



# 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

Mar 01- Mar 08, 2026

## 1. Ethiopia

Adwa commemorations this week reaffirmed Ethiopia's enduring narrative of sovereignty, unity, and national resilience. During the celebrations, senior military leadership emphasized Adwa not only as a historic victory but also as a continuing symbol that anchors contemporary political discourse in the country's legacy of independence. In a period marked by political fragmentation and regional sensitivities, the invocation of Adwa serves as a reminder of a shared national identity that transcends internal divisions. Looking ahead, the continued institutional and political use of Adwa as a unifying reference is likely to remain central to state messaging, particularly as Ethiopia approaches future electoral cycles and seeks to reinforce social cohesion.

However, this commemorative moment also unfolded against the backdrop of ongoing political tensions in the northern region. Adwa celebrations in Tigray coincided with renewed disagreements and heightened rhetoric from regional actors. The contrast between Adwa's symbolism, representing collective resistance and unity and the current political climate highlights unresolved tensions related to governance, representation, and post-conflict reconciliation. Statements from some regional actors framed disputes in stark terms, reflecting persistent mistrust toward federal institutions and raising concerns about the stability of political arrangements ahead of future elections. This dynamic underscores the fragile balance between historical unity narratives and contemporary political realities.

At the same time, Ethiopia's diplomatic posture toward the Gulf gained renewed visibility through outreach to the leadership of Qatar and Kuwait following Iranian attacks in the region. By expressing solidarity with Qatar and condemning violations of sovereignty in discussions with Kuwait's crown prince, Addis Ababa aligned itself with broader international principles regarding territorial integrity. This engagement serves multiple strategic purposes: it strengthens political trust with key Gulf partners, reinforces Ethiopia's role in regional dialogue concerning the Red Sea and Middle East corridors, and supports long-term cooperation in investment, energy, logistics, and infrastructure, areas increasingly important to Ethiopia's external economic strategy.

Taken together, these developments reflect a dual trajectory. Externally, Ethiopia is expanding diplomatic engagement and reinforcing partnerships, particularly with influential Gulf states. Internally, the state continues to draw upon powerful historical narratives such as Adwa to strengthen national identity while navigating persistent regional political sensitivities in a post-conflict environment.

The implication is clear: translating diplomatic momentum and symbolic unity into sustained stability will depend on the effective management of internal political grievances alongside continued external engagement. If balanced successfully, these dynamics could strengthen both geopolitical positioning and domestic cohesion. If unresolved tensions persist, however, national unity narratives and diplomatic advances may continue to coexist with underlying political fragility.

Parallel to these developments, the launch of nationwide voter registration for Ethiopia's seventh general election marks a significant step in institutional consolidation and democratic preparation. Supported by digital systems and broad political participation, the registration process signals a shift toward more structured electoral administration and wider civic engagement. This phase represents a key institutional test for governance structures. In the immediate term, it strengthens procedural legitimacy and public confidence in the electoral process, reducing uncertainty during political transition. Over the longer term, if implemented credibly and inclusively, it has the potential to reinforce democratic norms, deepen institutional resilience, and stabilize political competition by channeling it through constitutional mechanisms rather than confrontation, thereby shaping Ethiopia's governance trajectory in the next political cycle.

In a recent interview conducted in Tigrinya, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed expressed strong support for the people of Tigray, stating that they deserve peace and development, cherish these values, and have fought for them, while emphasizing they do not deserve another round of war and destruction. He portrayed the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) leadership as clinging to an outdated 50-year-old ideology resistant to modern reform and change, accusing them of obstructing dialogue, refusing compromise, failing to fully implement the Pretoria Agreement, and preparing for renewed conflict by arming forces and acquiring weapons. This rhetoric unfairly blames Tigray's legitimate leadership for defending regional rights and autonomy against federal overreach, while positioning Abiy's government as the aggressor risking escalation, making the federal side appear as the true warmonger intent on suppressing Tigray rather than pursuing genuine reconciliation or addressing the immense suffering endured during the war.

Recent tensions surrounding the implementation of the Pretoria Peace Agreement continue to generate political debate, with some actors from the Tigray Region claiming delays in provisions related to displaced persons, security arrangements, and transitional justice. Several Tigrayan political groups, including the Tigray People's Liberation Front and the Tigray Independence Party, have appealed to international actors such as the African Union, United Nations, European Union, United States, and United Kingdom to encourage further mediation and monitoring. However, Ethiopia continues to emphasize its commitment to maintaining peace, restoring stability, and implementing the agreement

through constitutional processes, while prioritizing national recovery and long-term reconciliation after the conflict.

Alongside these political and diplomatic developments, technological measures aimed at strengthening the national security architecture are also advancing. The National Intelligence and Security Service launched a new communication platform designed to receive public reports, disseminate security updates, and provide early warnings through a security-certified digital system. The initiative reflects a growing emphasis on integrating technology into Ethiopia's national security framework, potentially enhancing situational awareness, improving communication between authorities and citizens, and strengthening early-response capabilities in an increasingly complex security environment.

## **2. Sudan**

This week reflects continued escalation in Sudan's war across military, economic, and geopolitical dimensions. Fighting intensified in Kordofan, drone warfare continued to inflict civilian casualties, and new economic dynamics linked to narcotics production highlighted the evolution of the war economy. At the same time, diplomatic initiatives and regional tensions illustrate how Sudan's conflict is becoming more deeply embedded in broader geopolitical dynamics across the Red Sea, the Horn of Africa, and the Gulf.

On the battlefield, heavy fighting in North Kordofan marked one of the most significant military developments of the week. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) announced that they had retaken the town of Bara after intense clashes with Rapid Support Forces (RSF) fighters. The fighting reportedly left at least 51 people dead and forms part of a wider SAF push to secure El Obeid, a major strategic city in the region. Control of Bara is important because the town lies along key routes linking Darfur with central Sudan. Its recapture strengthens SAF positions around El Obeid and potentially disrupts RSF mobility between western and central fronts. Despite the reported advance, violence across the wider Kordofan region continues to intensify, with UN reporting indicating increasing clashes, artillery shelling, and displacement affecting multiple communities.

Drone strikes again emerged as a defining feature of the conflict. Separate attacks on markets in Kordofan and East Darfur killed more than thirty civilians, according to field reports. Markets, schools, and other civilian gathering areas continue to be targeted in aerial attacks, highlighting the normalization of drone warfare in Sudan's conflict. These strikes reinforce concerns that both sides are relying on long range unmanned systems not only for tactical strikes but also for attacks on civilian infrastructure and public spaces.

Sudan's government also escalated diplomatic tensions with neighboring Ethiopia. Khartoum formally accused Addis Ababa of allowing drones to enter Sudanese territory from Ethiopia and warned that it reserves the right to respond to what it described as hostile actions and violations of sovereignty. The accusation comes amid ongoing clashes

involving the RSF and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement North faction led by Abdel Aziz al-Hilu near the Blue Nile region. Sudanese officials claim that drones launched from Ethiopian territory targeted villages and military sites during February and early March. However, the allegations remain largely unverified, reflecting a broader pattern in which wartime intelligence and political messaging often blur the line between battlefield claims and independently confirmed facts.

Sudanese leadership also signaled concern about being drawn into wider Middle Eastern geopolitical tensions. Sovereign Council chairman Abdel Fattah al-Burhan warned armed groups fighting alongside the army not to publicly express support for Iran amid rising tensions between Iran and Gulf states. He stressed that no faction would be allowed to speak on behalf of the Sudanese state in matters affecting foreign relations. The warning follows statements from Islamist aligned groups that had expressed willingness to support Iran during the broader regional confrontation. Burhan emphasized that Sudan would maintain support for the security of Gulf countries and avoid actions that could damage diplomatic relations.

The war economy is also evolving in ways that could reshape Sudan's role in regional criminal networks. A new report indicates that Sudan has rapidly transformed into an industrial scale production hub for the synthetic drug Captagon. According to analysis by the Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker, the collapse of Syria's state sponsored Captagon industry in late 2024 pushed trafficking networks toward Sudan, where war driven state collapse, porous borders, and fragmented authority created favorable conditions for expansion. Authorities previously uncovered a production facility capable of producing 7,200 pills per hour in 2023. By 2025 an industrial laboratory near the Khartoum oil refinery was reportedly capable of producing up to 100,000 pills per hour with enough ingredients to manufacture hundreds of millions of tablets.

The report highlights how narcotics production has become an emerging component of Sudan's war economy. Cities in Darfur such as Nyala and Al Daein have reportedly developed into open trading hubs where weapons and drugs are exchanged in areas under RSF control. Al Radom National Park in South Darfur has also reportedly seen expanded cultivation of bango, a cannabis based narcotic, with production areas doubling during the war. The report notes that although centralized RSF leadership direction has not been conclusively established, trafficking networks and armed groups are increasingly intertwined in these illicit economies. Fighters on both sides are also reported to use stimulants such as Captagon to suppress hunger, remain alert, and reduce fear during combat. Analysts warn that widespread drug use may contribute to heightened brutality and human rights abuses during the conflict.

Sudan's maritime and economic outlook along the Red Sea was also highlighted this week. Analysts noted that Sudan's ports, particularly Port Sudan, could become

strategically important if instability in the Gulf disrupts shipping routes through the Strait of Hormuz or Bab al Mandab. Port Sudan currently serves as the country's main gateway for imports and exports and hosts terminals handling container traffic, bulk commodities, and South Sudanese oil exports through the Bashayer terminal. However, experts emphasize that Sudan's port infrastructure remains limited compared to regional competitors. The port lacks sufficient depth to accommodate ultra large container vessels and requires dredging, modern cranes, expanded logistics zones, and improved rail and road links to the interior. While Sudan's coastline offers geographic advantages for serving landlocked countries such as Chad and the Central African Republic, realizing that potential would require major investment and long term political stability.

Diplomatic efforts to address the conflict continue to circulate, though their prospects remain uncertain. Commentary from regional analysts proposed a potential diplomatic roadmap involving cooperation between Türkiye and Saudi Arabia aimed at pushing toward negotiations and a political settlement. Such proposals reflect growing international concern over the conflict's trajectory, yet previous mediation efforts have struggled to produce enforceable ceasefires or sustained negotiations between the warring parties.

