



# Weekly Geopolitical Report

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

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**For analytical and informational purposes only**

# **Horn Review: Weekly Report**

**Feb 09 – Feb 15, 2026**

## **1. Ethiopia**

This week's developments reflect a state increasingly confident in operating across domestic, continental, and multilateral arenas. Rather than reacting to external pressures, Ethiopia is actively shaping its diplomatic tempo through layered engagements that combine political messaging, technological ambition, continental leadership, and security awareness. The cumulative effect is not episodic diplomacy but a structured effort to anchor Ethiopia within Africa's evolving strategic architecture while projecting internal stability and resilience.

At the 48th Ordinary Session of the African Union Executive Council in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, Dr. Gedion Timothewos, emphasized that Africa must leverage unity and strategic autonomy to navigate global competition and regional security challenges, particularly in the Horn of Africa. He highlighted successes like UNSC reform advocacy, climate action, Agenda 2063, and the African Continental Free Trade Area, stressing that development, trade, and partnerships should be grounded in collective strength rather than goodwill. His remarks reinforced that Africa, and the Horn in particular, must act with one voice to assert sovereignty, defend regional stability, and shape development according to continental priorities, with ports, corridors, and waterways exemplifying both opportunity and risk.

Building on this continental framing, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's keynote address at the opening of the 39th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly on February 14, 2026, elevated Ethiopia's strategic vision to a continental scale, urging Africa to evolve from reactive diplomacy toward actively shaping the global agenda as the AU approaches its Silver Jubilee. Framing secure maritime access as an existential imperative for Ethiopia's 130 million people, and essential for diversified trade, economic resilience, and long-term stability in the Horn, he positioned it within broader calls for functional sovereignty, including ownership of narratives, technology, and institutions.

Aligning with the summit's theme of assuring sustainable water availability and safe sanitation systems to advance Agenda 2063, Abiy highlighted Ethiopia's leadership in water management, through responsible dam operations and climate-resilient agriculture, as practical models for continental progress. He simultaneously championed innovation through the established AI institute and plans for a continental artificial intelligence university focused on machine learning, robotics, and data science. These elements, combined with high-level engagements, including bilateral talks with leaders from Kenya, South Africa, Somalia, and others on infrastructure, energy, and regional stability, reinforced Ethiopia's convening power as host, bridging African priorities with global

multilateralism through addresses from UN Secretary-General António Guterres, Palestinian leadership, and partners like Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. The summit's institutional milestones, including the election of Burundi's President Évariste Ndayishimiye as AU Chairperson for 2026 and the formal launch of the year's water-focused theme, further amplified Ethiopia's role in driving unity, confidence, and African-led solutions amid multipolar shifts.

A defining moment of the summit came as Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed reiterated that access to the Red Sea is an existential necessity for Ethiopia. He framed maritime access not as a preference but as a structural imperative, highlighting that geographic isolation constrains trade, inflates transport costs, and limits long-term economic security. This bold declaration signals a decisive strategic pivot, positioning Ethiopia to pursue sovereign or guaranteed access through economic corridors, partnerships, or negotiated arrangements with neighboring states. By elevating the issue to the level of national survival, Addis Ababa conveys that maritime access is central not only to economic growth but also to demographic pressures and long-term state resilience, transforming a historic geographic limitation into a catalyst for proactive regional engagement and strategic influence. Beyond the Red Sea itself, asserting narrative sovereignty enables Ethiopia to shape policy debates and the informational environment, positioning Addis Ababa as both an intellectual and diplomatic hub and aligning geographic, economic, and political ambitions into a coherent strategy for regional leadership.

During the AU summit, Prime Minister Abiy intensified this posture through high-level bilateral meetings with leaders from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Liberia, Libya, and Botswana, expanding aviation cooperation, economic ties, peace coordination, and innovation partnerships. Technology, particularly plans for a continental artificial intelligence university, was highlighted as a strategic driver for Africa's competitiveness. Concurrent discussions with António Guterres and the presidents of Mozambique and Tanzania focused on multilateral cooperation, urban development, agriculture, and peace and security. These engagements reflect a proactive outreach strategy, embedding Ethiopia within both global governance frameworks and regional stability initiatives.

The broader summit atmosphere reinforced Ethiopia's trajectory. Leaders converged around themes of innovation, partnership, and institutional resilience, while Addis Ababa leveraged host-state proximity to deepen networks across Africa. This positioning converts geography into diplomatic capital, where active engagement amplifies influence.

Parallel diplomatic activity beyond the continent, exemplified by reciprocal visits with Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, signals strategic convergence on political coordination, economic investment, and regional stability. Such reciprocity emphasizes the growing

importance of the Red Sea corridor and Gulf–Horn connectivity as structurally intertwined strategic priorities.

Equally notable, Ethiopia is increasingly prioritizing technological acceleration, implementing policies to expand digital infrastructure and innovation ecosystems, including the development of a national **digital police system** to enhance public safety, law enforcement, and governance efficiency. These initiatives reflect a broader recognition that future geopolitical relevance will hinge on technological capacity alongside demographic weight, while also supporting knowledge-driven growth, improved service delivery, and secure digital governance, complementing Ethiopia's continental and global ambitions.

Recent reporting by Reuters has raised sensitive claims linking Ethiopia to alleged activities involving Rapid Support Forces from Sudan, but presenting such assertions without fully verified, on-the-ground evidence risks unfairly casting Ethiopia in a negative light internationally, adding unnecessary diplomatic pressure and overlooking the country's consistent interest in regional stability, sovereignty, and constructive engagement rather than conflict.

On the continental front, discussions surrounding emerging African platforms and cooperative programs suggest the potential development of major continental hubs, providing Africa with opportunities akin to influential European initiatives. For Ethiopia, participation in such frameworks offers expanded economic gateways, talent mobility, and enhanced policy influence, reinforcing its role in shaping Africa's future development trajectory.

At the multilateral level, the United Nations Security Council calls for continued attention to African stability, further underscoring the need for coordinated international support, anchoring Ethiopia's national priorities within recognized global governance processes.

Not all signals point toward stability. Recent statements and actions by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), including warnings that it "will not stay idle" if the Pretoria Agreement is perceived as breached, along with allegations of federal forces advancing or violating the accord through military preparations and operations in Tigray, reflect an obstructive stance that disregards its own commitments under the 2022 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. These claims come amid documented TPLF-led offensives in late January 2026 in disputed border areas (such as Tselemt and southern zones like Alamata and Korem), which initiated large-scale clashes with the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) and allied forces, the most significant since the war's end. TPLF coordination with Eritrea, including alleged intelligence support and infiltration, despite historical enmities, further complicates regional dynamics and risks broader escalation tied to Red Sea tensions.

Such developments emphasize the fragility of the peace: the TPLF's provocations, failure to fully disarm or withdraw from contested territories, and external alignments challenge national cohesion and the Pretoria framework. Ethiopia maintains that dialogue remains possible for those honoring the agreement, but any attempts to undermine it through armed actions, border violations, or proxy support will face resolute measures to preserve stability and sovereignty.

Taken together, the week reveals Ethiopia practicing calibrated statecraft. Diplomatic activism at the AU, narrative sovereignty over the Red Sea, technology prioritization, strategic Gulf partnerships, and vigilance toward internal disruptions collectively reflect a logic of autonomy without isolation. Ethiopia is constructing strategic optionality, diversifying relationships while strengthening domestic capacity.

What emerges is not a sudden pivot but a steady consolidation of geopolitical weight. In a region often defined by reactive politics, Ethiopia's recent moves demonstrate an anticipatory strategy: shaping conversations, building institutions, and embedding itself in overlapping networks of cooperation. If sustained, Addis Ababa is positioned not only as a continental diplomatic capital but as one of Africa's principal strategic anchors, with the Red Sea imperative forming a centerpiece of long-term economic and geopolitical planning.

## **2. Sudan**

Sudan's war intensified this week amid escalating battlefield operations, mounting evidence of war crimes, expanding diplomatic activity at the African Union (AU) summit, and renewed international calls for a humanitarian truce during Ramadan. The conflict continues to widen militarily while diplomatic and regional pressure increases, particularly around foreign involvement and civilian protection.

The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) reported destroying a second Rapid Support Forces (RSF) air defence system in West Kordofan, following a similar strike days earlier in South Kordofan. Military sources identified the system as a Chinese-made FB-10 short-range missile defence platform, reportedly used to target low-flying aircraft and drones. The operation, carried out via drone strikes, reflects SAF efforts to degrade RSF's advanced air defence capabilities, particularly around Kordofan, Nyala Airport, and El Fasher.

Fighting continued in El Fasher, where the UN accused the RSF of violations that may amount to war crimes following its capture of the city. Reports cited systematic killings, ethnic targeting, and attacks on civilian infrastructure. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) stated that violations committed during the takeover could constitute war crimes under international law.

Meanwhile, residents in previously besieged urban areas described fragile returns to normalcy after prolonged sieges, though drone threats remain persistent. Military escalation in Kordofan and Blue Nile has been accompanied by increasing use of drones and aerial capabilities, raising concerns over civilian exposure.

Humanitarian conditions remain catastrophic. The UN warned that famine and starvation are worsening, particularly in El Fasher, while cross-border displacement flows continue, according to the latest DTM monitoring report. Aid access remains heavily constrained.

