



# Weekly Geopolitical Report

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

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# Horn Review: Weekly Report

Apr 20 – Apr 26, 2026

## 1. Ethiopia

During the week, Ethiopia pursued active bilateral diplomacy with several partners to strengthen economic and multilateral ties. On April 20 in Addis Ababa, Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos met Austria's Federal Minister for European and International Affairs, Beate Meini-Reisinger, marking 120 years of diplomatic relations. Discussions addressed expanding cooperation in political, economic, educational, cultural, and multilateral areas. Ethiopia presented its Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda and investment opportunities in renewable energy, manufacturing, tourism, and digital infrastructure. Austria indicated readiness to support business linkages, trade missions, innovation partnerships, and closer collaboration on climate change, migration, and Sustainable Development Goals.

That same period also included a meeting between Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the European Union Commissioner for International Partnerships, which reviewed ongoing cooperation in areas of mutual interest, though detailed outcomes were not extensively publicized. Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos then continued engagements in Europe. On April 24 in Oslo, he held talks with Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide on trade, investment, and environmental protection. Norwegian entities expressed interest in Ethiopian opportunities, and Norway offered support for Ethiopia's preparations to host COP32. Additional meetings occurred with Norway's ministers of International Development and Climate & Environment, plus development agencies and private sector actors, focusing on financing and climate action. Later in Stockholm, Gedion met Swedish Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard to review bilateral relations, historic ties, investment prospects, and regional and international issues.

Shifting toward Asian partnerships, Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos met Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman on April 21 in Addis Ababa. The two sides agreed to prioritize expanded economic cooperation, trade, and investment as the foundation of bilateral relations. Ethiopia invited Bangladeshi participation in renewable energy, agro-processing, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, and industrial sectors. President Taye Atske Selassie also received the Bangladeshi minister to discuss strengthening historical relations and multilateral coordination.

Regional diplomacy also featured prominently when Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed hosted South Sudanese President Salva Kiir Mayardit for a two-day official visit to Addis Ababa starting April 24. Bilateral talks at the National Palace covered shared regional priorities, economic cooperation including trade and investment, national developments, and a common vision for the future. The leaders reaffirmed commitment to deeper partnerships

for mutual benefit and regional stability. On April 23, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed separately received Djibouti's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, who conveyed a message from President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh, with discussions centered on ongoing bilateral and regional collaboration between the neighbors.

Ethiopia advanced its continental leadership in innovation when the African Union appointed Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed as AU Champion for Artificial Intelligence and Digital Health on April 23. The appointment recognizes Ethiopia's initiatives, such as Africa's first AI Institute and plans for a dedicated AI university under the Digital Ethiopia 2030 strategy. It positions the country to promote responsible AI adoption for sovereignty, efficiency, and inclusive growth across the continent, aligned with the Medemer philosophy of synergy.

Complementing this technology focus, the inaugural Africa–China Entrepreneurs Summit was held on April 21 in Addis Ababa. President Taye Atske Selassie and AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf addressed participants, calling for a shift toward innovation-driven partnerships, joint research in AI, green energy, and the digital economy, plus greater “Made in Africa” value addition. The event concluded with the signing of 12 strategic agreements in infrastructure, renewable energy, and digital trade, emphasizing practical South-South cooperation and entrepreneurship.

In the area of peace and security, Ethiopia continued its chairmanship of the African Union Peace and Security Council for April 2026, which included thematic discussions on the role of artificial intelligence in peace, early warning, and conflict prevention, alongside other continental issues. However, concerns also arose over the Tigray peace process after the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) announced on or around April 20 that it would restore its pre-war regional government structures, effectively challenging the interim administration established under the 2022 Pretoria Agreement. The move, which the TPLF linked to alleged federal violations, raised international fears of potential renewed tensions or instability in northern Ethiopia, though no immediate large-scale conflict was reported.

This overview captures the main reported activities from your provided links and additional verified sources for the specified week. Diplomatic engagements largely emphasized economic cooperation and innovation, while the Tigray announcement introduced a notable security-related development. If you supply more specific links or wish to adjust emphasis, length, or include further details, I can refine the report accordingly.

## 2. Sudan

Sudan's political landscape continues to fragment as competing governance visions emerge amid the protracted conflict. Sovereign Council Deputy Chairman Malik Agar called for the expansion of the pro-army Democratic Block alliance, urging broader political consolidation to strengthen the government's legitimacy and counter rival factions. Parallel discussions within the bloc emphasized a "national vision" centered on unity, stability, and a domestically defined democratic transition, explicitly rejecting externally imposed governance models.

At the same time, Sudan's Empowerment Removal Committee has resumed operations with an expanded international mandate. The body is now targeting financial networks and assets linked to the Islamist movement abroad, signaling a renewed effort to dismantle remnants of the former regime beyond Sudan's borders. This move reflects a broader trend toward transnationalizing Sudan's internal political contestations.