The information environment surrounding the conflict remains restricted. The Sudanese Journalists Syndicate reported that at least seven media workers are missing or detained by both SAF and RSF authorities. The targeting and detention of journalists underscores the erosion of press freedom and the difficulties of documenting developments inside the country during wartime.

Peacekeeping dynamics in border regions also shifted this week. The United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei completed the withdrawal of personnel from its bases in Tishwin and Abu Qussawunkur as part of an operational redeployment. While the move is not directly linked to frontline fighting in Sudan's civil war, it reflects ongoing adjustments to peacekeeping deployments in the contested Abyei region along the Sudan South Sudan border.

Taken together, this week's developments illustrate a conflict that continues to expand in complexity. Battlefield dynamics in Kordofan remain fluid, drone warfare continues to generate civilian casualties, and the emergence of drug production as a major economic activity highlight how the war economy is evolving. At the same time, accusations involving Ethiopia, geopolitical sensitivities related to Gulf tensions, and strategic debates over Red Sea infrastructure demonstrate how Sudan's internal war is increasingly embedded within wider regional dynamics. The overall trajectory points toward continued escalation, with military confrontation, illicit economic networks, and geopolitical competition reinforcing one another in ways that make near term stabilization unlikely.

### 3. Egypt

Amid On March 2, 2026, Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty conducted urgent phone calls with GCC counterparts, Jordan, and Iraq, urging Iran to cease attacks on Arab states while expressing solidarity with affected nations and advocating restraint to avert broader conflict. This diplomatic push reflects Egypt's strategic imperative to safeguard regional stability, protecting vital Suez Canal revenues which is critical for its economy amid global trade disruptions and preventing escalation that could inflame Sinai tensions or strain Gulf alliances funding infrastructure projects.

Building on these efforts, on March 3, Abdelatty coordinated with Oman's Foreign Minister to de-escalate tensions, warning of catastrophic regional fallout and emphasizing diplomatic channels over military action. Egypt's collaboration with Oman underscores its positioning as a neutral mediator, leveraging historical ties to Iran to counterbalance US-Israeli dominance, thereby enhancing Cairo's influence in Arab affairs and mitigating risks to its energy imports from the Gulf, where disruptions could exacerbate domestic shortages.

As hostilities intensified, President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi reviewed gas supply strategies on March 4, directing enhancements in reserves, renewable capacity, and partnerships like a new MoU with Libya to counter war-induced market volatility. This focus on energy security reveals Egypt's vulnerability to Strait of Hormuz closures, prioritizing self-reliance to offset suspended Israeli gas supplies and rising Brent prices, ultimately aiming to insulate its economy from shocks that could fuel inflation and social unrest.

Egypt's early stance, articulated from February 28 onward, showed measured support for Iran by condemning escalation without directly criticizing US-Israel actions, while media outlets warned against regime change that could install a pro-US government. This nuanced position strategically challenges American hegemony in the region, fostering closer Iran ties as evidenced by prior normalization gestures to diversify alliances beyond Gulf dependencies and bolster Egypt's role in nuclear negotiations for broader Middle East leverage.

By March 5, El-Sisi publicly announced Egypt's joint mediation with Turkey and Oman to end the war, framing it as a sincere effort to halt destruction through talks on Iran's nuclear program, sanctions, and proxy issues. This initiative highlights Cairo's ambition to emerge as a pivotal peacemaker, securing US aid while courting Tehran to prevent Houthi threats to Red Sea shipping, thus preserving tourism and trade routes essential for economic recovery.

Complementing mediation, Abdelatty's March 5 call with US Secretary Marco Rubio addressed Iranian threats, with Egypt facilitating US citizen evacuations, demonstrating pragmatic cooperation despite underlying frictions. Strategically, this engagement

balances anti-US sentiments in Egyptian media with the need for Washington's military and economic support, ensuring Cairo's influence in post-war arrangements while avoiding direct entanglement that could expose its borders to refugee influxes or militant spillovers.

The US "depart now" alert on March 2, including Egypt despite its non-involvement, sparked official protests by March 4, as it threatened tourism, a sector generating \$18 billion annually. Egypt's backlash exposes its strategic priority to project stability, countering perceived US overreach that could deter visitors and investors, thereby safeguarding foreign currency reserves crucial for debt management amid war-driven currency slides and import cost surges.

Culminating diplomatic activities, Abdelatty discussed the conflict with Iraq's Foreign Minister on March 7, stressing ceasefire efforts ahead of an Arab League meeting. This coordination underscores Egypt's push for collective Arab diplomacy to isolate US-Israeli unilateralism, strategically positioning Cairo to lead regional consensus-building and protect against economic isolation, as unified stances could amplify leverage in global forums and mitigate fallout from prolonged instability.

#### **4. Eritrea**

The Africa Defense Forum (ADF) magazine, citing reporting from The Africa Report, stated that tensions along the Ethiopia–Eritrea border are rising amid mounting evidence that Eritrea has been conducting covert infiltration into the Tigray region and supporting armed actors inside Ethiopia. According to the report, local residents and military sources claim Eritrean soldiers have entered sensitive areas including Mekelle, Adigrat, and Zalambessa, sometimes operating covertly among local populations and crossing the border through multiple routes and dressing in Ethiopian Defence Forces uniforms.

A New York Times report attributed rising tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea largely to Ethiopia's push for access to the Red Sea, particularly its interest in the Eritrean port of Assab. However, this framing appears to overlook repeated reports that Eritrean forces have infiltrated its territory and supported armed actors in northern Ethiopia. While the report notes Addis Ababa's claims of Eritrean incursions, it primarily presents Ethiopia's maritime ambitions as the main driver of escalation, a characterization critics argue downplays Eritrea's long-standing role in destabilizing northern Ethiopia since the 2020–2022 Tigray conflict.

In a Tigrigna language interview broadcast last week, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed issued a direct warning to Eritrea's leadership, stating that any further attempt to harm Ethiopia would "be the last". The comments come amid escalating tensions between the two countries and follow the growing support Eritrea is believed to be providing for armed actors and conducting destabilizing activities in northern Ethiopia. Abiy framed the

warning as a response to continued threats to Ethiopia's sovereignty, signaling that Addis Ababa views Eritrean actions since the Tigray conflict as a persistent source of instability in the region.

Senior Eritrean diplomat Sophia Tesfamariam, Eritrea's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, recently posted on social media about a visit to Eritrea that included travel to strategic towns such as Assab and Nakfa and a meeting with President Isaias Afwerki. In the message, she emphasized themes of "continuity, strategic alignment, and sustained engagement," describing discussions on national priorities and development. The timing of the visit and the high-level exchange may indicate preparations for a diplomatic effort directed at the UN, particularly as tensions with Ethiopia continue to rise and Asmara appears increasingly focused on framing Ethiopia as a potential aggressor in international forums.

## 5. Djibouti

During the opening of Djibouti's first ordinary parliamentary session of the year on March 2, Speaker Dileita Mohamed Dileita called on lawmakers to support President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh's candidacy in the upcoming presidential election scheduled for April 10, 2026. The endorsement follows constitutional amendments approved earlier that removed the presidential age limit, thereby permitting President Guelleh to seek another term. The session was attended by Prime Minister Abdoukader Kamil Mohamed, government ministers, diplomatic corps representatives and international observers. Speakers emphasized national unity and continuity, though political analysts note the limited space for opposition participation in the electoral process.

During the review period Djiboutian officials and state-affiliated media voiced apprehension regarding reports of an Israeli security or military presence at Somaliland's Berbera port. The concerns were raised in the context of escalating Middle East conflict including the Iran-related war and associated Houthi threats. Djibouti's position at the Bab el-Mandeb strait hosting Camp Lemonnier the largest permanent U.S. military installation in Africa was highlighted as potentially vulnerable to regional spill over. The expression of concern follows Israel's formal recognition of Somaliland in December 2025 and ongoing discussions regarding Israeli access to the Berbera facility.

President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh conducted a series of telephone conversations with regional leaders during the week, reaffirming Djibouti's positions amid the escalating Iran conflict

**Kuwait:** President Guelleh issued a statement condemning Iranian airstrikes on Kuwaiti territory and expressed solidarity with the Kuwaiti leadership during a phone call with the Crown Prince. He emphasized Djibouti's commitment to Gulf security and regional stability.

**Jordan:** In a conversation with King Abdullah II, President Guelleh expressed support for Jordan amid deepening regional tensions. Discussions focused on de-escalation efforts and diplomatic solutions to the ongoing crisis.

**Saudi Arabia:** President Guelleh spoke with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, voicing solidarity with Saudi Arabia following Iranian strikes on Gulf states. The call showed Djibouti's alignment with Gulf partners and addressed shared concerns about Horn of Africa vulnerabilities.

**President Guelleh Criticizes U.S. Airstrikes in Somalia:** In a rare public statement President Guelleh rebuked U.S. drone and air strikes targeting Al-Shabaab and ISIS elements in Somalia. He characterized the operations as "blind" and warned that actions undertaken without adequate regional consultation risked civilian casualties and could undermine counterterrorism efforts. The criticism is notable given Djibouti's hosting of Camp Lemonnier and its role as a partner in U.S. counterterrorism operations in the region. The statement suggests growing unease in Djibouti regarding the conduct of military operations in Somalia.

A memorandum of understanding was concluded between Djiboutian authorities and French investors to launch a large-scale sustainable fishing project in Djiboutian waters. The initiative aims to develop the fisheries sector, create employment opportunities, and promote environmental standards. The agreement aligns with Djibouti's broader economic diversification strategy, which seeks to reduce reliance on port revenues by developing other productive sectors.

Prime Minister Abdoukader Kamil Mohamed convened with a high-level delegation from UNICEF to discuss expanded cooperation on child welfare, education, health, and social protection programs. The meeting focused on deepening development partnerships and addressing humanitarian needs within Djibouti's population. Both sides reaffirmed commitment to advancing child rights and improving social service delivery in line with national development priorities.

## **6. South Sudan**

This week in South Sudan was marked by escalating violence, deepening political tensions, and mounting humanitarian concerns. Armed clashes in several regions triggered large-scale displacement, while political developments surrounding opposition figures and the fragile peace process underscored the continuing fragility of the country's transitional framework. At the same time, humanitarian actors and religious leaders issued increasingly urgent warnings about the deteriorating security situation and the risks facing civilians across multiple regions.