A coalition known as the Quintet (AU, IGAD, UN, EU, Arab League) called for a Ramadan humanitarian truce, urging both parties to pause hostilities to allow aid delivery. The appeal followed reports of destructive tactics, siege warfare, and attacks on infrastructure. The coalition emphasized compliance with international humanitarian law and referenced UN Security Council Resolution 2736.

The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) echoed these concerns, condemning systematic killings, ethnic targeting, and RSF violations, while stressing that there can be no military solution to the conflict.

The AU opened its 39th Ordinary Summit in Addis Ababa with Sudan absent for the fifth consecutive year due to its suspension following the 2021 coup. The PSC maintained Sudan's suspension but formally endorsed Prime Minister Kamil Idris's National Peace Initiative, which includes ceasefire proposals, civilian protection measures, and national reconciliation frameworks.

The Council rejected the RSF-linked "parallel government" and called for the protection of Sudan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It also instructed its sanctions mechanisms to coordinate with continental security bodies (CISSA and AFRIPOL) to identify foreign entities providing military or financial support to combatants. However, to bolster its on-the-ground engagement, the AU announced plans to reopen its liaison office in Sudan and to conduct a field mission to engage directly with local stakeholders.

African leaders, including outgoing AU Chair João Lourenço and incoming Chair Évariste Ndayishimiye, called for urgent international intervention to halt the war. UN Secretary-General António Guterres also urged an immediate end to hostilities and an inclusive political pathway.

Despite diplomatic efforts, AU members failed to reach a consensus on reinstating Sudan's membership.

IGAD's special envoy, Lawrence Korbandy, denied allegations of bias and described the bloc as an "honest broker" following Sudan's recent return to IGAD. He emphasized coordination through the Quintet framework to pursue a humanitarian truce and eventual ceasefire.

However, internal Sudanese political fragmentation deepened. Divisions emerged within the Freedom and Change – Democratic Bloc after unauthorized meetings with international mediators in Addis Ababa triggered public disputes among spokespersons. The split highlights widening fractures within civilian and armed political coalitions over engagement with mediation processes.

Sudan's foreign minister accused external actors of interfering in the conflict, claiming Sudan is "protecting Africa from foreign interference." Simultaneously, regional and international reporting placed Ethiopia and the UAE under scrutiny regarding alleged roles or influence in the conflict dynamics.

The AU PSC explicitly called for an end to foreign military support to the warring parties, underscoring growing continental concern over external involvement prolonging the war.

### **Assessment**

This week underscores a dual dynamic: military intensification alongside expanding diplomatic pressure. SAF's targeted strikes on RSF air defence systems signal a tactical shift aimed at degrading paramilitary capabilities, while RSF operations in Darfur continue to generate allegations of war crimes.

At the diplomatic level, the AU summit amplified calls for a ceasefire, humanitarian truce, and accountability, yet Sudan remains suspended, and mediation efforts remain fragmented. The Ramadan truce proposal presents a narrow opportunity for de-escalation, but continued foreign involvement, battlefield escalation, and political fragmentation limit immediate prospects for resolution.

Sudan's war is increasingly defined by strategic weapon escalation, siege-driven humanitarian collapse, and a widening gap between diplomatic initiatives and realities on the ground.

## **3. Egypt**

On February 11, 2026, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi implemented a cabinet reshuffle, introducing new ministers such as Diaa Rashwan for information and Mohamed Farid Saleh for investment. This restructuring included the merger of the local development and environment ministries under Manal Awad and the separation of transport from industry. The adjustments were intended to strengthen the economy amid rising debt, with Hussein Issa appointed as deputy prime minister focused on economic affairs and an expansion of the foreign affairs ministry to include international cooperation.

However, these changes faced criticism for being superficial, with detractors claiming they merely recycled established figures without addressing the systemic inefficiencies that contribute to inflation and undermine public trust. MPs like Freddy Elbaiady pointed

out that the reshuffle offered no real reforms, highlighting the ongoing disconnect between leadership actions and the needs of the populace.

This internal recalibration was accompanied by Egypt's assertive outreach in volatile regions. On February 9, President El-Sisi hosted Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in Cairo, reaffirming Egypt's commitment to Somalia's sovereignty against separatist pressures and pledging troops to the African Union's mission aimed at counter-terrorism and safeguarding the Red Sea. However, the potential deployment of up to 10,000 soldiers outside multilateral frameworks raises concerns about Sisi's strategy of over-militarization.

This move threatens to exacerbate Somalia's already complex landscape, characterized by al-Shabab insurgencies and tribal conflicts, likely increasing operational chaos and deepening fragmentation in a nation where foreign military interventions have historically worsened divisions rather than fostering stability.

Furthermore, this security posture extended into Egypt's relations with Gulf states, where economic discussions masked underlying tensions. During El-Sisi's meeting with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed in Abu Dhabi on February 9, the leaders discussed advancing investments in energy and trade, while also addressing the Gaza crisis and the pursuit of a two-state solution for lasting stability.

Yet, this diplomatic engagement starkly contrasted with revelations earlier in February about Egyptian drone strikes on the alleged UAE-backed Rapid Support Forces in Sudan, launched from the Oweinat airstrip, a site heavily invested in by Emirati agricultural initiatives. This situation endangers those investments and highlights how strategic rivalries can undermine purported economic alliances.

Complementing this, Egypt's ties with Kuwait were highlighted on February 13 during an event celebrating 65 years of diplomatic relations, reflecting a history of mutual support during crises such as the 1990 invasion of Kuwait and the 1973 war. Ambassador Ghanem Al-Ghanem emphasized shared leadership visions aimed at fostering deeper economic unity as a cornerstone of Arab resilience. Similarly, on February 15, Egyptian and UAE foreign ministers engaged in discussions about Donald Trump's Gaza peace initiative, emphasizing the importance of humanitarian aid and de-escalation to maintain collaborative frameworks amid ongoing regional tensions.

These bilateral efforts align with Egypt's broader continental ambitions, as President al-Sisi announced on February 10 that Egypt would host the 2026 African Business Summit. This event aims to enhance continental integration through partnerships in the private sector and finance, highlighting significant achievements such as the mobilization of 500 billion in projects and 100 million dedicated to health initiatives under the leadership of AUDA-NEPAD.



Further reinforcing continental solidarity, Egypt and South Sudan signed a humanitarian cooperation pact in Juba on February 11, 2026, emphasizing disaster management, skill development, and flood early warning systems to tackle Nile basin vulnerabilities; yet, this resurgence in ties after a quiet period since 2020-2022 stems from Egypt's strategic imperatives to secure Nile water flows, counter Ethiopia's GERD influence and expand economic and diplomatic leverage in East Africa through embedded technical aid.

On February 14, Egypt's intelligence agency initiated an anti-Mossad campaign in partnership with China's Ministry of State Security across Africa. This effort involves deploying radar technology, conducting joint military drills, and establishing diplomatic barriers in Libya, Sudan, and Somalia, ostensibly to safeguard borders and protect Belt and Road projects. However, this initiative capitalizes on the continent's existing governance challenges and ongoing conflicts, such as Sudan's civil war and Somalia's instability. By embedding surveillance under the guise of security, it risks escalating proxy wars and mischaracterizing Israeli economic activities as threats.

This approach undermines the African Union's mediation efforts and could alienate neutral states that are cautious about foreign interference. The deepening ties, including intelligence-sharing between China's Ninth Bureau and Egypt, further advance Beijing's resource extraction interests. Meanwhile, Cairo's reactionary position against perceived Israeli expansion fails to address pressing domestic issues, such as water scarcity. This miscalculation could lead to potential U.S. sanctions, countermeasures from Mossad, and increased ethnic tensions, all without effectively tackling poverty or climate vulnerabilities.

#### **4. Eritrea**

Eritrea has responded to Ethiopia's letter, addressed to the Eritrean Foreign Minister, which demanded the withdrawal of Eritrean troops from what Ethiopia claims is its territory and called for negotiations. In a brief press release, Asmara dismissed Ethiopia's statements as "fabricated." This response underscores a fundamental disconnect between Addis Ababa and Asmara's interpretations of the situation. With dialogue appearing increasingly remote, the risk of open conflict remains significant.

Reports indicate a notable increase in Eritrean troop deployments inside Tigray, with some sources claiming Eritrean forces have reached the regional capital, Mekelle. This expanded presence, combined with growing coordination between the TPLF and Asmara, raises the prospect of a wider regional conflict.

Saudi Arabia appears to be pursuing a mediation effort between the two nations. On Wednesday, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, while his deputy, Waleed bin Abdulkarim, traveled to Asmara for talks with President Isaias Afwerki.

Eritreans celebrated the anniversary of "Operation Fenkil," marking the 1990 capture of the strategic port city of Massawa by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) during its war against the Derg regime. The operation is widely regarded as a turning point that paved the way for the EPLF's eventual victory over Ethiopia.