Military confrontations between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) intensified across multiple fronts. The army reported coordinated operations across six states, targeting RSF logistics, drone platforms, and fuel depots, while claiming territorial gains in parts of Blue Nile and Kordofan. However, RSF-affiliated sources countered with claims of strategic advances, underscoring the continued information asymmetry and battlefield ambiguity.

In Blue Nile State, clashes escalated significantly as RSF forces—alongside allies from the SPLM-N faction led by Abdel Aziz al-Hilu—engaged government troops in sustained offensives. The fighting has displaced thousands and deepened humanitarian vulnerabilities in the region.

Internal fractures within the RSF also became more visible. RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo sentenced defected commander Al-Nour Ahmed Adam ("Al-Qubba") to death in absentia following his defection to the army. The development highlights growing tensions within RSF ranks and suggests potential fragmentation within the paramilitary structure.

Meanwhile, drone warfare continues to redefine the conflict. In El Obeid, drone strikes killed at least seven civilians and injured dozens, reflecting an escalation in the use of unmanned systems in urban environments and raising concerns over violations of international humanitarian law.

Sudan's humanitarian crisis remains catastrophic, with conditions deteriorating across multiple regions. Aid delivery continues to face severe disruption, including attacks on humanitarian convoys in Darfur and restricted access in conflict zones such as Blue Nile.

Reports of arbitrary detention, extortion, and enforced disappearances have intensified, particularly in RSF-controlled areas. Legal advocacy groups have documented cases where detainees are released only after ransom payments, raising concerns over systemic abuses and potential human trafficking practices.

Public health conditions are also worsening. A dengue fever outbreak in northern states has resulted in rising infections and fatalities, compounded by the collapse of healthcare infrastructure and limited access to medical supplies. Displacement pressures continue to strain already fragile local systems, increasing exposure to disease and malnutrition.

Sudan's economy remains under severe strain despite isolated signs of sectoral resilience. The industrial sector is operating at only 10% capacity, with widespread destruction, logistical bottlenecks, and financial restrictions hindering recovery. Industry leaders warn that without immediate policy interventions—particularly from the Central Bank—long-term economic collapse is a growing risk.

Conversely, the gold sector continues to serve as a critical economic lifeline. Mining revenues have exceeded quarterly targets, driven largely by artisanal production, which accounts for approximately 80% of total output. However, persistent discrepancies between production and official export figures suggest ongoing smuggling and governance challenges, limiting the sector's contribution to public finances.

Sudan's conflict shows no signs of imminent resolution. The convergence of intensified military operations, political fragmentation, and deepening humanitarian and economic crises points toward a prolonged stalemate. Emerging internal fractures, particularly within armed factions, may reshape the conflict dynamics, but without a coherent political settlement, the trajectory remains one of continued instability with significant regional implications.

### **3. Egypt**

Egypt is leaning hard on Lebanon as a proof of concept for its regional diplomacy. The New Arab reported that Cairo welcomed the Lebanon-Israel ceasefire, backed Lebanese efforts to reassert control, and kept up direct contacts with Beirut. The strategic read is simple: Egypt wants to prevent a Levant spillover that would widen instability and weaken Arab negotiating leverage.

That same containment instinct appeared in Ahram's account of Egypt's push to restart US-Iran talks. Cairo is not acting as a spectator; it is trying to keep a diplomatic channel open before escalation turns into a wider confrontation. The deeper interest is to reduce the odds of a regional shock that would hit trade routes, energy costs, and Egypt's own room to maneuver.

Sisi then sharpened the message in Cairo, telling visiting Finnish President Alexander Stubb that Gulf security is non-negotiable and directly tied to Egypt's national security. He also rejected interference in Arab states' internal affairs. Beyond the headline condemnation, the move signals that Egypt wants to be seen as a stabilizer for Gulf partners while avoiding the optics of direct escalation with Iran.

The Iranian foreign minister's phone call with Badr Abdelatty shows Cairo keeping its channels to Tehran open even while speaking toughly in public. Mehr said the two discussed ceasefire diplomacy and wider regional developments. That balance matters: Egypt is trying to preserve enough access to influence outcomes, without conceding its core positions on de-escalation and Arab security.

Sisi's Sinai anniversary speech widened the frame from immediate crises to the future shape of the region. Saudi Gazette and Voice of Emirates both reported that he warned about efforts to redraw the Middle East map, rejected Palestinian displacement, and called for full implementation of the Gaza ceasefire and reconstruction. Cairo is presenting Gaza as both a moral issue and a strategic red line.

The Times Kuwait report on Egypt's rejection of any aggression against Kuwait fits the same pattern of Arab solidarity as strategic insurance. Sisi linked Kuwait's security to Egypt's own national security and backed cooperation on trade and investment. The subtext is that Cairo wants Gulf cohesion to function as a protective belt around the region, not just a symbolic talking point.

Egypt is also working the African flank much more aggressively. The National described a continent-wide push that links the Nile dispute, Red Sea access, and wider regional influence, with Egypt building ties through Somalia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and other partners. The real objective is not simply to pressure Ethiopia, but to shape the balance of power before the water dispute hardens into a permanent security fault line.