One of the most significant developments occurred in Jonglei State, where escalating tensions around the town of Akobo triggered a mass displacement crisis. Government

forces issued an evacuation order for civilians in the opposition-held town, prompting thousands of residents to flee toward neighboring areas and across nearby borders. Humanitarian organizations and civil society groups warned that as many as 50,000 civilians could be at risk if a large-scale military offensive proceeds. The evacuation order has heightened fears of major confrontation between government troops and opposition forces operating in the area, raising the possibility of further displacement in a region that has already experienced repeated cycles of communal violence and armed clashes.

The deteriorating security environment in Jonglei has also directly affected humanitarian operations. Medical organization Médecins Sans Frontières reported that dozens of its staff members remain missing following violent incidents in the region. The disappearance of humanitarian personnel highlights the increasingly dangerous operating conditions faced by aid agencies attempting to provide assistance in remote areas where insecurity and logistical constraints already limit access. Humanitarian groups warn that disruptions to their operations could further worsen food insecurity and health conditions for communities already affected by conflict.

Violence elsewhere in the country has also intensified concerns about civilian protection. Reports from northern regions describe a massacre in which as many as 178 people were killed, prompting strong condemnation from religious leaders and humanitarian organizations. Bishops and church leaders across the region expressed distress over the killings and urged communities to reject cycles of revenge violence. The incident has renewed scrutiny over the capacity of state institutions to prevent large-scale communal attacks and protect civilians in areas where security forces remain overstretched or absent.

The government has attempted to signal accountability in response to some of these incidents. Military authorities announced plans to try soldiers accused of involvement in a civilian massacre in a separate case. Officials stated that members of the armed forces implicated in the killings would face prosecution through military courts. While the announcement may represent an effort to demonstrate commitment to discipline within the armed forces, observers note that accountability for abuses by security forces has historically been limited, raising questions about whether the trials will lead to meaningful justice.

Political tensions surrounding the country's fragile power-sharing arrangement also intensified during the week. Lawyers representing detained former vice president Bol Mel warned that his life could be at risk while in detention. The arrest of the opposition figure has added another layer of strain to an already fragile political environment, where trust between factions remains extremely low. Critics argue that continued detentions and political disputes risk undermining the 2018 peace agreement that was intended to guide the country through a transitional period toward elections and political reform.

At the same time, opposition dynamics continue to evolve. Two opposition groups signed a new cooperation agreement aimed at strengthening coordination and political alignment between their movements. While the details of the agreement remain limited, the development suggests efforts by opposition actors to consolidate their positions amid growing dissatisfaction with the pace of political reforms and the implementation of the peace agreement.

Concerns about the broader trajectory of South Sudan's transition were also highlighted by prominent political figures and analysts. Critics argue that the peace process is faltering because senior political leaders remain reluctant to relinquish power or implement meaningful institutional reforms. These concerns reflect wider frustration among civil society organizations and political observers who believe that delays in implementing key provisions of the peace agreement have stalled progress toward stability and democratic governance.

Regional security dynamics also surfaced during the week. Reports indicated that Ugandan military involvement has been linked to recent clashes involving South Sudanese forces and armed groups. Uganda has historically maintained close security ties with the South Sudanese government, and its role in regional security developments continues to shape military dynamics inside the country. Any escalation involving external actors risks complicating already fragile internal security conditions.

Humanitarian and social challenges remain severe. The European Union warned that funding shortfalls and ongoing conflict are placing women in South Sudan at increased risk, particularly as protection programs and community support initiatives struggle to maintain operations. The combination of insecurity, displacement, and limited resources continues to exacerbate vulnerabilities among women and children across the country.

International organizations have also condemned recent killings affecting civilians. UNICEF issued strong criticism of violence in Ruweng Administrative Area, warning that attacks on civilians and children represent grave violations of international humanitarian law. The agency called for urgent measures to protect vulnerable populations and ensure accountability for perpetrators.

Meanwhile, the government sought to project a message of social commitment through policy statements. President Salva Kiir pledged renewed efforts to empower and protect women across the country, emphasizing the importance of women's participation in national development and peacebuilding. While such commitments have been welcomed rhetorically, implementation challenges remain significant amid ongoing conflict and institutional weakness.

South Sudan also weighed in on wider geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. The government issued a statement condemning Iranian attacks against Israel and several Gulf

countries, expressing solidarity with what it described as friendly states. The statement reflects Juba's effort to maintain diplomatic alignment with partners in the Gulf region while avoiding deeper entanglement in external conflicts.

Overall, developments this week highlight the persistent volatility shaping South Sudan's political and security landscape. Escalating violence in Jonglei, large-scale civilian displacement, and continued political disputes illustrate the fragile state of the peace process. Humanitarian agencies face mounting operational risks, while communities across the country remain vulnerable to communal violence, economic hardship, and weak governance structures. Without renewed political commitment to implementing the peace agreement and improving civilian protection, the risk of broader instability in South Sudan remains significant.

## **7. Somalia and Somaliland**

### **Somalia**

On March 3 Somali pirates hijacked a Chinese owned fishing vessel off the coast of Puntland. According to the Chinese Embassy in Mogadishu, the crew was subsequently rescued. The incident shows the persistent threat of maritime insecurity in Somali territorial waters despite years of international naval patrols. It also highlights the vulnerability of foreign commercial and fishing vessels operating in the region without adequate escort or private security.

Somali National Army (SNA) forces, supported by Ugandan troops under the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission (AUSSOM), continued offensive operations in Lower Shabelle region. Between late February and March 2, joint forces recaptured the strategic militant strongholds of Daarusalaam and Mubarak. Reports indicate Al-Shabaab elements fled the advancing forces though the group retains freedom of movement in other parts of southern and central Somalia.

The National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) in coordination with international partners neutralized a senior Al-Shabaab commander during the review period. The individual was reportedly linked to attacks on NISA facilities and civilian casualties in previous months. The strike is part of campaign to degrade the group's command structure.

In response to recent militant movements, Somali authorities announced the launch of "Operation Lightning," aimed at dismantling remaining Al-Shabaab positions in Lower Shabelle. The Armed Forces Commander has also directed military assets to assist in delivering aid to famine affected civilian populations signalling a dual role for the military in active combat zones and humanitarian support.

On March 2 the Federal Government of Somalia issued a statement condemning recent Iranian attacks on Gulf states including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain, and Oman. The statement described the attacks as "gross and flagrant violations" of sovereignty, international law, and a threat to regional stability. Somalia expressed full solidarity with the affected countries and affirmed their right to self-defense and protective measures but notably omitted any reference to the United Arab Emirates. The omission is consistent with the severance of diplomatic ties between Mogadishu and Abu Dhabi in January 2026, reflecting continued bilateral strain. The statement reinforces Somalia's alignment with its current Gulf partners while scoring the deepening rift with the UAE.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud traveled to Arusha, Tanzania to participate in the 25th East African Community (EAC) Heads of State Summit. Somalia's participation shows commitment to regional economic integration and diplomatic engagement with neighbouring states. The visit also provided an opportunity to discuss bilateral trade, infrastructure, and security cooperation with fellow EAC members.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty held talks regarding the Horn of Africa with a focus on Somalia's sovereignty and the security of the Red Sea. Egypt reiterated its commitment to contributing troops to the AUSSOM mission reinforcing Cairo's growing security presence in Somalia. The discussion reflects continued international interest in preventing a power vacuum that could be exploited by militant or destabilizing actors.

On March 4 and 5 Somalia's bicameral federal parliament passed amendments to the provisional constitution, including revisions to chapters governing power sharing and electoral processes. The move was immediately contested by opposition figures and regional leaders, particularly from Puntland who boycotted the sessions and described the process as "illegal." Reports emerged of flight diversions and movement restrictions that prevented some MPs and regional representatives from reaching Mogadishu to participate in or observe the proceedings.

In a national address following the parliamentary vote, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud praised the approval of the constitutional amendments as a historic day declaring the formal end of Somalia's transitional governance era. He framed the move as the completion of a long-delayed national process transitioning the country to a permanent constitutional framework. The president's remarks were met with skepticism by opposition figures, who view the amendments as a unilateral consolidation of power.

Somali police confirmed the arrest of a senior adviser to Puntland President Saeed Deni while he was in Mogadishu. The arrest occurs against a backdrop of rising political tensions between the federal government and Puntland particularly following Puntland's

withdrawal from federal processes earlier this year. The detention is likely to exacerbate existing mistrust and could provoke further friction ahead of planned national elections.

Between March 5 and 6, Mogadishu experienced a sharp increase in fuel prices with gasoline leaping from approximately \$0.65 to \$1.15 per liter a 77 percent rise. The spike is attributed to escalating regional tensions in the Middle East and global oil market volatility. The price hike led to long queues at filling stations and triggered increases in transportation and commodity costs, placing additional economic strain on households.

## **Somaliland**

On March 2, Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi Irro held a telephone conversation with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. According to a statement from the Somaliland Ministry of Foreign Affairs discussions centered on regional security dynamics amid the escalating Iran conflict. President Irro expressed concern over recent developments in the Middle East and emphasized that "the protection of civilians must remain the absolute priority." The call follows Somaliland's earlier condemnation of Iranian strikes on Gulf states and occurs against the backdrop of reported discussions regarding potential Israeli access to the Berbera port facility. The engagement represents the highest-level confirmed contact between Hargeisa and Jerusalem to date.

An analysis published by the Middle East Forum Observer examined whether the African Union might reconsider its position on Somaliland's independence in light of Israel's recognition. The assessment noted that while some member states maintain de facto engagement with Hargeisa on security and economic matters, the AU formally adheres to Somalia's territorial claim. The analysis acknowledged Somaliland's relative stability and value in the Horn of Africa but highlighted persistent continental opposition to creating precedents that could encourage secessionist movements elsewhere.

Multiple think-tank analyses and media reports on the Iran conflict explicitly identified Somaliland's Berbera port as a potential flashpoint. The assessments noted the presence of UAE and presumed Israeli facilities at the Red Sea citing Houthi threats issued following Israel's recognition of Somaliland. Western officials quoted in an Agence France-Presse (AFP) report from March 2 were described as assuming some level of Israeli military or security presence already exists at the facility, though no official confirmation has been provided by involved parties.

