



Weekly Geopolitical Report

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

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Horn Review: Weekly Report

Mar 23 – Mar 29, 2026

1. Ethiopia

In the evolving landscape of a multipolar world where alliances shift rapidly and crises demand nuanced navigation, Abiy Ahmed continues to demonstrate masterful diplomacy and domestic stewardship through a series of deliberate, high-impact engagements from March 22 to 28, 2026. This period stands as a compelling showcase of how Ethiopia asserts principled positions on development and unity, builds bridges across domestic and international divides, and transforms challenges into opportunities for deeper partnerships and stability, all while maintaining strategic autonomy and a firm commitment to dialogue over division, effectively positioning itself as a proactive architect rather than a passive observer in both national consolidation and the emerging global order. Notably, the synchronization between domestic development messaging and external diplomatic outreach suggests a maturing statecraft that deliberately links internal legitimacy with external influence.

The week opened with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed inaugurating the Niin Lee Palm Lodge in Afar Regional State on March 22, as part of the “Dine for Generations” tourism initiative. This milestone project emphasizes sustainable, community-driven development and environmental conservation in a strategically important region, delivering visible peace dividends and reinforcing the government’s commitment to inclusive growth across historically sensitive areas. It signals a broader political strategy of turning infrastructure and tourism into tools for regional cohesion and long-term stability. Beyond its economic value, the project also carries symbolic weight, embedding state presence and development in peripheral regions often associated with fragility.

On March 24, Prime Minister Abiy outlined Ethiopia’s ambitious urban corridor development strategy interview. He highlighted its transformative potential for job creation, housing expansion, GDP growth (with Addis Ababa playing a pivotal role), innovation hubs, and flagship programs such as the “5 Million Coders” initiative. These two interconnected initiatives, tourism infrastructure in Afar and urban corridor planning, illustrate a coherent domestic vision: using tangible development wins to build public legitimacy, foster national unity, and lay the groundwork for sustained economic momentum ahead of the 2026 general elections. Strategically, this reflects a governance model where economic transformation is positioned as both a political stabilizer and a forward-looking national narrative.

Parallel to these forward-looking projects, the government addressed internal cohesion head-on. On March 24, Somali Regional State authorities firmly denied rumors of any rift between its president and Prime Minister Abiy, dismissing leaked audio recordings as

“fabricated.” The swift rebuttal helped quell speculation about regional loyalties at a politically sensitive time, projecting federal-regional solidarity and countering narratives of fragmentation. This unity messaging gained further traction around March 26 when Prime Minister Abiy publicly urged opposition groups to “apologize,” seek forgiveness, and rejoin the Prosperity Party. Framed as an olive branch for national reconciliation, the statement, while drawing some criticism for potentially narrowing political space, reflects a strategic effort to reduce fragmentation and strengthen consensus on the government’s terms, mirroring the development-focused initiatives earlier in the week. Taken together, these moves indicate a dual-track approach: consolidating political control while projecting inclusivity.

On the peace and security front, Ethiopia maintained a proactive, preventive posture. On March 27, Southern Ethiopian Regional State Governor Tilahun Kebede and the regional security council issued a stern public warning against “conflict brokers,” contraband traders, and other destabilizing elements threatening relative peace. The strong tone and hint of an impending crackdown demonstrate heightened vigilance to safeguard stability in southern areas, complementing the domestic unity drive. In the north, social media and diaspora reports on March 28 continued to note low-level concerns, including Fano militia activities and displacement in Amhara and Tigray, though no major new clashes escalated. Against this backdrop, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus publicly urged leaders to pursue political solutions and avoid renewed confrontation, stressing that “there is always a political solution” and referencing the fragile post-2022 Pretoria Agreement. His intervention reinforces a shared emphasis on dialogue, aligning with domestic preventive measures and highlighting the preference for negotiation to protect hard-won gains and minimize human suffering. This convergence of domestic caution and international messaging suggests that stability is being actively managed rather than assumed.

Ethiopia’s outward diplomacy was exceptionally vibrant, directly supporting domestic priorities. On March 26, Taye Atske-Selassie arrived in Malabo for the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) Summit, underscoring Ethiopia’s leadership in Global-South and continental cooperation. At home, Gedion Timothewos presented the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ six-month performance report to Parliament’s Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs Standing Committee on March 25. The report and committee commendations highlighted major gains in G20/BRICS visibility and the pursuit of an “independent foreign policy,” providing strong parliamentary validation for Ethiopia’s diplomatic direction. This alignment between domestic oversight and international ambition reflects increasing institutional coherence in foreign policy execution.

The diplomatic and economic centerpiece came with the 4th Invest in Ethiopia: High-Level Business Forum (March 26–27) in Addis Ababa, which attracted over 800 participants from more than 70 countries. Under the theme “Ethiopia Ready for

Business,” Deputy Prime Minister Temesgen Tiruneh and State Minister Berhanu Tsegaye showcased macroeconomic reforms and investment opportunities, yielding substantial commitments across key sectors. This forum seamlessly connects to the Prime Minister’s urban corridor and tourism messaging, translating domestic vision into concrete international partnerships and positioning Ethiopia as an attractive, reform-oriented investment destination. Importantly, it signals confidence to external investors that internal reforms are credible and politically backed.

Bilateral ties advanced in parallel: Foreign Minister Gedion received Italy’s Undersecretary of State Maria Tripodi on March 26 to deepen economic cooperation, while State Minister Berhanu Tsegaye welcomed the new Saudi Arabian Ambassador and Gabon’s Ambassador. On the multilateral stage, a high-level delegation led by Trade Minister Kassahun Gofe and State Minister Hadera Abera actively engaged at the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference (MC14) in Yaoundé, Cameroon, advocating for enhanced Least Developed Country support, Special and Differential Treatment, and bilateral market-access talks.

Ethiopia simultaneously sustained its third-year engagement in BRICS processes under India’s chairship, contributing to over 20 ministerial meetings while preparing for New Development Bank accession. On March 25, Ethiopia commemorated the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and backed a UN resolution declaring the Transatlantic Slave Trade “the gravest crime against humanity,” leveraging its anti-colonial legacy to amplify its moral voice in global forums. Collectively, these actions demonstrate how Ethiopia is integrating economic diplomacy, multilateral activism, and historical legitimacy into a unified external strategy that reinforces both its regional influence and global standing.

2. Sudan

This week in Sudan reflects an intensification of a multi-layered conflict defined by expanding frontier warfare, sustained civilian targeting, and increasing regional entanglement. Developments across South Kordofan, Blue Nile, and key border zones with Chad and Ethiopia indicate a conflict that is no longer confined to core battlegrounds, but instead evolving into a geographically diffuse and externally sensitive war. At the same time, mounting international pressure for a humanitarian pause continues to clash with entrenched military and political fragmentation on the ground.

A defining feature of the week was the continued normalization of large-scale attacks on civilians, including the deliberate or indiscriminate targeting of populated areas and essential infrastructure. Shelling by the Rapid Support Forces in South Kordofan killed at least 14 civilians, including children, with multiple reports confirming similar casualty patterns. Drone strikes across conflict zones further killed at least 28 civilians, reinforcing the growing centrality of aerial warfare in the conflict. Particularly concerning was the

continued targeting of health infrastructure, including a devastating hospital attack, which underscores a broader erosion of protected civilian spaces. In parallel, the United Nations warned that sexual violence is increasingly being used as a systematic weapon of war, highlighting the conflict's deepening social and humanitarian consequences beyond immediate battlefield fatalities.

Humanitarian conditions continue to deteriorate sharply, driven by displacement, access constraints, and worsening living conditions. In Blue Nile State, joint operations by RSF and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), following their capture of the strategic town of Kurmuk, forced at least 3,000 civilians to flee, primarily toward Ed Damazin and border towns. Broader population movements remain significant, with continued displacement toward Ethiopia and other neighboring states, as documented in humanitarian reporting. Access to key cities including Kurmuk, Sali, and Dindraw has been severely restricted due to ongoing fighting, limiting the ability of aid actors to operate effectively.

At the same time, a contrasting movement dynamic has emerged, with organized voluntary repatriation efforts underway for Sudanese nationals in Egypt. The introduction of new transport corridors, including integrated rail and river routes from Cairo to Wadi Halfa, reflects attempts to facilitate returns amid shifting conditions, even as large-scale displacement persists internally and across borders. This dual movement pattern underscores the fragmented nature of Sudan's humanitarian landscape, where return, displacement, and transit coexist simultaneously under conditions of instability.

Battlefield dynamics remain fluid and highly contested, particularly across Blue Nile and South Kordofan. The RSF-SPLM-N alliance has expanded operations following the seizure of Kurmuk, mobilizing toward Geissan and surrounding areas south, east, and west of Ed Damazin. These advances carry significant strategic implications due to the region's proximity to critical infrastructure, including the Roseires Dam and key logistical corridors linking Blue Nile and Sinnar states. At the same time, the Sudanese Armed Forces have reported counter-advances in South Kordofan, with both sides claiming separate victories across multiple regions. This pattern of competing claims and localized offensives suggests a war increasingly focused on disrupting supply lines and controlling strategic points rather than achieving decisive territorial dominance.

The regional dimension of the conflict has become more pronounced and contentious. Clashes along the Sudan–Chad border have resulted in civilian casualties, while cross-border insecurity continues to generate displacement and strain neighboring states. More significantly, tensions along the Sudan–Ethiopia frontier have escalated sharply. Fighting around Kurmuk and nearby regions has triggered population movements into Ethiopia, while Sudanese officials have accused Ethiopian territory of being used as a staging ground for RSF and SPLM-N operations, including allegations related to cross-border

troop movements and drone launches. Although these claims remain unverified, they reflect a growing perception within Sudan's military leadership that the war is increasingly shaped by external logistical and operational support, raising the risk of further regionalization.

Diplomatic developments this week highlight a widening disconnect between international initiatives and domestic political realities. The United States has moved to push for an urgent humanitarian truce, while European and multilateral actors have reinforced calls for de-escalation, civilian protection, and unimpeded humanitarian access. However, internal political fragmentation continues to undermine these efforts. The National Forces Alliance announced its boycott of the upcoming Berlin conference, citing exclusion of key Sudanese actors and warning against what it described as attempts to legitimize parallel governance structures. The controversy surrounding the inclusion of the "Taasis" coalition, which has formed a parallel administration in RSF- and SPLM-N-controlled areas, reflects deepening divisions over representation and legitimacy in external mediation efforts.

At the same time, emerging shifts in external engagement may begin to influence the conflict's trajectory. Reports that Saudi Arabia has frozen a planned arms deal intended for Sudanese Armed Forces-aligned units suggest a potential recalibration away from direct military support toward renewed emphasis on a political settlement and civilian-led transition. While unconfirmed, such a move reflects broader regional unease with the continuation of the conflict and could carry implications for the balance of external backing that has sustained both sides.