Leaders from the Eritrean Blue Revolution Movement, an opposition group challenging the Isaias Afwerki regime, met with former U.S. Ambassador Tibor Nagy, a prominent voice on U.S. policy toward Ethiopia and Eritrea, and House Speaker Mike Johnson. The Blue Revolution Movement has been active in lobbying Western governments to increase pressure on Asmara. These efforts present a direct challenge to the Eritrean regime's recent attempts to improve relations with Washington under the Trump administration, effectively turning the U.S. capital into contested ground between the government and its opposition.

## **5. Djibouti**

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) headquartered in Djibouti has officially welcomed Sudan's decision to resume its full participation in the regional bloc. This ends a two year suspension that was prompted by Sudan's internal civil conflict. In a statement IGAD Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu hailed Sudan's return as a reaffirmation of regional solidarity, peace, and cooperation. He specifically praised Djibouti's President Ismail Omar Guelleh in his capacity as the current IGAD Chairperson for his leadership in guiding the process through dialogue and consensus.

President Guelleh landed at Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa to attend the 39th Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Assembly of Heads of State and Government. The main sessions are scheduled for February 14-15 with preparatory meetings already in progress. He was received by Ethiopia's Minister of Innovation and Technology Belete Molla and the State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ambassador Berhanu Tsegaye. President Guelleh's arrival positions Djibouti for active participation in continental discussions focused on advancing the priorities of the AU's Agenda 2063 including sustainable water and sanitation, infrastructure development, and regional stability.

As part of the 39th AU Summit schedule, IGAD headquartered in Djibouti and with President Guelleh serving as Chair participated in the African Union's Inter-Regional Economic Communities (RECs) Coordination Platform held in Addis Ababa. Discussions centered on enhancing collaboration in the areas of peace, regional integration, and the infrastructure and water and sanitation goals of Agenda 2063. The Djiboutian delegation played a key role in the talks contributing to efforts to strengthen synergies between the RECs and the African Union Commission.

Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu also led an IGAD delegation to the 39th AU Summit's preparatory sessions in Addis Ababa, which commenced on February 10. The delegation joined a high-level engagement titled Unlocking Groundwater Investments through Strategic Partnerships aimed at advancing the water and sanitation goals of Agenda 2063. This participation conducted under Djibouti's IGAD chairmanship reflects the country's leadership in elevating regional perspectives within continental policy frameworks and promoting sustainable development priorities.

On the margins of the AU Summit meetings in Addis Ababa United Nations Secretary General António Guterres held bilateral talks with President Guelleh. Their discussion focused on peace and security developments in the Horn of Africa including regional stability, conflict prevention and the IGAD mediated efforts addressing the ongoing Sudan crisis and broader dynamics in the Red Sea. The meeting also covered strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and Djibouti.

## **6. South Sudan**

Clashes in Jonglei State intensified this week, triggering fresh displacement and civilian casualties, according to humanitarian flash updates. Aid agencies warn that intercommunal violence and armed mobilization are worsening an already fragile security environment. Al Jazeera reported a deepening humanitarian crisis as violence surges across multiple regions, compounding food insecurity and protection risks. Cross-border monitoring data covering late 2025 shows continued outward and return movements, underscoring instability along key corridors.

The United Nations Security Council issued a press statement expressing concern over rising violence and delays in implementing the revitalized peace agreement. Separately, the UN cautioned against the premature closure of peacekeeping bases in Bentiu and Wau, warning such moves could leave civilians exposed amid escalating tensions.

Analysis this week highlighted deepening divisions within the unity government and competing political narratives undermining the 2018 peace agreement. Tensions between factions aligned with President Salva Kiir and opposition elements linked to the SPLM-IO continue to stall security sector reforms and transitional arrangements. A New York Times report detailed the detention of a prominent peace activist over alleged coup plotting, raising further concerns about shrinking political space.

At the African Union summit in Addis Ababa, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa warned that the coming months will be decisive for South Sudan's future and called for urgent action to stabilize the country. Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune echoed calls for stronger continental engagement. President Kiir attended meetings in Addis Ababa amid mounting diplomatic scrutiny over the stalled transition.

Relief agencies reported persistent access challenges due to insecurity, bureaucratic impediments, and damaged infrastructure. Updated access maps show large swathes of the country remain difficult to reach, while January snapshots documented violence against aid workers and restrictions on humanitarian movement.

In another development, South Sudan participated in a knowledge exchange with Ethiopia to learn from Mozambique's early warning systems for disaster risk reduction, reflecting efforts to strengthen preparedness amid recurring floods and climate shocks.

The African Development Bank approved \$214.5 million for a regional transport corridor linking Ethiopia, Djibouti, and South Sudan, aimed at improving connectivity and trade routes. Rwanda signaled readiness to support post-conflict reconstruction efforts once conditions permit.

## **Assessment**

With escalating localized violence, political mistrust, and delayed reforms, South Sudan faces a critical period. Regional leaders are urging preventive diplomacy to avoid relapse into broader conflict, while humanitarian actors warn that continued instability will further strain already vulnerable communities.

## **7. Somalia and Somaliland**

### **Somalia**

The Federal Government of Somalia barred opposition leaders from accessing Aden Adde International Airport in Mogadishu on Friday preventing them from entering the Halane camp area which hosts foreign diplomatic missions and currently shelters Jubaland and Puntland leaders. Former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed was denied entry a day prior. These figures now consolidated under the Somali Future Council oppose the government's proposed unilateral constitutional amendments and electoral arrangements. Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre visited Sharif on Thursday evening to issue an apology and assure that such restrictions would not hinder future political dialogue.

Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre led separate consultations with key stakeholders to advance preparations for a high-level government opposition forum. Discussions involved Puntland President Said Abdullahi Deni, Jubaland President Ahmed Mohamed Islam Madoobe, former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and former Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble. These talks aim to resolve electoral disputes and constitutional disagreements ahead of the expiration of mandates in May 2026.

The opposition aligned Somali Future Council held internal consultations in Mogadishu, involving Presidents Deni and Madoobe alongside other key figures. The meeting was

convened to unify opposition positions ahead of anticipated negotiations with the FGS on elections, constitutional reforms, and national unity.

Somali Defense Minister Ahmed Moallim Fiqi and Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman signed a memorandum of understanding on military and defense cooperation in Riyadh. The agreement aims to strengthen bilateral defense ties and covers areas of mutual interest, including regional stability and Red Sea security. The pact follows recent diplomatic shifts, including Israel's recognition of Somaliland, and aligns with Mogadishu's broader strategy to secure technical and military support from key regional allies.

On February 12, 2026, Kenyan President William Ruto announced the reopening of the Mandera border post with Somalia in April 2026, ending a nearly 15-year closure implemented in October 2011 due to Al-Shabaab cross-border attacks following Operation Linda Nchi. The decision approved by Kenya's National Security Council aims to revitalize cross-border trade, reconnect communities, and end regional marginalization, with President Ruto emphasizing a heavy deployment of security forces to mitigate risks. This follows failed reopening attempts in May 2023 and 2022 due to subsequent attacks and comes after the Interior Ministry had already approved specific border points for miraa transport by road.

Somali Police Chief Brigadier General Asad Osman Abdullahi met with Algeria's Director General of National Security, Ali Badawi, in Algiers. The talks focused on bilateral cooperation against transnational crime, cybercrime, and enhancing border security. Discussions included a roadmap for specialized training and forensic capacity building for Somali police, attended by Somalia's Ambassador to Algeria, Yusuf Jeego.

Fierce fighting occurred near Barsanguuni outside Kismayo involving Somali National Army units, U.S.-trained Danab special forces, and Jubaland regional forces against Al-Shabaab militants. The Ministry of Defense reported 14 militants killed. Al-Shabaab claimed via its Andalus Radio that its fighters ambushed Danab and U.S. forces, asserting that it killed 32 Danab soldiers, including seven officers, and seized five vehicles. The group also alleged that U.S. forces were firing mortars into civilian areas.

U.S. Africa Command conducted an airstrike against ISIS-Somalia militants in the Golis Mountains, approximately 50 km southeast of Bossaso, Puntland. Coordinated with the FGS, the operation aimed to degrade the group's capacity to threaten U.S. interests and regional stability. The strike is part of ongoing joint counterterrorism efforts with Somali forces.

Modern Turkish tanks were offloaded from a Turkish naval vessel at Mogadishu port and transported through the city to Somali National Army warehouses. Deputy Mayor for Politics and Security Mohamed Ahmed Diriye confirmed the equipment belongs to

Somalia and will be deployed in military operations to modernize and strengthen national forces. Turkey expanded its military modernization assistance to Somalia through the delivery of M48 and M60 Patton main battle tanks, which arrived aboard the Turkish Navy landing ship TCG Sancaktar at the Port of Mogadishu and were subsequently transported through the capital in convoy. This armoured vehicle transfer follows Turkey's late January deployment of F-16 fighter jets to Mogadishu, marking Ankara's first forward stationing of manned combat aircraft in Somalia.

In a meeting on the margins of the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, Nick Checker, Senior Bureau Official for the U.S. State Department's Bureau of African Affairs, expressed appreciation for counterterrorism cooperation with President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud but set "firm expectations for progress on security and accountability. Analysts characterized the public framing of these expectations as undiplomatic.

Following its February 12 ministerial meeting, the AU Peace and Security Council issued a communiqué strongly condemning Israel's December 2025 recognition of Somaliland, declaring it null and void and demanding immediate withdrawal. The PSC reaffirmed Somalia's internationally recognized borders as non-negotiable and expressed full AU support for Somalia's sovereignty and unity.