## **8. Yemen**

According to Al Jazeera, Yemen's Houthis have so far refrained from directly joining the US-Israel war on Iran, even as Iranian missile and drone attacks escalate across the region. Houthi leaders have repeatedly stated that their "hands are on the trigger" and

affirmed rhetorical support for Iran, but have not launched new offensive operations against Gulf or Israeli targets in this phase of the conflict. Analysts cited in the reporting suggest this restraint is strategic, with the Houthis weighing the risks of inviting direct retaliation from the US and Israel against the benefits of open engagement, even as the wider war continues to unfold.

The internationally recognised Yemen government has returned to Aden, testing Saudi Arabia's strategy to reshape the conflict and governance dynamics in Yemen by strengthening its allied authorities in the south. The move comes as Riyadh seeks to solidify its influence and manage the wider impact of regional instability, including pressures from the Gulf war with Iran and shifting alliances within Yemen. Aden's reinstatement as a functional base for the government signals efforts to bolster legitimacy and counter Houthi influence, even as the broader conflict across the Gulf and Red Sea theatres continues to affect strategic calculations for Yemen's internal factions and their external backers.

## **9. Kenya**

Kenya Over the past week, the security situation in Kenya remained focused on counterterrorism operations against Al-Shabaab and cross-border threats from Somalia. Security forces conducted targeted raids in northeastern counties such as Mandera and Wajir, arresting suspected militants and seizing weapons and explosives, while also disrupting recruitment networks. Kenyan authorities have continued to bolster border security along the Kenya–Somalia frontier, aiming to prevent infiltration by Al-Shabaab fighters, who remain active despite regional military operations. Intelligence reports indicate that the group has shifted some activities to rural and semi-arid areas where state presence is weak, conducting ambushes on local security personnel and attempting to coerce civilian populations. The operations have been coupled with community outreach initiatives to encourage local reporting of suspicious activity, reflecting a combined approach of military pressure and civil engagement.

Politically and regionally, Kenya continues to play a central role in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) framework and in broader East African counterterrorism cooperation. During the week, Kenya engaged in strategic discussions with regional partners, including Ethiopia and Somalia, to coordinate intelligence sharing, border monitoring, and joint operations aimed at neutralizing Al-Shabaab's cross-border capabilities. Diplomatic engagement with international partners, particularly the United States and United Nations, continues to provide support for security, training, and humanitarian stabilization programs in affected northeastern counties. Kenya also faces ongoing challenges in balancing security operations with political and social considerations, as large-scale counterterrorism efforts intersect with local grievances and resource disputes in marginalized border communities. Overall, the combination of

military pressure, regional cooperation, and targeted community engagement remains the cornerstone of Kenya's strategy to contain Al-Shabaab while maintaining stability in the northeastern region.

## **10. The Gulf Countries**

A Financial Times report indicated that Gulf states including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, and Qatar are reviewing overseas investments to mitigate financial strains caused by the ongoing US–Israeli campaign against Iran. The report cites disruptions to energy exports, tourism, aviation, and increased defense spending as key pressures, noting that sovereign wealth fund commitments and major infrastructure projects could be reassessed if the conflict continues. If sustained, such a retrenchment could have ripple effects in the Horn of Africa, where Gulf countries are major investors and back governments across the region, potentially leading to negative economic outcomes for local economies and development initiatives.

The ongoing US–Israeli war on Iran has forced Gulf states to shutter key energy facilities, including Qatar's LNG plants, Saudi Arabia's Ras Tanura refinery, Iraqi Kurdistan oil fields, and Israeli gas sites, while attacks on the Strait of Hormuz have slowed exports. Oil and gas prices have surged, and Gulf budgets are under strain, prompting potential reviews of overseas investments. If sustained, these disruptions could ripple into the Horn of Africa, where Gulf countries are major investors, threatening regional development and economic stability.

The US–Israeli strikes on Iran have intensified scrutiny of the Gulf states' longstanding reliance on the United States for security, as Iranian missile and drone attacks exposed vulnerabilities in the US defence umbrella and raised questions about its reliability. While American systems have intercepted many threats, the scale of attacks has prompted Gulf capitals to consider reducing dependence on Washington and restructuring national security approaches. This reassessment comes amid economic strains from energy disruptions and potential cuts to overseas investments, and, if sustained, could weaken US-Gulf partnerships.

A recent analysis by the middle east eye highlights growing threats to water supply and food inflation in the Gulf as the US–Israeli war on Iran disrupts shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and targets regional energy and transport infrastructure. While Iran has not directly struck major desalination plants, restrictions on maritime traffic and attacks on ports, airports, tankers, and logistics hubs have already slowed imports and raised the risk of supply shortages. Analysts warn that higher energy prices, shipping costs, and logistical bottlenecks could drive up food prices and strain basic utilities across Gulf states, compounding budget pressures from shuttered oil and gas production and raising longer-term concerns about social and economic stability in the region.

Iranian leaders have issued mixed messages regarding attacks on Gulf states. President Masoud Pezeshkian publicly apologized to neighbouring countries and indicated that strikes on Gulf territories would cease unless attacks originated from their soil. At the same time, elements of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) emphasized that operations would continue if Gulf states allowed US or Israeli forces to operate from their territory. The contrasting statements highlight internal divisions in Tehran and ongoing uncertainty over the country's approach to the Gulf conflict

## **Saudi Arabia**

On 3 March 2026, Iranian drone strikes hit the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh, causing limited fire and material damage and prompting Saudi condemnation of the attack as a serious breach of diplomatic norms. The strikes form part of a broader wave of Iranian missile and drone attacks on Gulf states hosting U.S. forces in retaliation for US–Israeli strikes on Iran that began on 28 February, exposing Saudi territory and infrastructure to direct fallout from the conflict. In response, U.S. President Donald Trump warned of an imminent retaliatory response to the embassy attack, while Washington ordered non-emergency embassy staff to leave Saudi Arabia due to security risks.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy offered support to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in countering Iranian drone and missile threats, reflecting growing cooperation between Riyadh and Kyiv amid the wider Middle East conflict. Zelenskyy's proposal, made during discussions with Saudi leadership, centres on sharing expertise and technologies developed by Ukraine in counter-drone defence, which could help Saudi Arabia bolster its air defence capabilities against continuing Iranian attacks. The outreach underscores how Gulf states are seeking external partnerships to enhance their security postures as direct strikes persists, and highlights Riyadh's efforts to diversify defence cooperation beyond traditional Western partners.

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have held discussions on enhancing military cooperation, with both countries agreeing to deepen coordination amid ongoing regional tensions following the conflict with Iran. The talks focused on strengthening joint defence mechanisms, improving interoperability between armed forces, and exploring expanded security arrangements to deter cross-border threats and shared risks. This development reflects broader Gulf efforts to reinforce collective defence frameworks as direct Iranian missile and drone strikes against regional targets continue to challenge national security postures across the Peninsula.

According to Al Jazeera, Pakistan is navigating a delicate diplomatic balance amid the widening conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia, trying to maintain neutrality while managing strong defence and economic ties with Riyadh and geographic and sectarian connections with Tehran. Islamabad has emphasised restraint and diplomatic engagement with both sides, including urging Iran to avoid attacks on Gulf states and reinforcing

communication channels with Saudi officials, even as its mutual defence pact with Saudi Arabia raises questions about how long true neutrality can be sustained. Pakistan's position remains complicated by internal political considerations and domestic tensions over the wider Middle East crisis, even as it seeks to avoid direct military entanglement in the escalating regional conflict.

## UAE

On 7 March 2026, UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan said the country is fully prepared to confront ongoing threats as Iranian missile and drone attacks continue against Gulf states, underscoring resilience and readiness to protect citizens, residents, and infrastructure. He described the UAE as being in a “period of war” that it will “emerge stronger” from, praised the armed forces’ defensive operations, and reiterated that the nation will not be an easy target. Iranian strikes — including impacts on airports, tourist hubs, and diplomatic sites — have resulted in civilian casualties and infrastructure disruption, and the UAE has maintained extensive interceptions of incoming threats while stressing the need to safeguard sovereignty and security.

Senior UAE officials denied Israeli media reports that the Emirates carried out a strike inside Iran—specifically targeting a desalination facility—describing the claims as “fake news” and inappropriate speculation about Abu Dhabi’s military actions, and stressing that any defensive measures would be publicly announced and not leaked by outside sources. In official statements, Emirati authorities reiterated that the UAE continues to act in self-defence against Iranian aggression, does not seek to be drawn into broader conflict escalation, and asserts its right to protect sovereignty and security while emphasising that it does not target civilian infrastructure abroad. These denials underscore efforts by the UAE to manage perceptions of its role in the ongoing regional conflict and to maintain a measured posture amid persistent Iranian missile and drone strikes against Gulf targets.

A leaked message attributed to former Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif reportedly described the UAE as equivalent to Israel, arguing that Tehran should focus attacks on Emirati targets alongside US and Israeli interests and that “the UAE and Israel are one and the same.” The remarks also suggested that Iran should avoid broader regional attacks where possible, concentrate on strategic targets, and explore diplomatic steps to give the US an “honourable exit.” The comments, if representative of thinking within Iranian elite circles, signal deep hostility toward the UAE’s positions and complicate efforts to de-escalate tensions in the Gulf theatre amid the wider conflict.

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

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

The security situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo remained tense, particularly in the eastern provinces of North Kivu and Ituri, where armed groups continued to carry out attacks on civilians and Congolese security forces. Militants from groups such as the Allied Democratic Forces and the Mai-Mai militias were active, conducting raids on villages, and looting operations. The Congolese army launched counterinsurgency operations during the week targeting key rebel strongholds, claiming to have neutralized several combatants and seized weapons caches. However, insurgent groups continued to exploit the rugged terrain, porous borders with Uganda and Rwanda, and limited state presence to regroup and resume attacks, perpetuating cycles of violence and civilian displacement. Humanitarian organizations have reported continued population movements, with many communities facing severe disruptions to food, health services, and local governance.

Politically and diplomatically, the Congolese government under Félix Tshisekedi has continued efforts to strengthen security sector reform and enhance cooperation with regional partners. During the week, discussions with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO) focused on coordinated operations against armed groups in the eastern provinces, as well as expanding intelligence sharing with neighboring countries to curb cross-border insurgent movements. Additionally, Kinshasa has maintained dialogue with international partners, including the United States, Belgium, and European Union, to secure support for humanitarian aid and stabilization projects in conflict-affected areas. These efforts reflect a dual strategy: pursuing military pressure on rebel networks while attempting to maintain international legitimacy and support for long-term stabilization and reconstruction initiatives in eastern DRC.