Economic developments further illustrate the distortions produced by prolonged conflict. Sudan's gold sector has experienced rising domestic prices despite declining global trends, driven primarily by reduced supply as artisanal mining operations slowed during Ramadan and Eid. At the same time, plans to expand exports into new international markets signal attempts to diversify trade partnerships under wartime conditions. However, the persistence of large-scale smuggling, accounting for a substantial share of production, underscores the erosion of formal economic structures and the increasing role of informal networks within Sudan's war economy.

Overall, this week reinforces the trajectory of Sudan's conflict as an increasingly fragmented, civilian-intensive, and regionally entangled war. The convergence of sustained aerial and ground attacks, expanding borderland operations, large-scale displacement alongside limited returns, and growing diplomatic fragmentation suggests a conflict that is not only persisting but evolving in complexity. Without a meaningful alignment between internal actors and external initiatives, prospects for de-escalation remain limited, while the risks of further regional spillover and humanitarian deterioration continue to rise.

3. Egypt

Egypt finds itself among the countries least prepared for a prolonged energy shock if the US-Iran conflict escalates, owing to its heavy reliance on imported fuels, extensive domestic subsidies, and recent price hikes that have already strained household budgets and fiscal balances. Any sustained disruption to Gulf oil flows or Hormuz shipping would compound these vulnerabilities, threatening inflation, tourism revenue, and Suez Canal tolls that underpin the economy. This stark exposure appears to be the primary driver behind Cairo's unusually assertive mediation push, as officials seek not only immediate de-escalation but a broader stabilization that shields Egypt's core strategic assets from external shocks.

At the heart of Egypt's response lies its emergence as a pivotal back-channel facilitator between Washington and Tehran. Intelligence contacts with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps enabled Cairo to propose a five-day pause in hostilities, building momentum toward a ceasefire and reportedly prompting President Trump to defer threats of strikes on Iranian power infrastructure. Egypt coordinated closely with Turkey and Pakistan, whose senior officials relayed messages between the White House envoy Steve Witkoff and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. These parallel tracks, joined by quiet involvement from Saudi Arabia and even India, reflect a coordinated effort to keep diplomatic lanes open and avert a wider war whose fallout would hit Egyptian interests hardest.

Building on this mediation core, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan held separate calls with his Egyptian counterpart Badr Abdelatty, along with counterparts from Norway, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, all focused on halting the conflict. The conversations underscored shared determination to prioritize diplomacy over escalation. This high-level Turkish-Egyptian alignment feeds directly into a planned trilateral visit by the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Egypt to Islamabad, where Pakistan will host talks aimed at consolidating these back-channel gains and forging a unified regional stance against further deterioration.

Egypt's outreach extends inward to Arab partners to reinforce collective security. In talks with Iraqi Foreign Minister, Abdelatty and his counterpart stressed the direct threats posed by military escalation to Iraq's stability, unity, and territorial integrity, warning that any fragmentation could ripple across the region. Similarly, a phone call with Jordan's Ayman Safadi renewed condemnation of Iranian attacks on Jordan and Gulf states while calling for activated Arab coordination to safeguard national security. These exchanges emphasize Egypt's view that fragmented responses invite greater Iranian leverage, making unified Arab diplomacy essential for containing the crisis.

Parallel bilateral channels sustain momentum. Syria's Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani and Abdelatty reviewed regional developments and prospects for deeper bilateral

cooperation, stressing Arab coordination to lower tensions. In Doha, Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani met Abdelatty to urge immediate de-escalation, explicitly warning that targeting water, food, or energy infrastructure would endanger global energy security and freedom of navigation—risks that directly imperil Egypt’s Suez-dependent economy and food imports.

Cairo has also issued pointed warnings beyond the immediate Arab circle. Lebanese channels received Egyptian intelligence assessments indicating that the Israeli component of the conflict is likely to become protracted, advising Beirut to prepare for a long war rather than expecting quick resolution. This intelligence-sharing, though sobering, positions Egypt as a realist broker seeking to prevent miscalculations that could draw Lebanon deeper into the vortex and further destabilize the eastern Mediterranean.

4. Eritrea

According to a report by Africa Intelligence, a small Eritrean military delegation led by Brigadier General Eyob Fesehaye travelled to Mekelle in late February for talks with TPLF officials, in what amounts to a further sign of Eritrea's deepening incursion into Ethiopia's internal fault lines. The delegation met with TPLF General Fisseha Kidanu, a senior figure in the faction's reconstituted military command, which was organized in mid-2025 in preparation for a potential renewed confrontation with Addis Ababa. While force assessments were on the agenda, the talks failed to produce an agreed position, with the Eritrean side reportedly viewing TPLF estimates of the current state of forces as significantly inflated relative to their own intelligence. The meeting nonetheless signals a sustained Eritrean effort to cultivate operational relationships with armed factions inside Ethiopia.

Indian Ambassador Raj Kamal met with Hagos Ghebrehiwet, Head of the PFDJ's Economic Affairs Department, in Asmara on March 26, in a meeting that points to a gradual deepening of New Delhi's engagement with the Eritrean regime. Hagos oversees the PFDJ's vast financial apparatus, including the Red Sea Trading Corporation, the state-controlled entity that manages Eritrea's import and export operations and serves as the primary commercial vehicle for the regime's mining sector revenues. The discussions, described officially as focused on bilateral trade and commerce, represent a significant step in India's calculus toward Eritrea, given that any serious economic engagement with Asmara runs directly through the party-controlled structures Hagos commands. The meeting signals that New Delhi is prepared to engage the PFDJ on its own institutional terms.

Recent intelligence points to an active transregional supply network channelling weapons and logistical support to the Houthi movement through Sudan and Eritrea. Staging operations are concentrated near Port Sudan and Suakin, with Eritrea serving as a transit

corridor for onward distribution to Yemen, a configuration that mirrors arrangements documented between 2012 and 2013. Sudan's role draws on the historical capacity of the Yarmouk Military Industrial Complex, which previously functioned as an assembly and modification site under Iranian guidance, while Eritrea's centralized governance enables tightly controlled transit operations that limit external visibility. The network's distributed architecture is designed for resilience and deniability, and its sustained operation positions the Horn of Africa as an embedded node within a wider Iranian-aligned conflict system, with material implications for Red Sea security and the Bab el-Mandeb chokepoint.

A Deutsche Welle report published on March 24 examined shifting alliances across the Horn of Africa against the backdrop of the US-Israel war with Iran, with Eritrea featuring as a central fault line. The report situates Ethiopia-Eritrea tensions within a broader regional realignment between UAE and Israeli-aligned actors on one side, and Saudi and Turkish-aligned actors on the other, a dynamic in which Eritrea's strategic exposure is acute. Analysts suggested the absorption of regional powers into the Middle East theater reduces the immediate likelihood of war between Addis Ababa and Asmara, though the underlying conditions driving that rivalry remain unresolved. The report makes no reference to Eritrea's documented relationships with Iranian-aligned actors, a significant omission given the weight of that dimension in Asmara's current regional posture.

Sudan's Ambassador to Eritrea, Osama Ahmed Abdul Bari, a representative of the Sudanese Armed Forces, published an op-ed on the Eritrean Ministry of Information's website on March 24, a development that reflects the deepening alignment between Asmara and Khartoum's military leadership. The piece frames Eritrea in an explicitly favorable light, portraying Asmara as a stabilizing regional actor committed to Sudan's unity and a principled opponent of foreign interference in African affairs. The publication of the piece on a regime-controlled platform is consistent with the extensive military backing Asmara is providing to the SAF in its fight against the Rapid Support Forces, and signals that the relationship has matured to the point where both sides are willing to publicly perform their alignment. The choice of the Ministry of Information's platform, rather than a neutral outlet, underscores that this is coordinated messaging rather than independent commentary, further consolidating the narrative architecture that both regimes are constructing around their partnership.

5. Djibouti

The presidential election campaign formally began on March 27 initiating a 15-day period of political activity leading to the April 10 vote. The Minister of the Interior confirmed that 256,467 voters are registered for the election. Authorities called on all candidates to conduct ethical and responsible campaigns to ensure an orderly democratic process. President Ismail Omar Guelleh, the candidate for the ruling Union for the Presidential Majority (UMP) seeking a sixth term formally entered the race and pledged to maintain

stability while pursuing broader economic reforms, stating, “I stand before you again, not to begin but to continue our way.”

On March 26 Djibouti’s political parties, including the ruling UMP and opposition groups such as the CDU alongside media organizations signed a landmark charter brokered by the National Communication Commission (CNC). The agreement commits to equal airtime, impartial coverage and transparent campaigning throughout the electoral period. Authorities described the initiative as a step to build public trust and ensure an orderly democratic process, reflecting coordinated efforts between the National Electoral Commission (CENI) and the CNC to strengthen electoral transparency.

On March 29 President Ismail Omar Guelleh held a working meeting at the Palais de la République in Djibouti with principal government officials. The gathering was framed as part of an executive coordination during the active phase of the presidential campaign. The meeting followed the pattern of regular high-level briefings observed earlier in the week, though no new policy announcements emerged in available reporting.

On the night of March 24, a traditional galba-type vessel carrying approximately 320 migrants and refugees capsized off Djibouti’s northern coast near Guehere, north of Obock while attempting to cross the Bab el-Mandeb Strait toward Yemen. At least nine individuals died, 45 remained missing, and Djiboutian coast guard rescue operations recovered 266 survivors. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) described the incident as the first major shipwreck of 2026 on the Eastern Route warning that the deadliest season was just beginning amid ongoing regional conflicts and migration pressures.

Ambassador Aden Mohamed Dileita, Djibouti’s representative in Brussels, attended the 11th summit of the Organisation des États d’Afrique, des Caraïbes et du Pacifique (OEACP) held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea from March 27 to 29. On behalf of President Guelleh, the ambassador reaffirmed Djibouti’s full support for the summit’s outcomes which called for strengthened South-South cooperation and an overhaul of development models. The participation scored Djibouti’s engagement in multilateral forums involving African, Caribbean, and Pacific states.

Foreign Minister and Government Spokesperson Abdoukader Houssein Omar participated via videoconference in the 165th ordinary ministerial session of the Council of the League of Arab States, convened under Bahrain’s presidency. During the session, Djibouti called for respect for the sovereignty of Arab states amid regional tensions. The intervention reflected Djibouti’s standard diplomatic stance on multilateral Arab issues, with no new bilateral agreements announced during the reporting period.

6. South Sudan

This week in South Sudan reflects a deepening convergence between political fragility, localized violence, and intensifying humanitarian strain. The country's transition framework continues to erode under the weight of unresolved elite competition, weak institutional capacity, and mounting pressure from both internal and external actors. Developments across Jonglei, Upper Nile, and diplomatic channels suggest a system increasingly stretched between formal commitments to peace and the lived reality of conflict recurrence.

Violence in Jonglei State remains a central driver of instability, with continued clashes and armed mobilization displacing large populations and exposing civilians to acute risk. Recent updates indicate that tens of thousands have been affected, particularly in areas such as Akobo, where forced evacuations and ongoing insecurity have triggered chaotic displacement patterns. Civilians have fled under extreme conditions, including crossing rivers in makeshift boats, underscoring the absence of organized protection mechanisms. Humanitarian actors report that many displaced communities are now sheltering in open areas without access to basic services, reinforcing the structural vulnerability of populations already affected by years of conflict.