The AU PSC convened at the ministerial level in Addis Ababa to assess the situation in Somalia and operations of the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM). Discussions addressed security gains, sustainable financing, counterterrorism efforts, and safeguarding progress amid regional challenges. A communiqué outlining key considerations was adopted.

President Mohamud arrived in Ethiopia's capital to participate in the 39th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, themed on sustainable water and sanitation for Agenda 2063. He was received at Bole International Airport in a continued high-level diplomatic engagement.

Speaking at the AU Assembly, President Mohamud commended African leaders for their unified stance against Israel's recognition of Somaliland, reiterating Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity as non-negotiable. He expressed gratitude for AU support, including Somalia's recent election to the PSC, and highlighted democratic progress, such as local elections in Banadir, as steps toward one-person-one-vote polls planned for later in 2026.

On the sidelines of the AU Summit, Somalia's Foreign Minister Abdisalam Ali chaired the sixth high-level A3 meeting comprising Somalia, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo as African non-permanent members of the UN Security Council. The session aimed to enhance Africa's unified voice at the UNSC, reflecting Somalia's growing diplomatic role.

The African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) issued a press release congratulating Somalia on its election to the AU PSC for the 2026–2028 term. The Special Representative described the election as a reflection of progress in security and state-building and emphasized Somalia's role in regional stability.

## **Somaliland**

In an exclusive interview published on February 9, Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi (Irro) launched a direct diplomatic overture to the incoming Trump administration, leveraging the momentum generated by Israel's December 2025 recognition of Somaliland. President Irro positioned Somaliland as a resource-rich and strategically located partner for the United States, emphasizing significant untapped mineral deposits and the territory's Red Sea coastline as assets for potential U.S. investment and security cooperation. The interview reflects Hargeisa's broader strategy to convert Israel's recognition into expanded bilateral relations with Washington and other Western capitals, with particular emphasis on mining sector development and counterterrorism partnerships in the Horn of Africa.

Senator Jim Risch, Chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, publicly raised serious allegations regarding Emirati-linked weapons trafficking through Somaliland's Berbera port to Sudan's Rapid Support Forces. The Senator described the RSF as genocidal thugs and expressed deep concern over these allegations, which raise significant questions regarding regional stability, arms flow monitoring mechanisms in the Horn, and the potential involvement of Somaliland's primary commercial port in fueling the ongoing Sudan conflict.

Authorities in Hargeisa successfully mediated a cease-fire agreement between two rival clans engaged in deadly clashes in western Somaliland near the territory's border areas. The reconciliation process, facilitated by Somaliland's interior ministry and local elders, aims to halt recent hostilities and restore stability to the affected districts. Officials in Hargeisa praised the agreement as a demonstration of effective local governance and the territory's traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.

## **8. Yemen**

UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg has cautioned that Yemen risks being drawn into a wider regional conflict without a comprehensive political settlement. He stressed that recent gains in stability and economic improvements remain fragile and could quickly unravel if political, economic, and security issues are not addressed holistically. Grundberg also called on the Houthis to release detained UN and civil society personnel.

## 9. Kenya

President William Ruto opened the week on 9 February by addressing Nairobi's diplomatic corps. He pledged to deepen Kenya's global engagement and called for a rules-based international order rooted in inclusive multilateralism. Excluding Africa, he warned, erodes the United Nations' legitimacy. Ruto stressed that Kenya's own development is inseparable from stability in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes, making global peace and African security two sides of the same coin.

Kenya's attention then turned to continental leadership. From 13 to 15 February, President Ruto joined the 39th African Union Summit in Addis Ababa. He told fellow heads of state that the Assembly must deliver deep institutional reforms, decisive climate action, and accelerated continental integration. In parallel, he committed to advancing his "transformation agenda" – infrastructure, agro-industry, irrigation, and energy – by mobilising AU partners. Nairobi also assumed the chair of the new AU committee on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), signalling a clear push to translate the trade pact into tangible economic gains.

At the summit, Ruto tabled ambitious pan-African proposals. He urged members to capitalise on an AU Peace Fund at \$1 billion to finance both security operations and development projects. He highlighted AfCFTA's projected addition of roughly \$1.4 trillion to Africa's GDP by 2045 and pressed African banks to fund domestic industries, notably pharmaceuticals, so the continent can reduce its dependence on imported medicines. These initiatives reflect Nairobi's conviction that unity among African states is the surest route to economic strength and collective security.

Climate diplomacy remained high on the agenda. On the margins of the summit, President Ruto met leaders of the Green Climate Fund and reiterated Kenya's desire for stronger cooperation. With agriculture accounting for nearly one-third of GDP, Kenya needs substantially more climate finance to safeguard its farmers and pursue low-carbon growth. The message was clear: vulnerable economies must receive the resources required to adapt to floods, droughts, and other climate shocks.

On the peace-making front, Kenya adjusted its mediation of South Sudan's Tumaini process. On 9 February, Nairobi announced a short delay in the formal launch so the talks could be aligned with the IGAD/AU summit on Sudan and South Sudan held in Addis Ababa on 15 February. Ambassador Mohammed Guyo, speaking for President Ruto (the initiative's principal facilitator), explained that the summit's guidance and IGAD leadership would help bring all parties – including holdout groups – into a genuinely solution-oriented dialogue.

Security cooperation with neighbours also advanced. On 5 February, Ethiopia and Kenya convened the inaugural meeting of their Joint Defence Committee in Nairobi to



operationalise the 2025 defence pact. The three-day session produced clear rules for intelligence sharing, joint training, and coordinated counter-terrorism. Ethiopian officers described the partnership as one built on mutual trust and essential for lasting regional peace.

In a significant border policy shift, Kenya announced it will reopen the Mandera crossing with Somalia in April 2026, ending a closure that lasted nearly 15 years. President Ruto declared that isolating Kenyan communities in Mandera from their Somali kin was unacceptable. The decision follows renewed confidence that security risks along the frontier can now be managed effectively.

Further afield, the United States reaffirmed Kenya's strategic importance. From 5 to 6 February, the deputy commander of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), Lt. Gen. John Brennan, held talks with Kenyan military leaders in Nairobi and at Manda Bay. He described Kenya as "a security anchor" in East Africa and praised the "generational" partnership in joint exercises, intelligence sharing, and counter-terrorism. The visit confirmed continued American support for Kenyan forces and bases in the fight against al-Shabaab.

At home, a brief security incident occurred on 12 February. During a youth forum in Wajir, a civilian breached the outer cordon and ran toward President Ruto. Security officers swiftly tackled the man before he reached the stage. Inspector General Japhet Koome ordered an immediate investigation, stating that the president was never in danger but that all procedures would be reviewed. National intelligence later confirmed no broader plot existed.

Finally, on 10 February, Kenya confronted a troubling international issue. Foreign Minister Musalia Mudavadi told the BBC that Nairobi would demand answers from Russia after credible reports that roughly 200 Kenyan citizens had been recruited to fight in Ukraine. He condemned the practice as "unacceptable and clandestine," noting the distress of families unable to repatriate the bodies of those killed. The government has closed suspect recruitment agencies and is coordinating with Ukraine to bring any victims home, underscoring Kenya's firm stance that its citizens must not be drawn into foreign conflicts.

In summary, the week showed a confident, outward-looking Kenya: active at the African Union, resolute on climate finance, pragmatic on border policy, and determined to protect its people from exploitation abroad while strengthening partnerships at home and across the region.

## **10. The Gulf Countries**

### **Saudi Arabia**

On Monday, February 9, Saudi Arabia signed a defense agreement with Somalia. According to Mogadishu, the agreement "aims to strengthen the frameworks of defense and military cooperation between the two countries, and includes multiple areas of common interest, serving the strategic interests of both parties."

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan and his delegation participated in the Munich Security Conference. Reports indicate the Kingdom raised issues including Palestinian statehood and the two-state solution, the Yemen conflict, and broader security challenges facing the Middle East.

### **UAE**

At the African Union summit held last week, the UAE dispatched its Minister of State Sheikh Shakhboot bin Nahyan, regarded as the Emirati's top diplomat for Africa. And on Saturday, a report indicated that "The UAE has committed more than \$110 billion in investments across Africa since 2019, with much of that targeting renewable energy and logistics infrastructure to support industrial growth and trade integration."

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi travelled to the UAE to meet with President Mohammad Bin Zayed. The meeting comes amidst an increasingly fraught relationship between Egypt and the UAE, and a growing relationship between Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The UAE is known to have made considerable investments in Egypt in the past and holds significant financial leverage over Cairo. In addition, the two stand on opposite poles in Sudan, with each pursuing diverging interests in the country.

Emirati President Mohammad Bin Zayed also met with Qatar's emir, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. UAE-Qatari relations have been bumpy recently, amidst a fallout between the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, in which Qatar sided with the latter.

In line with the recent diplomatic activities of the UAE, Turkish President Erdogan was expected to meet Mohammad Bin Zayed in Abu Dhabi, due to what was reported to be a health issue on the part of the Emirati President; the meeting has been postponed.