### **Mali**

The security environment in Mali remained highly fragile as militant violence continued across the northern and central parts of the country. Armed groups linked to Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara sustained attacks on military patrols, rural communities, and transport routes, particularly in areas bordering Burkina Faso and Niger, where the tri-border zone remains the core theater of insurgent activity. During the week, the Malian Armed Forces conducted counterterrorism operations in parts of the Ségou Region, including operations near Nampala, where several militants were reported killed and weapons, ammunition, and communication equipment were seized. These operations are part of broader military efforts to dismantle insurgent networks and secure vulnerable communities, although militant groups continue to exploit vast rural terrain, weak state presence, and porous borders to regroup and

launch further attacks. The continued violence has sustained displacement pressures and humanitarian concerns, particularly in rural areas where insecurity disrupts access to markets, food supplies, and essential services.

Politically and geopolitically, the transitional leadership under Assimi Goïta continued strengthening regional coordination and consolidating political authority amid ongoing security challenges. Mali remains a central actor in the Alliance of Sahel States, alongside Burkina Faso and Niger, where officials during the week continued advancing the second-year roadmap of the confederation focusing on defense integration, diplomacy, development cooperation, and the creation of new regional institutions such as a confederal parliament. The alliance is also expanding military coordination through joint planning and integrated security structures aimed at combating insurgent threats across borders.

At the same time, the Sahel alliance continues to reshape regional geopolitics following the three countries' withdrawal from the Economic Community of West African States, a move that has altered West Africa's security architecture and reduced cooperation with several coastal states. Mali is also deepening alternative international partnerships, including stronger political and security relations with Russia, while distancing itself from former Western security arrangements after the departure of French forces and the end of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

### **Burkina Faso**

Burkina Faso remained highly fragile as militant violence continued to affect several parts of the country, particularly in the northern and eastern regions where state control is limited. Armed groups linked to Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara carried out attacks targeting military positions, local self-defense groups, and rural communities. These incidents included ambushes on security patrols and coordinated assaults in areas close to the tri-border zone with Mali and Niger, which remains one of the most active theaters of the Sahel insurgency. In response, Burkinabè security forces conducted counterinsurgency operations during the week, combining air support and ground deployments aimed at dismantling militant positions and protecting strategic corridors linking major towns. Authorities reported tactical successes including the disruption of militant movements and seizure of weapons, although insurgent groups continue to exploit the vast geography and porous borders of the region to regroup and launch new attacks.

Politically and diplomatically, the transitional leadership of Ibrahim Traoré continued reinforcing centralized governance while framing national security as the government's primary priority. During the week, authorities maintained earlier decisions dissolving political parties that had already been suspended, effectively limiting organized opposition and concentrating political power under the transitional administration.

At the regional level, Burkina Faso further deepened coordination with Mali and Niger through the Alliance of Sahel States, as ministers from the three countries met to advance a second-year security roadmap focused on strengthening joint defense planning and intelligence cooperation across the Sahel. These discussions reflect growing efforts among the three governments to build an alternative regional security framework following their departure from the Economic Community of West African States. At the same time, Burkina Faso continues to reshape its external partnerships, maintaining closer relations with Russia and other non-Western partners after the withdrawal of French military forces from the region, while Western states cautiously reassess diplomatic engagement with Sahelian military-led governments amid concerns that continued isolation could further destabilize the region

## **Niger**

The security environment in Niger remained highly volatile, particularly in the western Tillabéri Region, where insurgent violence linked to the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara continued to intensify. Coordinated attacks were reported in the Anzourou district near the border with Mali, where at least 25 members of local self-defense groups were killed in assaults attributed to Islamic State-affiliated militants. The attacks targeted multiple communities and highlighted the continued instability in the tri-border zone connecting Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso, an area that remains one of the epicenters of the Sahel insurgency. The violence has reinforced concerns about the proliferation of community militias and the vulnerability of civilian populations living in remote border areas where state presence is limited. Human rights bodies and regional observers warned that ongoing attacks, displacement, and destruction of property are worsening the humanitarian situation and complicating efforts to stabilize rural communities.

At the diplomatic and regional level, Niger's leadership under Abdourahamane Tchiani continued strengthening cooperation with Mali and Burkina Faso through the Alliance of Sahel States, as ministers from the three countries met in Ouagadougou to finalize the second-year roadmap for deeper defense and security coordination within the confederation. The meeting focused on improving military cooperation and joint strategies to confront insurgent networks across the Sahel. At the same time, Niger has also engaged in diplomatic efforts to rebalance regional relations, including moves to restore ties with Algeria following months of tensions linked to broader Sahel diplomatic disputes. Meanwhile, regional security dynamics continue evolving as neighboring states, including Nigeria and Benin, discuss expanding cross-border counterterrorism cooperation in response to the spread of militant activity toward coastal West Africa. These developments reflect a shifting geopolitical environment in which Niger remains central to both the Sahel security crisis and wider regional efforts to reorganize defense cooperation amid fractured relations with the Economic Community of West African States and broader changes in international partnerships.

## **Chad**

The security environment in Chad has been shaped largely by the spillover effects of the war in neighboring Sudan, as well as broader instability across the Sahel. Armed tensions along the Chad–Sudan frontier increased after fighters linked to the Rapid Support Forces reportedly attacked Chadian forces near the border. Chad has become an important logistical corridor in the wider Sudan war environment, which has raised tensions and increased the risk of cross-border violence. At the same time, the conflict in Sudan continues to push large numbers of refugees into eastern Chad, putting heavy humanitarian and security pressure on border provinces and stretching state capacity to manage camps and protect vulnerable populations. Regional analysts warn that the growing flow of weapons and armed actors across borders is increasing insecurity and raising concerns about the potential expansion of armed violence into Chadian territory.

Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno remains the central political actor as Chad continues consolidating power under the current administration following the end of the transitional period and the elections held in 2024. The government has maintained a strong security-focused approach while seeking to strengthen international partnerships and maintain Chad’s role as a key regional security actor in Central Africa and the Sahel.

Diplomatically, Chad has been expanding security cooperation with international partners, including discussions aimed at strengthening cooperation with Western states on intelligence and crime prevention while also engaging in regional security initiatives. At the same time, debates continue domestically and internationally regarding governance and constitutional reforms that removed presidential term limits, a move widely criticized by civil society groups who warn it could entrench long-term centralized rule. Despite these concerns, Chad continues positioning itself as a critical security partner in regional counterterrorism and stabilization efforts across the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, particularly in confronting militant threats linked to Boko Haram and other extremist networks operating in the region.

## **Equatorial Guinea**

Equatorial Guinea continued to focus on consolidating political stability under Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, with domestic security and governance largely remaining under tight central control. No major internal security incidents were reported, reflecting the long-standing dominance of the government over political and social life. Authorities have maintained strict oversight over political activity, limiting opposition space, while reinforcing security protocols in key urban centers such as Malabo and Bata. The country continues to prioritize stability as the foundation for economic development, particularly given its reliance on oil and gas revenues, which remain the core driver of government resources and policy planning.

Diplomatically, Equatorial Guinea has been actively engaging with regional and international partners to strengthen its strategic position in Central Africa. The government continued fostering relationships with Spain and China, emphasizing investment, infrastructure development, and energy sector partnerships. At the same time, the country is participating in the Economic Community of Central African States initiatives to enhance regional security cooperation and economic integration, particularly around maritime and border security. These engagements underscore the government's strategy of leveraging international partnerships to reinforce internal stability and maintain its regional influence, even as political freedoms remain tightly constrained and governance remains highly centralized.

## **12. North Africa**

### **Morocco**

On March 2, 2026, Finland expressed support for Morocco's autonomy plan for the Sahara, viewing it as a credible solution under Moroccan sovereignty to resolve the long-standing territorial dispute. This stance was outlined in a joint communiqué following talks in Rabat between Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita and Finnish counterpart Elina Valtonen, aligning with UN Security Council Resolution 2797 and emphasizing a UN-led political process for a mutually acceptable outcome.

Amid persistent tensions in the Western Sahara region, the Sahrawi People's Liberation Army reportedly targeted the headquarters of Moroccan occupation forces in the Guelta sector, highlighting ongoing military clashes in the disputed area. This incident underscores the challenges to Morocco's control and the autonomy proposal, as sporadic confrontations continue between Moroccan troops and Polisario Front fighters seeking independence.

Shifting to broader regional escalations, Morocco's Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita strongly condemned Iranian drone attacks on Azerbaijan's Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic during a March 6, 2026, phone call with Azerbaijani counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov. Bourita labeled the strikes a violation of sovereignty and international law, expressing solidarity with Azerbaijan and warning of heightened tensions amid the ongoing US-Israel-Iran conflict.

### **Algeria**

On March 7, 2026, Türkiye and Algeria conducted high-level diplomatic consultations in Istanbul, co-chaired by Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Musa Kulaklıkaya and Algerian Foreign Ministry Secretary General Lounes Magramane. The discussions evaluated bilateral relations, explored avenues to enhance cooperation across sectors, and

addressed regional developments, highlighting their shared perspectives as strategic partners in North Africa and the Mediterranean amid shifting geopolitical dynamics.

Amid heightened regional tensions, Algerian forces intercepted a weapon smuggling operation near the Libyan border west of Ghat on July 3, 2026, seizing Kalashnikov rifles, automatic weapons, ammunition, and grenades possibly of Israeli origin. Intelligence monitoring targeted suspicious activities linked to organized crime and potentially Khalifa Haftar's forces, underscoring Algeria's vigilance against cross-border threats tied to Libyan conflicts and illicit arms trafficking.

## **Libya**

A Russian LNG tanker, the Arctic Metagaz, exploded and sank in the Mediterranean Sea off Libya's coast on March 3, following sudden blasts and a massive fire, with Russia attributing the incident to a Ukrainian naval drone attack launched from Libyan territory. All 30 crew members were rescued safely and transferred to Benghazi, while the vessel, part of Russia's sanctioned shadow fleet carrying 61,000 tons of LNG, was not en route to Egypt as speculated, a claim firmly denied by Egyptian authorities to dispel misinformation.