The humanitarian dimension continues to deteriorate in parallel. Access constraints, insecurity, and funding shortfalls are limiting the ability of aid agencies to respond effectively. Medical organizations report operating in conditions where communities are forced to live without shelter, often under trees, while essential services such as healthcare, food distribution, and protection programming remain severely disrupted. The situation is compounded by the broader regional displacement dynamic, with movements linked to both internal violence and spillover from Sudan further stretching already limited capacity.

Politically, the underlying drivers of instability remain tied to the fragile power-sharing arrangement between President Salva Kiir and First Vice President Riek Machar. Regional and international actors continue to emphasize that the sustainability of peace hinges on the relationship between these two figures. Recent diplomatic engagements have reinforced this assessment, with external envoys warning that the country's trajectory remains highly dependent on elite-level cooperation rather than institutional resilience. This reinforces a broader pattern in which the peace process is personalized and therefore inherently unstable.

At the same time, South Sudan's regional diplomacy has intensified, particularly through engagement with South Africa. High-level meetings between President Kiir and President Cyril Ramaphosa focused on electoral preparations, trade cooperation, and broader political support. These discussions signal an aim to project progress toward elections and state consolidation, while also seeking external legitimacy and economic partnerships.

However, the gap between diplomatic signaling and internal conditions remains significant, with ongoing violence and institutional weakness raising questions about the feasibility of credible electoral processes in the near term.

Governance challenges are also becoming more visible, particularly around issues of corruption and accountability. Recent scrutiny linked to corruption-related arrests has highlighted persistent concerns about transparency and the management of public resources. These developments point to deeper structural issues within the state apparatus, where governance deficits continue to undermine both domestic legitimacy and international confidence.

Regionally, South Sudan's integration trajectory is also under reassessment. Commentary surrounding its accession to the East African Community suggests that the move may have been premature, given the country's limited institutional readiness and ongoing instability. The costs of integration without sufficient domestic capacity are becoming more apparent, particularly as economic coordination and regulatory alignment remain constrained by internal dysfunction.

Diplomatic engagement at the regional level continues to emphasize de-escalation and political dialogue. Troika and other international partners have raised alarms over rising violence and called for renewed commitment to the peace agreement. At the same time, bilateral engagements, particularly with South Africa, indicate a need to sustain diplomatic momentum and prevent further deterioration. However, these efforts remain constrained by the lack of enforcement mechanisms and the continued prioritization of short-term political survival by domestic actors.

Overall, this week underscores the extent to which South Sudan's crisis is defined by the interaction between fragile political arrangements, localized conflict dynamics, and limited state capacity. The persistence of violence in Jonglei, combined with humanitarian deterioration and uncertain electoral prospects, suggests that the transition process remains at risk of further fragmentation. Without a shift toward genuine political compromise and strengthened institutional frameworks, the country is likely to remain in a cycle of intermittent conflict, humanitarian emergency, and externally mediated stability.

7. Somalia and Somaliland

Somalia

The central political crisis of the week centered on the escalating confrontation between the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and the Southwest State administration. Tensions began on March 23 when Southwest State President Abdiasis Husein Mohamed Laftagaren appointed a regional election committee to oversee an indirect, clan based

vote, directly defying the federal government's push for a unified system of direct popular suffrage. The following day, Somalia's Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation declared that the mandates of President Laftagaren and his administration had expired stating it would no longer recognize appointments or decisions made by the regional leadership.

On March 28, the Southwest State parliament formed through the contested indirect process, re-elected President Laftagaren to a second term in Baidoa. The vote which saw Laftagaren secure 66 votes against challenger Abdullahi Haji Hassan's 13 also resulted in the re-election of Ali Said Fiqi as Speaker of the parliament. The federal government swiftly rejected the outcome characterizing the proceedings as a "premeditated appointment," an "unlawful pseudo-election," and a violation of the national constitution and prior consultative agreements. The Southwest State presidency subsequently denied reports that Laftagaren had requested formal talks with President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, signalling a continued posture of defiance.

Amid the regional crisis domestic political fissures emerged at the federal level. On March 26 Abdirahman Odowa, the Secretary General of the ruling Justice and Solidarity Party (JSP) resigned. Odowa cited concerns that President Mohamud was sidelining dissent and undermining institutional integrity, exposing a rift within the party leadership. Separately, Speaker of the Federal Parliament Aden Mohamed Nur (Aadan Madoobe) declined to accept an impeachment motion against President Mohamud despite claims that over 120 lawmakers had supported the initiative. Concurrently, a bloc of over 130 federal lawmakers issued a joint statement endorsing Southwest State's decision to conduct its own elections highlighting legislative divisions over the federal government's electoral reform agenda.

On March 25 the Council of Ministers approved the appointment of General Mohamed Sheikh Hassan Hamud as the new commander of the Somali Custodial Corps (prison service), replacing General Mahad Abdirahman. The outgoing commander was reportedly placed under house arrest by President Mohamud the same day. Additionally, Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre formally dismissed State Minister for Petroleum and Minerals Ismail Shire Jama and State Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation Asad Abdirisq Mohamed, who had reportedly resigned earlier in protest over federal policies.

On March 26, traders at Bakaro Market, Somalia's largest commercial place staged a major protest in Mogadishu against government plans to evict them and sell the market to wealthy investors.

The political crisis between the FGS and Southwest State took on a pronounced military dimension. Throughout the week, the federal government deployed thousands of heavily armed troops, including Turkish-trained special forces, to the town of Burhakabo, approximately 183 kilometers from the regional capital of Baidoa. Additional federal

forces were reported to be advancing toward Baidoa placing the region on high alert. On March 29, authorities in Southwest State formally accused the federal government of using Turkish-supplied drones and equipment to support the offensive toward Baidoa alleging that counterterrorism assets were being diverted for internal political objectives. Southwest State officials warned that federal actions risked sparking a “direct war” and a new civil conflict, exacerbating an already fragile humanitarian situation.

Despite the political tensions, security forces continued counterterrorism operations. Somalia’s National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) in coordination with international partners announced the elimination of two senior Al-Shabaab figures, a senior liaison officer involved in international networks and Suleyman Omar Fidow described as the leader of the group’s suicide bombing unit. Later in the week, NISA released a list of 14 high-ranking Al-Shabaab leaders killed in operations conducted over the past 10 months (June 2025–March 2026).

In Lower Shabelle region, joint Somali National Army and African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) forces repelled an Al-Shabaab attempt to retake the town of Mubarak, killing over 42 militants. In the Bay region Somali forces conducted operations in the Daynunay area near Baidoa clearing terrorist roadblocks and reportedly killing over 20 Al-Shabaab fighters. The federal government leveraged these operations to level accusations against Southwest State leaders claiming that President Laftagareen and the newly elected regional parliamentary speaker maintain direct links with Al-Shabaab a charge Southwest officials dismissed as misinformation and propaganda.

On March 24, the Somali National Army dismissed media reports alleging a helicopter crash in Baidoa, urging the public to rely on official sources for information.

The escalating federal-Southwest standoff drew concerted appeals for restraint from the international community. The African Union Commission Chairperson, the United Nations mission in Somalia (UNSOM), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) each issued statements urging maximum restraint, constructive dialogue, and a peaceful resolution warning that further escalation could undermine national stability and unity. The European Union, through Ambassador Francesca Di Mauro, similarly expressed concern and called for differences to be resolved through dialogue. The United Kingdom’s Embassy in Mogadishu also urged de-escalation and restraint, echoing concerns over potential regional destabilization.

On March 29 Puntland President Said Abdullahi Deni held a high-level meeting in Garowe with Ethiopian Consul Major General Tagesse Lambamo Dombore who was accompanied by senior Ethiopian military officials. The engagement scored ongoing bilateral interactions between the Puntland administration and the Ethiopian government.

On March 24, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation extended condolences on the passing of Ambassador Hussein Haji Ahmed in Ankara, Türkiye. Later in the week, Somalia and Spain signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) establishing a framework for regular political dialogue. The agreement formalized through meetings between Somali Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Ali Mohamed Omar and Spanish Secretary of State Diego Martínez Belío covers cooperation in security, economic development, maritime affairs, and multilateral issues.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud hosted a high-level briefing at Villa Somalia for the international diplomatic community based in Halane to formalize Somalia's complaints against Ethiopia.

Somaliland

The Government of Somaliland introduced a fixed fuel price cap during the reporting period in response to price volatility stemming from ongoing conflicts in the Middle East which have affected global oil markets and regional supply chains. The measure, aimed at stabilizing domestic costs and shielding citizens from external economic pressures, established a ceiling for petrol prices denominated in Somaliland Shillings, with diesel similarly controlled.

The Governor of the Bank of Somaliland hailed the introduction of H.R. 7993, the Somaliland Economic Access and Opportunity Act, as a historic step toward global financial inclusion and integration for the territory. The bipartisan legislation, introduced in the United States Congress directs the U.S. Department of the Treasury to produce a report on barriers to Somaliland's access to the American financial system. Officials view the bill as a potential catalyst for unlocking investment opportunities and establishing banking pathways, building upon earlier momentum in bilateral relations between the United States and Somaliland during 2026.

Reports from February 2026 had indicated that Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi (Irro) was planning an official visit to Israel at the end of March 2026, which would have marked his first announced official trip following Israel's recognition of Somaliland. However, no confirmation of the visit occurring during the March 23–29 reporting period appeared in available coverage. The visit may be scheduled for later in the month or early April.

8. Yemen

The Houthi movement entered the conflict on March 29, launching two missile and drone attacks on Israel within 24 hours and pledging continued operations in support of resistance fronts across Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran. Both attacks were intercepted by Israeli air defences. The Houthis had held back from the conflict since the US and

Israel began striking Iran on February 28, but their entry marks the opening of a significant new front, with the Bab el-Mandeb strait now a potential pressure point. Iran's concurrent effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz means that Houthi action against Red Sea traffic would threaten the last viable energy export corridor in the region, a scenario that Saudi Arabia has been working to prevent by maintaining its 2022 detente with the group.

Yemen's internationally recognised government issued a statement on March 30 categorically rejecting the Houthi movement's entry into the regional conflict, accusing Iran of dragging Yemen into hostilities through its backing of armed groups operating outside state authority. The government described the Houthi attacks on Israel as a direct threat to Yemeni sovereignty and stressed that decisions of war and peace remain the exclusive prerogative of state institutions. It warned that continued Iranian interference risks deepening Yemen's humanitarian crisis, disrupting supply chains, and raising energy and food costs in a country already among the world's most acutely affected. The government called on the international community to take a firm position against violations of Yemeni sovereignty and to press for an end to foreign interference and unauthorised military operations.

UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg issued a statement on March 29 expressing grave concern over the Houthi movement's decision to enter the regional conflict by launching attacks against Israel, warning that the escalation risks deepening Yemen's economic crisis and prolonging civilian suffering. Grundberg stressed that no single actor holds the right to unilaterally draw the country into a wider conflict, and called for maximum restraint and an immediate halt to further military action. The Envoy said he is engaging with Yemeni, regional, and international stakeholders to urge de-escalation, with particular pressure directed at the Houthi leadership to pursue diplomatic and mediation channels.

9. Kenya

Kenya has seen developments that sit at the intersection of domestic political pressure, security vigilance, and regional diplomatic activity. On the security side, there have been no major headline attacks within the country this week, but the threat from Al-Shabaab remains active and closely monitored, particularly in border counties near Somalia. Kenyan security forces have maintained patrols, intelligence operations, and coordinated surveillance to prevent infiltration, reflecting a continued high-alert posture rather than a shift in threat level. At the same time, internal security concerns persist in a different form, with periodic protests, policing controversies, and public dissatisfaction over economic conditions adding pressure to the domestic environment. While these have not escalated into widespread unrest in the past week, they remain part of a broader underlying tension that authorities are managing carefully.

Politically and diplomatically, this week reinforces Kenya's role as an active regional and international player under William Ruto. Nairobi continues to position itself at the center of regional security and mediation efforts, including its engagement in initiatives related to Somalia stabilization and broader East African diplomacy.

Kenya's planned leadership role in the Haiti security mission remains a key part of its external engagement strategy. At the same time, Kenya is balancing relationships with Western partners and emerging global actors, maintaining a pragmatic foreign policy approach. Regionally, it continues to engage in coordination frameworks aimed at addressing instability in neighboring states, while also safeguarding its own strategic and economic interests.

10. The Gulf Countries

Saudi Arabia

Ethiopia's Finance Minister Ahmed Shide met with the Chief Executive Officer of the Saudi Fund for Development in Riyadh on March 25, with discussions focused on advancing a bilateral debt restructuring agreement under the G20 Common Framework and exploring financing options for the planned Bishoftu International Airport. The meeting forms part of an accelerating diplomatic push by Addis Ababa to consolidate its debt restructuring process, which has recently produced agreements with Italy and France, alongside active engagement with China's Exim Bank in its capacity as co-chair of the Official Creditor Committee. Ethiopia defaulted on its sole Eurobond in December 2023, and while an agreement in principle reached in January 2026 proposed a fifteen percent debt reduction, the process remains complicated by a dispute with private bondholders over comparability of treatment, with a group holding the one-billion-dollar Eurobond announcing plans for legal action in February.

Ukraine signed a defence memorandum with Saudi Arabia during President Zelenskyy's visit to Riyadh on March 27, covering procurement, technological cooperation, and investment. The agreement reflects Kyiv's effort to leverage its battlefield-tested drone expertise as a strategic asset in the Gulf, where Saudi Arabia has intercepted hundreds of Iranian drones and dozens of missiles since February 28. Ukraine, which has deployed 201 anti-drone experts to the Middle East and emerged as a leading producer of low-cost interceptor drones through its conflict with Russia, is positioning itself as a partner of direct operational relevance to states under sustained Iranian attack.

Saudi air defences intercepted 28 drones and a ballistic missile targeting the kingdom's Eastern Region on March 25, with the Saudi Defence Ministry confirming all aerial threats were destroyed before reaching their targets. The Eastern Province, home to Saudi Arabia's principal oil infrastructure, has been a consistent focus of Iranian strikes since the US and Israel launched their campaign against Tehran on February 28. Iran has framed its

retaliatory strikes across the Gulf as targeting US military assets in the region, though the attacks have caused civilian casualties and significant infrastructure damage across multiple Gulf states.

Saudi Arabia's East-West pipeline, which bypasses the Strait of Hormuz, is operating at full capacity of seven million barrels per day, with crude exports through the Red Sea port of Yanbu reaching five million barrels per day, according to a Bloomberg report published March 28. The pipeline has become the kingdom's primary export lifeline following Iran's effective closure of the strait, with tanker flotillas redirecting to Yanbu to collect shipments. The bypass has helped moderate oil prices, though it only partially offsets the loss of the roughly fifteen million barrels per day that transited Hormuz before the conflict. The route's continued viability faces a potential new threat, with the Houthis signalling entry into the war, raising the prospect of the Red Sea becoming an additional front. The Bab el-Mandeb, through which Yanbu's exports must pass, would fall under direct Houthi reach, and its disruption would effectively close off the last functioning export corridor for Gulf oil.

An Iranian missile and drone strike on Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia on March 27 injured 12 US troops, two seriously, and damaged at least two KC-135 aerial refueling aircraft, marking one of the most serious breaches of American air defenses since the conflict began. The attack adds to a cumulative toll of nearly 300 American troops injured since February 28, with the overall US death toll standing at 13 service members. The strike coincides with a volatile moment in Washington's posture, with Trump having threatened to strike Iranian power plants if Tehran does not reach a deal by April 6, a deadline already extended twice, while Iranian officials continue to dispute White House claims that peace negotiations are underway.

UAE

Ukrainian President Zelenskyy visited the UAE on March 29 as part of a Gulf tour, holding talks with Emirati President Mohamed bin Zayed and agreeing to cooperate on defence and security. The agreement forms part of a broader ten-year framework Kyiv is establishing across the Gulf, encompassing co-production arrangements, joint investments, and the exchange of expertise in countering drones and missiles. Ukraine has positioned itself as a leading drone warfare hub since Russia's 2022 invasion, and has deployed anti-drone experts to the UAE as part of the arrangement. Zelenskyy indicated that the contracts across the three Gulf states visited are worth billions of dollars, with Kyiv proposing to swap its interceptor drones for the Patriot missiles Gulf states are deploying against Iranian attacks.

UAE Ambassador to the United States Yousef Al Otaiba published an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal on March 25, offering Abu Dhabi's most direct public articulation of its position since the conflict began. Otaiba argued that a ceasefire alone is insufficient and

that the war requires a conclusive outcome addressing Iran's nuclear capabilities, missile and drone arsenal, proxy networks, and blockade of international sea lanes. He noted that Iran has launched more than 2,180 missiles and drones at the UAE, more than at any other country, and reaffirmed Abu Dhabi's 1.4 trillion-dollar investment commitment to the United States. The piece signals that Abu Dhabi is actively shaping the terms of any eventual settlement, with Otaiba indicating UAE readiness to join an international initiative to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran's IRGC claimed responsibility for missile and drone strikes on aluminium facilities in Bahrain and the UAE on March 29, targeting Aluminium Bahrain and Emirates Global Aluminium in Abu Dhabi, injuring eight people and causing significant damage. The strikes signal an Iranian effort to extend pressure beyond oil and military targets, with the region accounting for an estimated four to nine percent of global aluminium supply. Separately, a drone strike on Oman's Salalah port prompted Maersk to temporarily suspend operations, while Saudi air defences intercepted ten drones and Kuwait shot down four within the same period, reflecting a pattern of Iranian escalation widening in both geographic scope and target set.

A Wall Street Journal report published March 24 indicated that Saudi Arabia and the UAE are moving toward greater operational involvement in the conflict with Iran. Riyadh has reversed its earlier position by allowing US forces to use King Fahd Air Base, with Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan warning that the kingdom's patience is finite and that any assumption of Gulf incapacity would be a miscalculation. The UAE has moved separately, shutting down Iranian-linked institutions in Dubai and warning it could freeze billions of dollars in Iranian assets, targeting IRGC-linked entities in measures that would significantly restrict Iran's access to foreign currency and trade. Both states remain cautious about direct combat roles, but the trajectory reflects a hardening posture as Iranian strikes on infrastructure and urban centres continue to mount.

Qatar

Ukraine signed a ten-year defence agreement with Qatar during President Zelenskyy's visit to Doha on March 28, the final stop on a Gulf tour that also produced defence cooperation arrangements with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The agreements cover co-production, joint investment, and the exchange of expertise in countering drones and missiles, with Ukraine having deployed over 200 anti-drone specialists across the region. Kyiv has positioned its battlefield-tested air defence capabilities as a strategic asset in exchange for the air defence systems it requires against Russian ballistic missiles, with Zelenskyy describing the Gulf contracts as worth billions. Qatar holds additional significance for Kyiv as a mediator on humanitarian issues, having facilitated the return of Ukrainian children deported by Russia and the exchange of prisoners of war.

Kuwait

Kuwait's armed forces reported ten soldiers injured in a new wave of Iranian attacks on March 29, with 14 ballistic missiles and 12 drones detected in Kuwaiti airspace, several of which struck a military camp. Logistics warehouses were also targeted, sustaining material damage. The attacks bring Kuwait's cumulative toll since February 28 to 307 ballistic missiles, 616 drones, and two cruise missiles intercepted or detected, reflecting the sustained intensity of Iran's campaign against Gulf states hosting US military assets.

An Iranian strike on a power and water desalination plant in Kuwait on March 30 killed one Indian worker and caused significant structural damage, according to Kuwait's Ministry of Electricity. The attack followed a separate incident the previous evening in which 14 missiles and 12 drones were detected in Kuwaiti airspace, with several targeting a military camp and injuring ten servicemen. The strikes underscore the expanding target set of Iran's campaign across the Gulf, with critical water infrastructure now joining energy facilities and military installations as points of attack in one of the world's most water-scarce regions.

11. Africa and The Sahel Region

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

The situation in Democratic Republic of the Congo has remained highly volatile, with eastern conflict dynamics continuing to dominate both security and political attention. In North Kivu and Ituri, fighting between the M23 rebellion and Congolese armed forces (FARDC), alongside a wide range of militias, has persisted with shifting lines rather than decisive gains. This past week reflects continued clashes, localized offensives, and fragile ceasefire narratives that fail to hold on the ground.

Civilian displacement continues to rise, and humanitarian access remains severely constrained, especially around Goma and surrounding. What stands out is the entrenchment of parallel armed actors, including community militias and foreign-linked groups, which are complicating any unified security response. At the same time, tensions with Rwanda remain a central geopolitical driver, with Kinshasa continuing to accuse Kigali of backing M23, further escalating regional mistrust and keeping the risk of broader confrontation alive.

Under Félix Tshisekedi, the government is maintaining a strong security-focused posture while also engaging in regional diplomatic frameworks aimed at de-escalation, though with limited visible breakthroughs this week. Processes under the East African Community and Southern African Development Community tracks continue to exist, but coordination challenges and competing interests are slowing progress. Meanwhile, MONUSCO's gradual drawdown remains a sensitive issue, as concerns grow about security gaps in areas where peacekeepers are reducing presence. The broader geopolitical picture this week is one of layered crises, where local conflict, regional rivalries, and

international disengagement risks are all intersecting. The result is a fragile environment where military efforts, diplomacy, and humanitarian needs are all moving, but not yet aligning toward a sustainable resolution.