## **11. Africa and The Sahel Region**

### **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**

President Tshisekedi accepted an Angola-brokered ceasefire for eastern Congo, set to begin 18 February, freezing frontlines and cutting rebel supplies. M23 immediately questioned the deal, saying it was never consulted, while fresh clashes continued in South Kivu. The UN is preparing monitors, yet history of broken truces leaves little confidence.

Economic activity pushed ahead regardless: Eni shipped its first LNG cargo from Nguya, and new mining agreements were signed in Cape Town. At the same time, cholera alerts rose, children were abducted into militias, and thousands fled renewed fighting. Uganda stays to fight ADF; South Africa begins pulling its MONUSCO troops.

Diplomacy offers a thin opening, but without fixing governance failures and foreign meddling, the familiar cycle of fragile deals and fresh violence is likely to repeat.

## **Mali**

The same tension between repression at home and combat in the field defines the situation in Mali. An appeals court in Bamako upheld a two-year prison sentence against former Prime Minister Moussa Mara for social-media posts that expressed solidarity with jailed critics of the junta. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International promptly condemned the verdict as politically motivated, warning that the ruling stifles the very public debate needed to heal a fractured society. When a government treats even mild dissent as a threat, it signals not strength but insecurity, and insecurity in turn deepens the alienation that insurgent groups exploit.

At the same time, Malian troops announced the neutralization of roughly a dozen suspected terrorists in the central region between Bambara-Maoude and Inadjatafane. These operations demonstrate professional competence and offer brief respite to threatened communities, yet they also highlight the limits of a purely kinetic strategy. Without credible institutions, inclusive politics, and visible improvements in daily life, battlefield gains risk becoming isolated episodes in an endless cycle. The parallel tracks of internal crackdown and external fighting in Mali thus mirror the broader Sahelian dilemma: regimes that tighten control at home while battling enemies in the bush often find that each effort undermines the other.

## **Burkina Faso**

The Sahel's central corridor remains locked in a grinding contest between fragile state authority and resilient insurgent networks, nowhere more visibly than in Burkina Faso. In the northern town of Nare, suspected jihadist fighters struck an army detachment and associated civilian volunteers over several days, leaving at least ten dead. Such losses, tragic in themselves, also expose a deeper pattern: more than a decade of violence has shown that military pressure alone cannot extinguish the social and economic grievances that sustain extremism. When the state's reach is thin and local communities feel abandoned, even tactical victories prove temporary.

Against this backdrop, Ouagadougou is quietly but deliberately widening its partnership with Russia. The foreign ministers of the two countries met in Moscow to advance military-technical cooperation, joint counter-terrorism work, and media collaboration. The

move is neither impulsive nor isolated; it reflects a calculated search for partners who deliver tangible support without attaching lectures on governance or human rights. In the long arc of Sahelian politics, this pivot illustrates a recurring reality: when established alliances fail to guarantee security, governments turn to those who ask fewer questions, even if the ultimate price of such bargains remains to be seen.

## **Nigeria**

Vice-President Kashim Shettima returned from the African Union summit in Addis Ababa having engaged constructively with continental leaders and the UN Secretary-General. That engagement found concrete form in a new bilateral agreement with Angola exempting holders of diplomatic and official passports from visa requirements, a modest but practical step that eases the daily work of governance across borders.

Abuja has also thrown its support behind African Union reforms focused on peace, security, and democratic norms—priorities that carry special weight when neighboring states are sliding toward authoritarian consolidation. In the same spirit, the Nigerian government has renewed its warnings against citizens being lured into foreign conflicts, including the war in Ukraine. These measures reveal a consistent philosophy: security is best pursued not by closing ranks with distant powers or silencing critics, but by strengthening the rules-based continental order and protecting citizens from external exploitation.

Across the Sahel, the events of the past week therefore form a single, cautionary story. Where Burkina Faso and Mali illustrate the costs of prolonged insurgency and inward-looking authoritarianism, Nigeria points toward an alternative grounded in institutional cooperation and accountable leadership. The region's future will depend on which model ultimately proves more durable: the one that trades legitimacy for short-term survival, or the one that bets on shared norms and collective resilience. The coming months will test whether the latter can inspire its neighbors before the former entrenches itself further.

## **12. North Africa**

### **Morocco**

In the evolving dynamics of North Africa's most intractable dispute, the United States orchestrated a significant diplomatic breakthrough in Madrid on February 8 and 9, convening high-level delegations from Morocco, the Polisario Front, Algeria, and Mauritania for the first direct talks since 2019. Facilitated alongside the United Nations and focused on implementing Security Council Resolution 2797, the meetings advanced Morocco's detailed autonomy proposal as the foundation for a mutually acceptable resolution. This quadripartite format, with Washington assuming a leading role, reflects a strategic push to transform long-standing rivalries into structured negotiations, offering a

rare pathway toward stability in a region where proxy influences have perpetuated division.

Yet this momentum collides with the unyielding realities on the ground. On February 13, the Sahrawi People's Liberation Army reported precise strikes on a Moroccan base in the Farsia sector's Agrara Shadida area, claiming substantial losses to occupation forces through concentrated bombardment. Such actions, recurrent since the ceasefire's erosion, affirm Polisario's commitment to armed resistance amid stalled self-determination aspirations. Together, these developments reveal the delicate tension in protracted conflicts: diplomatic initiatives gain traction only when they address the core grievances that sustain low-intensity warfare, a pattern that has defined the Western Sahara question for half a century and will shape its resolution for years to come.

## **Algeria**

In the intricate geopolitics of North Africa, Algeria's termination of its 2013 air services agreement with the United Arab Emirates marks a sharp escalation in bilateral tensions, propelled by clashing visions over Libya's fractured landscape and the enduring dispute in Western Sahara. Libya's competing power centers, Morocco's deepening security ties with both the UAE and Israel, and Jerusalem's expanding regional footprint have collectively sharpened Algiers' resolve against what it perceives as encirclement. This rupture reveals not fleeting irritation but a structural realignment, where proxy influences and ideological fault lines continue to redraw the map of influence in the Maghreb with enduring consequences for sovereignty and stability.

Flowing directly from these deeper strategic divergences, the practical breach has now crystallized in aviation. On February 14, Emirates announced that its last scheduled flight from Algiers would depart on February 3, 2027, honoring the mandatory notice period after Algiers formally moved to end the pact. Flights continue uninterrupted for now, yet the decision severs a vital economic and human bridge that once symbolized pragmatic cooperation amid rivalry. In an era when connectivity often outpaces diplomacy, such measures underscore how regional power inexorably translates into everyday isolation, compelling states to weigh symbolic assertions against the tangible costs of disconnection.

## **Libya**

In the unfolding diplomatic landscape of Libya this week, Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah convened with senior US military leadership in Tripoli on February 11, marking a significant step toward enhanced defense collaboration. Discussions with Lieutenant General John W. Brennan of AFRICOM emphasized training initiatives, military unification, and intelligence coordination, all while upholding Libyan sovereignty. Such partnerships not only bolster the nation's security apparatus but also signal a broader

commitment to regional stability, essential for navigating the complexities of a divided polity.

Building upon this foundation of security dialogue, the following day saw Dbeibah host Ibrahim Kalin, Turkey's intelligence chief, in the same capital. Their exchange delved into mutual concerns and recent regional shifts, with both sides advocating for intensified global support to propel Libya's political reconciliation. This alignment with Ankara, a longstanding backer of the unity government, illustrates the interconnectedness of intelligence and diplomacy in addressing persistent fractures, paving the way for a more cohesive national trajectory.

Extending this web of international outreach, Acting Foreign Minister Taher Al-Baour engaged Germany's Special Envoy Sabine Sparwasser in Addis Ababa on February 12, focusing on bilateral advancements and the prospect of easing European restrictions on Libyan aviation. By linking political support with practical economic reintegration, this encounter underscores Libya's multifaceted strategy: forging alliances that address immediate security needs while laying groundwork for long-term prosperity and global inclusion.

## **13. Middle East**

### **Israel**

This week's events in Israel and the broader Middle East highlight the enduring interplay of military escalation, humanitarian distress, territorial disputes, and diplomatic efforts, where immediate actions often echo long-standing patterns of conflict that challenge prospects for lasting peace.

Israeli forces escalated operations in Gaza with artillery barrages on Beit Lahia and Jabalia camp, destroying UNRWA shelters and injuring civilians, while airstrikes east of Al-Maghazi and demolitions near Khan Younis intensified the destruction. Tank incursions in central areas and gunfire near Al-Shawa Station further heightened tensions, perpetuating a cycle where border threats from tunnels near Beit Hanoun prompt rapid drone responses that claim lives and reinforce a climate of unyielding vigilance.

These military pressures have deepened Gaza's humanitarian woes, as fuel shortages curtail essential services and accelerate disease outbreaks amid widespread ruins affecting 85% of structures. Recovery efforts in areas like Sheikh Radwan uncover bodies from debris, while tragic incidents such as a child's death in a Khan Younis tent fire amid family disputes reveal how overcrowded displacement turns minor conflicts into fatal ordeals, underscoring the profound human cost of prolonged sieges that erode basic societal resilience.