This maritime disruption highlights ongoing regional tensions that could exacerbate Libya's instability, drawing attention to international diplomatic pushes for resolution. Massad Boulos, a key adviser to US President Donald Trump on African and Middle Eastern affairs, voiced strong support on March 5 for UN-led efforts to foster a Libyan-owned political process, stressing that unifying state institutions is essential for restoring economic vitality and ensuring long-term peace.

Building on these stabilization initiatives, which emphasize inclusive governance, Libya marked International Women's Day on March 8 with statements from UNSMIL condemning barriers to women's political engagement as violations of human rights and calling for equal protections. The EU Delegation in Tripoli and local committees echoed this by celebrating Libyan women's resilience and pivotal contributions to societal progress, urging greater empowerment to support national unity and development.

## **13. Middle East**

### **Iran-Israel-USA war**

On March 2, 2026, U.S. and Israeli warplanes conducted coordinated strikes on various Iranian targets, including explosions in Tehran affecting the IRIB state TV headquarters and areas near Mehrabad airport. Additional hits targeted an underground nuclear site at Minzadehei and the Assembly of Experts building in Qom, while Iran's defense ministry confirmed that the major uranium enrichment facility at Natanz was also struck during the operation.

Following these initial assaults, Iran swiftly retaliated on the same day, deploying armed drones that struck outside the U.S. embassy in Riyadh, causing a minor fire, and targeting the U.S. consulate in Dubai. Over the period, Iran launched missiles and drones at several Gulf Arab nations, with Kuwait's air defenses intercepting incoming threats for the third consecutive day, resulting in debris injuring two refinery workers.

Amid the intense aerial engagements and defensive responses, Kuwait's air defenses erroneously shot down three U.S. F-15 fighter jets on March 2. U.S. Central Command described this as an apparent friendly-fire mishap occurring during simultaneous attacks from Iranian aircraft, missiles, and drones; fortunately, all six American crew members ejected safely and were recovered without serious injury.

As the conflict expanded, Iran's ally Hezbollah initiated a second front on March 2 by firing rockets and drones from southern Lebanon into northern Israel for the second day, prompting immediate Israeli air raids on Lebanese territory. In retaliation, Israel unleashed heavy bombardment on Hezbollah positions around Beirut and southern Lebanon, producing dense smoke plumes over suburban areas.

With cross-border hostilities escalating rapidly, authorities ordered civilian evacuations and embassy drawdowns on March 2. Israel instructed thousands of villagers in south Lebanon to relocate northward for safety, while the U.S. reduced staff at its embassies in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Lebanon, issuing warnings about potential ongoing missile and drone threats in the region.

The following day, on March 3, Iran officially acknowledged through its envoy at the Vienna nuclear agency that the Natanz uranium enrichment site had been struck by U.S.-Israeli forces the previous day. This confirmation aligned with initial reports, underscoring the campaign's focus on degrading Iran's nuclear infrastructure amid the broader military offensive.

The war drew Lebanon further into the fray on March 3, as Israeli ground forces advanced into southern Lebanon with reinforcements heading north, displacing Lebanese civilians en masse. Thousands, primarily women and children, fled border regions to safer areas; the U.N. reported approximately 30,000 people, including 9,000 children, seeking shelter from the relentless bombardment. Israel's military chief vowed continued strikes until Hezbollah disarmed.

By March 4, the conflict extended far beyond the Gulf region when a U.S. Navy submarine torpedoed and sank the Iranian frigate IRIS Dena in international waters near Sri Lanka, resulting in at least 87 crew deaths. The vessel was returning from a naval exercise; U.S. officials stated the attack broadened Washington's efforts to neutralize the Iranian navy.

The escalation also pulled in NATO forces on March 4, as Turkey reported that alliance air defense batteries intercepted and destroyed an Iranian ballistic missile approaching Turkish airspace—the first direct involvement for Turkey in the conflict. U.S. officials emphasized that no collective-defense clause was invoked, but the event highlighted the growing regional spillover risks.

Shifting to a new stage, Israel declared on March 5 that the war had entered its "second phase," with air force strikes targeting an underground Iranian site storing ballistic missiles. Israeli sources reported that hundreds of surface-to-air and surface-to-surface missile launchers had already been destroyed, now focusing on fortified subterranean bunkers to further cripple capabilities.

In a significant counteroffensive on March 5, dubbed the war's sixth day, Iranian forces fired ballistic missiles at Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar. A strike ignited a large fire at a Bahrain oil refinery, later extinguished, while Iran claimed drone hits on an opposition camp in Iraqi Kurdistan and a U.S.-operated oil facility, demonstrating extensive retaliatory reach.

Concurrently, the U.S. military highlighted operational successes on March 5, announcing strikes on at least 30 Iranian vessels, including a major drone carrier, and deployments of B-2 stealth bombers dropping dozens of 2,000-pound bunker-buster bombs on buried missile sites. Pentagon officials affirmed that U.S. munitions reserves remained robust to sustain prolonged bombardment.

As military actions intensified, global figures responded on March 5, with Pope Francis (Leo XIV) issuing an unprecedented video appeal for peace, urging world leaders to renounce war as a conflict resolution tool and abandon "projects of death." The Vatican's top diplomat echoed this, criticizing the U.S.-Israeli "preventive war" on legal grounds and advocating for dialogue.

Renewing attention on the northern front, Israel intensified operations against Lebanon and Hezbollah on March 6, warning that Lebanon would face severe consequences if cross-border attacks persisted. The Israeli Air Force bombarded Hezbollah command centers and rocket sites, supplemented by an airborne commando raid in eastern Lebanon to disrupt militant activities.

Indicating a perceived reduction in threats, Israel's Home Front Command relaxed some public safety measures on March 6, allowing businesses to reopen as U.S. officials noted a decline in Iran's missile launches. This adjustment reflected assessments by U.S. and Israeli commanders that sustained strikes had significantly eroded Iran's missile arsenal and operational capacity.

Amid ongoing hostilities, Iran's political structure solidified between March 7 and 8, with the Assembly of Experts appointing Mojtaba Khamenei, the hardline son of the late Ali

Khamenei, as the new Supreme Leader following his father's death in the opening strikes. This move entrenched hardliners, countering U.S. President Trump's earlier statement desiring influence over Iran's leadership selection.

The human cost mounted by March 7, as the U.S. reported a seventh service member succumbing to wounds from Iran's early retaliatory strikes. In response to heightened risks, U.S. officials evacuated non-essential staff from embassies in Riyadh, Amman, Doha, Kuwait City, and Manama, amid persistent concerns over attacks on American diplomatic facilities.

The conflict's repercussions rippled into global markets on March 8, with oil prices surging over 20% and briefly exceeding \$100 per barrel due to fears of disrupted Gulf supplies. President Trump tweeted that elevated fuel costs represented a "small price" for enhanced security, though commodity exchanges experienced substantial volatility as a result.

Undeterred by mounting pressures, Iran escalated its rhetoric on March 8, with a senior official threatening to target Israel's Dimona nuclear reactor should Israel and the U.S. pursue regime change. This defiant stance persisted under the new Supreme Leader, signaling Tehran's resolve despite leadership transitions and military setbacks

## **Turkey**

On March 4, 2026, NATO air defense batteries in Turkey intercepted and destroyed an Iranian ballistic missile approaching Turkish airspace, marking the first direct involvement of Turkey in the US-Israel-Iran conflict. The projectile, which crossed Iraq and Syria before being neutralized in the Eastern Mediterranean, resulted in debris falling in Hatay's Dörtyol district without causing casualties. Turkish officials emphasized their capability to protect national territory and reserved the right to respond to any threats.

Following the incident, Turkey summoned Iran's ambassador to protest the violation of its airspace amid the escalating regional hostilities. Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan urged Iranian counterparts to exercise restraint and avoid further escalation, highlighting the risks of broader conflict stemming from US-Israeli strikes on Iran since February 28. This diplomatic move underscored Ankara's commitment to stability while maintaining NATO alliances.

In response to the missile threat, NATO condemned Iran's actions and reinforced air defenses in the region, benefiting Turkey as a member state without invoking collective defense clauses. The alliance's interception highlighted the spillover risks from Iran's retaliatory strikes on Gulf states hosting US bases, prompting international solidarity against territorial violations.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan intensified diplomatic efforts, conducting phone calls with leaders including US President Trump, Qatari Emir, UAE President, Saudi Crown Prince, and EU officials to advocate for de-escalation and peace negotiations. Erdogan warned of severe security consequences from the conflict, offering Turkey's mediation support to prevent further civilian casualties and regional instability.

Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan led a broader diplomatic push, engaging with counterparts from Qatar, Greece, Iraq's KRG, UK, UAE, and others to promote a ceasefire and dialogue. These efforts built on prior engagements, such as hosting Iran's foreign minister in January, aiming to reduce tensions amid the US-Israel attacks that have claimed hundreds of lives in Iran.

Erdogan also discussed NATO defense cooperation with French President Macron, urging enhanced alliance measures to address the Iran crisis and mitigate risks of wider instability. This call emphasized the need for collective security responses following the missile incident, while Fidan met US and EBRD officials to review bilateral ties and regional developments.

Turkey condemned Iran's retaliatory strikes on Gulf countries as a misguided strategy that could widen the war, with Fidan stressing the importance of diplomacy over military escalation. As a NATO member bordering Iran, Turkey positioned itself as a mediator, holding talks with multiple governments to halt the violence.

To bolster security, Turkey heightened measures along its 534-kilometer border with Iran, placing units on alert and coordinating crisis scenarios for public order and migration management. The interior ministry denied false claims about mine disposal, affirming modern systems to enhance defenses amid the conflict's potential spillover.

Amid rising tensions, Turkey and Iran suspended day-trip passenger crossings at their shared border on March 2, while keeping commercial freight operational. Trade Minister Omer Bolat announced coordinated management to ensure stable flows, with contingency plans in place to safeguard security without disrupting essential economic ties.

Turkey extended flight suspensions to Middle Eastern destinations due to airspace closures in conflict-affected countries like Iran, Israel, and Gulf states, citing worsening security from the ongoing war. This measure followed the missile interception, reflecting heightened risks to civilian aviation in the region.