Mali

Mali has seen no real easing of its security crisis, but rather a continuation and quiet intensification of multiple overlapping threats. Across the center and north, attacks by Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and Islamic State–linked factions have remained frequent, targeting military convoys, remote bases, and local communities, especially in Mopti, Gao, and Timbuktu regions. What stands out this week is the sustained operational tempo of these groups, not necessarily a single high-casualty but a pattern of constant pressure that keeps state forces stretched and reactive. Malian armed forces, often working alongside Russian-linked paramilitary elements, have continued offensives and sweeps, yet reports suggest these operations remain largely short-term in effect, with insurgents returning after withdrawals.

Under Assimi Goïta, there has been no visible movement toward restoring civilian rule in the past days; instead, the leadership continues to tighten control over political space and maintain a narrative centered on sovereignty and resistance to external pressure. Regionally, Mali is further embedding itself within its strategic alignment with Burkina Faso and Niger under the Alliance of Sahel States, with continued emphasis on joint security coordination and collective autonomy. Relations with ECOWAS remain strained and largely stagnant this week, with no meaningful diplomatic breakthrough. At the same time, Mali's reliance on alternative partnerships, particularly Russia-linked security actors, continues to define its external posture, even as it reshapes military strategy and international engagement.

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso has sharpened rather than shifted, with security deterioration deepening into what many analysts now describe as an entrenched, systemic crisis. The most recent reporting shows insurgent groups linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State expanding operational reach across large parts of the country, with violence no longer episodic but normalized across rural zones. In the past days alone, assessments indicate that armed groups effectively operate across vast territory, while civilian casualties continue to climb and displacement remains massive, with millions in need of humanitarian assistance. What is striking in this latest phase is not just the scale of attacks, but the erosion of state control alongside parallel violence attributed to pro-government forces, reinforcing a cycle where insecurity feeds both insurgency and repression. The narrative coming out of Ouagadougou, however, remains tightly managed, with the military leadership continuing to project progress while battlefield realities suggest otherwise, deepening the gap between official discourse and conditions on the ground.

On the diplomatic and geopolitical front, the past week reflects a continued hardening of Burkina Faso's sovereign posture and its distancing from traditional Western engagement, even if concrete new agreements are limited in public reporting. The broader pattern still visible this week is one of strategic isolation combined with selective alignment, especially with non-Western security partners and information networks that reinforce the military legitimacy narrative. This is unfolding as internal political space remains tightly restricted and dissent increasingly controlled, shaping both domestic governance and external relations. At the same time, the Sahel context continues to frame Burkina Faso as the epicenter of regional instability, with its crisis spilling across borders and influencing wider geopolitical recalibrations among neighboring states and blocs. The result is a country moving deeper into a security-first state model, where diplomacy is less about engagement and more about asserting autonomy in a fragmented regional order.

Niger

Niger has remained on a tense but revealing trajectory where security pressure, political consolidation, and regional realignment are all unfolding at the same time. On the security front, the situation continues to deteriorate in the Tillabéri and Diffa regions, with persistent attacks by Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP) and Boko Haram-linked factions. There hasn't been one single defining attack dominating headlines this week, but violence has become routine, with repeated ambushes, IED incidents, and civilian targeting shaping daily life in vulnerable areas. The military authorities are maintaining heavy deployments and offensive operations, but there is little indication of regained territorial control. At the same time, internal governance remains tightly managed under Abdourahamane Tchiani, with no visible progress toward a civilian transition and continued restriction on political activity and media, reinforcing a pattern where security justification is used to sustain prolonged military rule.

At the same time, relations with ECOWAS remain strained, with no meaningful normalization visible this week, keeping Niger in a semi-isolated regional posture. Economically and strategically, pressure is building: sanctions aftereffects, disrupted trade corridors, and reduced external aid are quietly shaping the internal situation, while humanitarian needs continue to rise. The broader picture from this week is not about sudden change, but about consolidation, Niger is steadily embedding itself in a new Sahelian geopolitical order, one that prioritizes autonomy and regime survival, but comes with growing long-term risks of isolation, economic fragility, and protracted insecurity.

Chad

The situation in Chad has escalated sharply along its eastern frontier, pulling the country deeper into the conflict dynamics of Sudan. The most critical development is the direct spillover of violence: a cross-border drone strike that killed civilians triggered a strong response from Mahamat Idriss Déby, who ordered the military to prepare retaliation and

reinforced troop deployments along the border. Over the past days, Chad has moved from defensive posture to active containment, launching security operations, relocating thousands of refugees away from the frontier, and signaling possible cross-border action if attacks continue. At the same time, humanitarian pressure is intensifying: continued fighting in Darfur is pushing refugees into Chad despite border restrictions, while aid systems are strained by insecurity and shortages. The broader picture this week shows a country no longer just absorbing regional instability, but increasingly militarized and exposed to direct confrontation risks tied to Sudan's war.

On the diplomatic and geopolitical side, Chad's posture over the past week reflects both outward engagement and structural vulnerability. While managing its own security crisis, N'Djamena is still projecting itself internationally, including plans to deploy hundreds of security personnel to Haiti under a UN-backed mission, reinforcing its image as a security contributor beyond Africa. Yet this outward role contrasts with internal fragility: even basic health security is now geopolitically exposed, with cholera response supplies delayed due to global disruptions linked to Middle East tensions, highlighting how external crises directly affect Chad's resilience. Diplomatically, there is no visible shift toward new alliances this week, but the underlying pattern is clear, Chad is navigating between asserting sovereignty, maintaining selective international partnerships, and managing the consequences of being at the center of overlapping crises from the Sahel to Sudan. The result is a state that remains indispensable in regional security calculations, but increasingly constrained by the very instability it is trying to contain.

Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea has remained relatively stable on the surface, but beneath that calm, the past days reflect a tightly controlled political environment and subtle but important geopolitical positioning. On the internal security front, there have been no major reported attacks or insurgent threats, which continues to distinguish the country from much of the Sahel. However, stability here is deeply tied to strong state control rather than open political space. Security forces remain firmly dominant, and the government continues to closely monitor dissent, limiting any visible opposition activity. Under Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, governance remains highly centralized, and this week shows no indication of political liberalization or reform. Instead, the pattern is continuity, where regime security and control are prioritized over openness, maintaining a predictable but rigid internal order.

Geopolitically and diplomatically, this past week highlights Equatorial Guinea's ongoing strategy of quiet but strategic engagement, particularly as it leverages its energy resources and geographic position in the Gulf of Guinea. While there have been no dramatic new agreements publicly announced in the last few days, the country continues to maintain ties with a mix of partners, including China, Russia, and Western energy companies,

balancing relationships without fully aligning with any single bloc. Its recent non-permanent role at the United Nations Security Council still shapes its diplomatic posture, reinforcing its preference for sovereignty-focused positions and non-interference narratives. At the same time, regional security concerns in the Gulf of Guinea, especially piracy and maritime risks, continue to frame its strategic importance, even if incidents this week remain limited.

12. North Africa

Algeria

As the Iran war continues to disrupt energy markets and slash Gulf gas supplies, particularly from Qatar, European countries are accelerating efforts to secure alternative sources from North Africa. Italy and Spain have turned to Algeria, a longstanding and reliable supplier with direct pipeline connections, to mitigate rising prices and potential shortages affecting the continent.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni visited Algiers on March 25, 2026, where she held talks with Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune. The leaders agreed to strengthen energy cooperation between Italy's Eni and Algeria's Sonatrach, including new areas such as shale gas and offshore exploration. Meloni emphasized that Algeria already meets more than 30 percent of Italy's natural gas needs through the TransMed pipeline and LNG shipments, and both sides committed to increasing deliveries to offset disruptions from the Gulf.

In parallel, Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares conducted a two-day visit to Algiers, meeting Algerian President Tebboune and other officials on March 26. Discussions centered on expanding bilateral ties, with a strong focus on the energy sector. Albares highlighted the context of the Middle East war's impact on gas markets and confirmed talks to increase natural gas supplies via the Medgaz pipeline by up to 10 percent. Spain already relies on Algerian gas for over 29 percent of its imports in early 2026, making the North African country its primary supplier.

These moves reflect broader European concerns over energy security amid volatility triggered by the regional conflict, including higher benchmark gas prices and reduced LNG availability from Qatar. Algerian officials, including President Tebboune, have reaffirmed the country's role as a stable partner for Italy and Europe, while both European nations seek to maximize pipeline capacity and explore additional long-term contracts. The initiatives also include economic measures, such as establishing an Algerian-Italian chamber of commerce, to deepen overall ties beyond energy.

The developments come as Europe faces another potential energy shock, with storage levels lower than in previous years and the need to diversify away from disrupted Middle

Eastern routes. Algeria's proximity, existing infrastructure, and production capacity position it as a key lifeline, allowing Italy and Spain to compete for additional volumes without the risks associated with seaborne LNG in a tense maritime environment. This renewed focus on North African gas echoes earlier post-2022 efforts but gains urgency from the current Iran-related disruptions.

These energy diplomacy steps illustrate how the wider regional conflict is reshaping European supply strategies, prompting swift high-level engagements with Algeria to safeguard economies from inflationary pressures and ensure uninterrupted flows during a period of heightened global uncertainty.

Libya

In late March 2026, external actors intensified their engagement with Libya's fragmented political landscape, beginning with a notable lobbying effort in Washington. A firm closely tied to senior figures in the Trump administration, Ballard Partners, secured a \$2 million contract to provide government relations and strategic advisory services to eastern Libyan commander Khalifa Haftar and his son Saddam Haftar.

The agreement focuses on representing the self-styled Libyan Arab Armed Forces before the US executive branch, monitoring policy developments, and advising on the American political environment. This move comes as Haftar seeks to consolidate influence in oil-rich eastern Libya amid ongoing divisions between his forces and the Tripoli-based Government of National Unity.

Parallel to these US-linked developments, Russia and China coordinated their diplomatic positions on Libya. On March 23, Russian Ambassador Aidar Aganin met his Chinese counterpart Ma Shouliang in Tripoli to discuss the latest ground developments, the course of the political process, and United Nations efforts aimed at advancing a settlement. The meeting reflected their traditional bilateral coordination in support of a negotiated resolution to Libya's divisions, underscoring the interest of major powers in shaping the country's future without immediate breakthroughs reported.

Regional neighbors Egypt and Greece similarly emphasized the need for stability. In a telephone conversation on March 28, Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty and his Greek counterpart Giorgos Gerapetritis stressed the importance of unifying Libyan state institutions, achieving a comprehensive political settlement, and holding presidential and parliamentary elections as soon as possible through a Libyan-led process that preserves sovereignty. Both sides committed to backing international mediation and strengthening bilateral cooperation to ease regional tensions and maintain peace.

Against this backdrop of diplomatic maneuvering, Libya advanced practical economic ties with China. On March 26, the Government of National Unity reached an agreement to eliminate tariffs on Libyan exports to China effective May 2026. The deal, discussed

during meetings in China, aims to boost trade competitiveness, facilitate financial cooperation, ease cross-border transactions, and encourage the return of Chinese firms to reconstruction and investment projects in post-conflict Libya.