Evacuation restrictions compound this suffering, limiting patients to minimal companions and sparking protests over detained doctors facing dire conditions, which in turn expose the fragility of healthcare systems under strain. Shifting focus to the West Bank, Israel's push to claim lands as state property has drawn Palestinian condemnation as unlawful annexation, systematically undermining territorial cohesion in ways that echo historical dispossessions and invite international rebuke, such as Canada's criticism for impeding peace pathways.

Incursions into towns like Kafr al-Labad and Tulkarm, alongside injuries in Hebron and new checkpoints near Ramallah, amplify these divisions, fueling resistance that mirrors broader regional instabilities. On the diplomatic front, Netanyahu's insistence on dismantling Iran's nuclear sites aligns with reports of potential U.S. backing for strikes under Trump, even as Iran's foreign minister engages in Geneva talks, illustrating the tense balance between confrontation and dialogue that risks broader fallout if unresolved.

Trump's proposed \$5 billion Gaza reconstruction fund, paired with plans for an international force and demands for Hamas to relinquish heavy arms, offers a glimmer of rebuilding, yet his stance against West Bank annexation clashes with ongoing realities, embodying the inconsistent international interventions that shape the region's fate without fully addressing entrenched grievances.

## **Turkey**

This week's events underscored the intricate web of diplomacy and security challenges shaping the Middle East and adjacent regions, with Turkey playing a pivotal role in mediating tensions while foreign powers deepen their involvement in fragile states. Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Musa Kulaklikaya, speaking at the Global Coalition Against DAESH meeting in Riyadh, advocated for a unified approach to combating ISIS in Syria, emphasizing Syria's territorial integrity and the need to enhance its counterterrorism capabilities for sustainable stability.

This call highlighted Turkey's commitment to coordinated international efforts against extremism, aligning with broader regional security priorities. In a related diplomatic thread, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan noted in an interview that the United States and Iran are displaying flexibility toward reviving a nuclear agreement, with the U.S. potentially accepting limited Iranian enrichment under strict inspections reminiscent of the 2015 deal, such pragmatism offering a pathway to avert escalation but demanding careful navigation to prevent broader conflicts over related issues like ballistic missiles.

Amid escalating regional tensions, Egypt and Turkey intensified their military support to Somalia, with Egyptian forces deploying under the African Union Mission and Turkish naval units arriving in Mogadishu to bolster naval capabilities. These moves, framed as aid against terrorism and separatism, reaffirmed commitments to Somalia's unity through

defense agreements and equipment deliveries, yet in a fractured state like Somalia, over militarization carried risks of deepening clan divisions, proliferating arms among rival groups, and eroding civilian authority, potentially sparking proxy wars that perpetuate instability and hinder genuine reconciliation.

At the same time, shifts in Gulf dynamics tested Turkey's bilateral ties: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan postponed a scheduled visit to the United Arab Emirates following a phone conversation, citing a health issue with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, though the announcement was swiftly retracted from official channels.

The move came just as Erdogan had lined up consecutive stops in Abu Dhabi on February 16 and Addis Ababa on February 17, a tightly choreographed itinerary meant to straddle the two rival axes now hardening across the Gulf and Horn of Africa: the Saudi–Egypt–Qatar–Turkey–Somalia bloc versus the Israel–UAE–Ethiopia–Somaliland alignment.

By maintaining his visit to Ethiopia while deferring the UAE leg, Ankara signaled its intention to engage with both camps, using the health-related delay as diplomatic cover. This approach allows Turkey to navigate the acute polarization in the region without appearing to quickly align itself with one side over the other, thus retaining flexibility in its foreign policy amidst rising tensions.

## **Iran**

Iran signalled conditional flexibility on its most sensitive nuclear hold, the 60% stockpile, tying any dilution of highly enriched uranium directly to sweeping sanctions relief. That calibrated concession reframed negotiations from zero-sum to transactional, placing economic incentives at the centre of diplomacy and testing whether Washington can translate tactical openings into durable de-escalation.

The early week diplomatic rhythm continued as Iran's lead negotiators moved between Gulf interlocutors and Western venues, using mediator channels to probe U.S. seriousness while simultaneously rebuffing third-party meddling; those shuttle talks set the stage for Geneva follow-ups and underlined Tehran's preference for bilateral bargaining over multilateral formats.

Tehran's public posture sharpened against European influence, with senior foreign ministry officials dismissing some European capitals' leverage as diminished and urging Washington to resist outside pressure, a rhetorical pivot designed to isolate the nuclear track from wider Western agenda items, and to elevate regional actors as more consequential interlocutors.

Parallel to diplomacy, U.S. maritime and military moves heightened signaling: American authorities issued fresh transit guidance for vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, and satellite imagery showed U.S. air-defence systems reconfigured onto mobile platforms in the



region. Together, these measures illustrated Washington's hedging: tighten pressure at sea while keeping open negotiating channels ashore.

That duality, bargaining at the table, readiness at sea, fed strategic ambiguity in Washington's calculus, prompting public assessments that U.S. forces were preparing options for an extended campaign if diplomacy failed. The interaction of deterrence and diplomacy thereby became the central organizing logic of the period.

Inside Iran, authorities intensified a domestic clampdown, detaining several prominent reformist figures amid an ongoing protest aftermath. The arrests signaled a regime intent on limiting political pluralism while it negotiates externally, a dynamic likely to complicate any Western appetite for rapid rapprochement.

Tehran's security leaders used the diplomatic window to caution Washington against perceived external spoilers, explicitly warning that allied interventions risked undermining talks; that messaging sought to constrain third-party diplomacy and to preempt pressure that could splinter bilateral engagement.

Regional shuttle diplomacy, including high-level visits to Oman by Iran's security and foreign envoys, reinforced a two-track approach: steady, guarded engagement with U.S. counterparts while simultaneously rallying neighborhood partners to bolster negotiating leverage and post-deal implementation mechanisms.

By week's end, Iran framed possible compromises in economic terms, signalling openness to concrete energy, mining, and aircraft cooperation if sanctions were meaningfully lifted; this linkage re-casts non-proliferation tradeoffs as a package of mutual commercial gains rather than an isolated arms control concession.

The week closed with a fragile equilibrium: tactical openings and reciprocal pressure produced space for more talks, but military posturing, domestic repression, and competing external actors left the trajectory contingent on whether diplomatic momentum can outpace security frictions.

## **Syria**

A symbolic shift in southern Syria saw U.S. forces withdraw from the long-held al-Tanf garrison and transfer control to Damascus-aligned troops, marking a tangible shift in on-the-ground authority and underscoring a broader U.S. drawdown posture that recalibrates frontier dynamics with Jordan and Iraq.

That handover presaged swift consolidation: central government forces moved to secure adjacent positions, including other strategic bases once coordinated with U.S. partners, accelerating Damascus's reclamation of territorial control and complicating local power balances previously mediated by international actors.

In the northeast, a fragile U.S.-backed ceasefire arrangement advanced but remained vulnerable to implementation missteps; key details on integration of Kurdish forces, weapons custody, and local authority were left unresolved, exposing a governance gap that could revive violence unless bridged quickly and credibly.

Against that backdrop, the U.S. conducted a concentrated air campaign, ten strikes across multiple days targeting more than 30 Islamic State sites, intended to disrupt a resurgent jihadi infrastructure even as frontline control shifted, signalling continued kinetic engagement amid political realignments.

The strikes and territorial transfers were not isolated: they unfolded alongside diplomatic rapprochement at the Munich Security Conference, where Syrian and U.S. foreign ministers met, discussed SDF integration, and explored avenues for cooperation, a discreet but consequential recalibration of bilateral ties.

Also in Munich, Syria's foreign minister held a first-of-its-kind discussion with the International Criminal Court president on transitional justice, a dialogue that, regardless of near-term outcomes, signals Damascus's willingness to engage international legal institutions even as accountability questions remain politically charged.

Economic diplomacy advanced in parallel: Damascus and Riyadh continued to operationalize earlier investment pacts, signing a framework to digitize financial operations and launch broad reconstruction initiatives, moves that project normalization and create tangible incentives for stabilization.

Locally influential actors framed regional tensions through a security lens: the dominant Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham administration publicly accused Israel of seeking to escalate conflict, a refrain that both reflects and amplifies cross-border anxieties as new authorities consolidate and external actors test boundaries.

Taken together, the week showed Syria's transition from fragmented wartime governance toward managed reintegration: military realignments, counter-terror operations, and high-level diplomacy moved in tandem, yet the durability of gains will hinge on how implementation gaps, security, justice, and reconstruction are managed.

## **14. Europe**

Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni attended the second Italia-Africa Summit in Addis Ababa on February 13 (coinciding with the AU Summit), marking the first time the event was held on the continent. She emphasized advancing the Mattei Plan (launched in 2024) for energy, development, and mutually beneficial partnerships, positioning Italy as a bridge between Europe and Africa. This has direct implications for the Horn, as Ethiopia is a priority country in the Mattei Plan (included from the outset for infrastructure and energy cooperation), and the summit reinforced Italy's role in countering irregular

migration through economic alternatives rather than border controls alone. Meloni's presence highlighted synergies with the EU's Global Gateway strategy, potentially boosting investments in Ethiopia and Somalia to address the root causes of migration and instability.