Economic pressures emerged as oil prices rose from the conflict, prompting Turkey to consider reviving fuel tax adjustments to mitigate impacts. Border regions like Van reported anxiety and losses, while the government blocked social media accounts spreading war disinformation to maintain public calm.

Turkey firmly rejected disinformation claims, including allegations that the US ordered strikes on Iran in exchange for sanctions relief or that the UAE would be targeted if Turkey attacked Iran. Officials affirmed sovereign foreign policy and prioritized dialogue to de-escalate regional tensions.

## **Syria**

On March 4, 2026, an Iranian ballistic missile traversed Syrian and Iraqi airspace before being intercepted by NATO air defense systems as it neared Turkish territory in the eastern Mediterranean. No specific target was identified, and debris fell harmlessly, causing no casualties. Turkish officials protested to Iran, urging restraint amid the broader US-Israel-Iran conflict, while NATO condemned the action and reinforced its defensive posture in the region.

Building on this incident, remnants of two additional Iranian missiles landed in Syria's Daraa countryside on March 5 without injuries, highlighting the spillover risks from Iran's retaliatory strikes. Syria's Foreign Ministry strongly condemned these violations, along with Iranian drone and missile attacks on Turkey and Azerbaijan, labeling them threats to sovereignty and regional stability, and called for international intervention to preserve peace.

As the war exacerbated regional tensions, concerns mounted over Syria's internal stability, with Turkish intelligence reportedly requesting British MI6 in February 2026 to bolster protection for Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa against assassination plots by ISIL. This move aimed to prevent sectarian conflict in post-Assad Syria, amid ongoing violence that has displaced millions and intertwined with the US-Israel-Iran hostilities.

However, Turkish authorities denied the specific claim of soliciting MI6's aid, clarifying that while no such request occurred, their National Intelligence Organization maintains counterterrorism cooperation with international partners and Syrian security forces. This includes joint operations against Daesh, underscoring efforts to mitigate threats amplified by the surrounding conflict without direct involvement in the war.

## **14. Europe**

EU foreign ministers held informal video conferences on March 1 and March 5 to address the Iran escalation, urging maximum restraint, civilian protection, adherence to international law, and de-escalation while condemning Iran's "indiscriminate" attacks on Gulf states and regional targets. The EU issued statements refusing to endorse regime change, emphasizing diplomatic solutions, Strait of Hormuz openness, and protection of citizens. High Representative Kaja Kallas coordinated with Gulf Cooperation Council ministers, expressing solidarity against Iranian strikes and exploring defensive cooperation (including Ukraine's drone-interceptor expertise for Gulf allies). Responses

varied: France, Germany, and the UK (E3) condemned Iranian retaliation and reserved rights for defensive actions against missile/drone sites in coordination with the U.S.; Spain firmly opposed the strikes as unjustifiable and outside international law, refusing U.S. base access and facing Trump's trade threats; Italy raised legal concerns but offered limited support.

The conflict revived fears of an energy crisis in Europe, with gas prices surging (up to 60% in some cases) due to Hormuz disruptions, facility attacks, and supply halts. ECB policymakers warned of inflation spikes (0.3–0.5 percentage points in 2026) and growth slowdowns if prolonged, prompting preparations for reserve impacts and diversification. European stocks showed mixed reactions (defense/energy up, broader markets down), with anxiety over economic consequences.

President Emmanuel Macron announced intentions to expand France's nuclear arsenal and extend its nuclear umbrella to European allies, framing it as necessary for independence amid U.S. detachment in the Iran war. France joined the E3 (with UK and Germany) in condemning Iran's retaliatory missile attacks and warning of proportionate defensive actions. Paris bolstered military presence in the region to protect citizens and interests while urging de-escalation and diplomacy. Macron's moves reflect Europe's push for strategic autonomy as transatlantic ties strain under Trump's unilateral approach.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz visited Washington, D.C., on March 3, 2026, for a bilateral meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House, marking his third visit overall and the second in-person encounter in 2026 amid heightened global tensions from the ongoing U.S.-Israeli war against Iran (Operation Epic Fury), which had escalated just days earlier with strikes killing Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The talks, held in the Oval Office and attended by figures like Vice President JD Vance, focused primarily on the Iran situation, where both leaders expressed alignment on ending Iran's "terrible regime" and its nuclear/missile threats, with Trump briefing Merz on intelligence suggesting Iran was preparing attacks that justified preemptive action, while Merz emphasized the need for a rapid conclusion to the conflict, discussions on the "day after" including post-regime stability, and shared concerns about regional security and economic fallout; Merz avoided direct criticism of the U.S. approach, noting Europe's own past ineffectiveness toward Iran and the importance of transatlantic unity. They also addressed Russia's war in Ukraine, with Merz urging Trump to increase pressure on Vladimir Putin to exploit Russia's economic weakening after four years of conflict and advocating for European involvement in any settlement to avoid deals negotiated over heads, while Trump acknowledged Ukraine's high priority but admitted challenges in finding a quick resolution. Trade and tariffs were touched on, with Merz securing commitments toward finalizing a U.S.-EU deal and assurances that no individual EU member like Spain would face disproportionate treatment. Trump praised Merz as a "friend" doing a "great job," highlighting strong bilateral ties in trade and

security, and Merz presented symbolic items while underscoring NATO solidarity and Europe's defense contributions. Post-meeting, Merz held a press conference reiterating the "same page" stance on Iran, the risks involved, and the need for coordinated pressure on Moscow, leaving with optimism about U.S. recognition of Ukraine's stakes and trade progress, though the visit highlighted Europe's delicate balancing act in influencing U.S. decisions during volatile crises without full endorsement of unilateral actions.

## **15. Global Superpowers**

The U.S.-Israeli war against Iran, known as Operation Epic Fury, escalated this week with intensified airstrikes on Iranian targets including nuclear sites, military facilities, and leadership remnants. President Donald Trump demanded Iran's unconditional surrender, threatened further intensification, and considered seizing nuclear stockpiles or deploying ground troops while rejecting regime change solely from the air. Iran retaliated with missile and drone attacks on Israel, U.S. bases, and Gulf states, leading to civilian casualties, energy disruptions including the Strait of Hormuz closure, and the naming of Mojtaba Khamenei as the new supreme leader. Trump expressed dissatisfaction with this succession and stated he would decide, alongside Israel, when the conflict ends.

The United States approved an urgent emergency military arms sale to Israel on March 6, 2026, amid the ongoing U.S.-Israeli war against Iran (Operation Epic Fury), which had escalated with joint strikes beginning late February and Iranian retaliatory attacks. The U.S. State Department, under Secretary Marco Rubio, invoked emergency authority under the Arms Export Control Act to bypass the standard congressional review process, determining that an immediate sale was required in the national security interests of the United States due to the active conflict and Israel's need to replenish munitions for sustained operations. These rapid arms transfer underscores deepened U.S.-Israel military alignment under President Trump, prioritizing ally support in the face of Iran's missile/drone barrages and regional spillover, though it has drawn scrutiny over transparency, potential for prolonged conflict, and implications for broader Middle East stability.

Russia condemned the U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran as unprovoked aggression and a violation of sovereignty, with President Vladimir Putin calling for an immediate halt to hostilities and a return to diplomacy in calls with Iranian and Gulf leaders. Moscow offered mediation but provided no direct military support due to its Ukraine commitments, though reports indicated Russia shared intelligence on U.S. military positions with Iran to aid targeting. The war distracted from stalled U.S.-brokered Ukraine-Russia peace talks, which faced relocation issues, while Ukraine proposed drone aid to Gulf states in exchange for air defense systems amid fears of diverted Western resources.

China strongly condemned the U.S.-Israeli attacks on Iran as unacceptable violations of sovereignty, particularly the killing of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and urged an immediate ceasefire, de-escalation, and resumption of dialogue to prevent wider conflict. Foreign Minister Wang Yi coordinated with Russia and regional states while emphasizing respect for international law and Gulf stability. Beijing evacuated thousands of citizens from Iran, canceled flights, and positioned itself as a proponent of multilateralism and peace amid the crisis without providing material support to Tehran.

Tensions with the U.S. persisted after Prime Minister Keir Starmer's initial reluctance to allow offensive use of British bases (e.g., Diego Garcia, RAF Akrotiri) for Iran strikes, drawing public rebukes from Trump calling him uncooperative and disappointing. Starmer authorized defensive support including intercepts and intelligence sharing after Iranian attacks hit UK-linked assets in Cyprus. The UK intercepted missiles targeting Cyprus and reinforced regional deployments to safeguard expatriates and prevent escalation, balancing alliance loyalty with domestic and legal concerns.

The U.S.-UK special relationship faced significant strain as President Trump publicly criticized Prime Minister Keir Starmer for initially refusing U.S. access to British bases for offensive strikes on Iran, calling him uncooperative, disappointing, and not comparable to Winston Churchill. Starmer defended his cautious approach as principled and focused on legality and civilian safety before authorizing defensive support including intelligence sharing and intercepts. He insisted the relationship remained operational despite the public rift, which highlighted broader transatlantic tensions over Trump's unilateral style.

The ongoing Iran conflict disrupted global energy markets with surges in oil and gas prices due to attacks on facilities, shipping halts in the Strait of Hormuz, and production shutdowns in Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Regional spillover included strikes extending to Lebanon via Hezbollah responses and attacks on Gulf allies, prompting evacuations, port suspensions, and economic ripple effects worldwide including higher shipping insurance and aviation disruptions.

The escalating U.S.-Israeli war against Iran (Operation Epic Fury), which severely impacted India's energy security, diaspora safety, and diplomatic balancing act. India adopted a cautious, neutral stance emphasizing restraint and dialogue while facing domestic criticism for perceived alignment with Israel and silence on Iran's sovereignty violation. Economic fallout included surging oil/gas prices, supply disruptions via the Strait of Hormuz, and accelerated diversification efforts. Bilateral diplomacy continued with energy deals and regional outreach, amid broader recalibration under U.S. volatility and multipolar pressures. India expressed deep concern over developments in Iran and the Gulf region, urging all parties to exercise maximum restraint, avoid escalation, prioritize

civilian safety, respect sovereignty and territorial integrity, and pursue dialogue and diplomacy for an early end to the conflict.