Security and environmental concerns also surfaced when Libyan coast guards intervened on March 26 to tow a damaged Russian-flagged LNG tanker, the Arctic Metagaz, away from the western port of Zuwara. The unmanned vessel, which had been adrift since early March after reportedly being hit by Ukrainian naval drones, posed a serious risk of ecological disaster in the Mediterranean. The operation, conducted with a frigate, moved the tanker into international waters between Malta and Italian islands, addressing warnings from several southern European countries.

These interconnected developments illustrate Libya's position at the crossroads of great-power interests, regional stabilization efforts, and economic outreach, even as deeper political reconciliation and unified governance remain elusive.

13. Middle East

Iran – Israel Conflict

The diplomatic landscape surrounding the Iran-Israel war saw initial signs of potential de-escalation this week, though progress remained elusive. On March 23, President Trump stated that U.S. envoys had conducted strong talks with a top Iranian leader and extended the deadline for Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz by five days to April 6, warning of strikes on power plants if unmet. He described Iran as eager for a deal, yet Iranian officials immediately rejected the claim, with parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf dismissing any negotiations as fake news and insisting no meetings had occurred.

Building directly on these U.S. overtures, regional actors stepped in to broker peace. Pakistan announced on March 28 that it would host foreign ministers from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt in Islamabad on March 30-31 to pursue an end to hostilities. Iranian President Pezeshkian held phone talks with Pakistan's Prime Minister Sharif, while Turkey's foreign minister relayed messages between Washington and Tehran. These initiatives reflected broader Arab and Muslim-world concerns over spillover, even as Iran maintained that no direct U.S. talks had taken place.

At the heart of the stalled diplomacy lay competing ceasefire proposals. The United States presented Iran with a 15-point action list via back-channels, demanding an end to uranium enrichment and the handover of thousands of kilograms of enriched uranium as red lines. Iran dismissed the terms as unreasonable and issued its own five-point counterplan, calling for reparations and formal recognition of its sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio reinforced Washington's stance, predicting

the campaign would last weeks rather than months without requiring American ground troops.

Despite the flurry of talks, military escalation defined the week as Israel and the United States pressed their offensive. Israeli airstrikes targeted Iranian military infrastructure, a decommissioned heavy-water reactor at Arak, a yellowcake uranium plant on Kharg Island, and the Bushehr nuclear power plant, with additional hits on steel factories, a power facility, port installations, and industrial sites. Russia's Rosatom evacuated personnel from Bushehr after the assault, citing nuclear safety risks, though Iranian authorities reported no radiation leaks and limited overall damage. Iran's foreign minister warned that these actions contradicted Trump's deadline and promised a heavy price.

Iran responded with sustained counterstrikes that widened the conflict's geographic reach. Ballistic missiles and drones were launched at Israel, including one that struck a village near Jerusalem and wounded seven civilians, as well as at Gulf targets. A direct Iranian barrage hit Saudi Arabia's Prince Sultan Air Base, injuring at least 15 U.S. troops, five of them seriously. Bahrain and Kuwait activated missile defenses and sirens during inbound Iranian volleys, with Kuwait reporting power outages after shrapnel from interceptions damaged high-voltage lines.

The war expanded further when Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi rebels formally entered the conflict on March 28. They fired ballistic missiles and drones at southern Israel in their first direct attacks of this round, followed by a second wave within 24 hours. Israel intercepted the projectiles with no reported casualties, yet Houthi leaders vowed to sustain operations until Israeli "aggression" ended. Saudi Arabia's air defenses simultaneously destroyed at least 19 Houthi drones over its oil-rich Eastern Province, underscoring the proxy dimension now linking multiple battlefields.

Parallel to the Iranian theater, Israel intensified its long-running Lebanon campaign against Hezbollah. Overnight airstrikes pounded Hezbollah infrastructure in Beirut's southern suburbs, accompanied by ground advances into southern Lebanese villages and increased border operations.

An Israeli strike on a media vehicle affiliated with Hezbollah-linked Al-Manar TV killed three Lebanese journalists and a Lebanese army soldier. Lebanese officials reported that Israeli actions had killed over 1,000 civilians nationwide since February, triggering mass evacuations that left southern Beirut largely empty.

A dangerous new front opened in Iraq when U.S.-Israeli airstrikes targeted a Popular Mobilization Forces headquarters in Anbar province on March 24. The assault killed at least 15 fighters, including Anbar operations commander Saad al-Baiji, and wounded around 30 others. Iraq's government summoned U.S. and Iranian envoys in protest and

authorized the PMF to exercise its right of self-defense, marking the first public Iraqi attribution of such strikes to both U.S. and Israeli forces.

To support ongoing operations, the United States bolstered its regional posture with fresh troop deployments. On March 28, approximately 2,500 Marines aboard the amphibious ship USS America arrived in the Gulf, joined by more than 1,000 paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division. Pentagon officials described the moves as providing operational flexibility rather than signaling an imminent ground invasion, aligning with Rubio's assessment that the campaign could conclude swiftly without large-scale U.S. boots on the ground.

The human cost of the week's fighting remained devastating across multiple fronts. Iranian sources claimed thousands killed and tens of thousands injured by coalition strikes, while the International Federation of Red Cross documented more than 1,900 deaths inside Iran since February. Israeli medical teams reported 19 fatalities from Iranian missile attacks. In Lebanon, the targeted media strike and broader bombardment added to the civilian toll, with fires, building damage, and infrastructure disruption compounding the suffering in Iran, Israel, and Gulf states alike.

Economic ripples from the conflict were immediate and global. Brief optimism over truce talks briefly pushed Brent crude below \$100 per barrel and lifted U.S. stock indices, yet Iran's swift denial of negotiations quickly stabilized markets. Maritime trade faced renewed threats as Iran reiterated its ability to close the Strait of Hormuz, although limited tanker traffic including Pakistani and Indian vessels continued under safe-passage assurances. Analysts warned that Houthi involvement could further endanger shipping through the Bab al-Mandeb, potentially spiking oil prices.

International organizations and third parties urged restraint amid the widening war. The United Nations Secretary-General and human rights experts condemned the U.S.-Israeli strikes as illegal and called for an immediate ceasefire, though no new Security Council resolution advanced. Ukraine's UN ambassador highlighted the risk posed by Russian drone support to Iran, while Moscow denied supplying advanced missiles and evacuated its Bushehr staff. China and Russia continued to press for de-escalation, even as global protests in the United States and Europe voiced opposition to the conflict's humanitarian toll.

Under United Nations pressure, Iran took a modest step toward easing civilian hardship by permitting limited humanitarian and agricultural shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, with its navy escorting relief vessels. This concession addressed some concerns over blocked access but did little to offset the broader infrastructure damage, displacement of hundreds of thousands in Lebanon, and the overall trajectory of a regional stalemate marked by tit-for-tat strikes and failed diplomatic breakthroughs.

Turkey

Turkey has positioned itself as a key diplomatic actor amid the ongoing Iran war, with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan declaring that Ankara is deploying all available resources to establish peace and mitigate the conflict's fallout on the Turkish economy and regional stability. He highlighted skyrocketing energy costs as a pressing concern and noted that the government is exploring protective measures against the broader impacts of the US-Israel involvement. This stance underscores Turkey's efforts to shield its interests while advocating for de-escalation.

Complementing these calls, Turkey has actively served as an intermediary by relaying messages between the United States and Iran to prevent further escalation and foster potential direct negotiations. A senior ruling-party official confirmed that Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan has conveyed friendly advice to Tehran while maintaining contacts with Washington, building on prior mediation attempts. NATO has also intercepted Iranian missiles heading toward Turkish territory, illustrating the tangible risks of spillover that Ankara seeks to contain through quiet diplomacy.

These bilateral efforts have extended into a broader multilateral framework, as Pakistan hosted two-day talks in Islamabad involving foreign ministers from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt to develop mechanisms for de-escalation in the Iran conflict. Turkish Foreign Minister Fidan participated in discussions aimed at early and permanent resolution, with Pakistan also conveying US offers to Tehran and proposing venues for potential negotiations in Ankara or Islamabad. The gathering signals an emerging regional platform involving key Muslim-majority states to address the crisis collectively, aligning with Turkey's mediation role.

Parallel to these diplomatic initiatives, Turkey has strengthened its Western defense ties through a multibillion-pound training and support contract with the United Kingdom for 20 Eurofighter Typhoon jets. Signed by UK Defence Secretary John Healey and Turkish Defence Minister Yaşar Güler, the agreement advances Ankara's integration into the Eurofighter program and bolsters NATO's air capabilities along its eastern flank. Officials described the deal as enhancing interoperability and signaling sustained Western backing for Turkey's security needs.

Domestically, political tensions have intensified as Justice Minister Akin Gürlek filed a defamation lawsuit seeking one million lira in damages against main opposition CHP leader Özgür Özel. The suit stems from Özel's public accusations of unexplained wealth linked to Gürlek's properties, which the minister's side dismissed as slander backed by forged documents. This legal action highlights the sharp divide between the ruling AKP and CHP, raising questions about the use of judicial processes in partisan disputes.

In a related development targeting opposition-led local governments, authorities detained Uşak Mayor Özkan Yalım of the CHP along with other municipal officials in a bribery and tender-rigging probe. Prosecutors alleged manipulation of contracts for personal gain, prompting CHP figures to denounce the operation as part of a systematic crackdown on their mayors. Supporters of the investigations frame them as legitimate anti-corruption efforts, while critics see political motivations at play.

Concerns over media freedom have also surfaced prominently, with Turkish authorities blocking the X account of AFP correspondent Mahmut Bozarıslan, who covers the Kurdish-majority southeast and recently reported on Newroz celebrations in Diyarbakır. The move, justified on national security grounds, drew condemnation from Reporters Without Borders as censorship. It coincides with ongoing reconciliation talks on the Kurdish issue, potentially limiting independent coverage of sensitive topics.

Broader scrutiny of press conditions followed recent arrests of journalists on charges including disinformation and terrorism links. Turkish bar associations and international press groups issued joint statements labeling these detentions alarming, urging respect for free expression amid expansive laws on false information. The cases have fueled debates about judicial pressures on independent reporting and Turkey's international image regarding media rights.

A coalition of press freedom organizations has urged the European Union to simplify Schengen visa procedures for Turkish journalists, citing lengthy delays, high rejection rates, and professional isolation that hinder cross-border collaboration and training. The appeal emphasizes the contradiction with the EU's support for media in candidate countries and calls for a dedicated "visa corridor" to facilitate mobility for recognized professionals.

On the economic front, the Central Bank of Turkey has drawn down significant gold reserves—selling around 22 tons outright and swapping approximately 34-60 tons in total—to defend the lira against depreciation pressures exacerbated by the Iran war's inflationary effects, particularly higher energy costs. This intervention, one of the largest in years, provides temporary market stability but highlights vulnerabilities in reserves amid external shocks.

Energy security has remained a focal point, with Minister Alparslan Bayraktar firmly denying rumors of a halt in Iranian natural gas supplies via the South Pars pipeline following strikes. He confirmed uninterrupted flows and noted that storage levels stand at about 71 percent, attributing any minor variations to routine maintenance while stressing diversification efforts to manage potential risks.