Meloni also offered climate-shock debt suspension for African states, a novel mechanism to buffer vulnerable economies from extreme climate events and link financial support with sustainable development objectives. This represents a more flexible European fiscal policy toward Africa than traditional aid mechanisms.

The European Parliament (February 9–12 plenary) adopted new asylum rules, enabling the European Commission and member states to designate more "safe third countries" or "safe countries of origin" for expedited returns and border procedures. This hardening of migration policy (part of broader reforms) could accelerate deportations from the Horn (e.g., high-origin countries like Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan), increasing pressure on fragile states amid conflicts and displacement. It risks exacerbating humanitarian strains without matching development aid, though it aligns with EU efforts to manage Red Sea/Mediterranean routes.

Italy's government under Giorgia Meloni has moved to legislate naval blockades and tougher border enforcement to deter Mediterranean crossings, expanding powers to intercept and expel vessels, including humanitarian rescue ships. This hardening stance intersects with EU policy trends and signals a stronger securitisation of migration that will ripple through Horn of Africa migration networks.

The Munich Security Conference (February 13–15 in Germany) concluded with mixed reassurances and tensions. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio emphasized transatlantic unity ("U.S. and Europe belong together"), received a standing ovation, and critiqued European migration/climate policies while offering reliability signals. European leaders like Ursula von der Leyen stressed "Europe must do more" for Ukraine/defense, NATO's Mark Rutte pushed stronger EU-NATO ties, and German officials highlighted threats from Russia/China. Zelensky demanded an EU accession date for Ukraine, and reiterated compromise willingness (e.g., elections under sustained ceasefire, two-month truce for polls, security guarantees first) ahead of Geneva talks (February 17–18).

A common thread in Munich discussions was European defence autonomy. Leaders, including Germany's Friedrich Merz and France's Emmanuel Macron, signalled an intention to reduce dependency on U.S. security guarantees. Conversations reportedly touched on deeper cooperation on defence capabilities and even exploring Europe-level nuclear deterrent concepts, reflecting a recalibration of threat perceptions and alliance expectations.

Discussions covered NATO spending, Ukraine support, nuclear risks post-New START lapse, and "wrecking-ball politics" from the MSC Report 2026 ("Under Destruction"). Side events addressed free speech/digital freedom (U.S. funding initiatives in Europe via Under Secretary Sarah Rogers) and competing visions of the West.

The European Parliament plenary in Strasbourg (February 9–12) delivered key votes and debates. On February 11, MEPs approved a €90 billion loan package for Ukraine (2026–2027): €60 billion military aid, €30 billion budget support, via EU borrowing (potentially repaid from frozen Russian assets). Total EU aid to Ukraine since 2022 exceeds €193 billion, with emphasis on integrating Ukraine into Europe's defense industrial base. Parliament voted on a 90% greenhouse gas emissions reduction target by 2040 (from 1990 levels) toward climate neutrality by 2050.

It greenlit the first EU list of safe countries of origin for asylum and rules for deeming non-EU countries "safe." A report on EU strategic defense/security partnerships passed, urging rapid European Defence Industrial Programme (EDIP) implementation, joint training, a single defense market, supply chain resilience, and partnerships with like-minded nations.

## **15. The United State**

The week was marked by high-level U.S. diplomatic outreach in Europe and the Middle East, continued pressure on Iran through sanctions and military posturing, ongoing counter-ISIS operations in Syria, and efforts to reinforce alliances amid transatlantic reassurances. Secretary of State Marco Rubio delivered a keynote address at the Munich Security Conference (February 13–15) in Germany, emphasizing transatlantic unity by describing the United States as the "child of Europe" and stating that "the U.S. and Europe belong together." He received a standing ovation and offered reassurance to European leaders after a year of strained ties under the Trump administration, while critiquing European policies on migration and climate. Rubio participated in G7 foreign ministers' meetings but skipped a separate Ukraine-focused gathering with European allies due to scheduling.

Pentagon policy chief Elbridge Colby also made conciliatory remarks on joint security efforts. The conference highlighted concerns over U.S. reliability, with discussions on NATO, Ukraine, and broader global threats. U.S. Central Command conducted 10 airstrikes on more than 30 Islamic State (ISIS) targets in Syria from February 3–12 (with announcements and details emerging February 14–15), targeting infrastructure, weapons storage, communication sites, and logistics nodes using precision munitions from fixed-wing, rotary-wing, and unmanned aircraft. This extended Operation Hawkeye Strike, a retaliatory campaign following a December 2025 ambush that killed two U.S. soldiers and one civilian interpreter.

Over 50 ISIS fighters were reportedly killed or captured in the broader operation, with praise for Damascus's fresh coalition role in sustaining pressure on remnants. The administration maintained maximum pressure on Iran amid ongoing indirect nuclear talks (last round in Oman on February 6–7). President Trump considered deploying a second aircraft carrier strike group to the Middle East to prepare for potential military action if negotiations fail, reiterating threats of "something very tough" absent a deal.

On February 6 (effects ongoing), an executive order authorized secondary tariffs (e.g., 25% as an example) on countries acquiring Iranian goods/services, building on prior actions targeting Cuba, Russia, and Venezuela. The State Department sanctioned 15 entities, two individuals, and 14 vessels linked to Iran's "shadow fleet" for illicit oil trade, aiming to curb revenues funding proxies and domestic repression. High-level travels included Under Secretary Jacob Helberg joining Vice President JD Vance to Italy, Armenia, and Azerbaijan (February 9–11) for economic and strategic engagements; Under Secretary Sarah Rogers to Ireland, Hungary, Poland, and Germany (February 5–15, overlapping the week); and Under Secretary Thomas DiNanno to Switzerland and Israel (February 5–10). These focused on alliances, arms control, and regional stability

Secretary of State Marco Rubio continued his travel from Munich to Slovakia and Hungary (February 13–16), including a meeting with German Chancellor Merz on February 13, focused on bilateral ties, transatlantic security, and shared priorities. This extended the week's European diplomacy amid reassurances on U.S. commitment.

On February 10, the State Department sanctioned Hizballah finance operatives, targeting networks supporting the group's activities through illicit finance, as part of ongoing efforts to disrupt proxy funding in the region.

Trump hosted Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu at the White House on February 11 (rescheduled earlier due to Iran's urgency), their seventh meeting. Discussions focused on ensuring Israel's concerns (missile limits, ending proxy support for Hamas/Hezbollah) are addressed in U.S.-Iran nuclear talks, with Trump stating any deal must include "no nuclear weapons, no missiles." The meeting was low-profile (closed-door, no press conference), and Trump opposed recent Israeli West Bank annexation/expansion plans for stability reasons. Iran-related signaling continued: Iranian Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Larijani visited Oman on February 10, potentially to convey nuclear concession details (e.g., diluting enriched uranium from 60% to 20% in exchange for full sanctions relief) via Omani channels, though Iran maintained refusal on enrichment cessation or missile talks. VP JD Vance noted Trump would set red lines on limited enrichment.

## **16. Eurasia**

New Delhi publicly stated its decision to maintain diversified sources of energy supply rather than align with any single supplier or bloc. This was articulated in response to external commentary on energy partnerships and underscores India's insistence on strategic autonomy in energy markets. While this directly concerns its ties with major producers, the ripple effects include shifts in global energy demand networks that can influence investment flows into African producers and competing external partners.

The 6th India–France Annual Defence Dialogue is scheduled for Feb 17, 2026, demonstrating the continued deepening of bilateral security cooperation. This includes efforts to institutionalize cooperative frameworks on defence technology, joint exercises, and interoperability. France is a key player in the western Indian Ocean and North Africa, so stronger ties influence regional security architectures relevant for Indian Ocean trade routes and security partnerships with Horn of Africa states.

Azerbaijan has intensified efforts to secure and develop the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor, recognised as a major multimodal route connecting Europe, Central Asia, and beyond. This includes initiatives to strengthen the competitive positioning and long-term viability of this corridor.

The Trans-Caspian route has become geopolitically significant as a potential continental trade path that can influence global supply chains — intersecting with broader regional ambitions, including EU connectivity plans. A European Commission–commissioned meta-study published this week also highlights growing interest in Trans-Caspian investment for combined trade and connectivity objectives, illustrating how Eurasian transport infrastructure is receiving cross-regional strategic prioritisation.

Central Asian states and corridor proponents emphasise the “Middle Corridor” (linking China through Central Asia, the Caspian, South Caucasus and Turkey to Europe) as a viable strategic transit route, with proposals to extend connectivity further to Pakistan and beyond. This positioning of transport and logistics routes reconfigures global trade flows and decreases reliance on traditional maritime routes that pass through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, which are key arteries for Horn of Africa trade. Diversification of global corridors can affect how ports in the Horn (e.g., Djibouti, Berbera) compete for transshipment and regional logistics relevance.

## **17. China**

Japan seized a Chinese fishing vessel in its EEZ near Nagasaki for evading inspection, a move that escalates China–Japan maritime tension, linked to broader issues such as fisheries enforcement, maritime law, and regional security. Beijing responded with diplomatic warnings and restrictions on “goodwill” gestures, intensifying bilateral

friction. This incident reflects ongoing maritime geopolitical tension in East Asia involving China's fishing and maritime behaviour as a domain of strategic press.