The United States, through the Treasury Department under the Trump administration, issued a temporary 30-day waiver (announced around March 5-6, 2026, valid until April 4) allowing Indian refiners to purchase sanctioned Russian crude oil and petroleum products. This applies specifically to cargoes already loaded on vessels as of March 5 and destined for India, enabling rerouting of stranded shipments amid disruptions from the ongoing U.S.-Israeli war against Iran, which has halted much traffic through the Strait of Hormuz and caused global supply fears and price spikes. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent described the move as a "deliberate short-term" or "stopgap measure" to keep oil flowing into the global market, prevent near-term shortages, and ease pressure on energy prices, while emphasizing it would not provide significant new financial benefits to Russia since it covers only pre-loaded oil already at sea (not new shipments). This came after months of U.S. pressure on India—including earlier punitive tariffs (later revoked in a trade framework deal)—to reduce or halt Russian oil imports to limit funding for Russia's war in Ukraine.

## **16. International and Regional Organizations**

### **United Nation**

During the first week of March 2026, the United Nations Security Council operated under the rotating presidency of The Gambia and focused on escalating humanitarian crises and security threats in Sudan, Haiti, and the Middle East. On 2 March, Ambassador Lamin Faati outlined a presidency agenda emphasizing justice-centered diplomacy, stronger support for African-led peace initiatives, and sustainable financing for AU peace operations. The Council held consultations the same day on the humanitarian impact of sanctions and the arms embargo in South Sudan.

On 3 March, members convened to address the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza amid warnings of imminent famine, debating a draft resolution proposing humanitarian corridors to northern Gaza, though divisions among permanent members prevented its adoption.

On 5 March, the Council convened an emergency session on Sudan after briefings from UN humanitarian agencies described unprecedented displacement and worsening famine risks, prompting calls for a Ramadan ceasefire expected to begin around 10 March. Discussions that day also reviewed the future of the Kenya-led Multinational Security Support mission in Haiti, including options to convert it into a formal UN peacekeeping operation.

On 6 March, the Council issued a press statement expressing concern over the withdrawal of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger from regional security frameworks, warning that the resulting fragmentation undermines counter-terrorism coordination in the Liptako-Gourma region. A thematic debate on 7 March examined the growing use of artificial intelligence-driven disinformation campaigns in conflict zones, with particular reference to tensions in the Great Lakes region.

The week concluded on 8 March with an open session marking International Women's Day and reviewing implementation of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, during which member states pledged to expand female participation in peacekeeping missions and condemned the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

### **Africa Union**

During the first week of March 2026, the African Union concentrated on institutional consolidation, judicial engagement, and emerging security challenges under the new leadership cycle of the 2026 Bureau. On 2 March, the AUC Chairperson issued a statement marking the 130th anniversary of the Victory of Adwa, framing the historic event as a foundational symbol of Pan-African unity and resistance and linking it to the long-term ambitions of Agenda 2063.

The following day, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights commemorated its 20th anniversary in Arusha, formally launching the 2026 judicial year and opening its 80th Ordinary Session scheduled from 2–27 March. High-level diplomatic consultations took place on 3–4 March when the AUC Chairperson received former Botswana President Mokgweetsi Masisi in his capacity as AU Facilitator for the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo peace process and held consultations with Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf, former President of the International Court of Justice, as well as leadership of the Africa-Arab Cultural Institute.

On the security front, the Kingdom of Eswatini assumed the rotating chairship of the AU Peace and Security Council on 1 March and prioritized institutional induction for newly elected members. Briefings held on 3 March addressed escalating tensions in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo following reported drone strikes against M23 positions and diplomatic engagement by the SADC Panel of Elders. The AU also responded on 6 March to terrorist attacks in Benin, warning that violent extremist activity from the Sahel continues to expand toward coastal West African states.

Throughout the week the AU remained actively engaged in the crisis in Sudan, advocating a unified diplomatic framework to prevent further fragmentation while emphasizing the necessity of an AU-led political process. At the global level, the organization also began refining its engagement strategy within the G20 framework

following its permanent membership, seeking to ensure African priorities are reflected during South Africa’s presidency. Parallel policy work advanced implementation of the AU’s 2026 Theme of the Year on sustainable water availability and sanitation systems, linking water governance with conflict prevention and long-term economic resilience across the continent.

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

During the week of 2–8 March 2026, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development focused on strengthening regional resilience, advancing mediation efforts in Sudan and South Sudan, and promoting climate-smart agricultural cooperation. Following Sudan’s return to the organization in February, IGAD continued to lead the Forum of Special Envoys aimed at harmonizing diplomatic initiatives among the African Union, United Nations, and other partners seeking an end to the Sudanese conflict. Institutional coordination with the African Union was reinforced on 4 March when the IGAD Director for Peace and Security met the AUC Chairperson in Addis Ababa to strengthen joint responses to regional instability.

Strategic planning consultations also progressed during the week as the Secretariat refined the IGAD Strategy 2026–2030, which aims to transition from fragmented national responses toward integrated regional governance frameworks. On the security front, the organization remained closely engaged in monitoring violations of the Permanent Ceasefire Agreement in South Sudan and urged all parties to recommit to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). IGAD also advanced implementation of its Women, Peace and Security initiative following the late-February ministerial meeting, incorporating gender-responsive mediation practices into regional peace processes.

Experts simultaneously continued discussions on a broader regional strategy for preventing and countering violent extremism through development-focused approaches. Complementing these political and security initiatives, IGAD hosted a Climate-Smart Agriculture Forum in Addis Ababa on 3–4 March to align national investments with climate adaptation strategies, followed by a Women’s Agrifood Systems Forum on 5–6 March that addressed structural barriers to land access and finance for female farmers.

On 8 March, coinciding with International Women’s Day, Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu highlighted the role of women’s leadership in peacebuilding and economic development. The same day Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Somalia announced plans for a regional “Resilience Corridor” aimed at protecting the livelihoods of an estimated 150 million people vulnerable to recurring climate shocks.

## **ECOWAS**

During the first week of March 2026, the Economic Community of West African States concentrated on strengthening regional security architecture, preparing for electoral processes, and expanding economic coordination initiatives. On 2 March, following consultations among military chiefs in Freetown, the bloc moved to activate a 2,000-strong regional standby force designed to address jihadist threats and transnational organized crime.

Under the chairmanship of Sierra Leone's President Julius Maada Bio, ECOWAS also issued a statement aligning with the African Union to express concern about escalating tensions in the Gulf region and their potential impact on global trade and energy markets. Institutional modernization initiatives were launched the same day through five regional statistical harmonization workshops in Abidjan under the ECOWAS Vision 2050 framework.

On 3 March, an ECOWAS pre-election fact-finding mission began engagements in Cabo Verde ahead of upcoming legislative and presidential polls, while a parallel regional consultation in Côte d'Ivoire opened discussions on the future of trade, economic integration, and sustainable development in preparation for an upcoming summit of heads of state. Vice-President Damtien Tchintchibidja also met Togolese authorities in Lomé to support operationalization of the National Early Warning Mechanism, linking national monitoring structures with the ECOWAS regional early warning system. Air transport reform discussions began in Abidjan on 4 March, focusing on strengthening consumer protection and improving regional competitiveness in the aviation sector.

By 5 March, additional operational details emerged regarding the new counter-terrorism force, with Sierra Leone designated as its logistical hub. On 6 March, ECOWAS concluded consultations in Cotonou with media and civil society actors to encourage a peaceful political environment ahead of Benin's presidential election scheduled for 12 April 2026. The same week the ECOWAS Parliament commemorated its 25th anniversary, emphasizing a long-term institutional shift from an "ECOWAS of States" toward a more people-centered regional integration model.

## **European Union**

During the first week of March 2026, the European Union balanced internal security initiatives with diplomatic engagement on the war in Ukraine and rising trade tensions with China. On 2 March, the European Council approved the release of a €5 billion tranche under the European Peace Facility to support joint procurement of artillery ammunition and air defense interceptors for Ukraine.

The European Commission simultaneously released its 2026 compliance report on the Digital Markets Act, announcing new fines against several technology firms classified as “gatekeepers” for failing to meet interoperability obligations. Between 3 and 4 March, EU officials reviewed progress on the European Defence Industrial Strategy, moving toward incentives for cross-border defense manufacturing and deeper integration of the bloc’s defense supply chains. During the same period, the Commission confirmed the extension of anti-subsidy tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles following investigations that identified continuing market distortions.

On 5 March, EU interior ministers advanced preparations for the full land-border integration of Bulgaria and Romania into the Schengen Area, targeting completion by the end of the 2026 judicial year. The European Parliament also began legislative debate on the “2040 Climate Target Framework,” which proposes a mandatory 90 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990 levels. Economic indicators released on 6 March showed Eurozone inflation stabilizing at 2.1 percent, increasing expectations that the European Central Bank could consider interest-rate cuts later in March.

The same week, the EU formally activated its Integrated Solidarity Mechanism under the Migration and Asylum Pact, establishing a framework for relocating asylum seekers among member states or providing financial contributions in lieu of relocation.

## NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization focused on large-scale military exercises in the High North, integration of its newest Nordic members, and long-term security support for Ukraine. On 2 March, the alliance launched the second phase of Exercise Steadfast Defender 26, deploying more than 30,000 troops across Norway, Finland, and Sweden to test collective defense capabilities in Arctic and northern European environments. The exercise also marked the first time Swedish and Finnish air forces led Baltic Air Policing sorties as fully integrated NATO members, demonstrating deeper operational integration in the Baltic region.

Between 3 and 4 March, NATO leadership announced that 18 member states had reached the alliance’s benchmark of allocating at least two percent of GDP to defense spending focused specifically on equipment procurement and research and development. Contracts worth approximately \$1.2 billion were simultaneously signed for the production of 155mm artillery ammunition to replenish stockpiles depleted by military assistance to Ukraine.

Allies also debated proposals to bring the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, commonly known as the Ramstein Group, under formal NATO oversight in order to institutionalize long-term military assistance. On 5 March, NATO inaugurated a new quantum-safe cryptography hub in Tallinn, Estonia, designed to protect allied communications

infrastructure from potential future threats posed by quantum computing technologies. The alliance also intensified Enhanced Air Policing missions over Romania following reports of debris from a drone strike near the border, increasing the deployment of French and Italian fighter aircraft.

On 6 March, NATO and EU officials convened a joint task force to coordinate protection of critical undersea infrastructure, including pipelines and fiber-optic cables in the North Sea, amid reports of suspicious maritime activity.



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