Overall, Turkey's multifaceted response to the Iran war—spanning active mediation, defense partnerships, economic safeguards, and domestic governance—reflects a strategy

balancing regional influence with internal stability, even as political and media frictions persist at home. These interconnected developments illustrate how external conflict continues to shape Ankara's priorities across diplomacy, security, and the economy.

Syria

Syria has experienced heightened cross-border tensions linked to the broader regional conflict, as at least seven rockets were launched from the Iraqi town of Rabi'a near Mosul toward a US military base in northeastern Syria near Qamishli on March 23. Iraqi security sources indicated no US casualties resulted, while the Syrian army reported additional strikes on its positions in Hasaka province. Baghdad pledged cooperation to identify the perpetrators, believed to involve militant groups, marking an early spillover of instability from the Iran war into Syrian territory and raising concerns about Iraq's potential deeper entanglement.

In a similar incident reflecting persistent risks to foreign forces, Syrian defenses repelled a small drone attack targeting the US-controlled Al-Tanf base in southern Syria on March 29. The drones were reportedly launched from across the Iraqi border, with no confirmed damage or casualties. Such attempts, often attributed to pro-Iranian militants, underscore ongoing efforts to challenge the US presence in the country amid wider regional hostilities.

Meanwhile, Israeli military actions have continued along Syria's southern front. On March 19-20, Israel struck Syrian government command centers and weapons storage sites in southern Syria, stating the operation responded to attacks on Druze civilians in Sweida province. Syrian officials condemned the strikes as a violation of sovereignty, highlighting recurring friction along the 1974 disengagement line in areas like Quneitra.

Further incidents included reported Israeli artillery shelling on Tal al-Ahmar in Quneitra countryside and tank incursions near villages such as al-Lajat and Atma, where civilians including shepherds were allegedly detained. Damascus has repeatedly portrayed these moves as harassment and breaches of the ceasefire agreement, sustaining local tensions in the Golan-adjacent region without major casualties in the latest cases.

Sectarian violence in southern Syria drew international attention through a UN Commission of Inquiry report released on March 27, documenting at least 1,707 deaths and nearly 200,000 displacements during clashes in Sweida province in July-August 2025. The inquiry cited involvement of government forces, Druze factions, and other groups, with credible allegations of war crimes including killings, torture, and destruction of property by multiple parties. Syrian authorities acknowledged a comparable toll and pledged accountability measures.

In parallel developments signaling modest diplomatic outreach, Syria's Information Minister Hamza al-Mustafa participated in a strategic communications summit in Istanbul

hosted by Turkish authorities on March 27. His involvement in panels on global disruptions reflects Damascus's gradual re-engagement in select international forums, particularly with neighboring Turkey on non-security topics.

On the economic front, the CEO of Syria's state oil company held discussions with executives from Chevron and ConocoPhillips during the CERAWEEK conference in Houston on March 26. Talks focused on potential cooperation in onshore and offshore oil and gas development, building on a prior memorandum of understanding for exploration, as Syria seeks foreign investment despite ongoing sanctions.

Humanitarian cooperation advanced when Syrian and German officials signed an agreement in Damascus on March 27 for disaster relief equipment and emergency operations support. Germany's civil protection agency will provide vehicles and training to Syrian responders, representing a rare direct engagement between Berlin and Damascus on practical reconstruction needs.

Security operations along Syria's borders yielded results when troops intercepted a large Captagon smuggling attempt near Assal al-Ward on the Lebanese frontier on March 28. Smugglers opened fire but were repelled, with the bust highlighting persistent drug trafficking networks active in the post-conflict environment and bolstering official narratives on border control.

These events collectively illustrate Syria's multifaceted challenges, where external military pressures from rockets, drones, and Israeli operations intersect with internal sectarian legacies and tentative steps toward diplomatic and economic normalization. The country remains a theater for proxy tensions tied to the Iran war while navigating opportunities for limited international re-engagement on humanitarian and energy fronts.

14. Europe

President Emmanuel Macron spoke by phone with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. He urged Iran to immediately end "unacceptable attacks" on countries in the region (directly or via proxies), preserve energy and civilian infrastructure, and restore freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. Macron called on Iran to engage in "good faith negotiations" to enable de-escalation and address international concerns over its nuclear and ballistic programmes plus regional destabilising activities.

Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot (or senior officials) continued diplomatic outreach, with France approaching around 35 countries to discuss a future purely defensive escort mission in the Strait of Hormuz once the most intense phase of the conflict subsides. This builds on earlier announcements of a large-scale naval presence (aircraft carrier strike group, eight warships, two helicopter carriers) across the eastern Mediterranean, Red Sea, and potentially Hormuz for protecting shipping and allies. France reiterated it would not approve or join offensive operations.

France sustained its defensive posture, including continued deployment of the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle and supporting assets in the Mediterranean (with links to Cyprus protection). Officials highlighted the risks posed by Iran's demonstrated longer-range missile capabilities (post the March 20 Diego Garcia attempt), framing it as a broader threat to regional and European security. Macron and the government pushed for a "return to reason," multilateral dialogue, and a political framework that prevents Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons while protecting French interests and citizens.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez of Spain maintained strong criticism of the U.S.-Israeli strikes as "unjustified and dangerous" and outside international law. Spain continued to refuse U.S. access to bases (Rota and Morón) for offensive operations against Iran, despite earlier Trump threats of trade cuts or severed relations.

15. Global Superpowers

On March 23, President Donald Trump publicly postponed imminent strikes on Iranian energy infrastructure, extending the decision window by several days and citing what he described as "productive" indirect discussions. This marked the first formal acknowledgment from Washington that a negotiation track existed alongside ongoing hostilities. However, Tehran rejected the characterization, denying the existence of formal talks and framing the U.S. position as a narrative designed to mask coercive pressure. Despite the rhetorical shift, military operations continued unabated. U.S. and allied strikes targeted Iranian-linked infrastructure and positions, while Iranian-aligned militias conducted retaliatory attacks across secondary theaters, including Syria. This juxtaposition established the dominant pattern of the week: diplomacy and escalation proceeding simultaneously rather than sequentially.

By March 24, this dual-track approach became more structured. The United States transmitted a multi-point framework to Iran through intermediaries, addressing nuclear constraints, missile capabilities, and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. In response, Iran adopted a calibrated maritime strategy rather than a full blockade. Selected vessels were allowed passage, while others—particularly those perceived as aligned with U.S. interests—faced restrictions. This marked a significant tactical shift. The Strait of Hormuz was no longer treated as a binary chokepoint but as a selective economic instrument, enabling Tehran to exert pressure without triggering immediate full-scale retaliation. The implication was clear: economic disruption had become central to the conflict's leverage structure.

On March 25, negotiations appeared to stall. Reports indicated that Iran rejected the U.S. proposal in its existing form, though signals from Tehran suggested that elements of the framework remained under consideration. At the same time, the geographic scope of the conflict widened. Missile and drone activity extended into neighboring airspaces, including interceptions over Jordan, indicating that the confrontation was no longer

confined to the Gulf. This expansion reinforced the perception that even limited escalation between Washington and Tehran would inevitably produce regional spillover.

Between March 26 and 27, the United States recalibrated its timeline and messaging. President Trump extended the deadline related to Hormuz while simultaneously asserting that the conflict could conclude within weeks. This messaging was strategically ambiguous. On one hand, it signaled confidence in coercive diplomacy. On the other, it aimed to contain domestic and international concerns about a prolonged war. In practice, however, the situation on the ground pointed in the opposite direction. Global shipping disruptions intensified, and even actors not directly aligned with the United States, including commercial operators linked to China, avoided transit through Hormuz despite Iranian assurances. This indicated that the security environment had deteriorated beyond the control of either primary actor. Energy markets reacted accordingly, with oil prices rising sharply and financial markets reflecting increased volatility. At this stage, the conflict had clearly transitioned from a regional military confrontation into a systemic economic disturbance.

On March 28, the strategic narrative broadened further. President Trump framed the conflict as part of a larger effort to reshape the Middle East, linking immediate military objectives with longer-term regional reordering. Concurrently, the war expanded across multiple fronts. The Houthis intensified operations in the Red Sea, targeting maritime routes, while Hezbollah activity increased along the northern front involving Israel. This multi-theater dynamic significantly altered the strategic environment. The conflict was no longer a bilateral U.S.–Iran confrontation but an interconnected regional system involving state and non-state actors operating across the Gulf, the Levant, and the Red Sea. Diplomatic efforts also became more layered. While mediation channels through Oman and Egypt remained active, additional actors began exploring roles, indicating that negotiations were becoming decentralized rather than consolidated.

By March 29, escalation signals became more concrete. The United States deployed additional forces into the region, including thousands of troops transported via amphibious platforms, and began preparing contingency options that extended beyond air and naval operations. Discussions within the Pentagon reportedly included scenarios involving a larger troop presence and potential ground operations, although no formal decision was announced. Iran responded with explicit warnings against any ground incursion, signaling that such a move would represent a major escalation threshold. Simultaneously, attacks continued across secondary theaters, including strikes near U.S.-linked facilities in Iraq. Within the United States, scrutiny increased regarding the trajectory of the conflict, including its economic implications and decision-making processes. This domestic dimension introduced an additional constraint on escalation, as political pressure began to intersect with strategic planning.

On March 30, the cumulative effects of the week's developments became fully visible. Oil prices surged beyond \$110 per barrel, reflecting sustained disruption in supply expectations and maritime insecurity. The United States further reinforced its military posture in the region, while Iranian-aligned actors, particularly the Houthis, deepened their involvement in maritime attacks. Strategic discussions expanded to include more aggressive options, such as targeting critical Iranian export infrastructure, including key oil facilities. At this point, the conflict had clearly entered a phase characterized by systemic impact rather than localized confrontation. Energy markets, global shipping, and financial systems were all directly affected, underscoring the broader implications of the crisis.

Domestically in the U.S., anti-war sentiment intensified, with the Iran conflict becoming a major galvanizing issue in broader anti-Trump demonstrations. Protests remained largely peaceful but widespread, organized by coalitions including the ANSWER Coalition, CodePink, Democratic Socialists of America, and others. The war fueled criticism of "endless wars," costs, and perceived alignment with Israel.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov rejected a New York Times opinion piece claiming Putin no longer sought peace in Ukraine, calling it "false." Peace talks with Ukraine (U.S.-mediated trilateral format) remained on a "situational pause" due to the Middle East crisis diverting U.S. focus.

The White House announced that the postponed Trump-Xi summit is back on track for May 14–15, 2026, in Beijing. The original late-March/early-April dates were delayed due to the Iran war; China had not formally confirmed the initial schedule but accepted the rescheduling. This development was seen as giving Beijing potential leverage amid U.S. distractions in the Middle East.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian urged the U.S. and Israel to stop military actions in the Middle East, warning of a "vicious cycle" if the war escalates. Beijing expressed deep concern over continued escalation and spillovers, calling for an immediate ceasefire, respect for sovereignty, and a return to dialogue and negotiations. China reiterated that a prolonged conflict serves no one's interest and offered to play a constructive mediation role.