China will eliminate import tariffs on goods from 53 African countries with which it maintains diplomatic relations, starting May 1, 2026.

– Chinese President Xi Jinping announced this measure during the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, stating that tariffs on imports from these countries will be scrapped as part of a broader effort to strengthen economic ties and expand market access for African exports into China's market. Previously, zero-tariff treatment applied only to a smaller group of least-developed countries; the new policy extends it to nearly the entire continent except Eswatini, which maintains diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

## **18. International and Regional Organizations**

### **United Nation**

Following Sudan's formal return to IGAD, the Security Council held closed consultations to assess prospects for renewed UN-backed mediation and potential adjustments to the existing sanctions regime. Discussions reflected cautious openness to recalibrating diplomatic engagement should regional initiatives demonstrate tangible progress.

On 10 February, the Council convened its semi-annual briefing on ISIL and Al-Qaeda, noting increased use of drone technologies by non-state armed groups in the Sahel. Members underscored the growing technological adaptation of extremist networks and its implications for counter-terrorism strategy.

The Council held a high-level debate on Ukraine's "Peace Formula," focusing on principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the stabilization of humanitarian corridors. On the margins of the Munich Security Conference, non-permanent members circulated draft language advocating voluntary restraint on veto use in situations involving mass atrocity crimes, reviving long-standing reform discussions.

The Council reviewed the transition from the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) to the AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), assessing Al-Shabaab's evolving operational tactics and force posture implications. A separate progress report examined the Kenya-led Multinational Security Support mission in Haiti, highlighting persistent funding constraints and the complexities of transitioning toward a more formalized UN structure.

A technical briefing addressed deteriorating conditions in North Kivu amid MONUSCO's phased withdrawal and continued M23 advances, raising concerns over civilian protection and regional spillover risks.

## Africa Union

In opening remarks ahead of the 39th Ordinary Session, Ethiopia's Foreign Minister warned that intensifying global competition over strategic resources and emerging technologies risks eroding cooperative multilateralism, urging stronger African unity in response to systemic geopolitical shifts. On 12 February, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) demanded an immediate ceasefire in Sudan, condemned reported atrocities in El Fasher attributed to the Rapid Support Forces, and rejected any attempts to establish parallel governance structures. The PSC also called for expanded humanitarian access across Darfur, Kordofan, and Khartoum amid worsening civilian conditions.

The 39th Ordinary Session of the Assembly convened in Addis Ababa, centering deliberations on continental peace and security, institutional reform, and long-term development financing. President Évariste Ndayishimiye formally assumed the AU Chairpersonship for 2026, succeeding João Lourenço, marking a leadership transition within the continental body.

The Assembly launched the 2026 Theme of the Year, "Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063," framing water governance and climate resilience as strategic pillars of Africa's long-term transformation agenda.

Leaders reiterated concern over the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government, persistent instability across the Sahel, and escalating violence in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. The PSC reaffirmed its commitment to the "Silencing the Guns by 2030" agenda as the principal framework for continental counter-terrorism coordination.

The PSC reviewed the AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), reaffirming Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, rejecting unilateral recognition of "Somaliland" by external actors, and welcoming Egypt's stated readiness to contribute troops. Discussions also underscored the need for predictable and sustainable financing for AU-led peace operations.

The AU and the United Nations reaffirmed cooperation under UN Security Council Resolution 2719 to secure more reliable funding mechanisms for AU peace support operations. Finance ministers proposed increasing assessed member-state contributions to reduce structural dependence on external partners.

The Assembly further emphasized accelerating the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area and operationalizing the Pan-African Payments and Settlement System to strengthen intra-African trade resilience amid global economic fragmentation.



On the margins of the summit, Italy–Africa engagements focused on energy cooperation and broader economic partnership frameworks. The Assembly also reiterated solidarity with the Palestinian people and support for a comprehensive political settlement.

### **Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)**

Sudan formally resumed full participation in IGAD on 9 February following a two-year suspension, after receiving assurances regarding respect for sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs. The reinstatement marked a significant diplomatic recalibration within the Horn of Africa, reopening a regional mediation channel at a critical stage of Sudan’s conflict.

Concurrently, IGAD convened a National Policy Workshop in Djibouti examining entrepreneurship as a driver of regional integration and economic resilience. On 10 February, a high-level groundwater investment session in Addis Ababa assessed water governance as a stabilizing instrument aligned with Agenda 2063 priorities, linking environmental management to long-term security planning.

IGAD joined the African Union, European Union, United Nations, and the League of Arab States in a Quintet joint statement calling for immediate de-escalation in Sudan, signaling renewed multilateral coordination. The AU Peace and Security Council subsequently welcomed the IGAD-supported Quintet mechanism as a viable framework for advancing political dialogue.

On 13 February, IGAD participated in the AU Inter-REC Coordination Platform to align regional security frameworks with continental peace and security architecture, reinforcing institutional coherence between regional economic communities and the AU.

IGAD Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu led a delegation to the 39th AU Summit in Addis Ababa, underscoring close coordination between continental and regional bodies. On the margins of the summit, South Sudan’s President Salva Kiir and Ethiopia’s Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed held bilateral discussions focused on Horn stability and cross-border security cooperation.

### **European Union (EU)**

EU defence ministers convened in Brussels under the Foreign Affairs Council (Defence) configuration to coordinate continued military assistance to Ukraine and advance the European Defence Industrial Programme, signaling sustained efforts to consolidate Europe’s defence production base. On the same day, EU leaders met at Alden Biesen Castle to discuss competitiveness reforms inspired by the Draghi and Letta reports, focusing on industrial modernization and strategic autonomy.

The European Commission released a Drone and Counter-Drone Security Action Plan aimed at strengthening detection systems and cross-border response coordination amid rising security risks. On 13 February, a new ICT Supply Chain Security Toolbox was introduced to reduce exposure to high-risk technology suppliers and enhance digital resilience across member states.

The European Parliament continued deliberations on a €90 billion Ukraine support package extending through 2026, while also adopting safeguard measures linked to the EU–Mercosur trade framework. In parallel, Members of the European Parliament approved the first EU list of safe countries of origin as part of the implementation of the Asylum and Migration Pact.

At the Munich Security Conference, High Representative Kaja Kallas advocated deeper European defence integration alongside NATO structures, reinforcing calls for burden-sharing and enhanced interoperability.

During the same period, transatlantic tensions intensified following U.S. tariff threats reportedly linked to Arctic military exercises. The European Union signaled potential activation of its Anti-Coercion Instrument and began preparing counter-tariff options, reflecting renewed economic-strategic friction within the alliance.

## **ECOWAS**

On the margins of the 39th African Union Summit, ECOWAS representatives engaged the AU Peace and Security Council to reinforce the principle of subsidiarity in regional security coordination. The consultations underscored ECOWAS’s role as the primary crisis-management mechanism in West Africa, particularly amid evolving institutional fragmentation.

ECOWAS continued managing internal realignment following the withdrawal of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger under the Alliance of Sahel States framework. Under the chairmanship of President Julius Maada Bio, consultations progressed on reforming the Community Strategic Framework toward Vision 2050, aimed at recalibrating integration objectives in light of shifting political dynamics.

Implementation measures also continued under the regional state of emergency declared in late 2025 in response to expanding extremist violence across the Sahel and coastal states. Planning intensified around operationalizing the ECOWAS Standby Force and strengthening financial mechanisms to sustain counter-terrorism operations in the Lake Chad Basin and the broader Sahel.

Diplomatic monitoring remained active in Guinea-Bissau and Benin amid continued political volatility. In parallel, air transport reform implementation advanced, targeting the

abolition of select taxes and reduction of security charges to lower intra-regional travel costs and improve mobility.

Technical committees also progressed preparatory work toward the Eco single currency, focusing on fiscal convergence criteria, institutional harmonization, and macroeconomic stabilization benchmarks necessary for eventual monetary integration.

## NATO

At the NATO Defence Ministers Meeting, Allies reaffirmed their commitment to invest 5 percent of GDP in defence and security by 2035, signaling a structural acceleration in burden-sharing and long-term force modernization. Secretary General Mark Rutte announced the launch of the “Arctic Sentry” initiative, designed to enhance coordinated monitoring, deterrence, and domain awareness in the High North amid intensifying geopolitical competition.

Seven Allies introduced a High Visibility Project to advance integrated ballistic missile defence capabilities, reinforcing layered deterrence architecture across the Euro-Atlantic theatre. In parallel, Letters of Intent were signed to develop long-range, low-cost deep-strike drone systems with operational ranges exceeding 500 kilometres, reflecting adaptation to evolving battlefield technologies.

The Munich Security Conference provided a platform for addressing transatlantic volatility, particularly amid emerging Arctic-related tensions and broader strategic uncertainty following the expiration of New START. Discussions underscored alliance cohesion while acknowledging the need for recalibrated deterrence frameworks.

NATO announced additional funding allocations under the Prioritized Ukraine Requirements List to strengthen Ukrainian air defence capacity. The United Kingdom and Germany convened the 33rd Ukraine Defense Contact Group meeting at NATO Headquarters, coordinating military assistance, joint production initiatives, and long-term capability sustainment.



# **HORN** **REVIEW**

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