European Parliament debated measures to secure competitiveness in critical medicines and voted to refer the EU–Mercosur agreement to the European Court of Justice, delaying ratification.

EU leaders met informally on geostrategic issues including Ukraine and Greenland. The Commission launched €205 million in agri-food promotion programmes, while Denmark

received €175.4 million under the Recovery and Resilience Facility. The ECB published accounts confirming steady interest rates.

Reports confirmed that the EU and India reached final consensus to announce the conclusion of Free Trade Agreement negotiations at the 27 January summit. The European Parliament also marked the 40th anniversary of Spain and Portugal's accession to the EU.

ECOWAS

Throughout the week, ECOWAS advanced long-term integration agendas. Gender and youth inclusion frameworks were aligned with Liberia, while a Lagos dialogue adopted a roadmap for a Regional Digital Single Market centred on AI and fintech. Electoral reform consultations progressed in Sierra Leone, aviation tax reforms moved toward implementation, ECO currency convergence efforts continued, and the 2026 Volunteer and Immersion Programme commenced.

NATO

Eight NATO allies issued a joint statement committing to strengthened Arctic security cooperation amid emerging alliance tensions linked to U.S. tariff threats. Secretary General Mark Rutte held consultations with Danish and Greenlandic officials, as Denmark deployed additional troops to Nuuk.

At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Rutte underscored NATO's central role in European defence. Meetings with the U.S. administration resulted in the announcement of a new Arctic framework and suspension of threatened tariffs. NATO's 194th Military Committee session convened in Brussels, reaffirming alliance cohesion and coordinating Ukraine support.

NATO advanced partnerships with Azerbaijan, opened the DIANA UniLab defence accelerator in Riga, and continued Exercise Steadfast Dart 2026, testing rapid Allied Reaction Force deployment on the Eastern Flank.



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