16. International and Regional Organizations

United Nation

During the period of March 23 to March 30, 2026, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), under the presidency of the United States, was marked by intense diplomatic engagement concerning the conflicts in Ukraine, the Middle East, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On March 23, 2026, the Council held a high-level briefing on

Ukraine, where Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo warned that the conflict was worsening, and delegates raised concerns about accountability, particularly regarding children and civilian suffering.

On March 26, 2026, the Council received a briefing on the deteriorating security situation in eastern DRC despite an ongoing ceasefire and considered a draft resolution to adjust the mandate of the MONUSCO mission in light of potential drawdown recommendations. On March 27, 2026, at Russia's request, a closed-door meeting addressed escalating tensions with Iran following reports of drone attacks and missile strikes near U.S. interests. On March 24, 2026, experts briefed the Council on the unsustainable situation in Gaza and the West Bank, emphasizing the need to uphold Resolution 2334 (2016) amid a worsening humanitarian crisis and rising settler violence.

In terms of sanctions and legal actions, on March 26, 2026, the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee added a new entry to its sanctions list, imposing an assets freeze, travel ban, and arms embargo under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, while the March 25, 2026, UN General Assembly declaration recognizing the trafficking of enslaved Africans as the gravest crime against humanity formed a broader backdrop to discussions on reparations and international law.

In terms of diplomatic engagements, on March 30, 2026, the Council monitored Syria's fragile transition one year after the collapse of its previous government, with Syrian leader Ahmad al-Sharaa meeting community delegations in Berlin, reflecting ongoing international stabilization efforts. Throughout the week, the United States advanced its presidency theme of "Children, Technology, and Education in Conflict," emphasizing the role of digital tools in protecting vulnerable youth in war zones.

Africa Union

During the period of March 23 to March 30, 2026, the African Union (AU) focused on regional leadership appointments, security mediation in Somalia, and advancing continental frameworks for agriculture and human rights. In terms of major political appointments, on March 25, 2026, AUC Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf appointed former Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete as High Representative for the Horn of Africa, with a mandate focused on preventive diplomacy and addressing security dynamics in the Red Sea and Horn of Africa regions.

On the same day, a new Special Envoy for Gabon and Equatorial Guinea was appointed to oversee political transitions and maintain regional stability for these two member states. Additionally, under the chairship of the Kingdom of Eswatini, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) conducted induction sessions in Mbabane for newly elected members to prepare for the 2026–2028 term.

In terms of security and diplomatic developments, on March 29, 2026, Chairperson Youssouf issued a formal statement urging dialogue and restraint among stakeholders in Somalia's Southwest State to prevent further political and security escalation. On March 26, 2026, the AU officially welcomed a UN General Assembly resolution declaring the trafficking of enslaved Africans a crime against humanity. Between March 24 and 25, 2026, the Chairperson met with French Ambassador Alexis Lamek to prepare for a high-level dialogue in Paris and also held a diplomatic meeting with Irish Ambassador Olivia Leslie to discuss peace and security cooperation.

Between March 29 and 30, 2026, the AU mourned the passing of former Algerian President Liamine Zeroul, congratulated Nabil Fahmy on his appointment as Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, and extended congratulations to President Denis Sassou Nguesso on his re-election in the Republic of Congo. In terms of thematic and technical work, between March 24 and 27, 2026, technical workshops were held to refine the CAADP Kampala Results Framework, which tracks biennial indicators for continental food security.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

During the period of March 23 to March 30, 2026, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) focused on human rights integration into security, mediating regional tensions in Somalia, and cross-border health and environmental coordination. In terms of political and security developments, on March 27, 2026, IGAD concluded a two-day high-level meeting in Bishoftu, Ethiopia, to operationalize the IGAD National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) Network, where member states validated an Action Plan to integrate human rights into regional peace and security efforts, focusing on accountability and preventive diplomacy.

On March 29, 2026, Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu issued a formal statement expressing deep concern over rising political tensions in Somalia's South West State, calling for immediate dialogue and restraint among all political stakeholders to safeguard the country's security gains and ensure stability during the transition period. Between March 26 and 27, 2026, the IGAD Peace and Security Division held technical sessions to finalize the Draft IGAD Mediation Board Roadmap, focusing on strengthening the role of women and youth in inclusive mediation and preventive diplomacy across the Horn of Africa. In terms of diplomatic and technical engagements, on March 30, 2026, a regional coordination meeting was held in Namanga, Kenya, to improve integrated human, animal, and environmental health monitoring as part of a broader strategy to address transboundary threats impacting regional security and livelihoods.

Throughout March 2026, IGAD's Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) released a Climate Watch Advisory noting evolving dry conditions in Eastern Africa, serving as an early-warning tool for potential resource-based conflicts in the region.

Preparations were also finalized on March 31, 2026, for the Mara-Serengeti Cluster meeting beginning April 1 in Namanga to harmonize vaccination calendars and disease surveillance. In terms of ongoing regional mandates, IGAD maintained its commitment to the Sudanese-led civilian dialogue and continued monitoring the permanent ceasefire in South Sudan following the 2025 extension of the transitional period, while also continuing technical consultations following a March 13 roadmap agreement with Uganda to accelerate the ratification of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons across the region.

European Union (EU)

During the period of March 23 to March 30, 2026, the European Union (EU) focused on implementing decisions from the March 19–20 European Council summit, particularly regarding the Middle East crisis and the first major disbursements of the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) defense loan program. In terms of security and defense developments, on March 26, 2026, the European Commission approved the first tranche of the €150 billion SAFE defense loan instrument, finalizing decisions for 16 Member States, including Czechia and France, to unlock funding for joint procurement of air defense, ammunition, and ground combat systems.

On March 25, 2026, following a Russian drone strike on an Estonian power station, the EU intensified discussions on the Preparedness Union Strategy and called for an updated 360° threat assessment to protect critical subsea and energy infrastructure, while on March 24, 2026, Commissioner Tzitzikostas issued a statement regarding new maritime security measures in the Strait of Hormuz amid escalating Middle East tensions.

In terms of diplomatic and political developments, between March 23 and 30, 2026, the EU mobilized an additional €10 million in emergency cash aid for 100,000 vulnerable households in Lebanon on March 23, supplementing a previously announced €100 million humanitarian package, while Commissioner Dan Jørgensen urged coordinated gas storage refilling to mitigate price volatility linked to the conflict.

On March 24, 2026, the EU and Australia concluded negotiations for a comprehensive Free Trade and Security Pact, including cooperation in defense, cybersecurity, and critical raw materials such as lithium, and on March 23, 2026, the EU notified Mercosur countries of the provisional application of the EU-Mercosur interim Trade Agreement set to begin on May 1, 2026. In terms of institutional meetings, between March 26 and 29, 2026, the Foreign Affairs Council (Trade) coordinated positions for the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference, while on March 30, 2026, the Agriculture and Fisheries Council met in Brussels to discuss energy transition in the fisheries sector and market support for farmers.

Between March 23 and 24, 2026, Commissioner Michael McGrath visited Bratislava, Slovakia, for discussions with Prime Minister Robert Fico on judicial independence and media freedom. In terms of political appointments and delegations, on March 23, 2026, Commissioner Magnus Brunner visited Nouakchott to strengthen the EU-Mauritania Migration Partnership, and between March 23 and 24, 2026, Commissioner Sikela led a business delegation to Hanoi to launch new Global Gateway investments in clean energy and sustainable transport.

ECOWAS

During the same period, from March 23 to March 30, 2026, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) focused on high-level mediation with breakaway states, digital transformation, and regional food security. Regarding major diplomatic appointments, on March 23, 2026, ECOWAS appointed Dr. Lansana Kouyaté, former Prime Minister of Guinea and former ECOWAS Executive Secretary, as Chief Negotiator to lead discussions with the Alliance of Sahel States (AES)—Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger—following their official withdrawal from the bloc, with the goal of rebuilding trust and fostering constructive dialogue to restore regional stability.

In the area of political and regional security, on March 25, 2026, ECOWAS and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) held meetings to strengthen coordination on regional security and integration efforts, while throughout late March member nations continued technical planning to operationalize a regional standby force aimed at combating cross-border armed groups, a move intensified by the spread of terrorism in the Sahel.

On March 28, 2026, ECOWAS issued a formal statement expressing deep concern over escalating military actions in the Middle East, noting potential repercussions for global energy markets and food supply chains affecting Africa. In terms of economic and thematic developments, between March 23 and 27, 2026, the 20th Meeting of Ministers responsible for Telecommunications, ICT, and Digitalization was held in Freetown, Sierra Leone, focusing on advancing regional digital transformation, cybersecurity, and personal data protection, with outcomes including the review of a regional e-government strategy and a harmonized digital market framework. On March 23, 2026, an online extraordinary meeting of Ministers of Agriculture addressed the impact of international crises and soaring oil prices on food security in West Africa and the Sahel.

Between March 26 and 29, 2026, the ECOWAS Commission participated in the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) in Yaoundé, Cameroon, to represent the trade and development interests of the community, while on March 24, 2026, ECOWAS Commission President Dr. Omar Alieu Touray hosted the High Commissioner of India to discuss advancing cooperation in trade, investment, and food security. In terms of commemorative activities, between March 27 and 28, 2026, as part of the ongoing 50th

anniversary celebrations, the ECOWAS Representation in Côte d'Ivoire organized events in Yamoussoukro focused on regional integration and peace.

NATO

During the period of March 23 to March 30, 2026, NATO's activities were characterized by a historic shift in defense spending, high-level diplomatic engagements, and the conclusion of major winter exercises. On March 26, 2026, Secretary General Mark Rutte presented the Annual Report for 2025 at NATO Headquarters, marking the first time all 32 NATO allies met the 2% GDP defense spending target and announcing a new long-term goal of 5% of GDP following the Hague Summit.

On March 25, 2026, NATO and Ukraine activated the next phase of the UNITE – Brave program to accelerate battlefield technology deployment, while NATO also held its 9th Military Staff Talks with China focusing on transparency and regional security. In terms of military operations, Exercise Steadfast Foxtrot 26 concluded on March 26, 2026, in Ulm, Germany, focusing on sustainment and medical logistics, while redeployment and after-action reviews for Exercise Cold Response 26 continued through late March following its field phase earlier in the month. Maritime security operations also continued, with the Arctic Sentry operation maintaining coordinated command over allied activity in the High North throughout its first month.

In terms of diplomatic engagements, on March 23, 2026, the Deputy Secretary General met with the Swedish Minister for Justice to discuss hybrid threats, on March 25, 2026, Mark Rutte hosted Grand Duke Guillaume of Luxembourg and President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani of Mauritania at NATO Headquarters, and on March 27, 2026, the NATO Military Committee visited Allied Air Command to assess AWACS readiness. In terms of future outlook and innovation, applications opened on March 25, 2026, for the NATO Internship Program, while applications continued throughout the week for the third annual Women and Girls in Science STEM Challenge, with finalists scheduled for presentation in June 2026.



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