Israel's unease over Egyptian drills near the border underlines that Cairo is pairing diplomacy with deterrence. The New Arab said Israeli officials and settlers were alarmed by planned Egyptian exercises close to the frontier, even though they were approved under the peace treaty. Egypt is signaling that calm in Gaza and Sinai will be enforced, not assumed, which strengthens Cairo's bargaining position.

A quieter but important layer of Egypt's regional posture is defense networking with Gulf states. In Bahrain, the commander-in-chief received Egypt's defense attaché and stressed steady progress in military cooperation and joint coordination. That kind of engagement is low-profile by design, but it helps Egypt remain embedded in Gulf security architecture at a time when regional crises are becoming increasingly interconnected.

Egypt's joint drills with Pakistan add another dimension to that security web. Middle East Monitor said the "Thunder 2" exercise focused on counterterrorism and unconventional

threats, with Egyptian paratroopers training alongside Pakistani special forces. Strategically, Cairo is widening its military partnerships beyond the Arab core, which gives it more flexibility if regional alignments keep shifting.

The diplomatic map is widening in the Eastern Mediterranean too. Cyprus and Egypt signed a strategic partnership declaration covering energy, security, defense, trade, investment, technology, education, and regional stability. The practical logic is clear: Cairo is strengthening an eastern corridor that deepens energy cooperation, broadens European links, and gives Egypt more leverage in future regional bargaining.

Egypt's meeting with the Saudi ambassador also fits that broader alignment strategy. Asharq Al-Awsat reported the talks at the Cabinet headquarters in the New Administrative Capital. The immediate topic may have been bilateral housekeeping, but the real value is in maintaining the Cairo-Riyadh channel that underpins Gulf coordination, investment confidence, and common positions on crisis management.

On the domestic front, Egypt is trying to normalize life after the energy squeeze triggered by the Iran war shock. Anadolu reported that the government ended the early closing-hours policy and restored normal hours for shops, malls, and restaurants, while keeping other savings in place. The move suggests Cairo wants to preserve tourism and private-sector momentum without pretending the energy environment has become risk-free.

The green hydrogen deal between Egyptian and Chinese firms points to the longer-term economic hedge underneath all the crisis diplomacy. MEED said the companies will work toward a large-scale facility. The strategic value is that Egypt is using clean energy and Chinese capital to build industrial relevance, attract investment, and reduce vulnerability to future fuel shocks.

The Red Sea Olympic Village project shows the same development logic in a more visible form. MEED said the site will sit opposite El-Gouna, turning a sports project into part of the coast's broader tourism and infrastructure story. Cairo is trying to make the Red Sea corridor pull double duty: prestige development at home, and another signal to investors that the coastline remains open for high-value projects.

#### **4. Eritrea**

A major regional development this week followed reports on April 22 that the Trump administration is exploring the lifting of sanctions on Eritrea and a broader reset in relations with Asmara. The reported initiative appears tied to the growing strategic importance of the Red Sea amid threats to maritime routes linked to the Iran conflict, with Eritrea's coastline and geographic position increasing its value in U.S. calculations. If pursued, the move would mark a significant shift in Washington's approach toward one of the world's most closed political systems, despite the absence of reforms or changes in governance. Critics, including former U.S. official Cameron Hudson, argue the policy

reflects a transactional and underdeveloped strategy that risks overlooking Eritrea's domestic repression while generating wider ripple effects across Ethiopia, Sudan, and broader Horn of Africa rivalries.

UNHCR released an updated guidance note on Eritrea reaffirming the continued international protection needs of Eritrean asylum seekers and refugees. The report highlights persistent arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, indefinite national service, severe restrictions on movement, and the absence of political and civic freedoms under the PFDJ system. It also notes continuing economic hardship and humanitarian vulnerability, with more than 679,000 Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers recorded globally by the end of 2025. The updated assessment is significant as it reinforces that the structural drivers of Eritrean displacement remain largely unchanged despite growing external diplomatic engagement with Asmara.

In an April 23 analysis, Deutsche Welle examined the risk of renewed conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia, arguing that regional disruptions linked to the Iran crisis may have temporarily delayed, rather than resolved, mounting tensions. The report highlighted Eritrea's growing alignment with Egypt, its reported contacts with Ethiopian opposition actors including elements of Fano and the TPLF, and continued military sensitivities along the Eritrea-Tigray frontier. The broader assessment suggests that while immediate escalation may have been deferred, the underlying strategic rivalry between Asmara and Addis Ababa remains active and unresolved.

The previous week, the African Development Bank's regional director outlined the outcome of a recent mission to Eritrea focused on expanding cooperation in energy, transport, financial sector modernization, skills development, agriculture, and statistics. The visit included meetings with senior Eritrean officials, among them presidential adviser Hagos Gebrehiwet and ministers overseeing finance, education, agriculture, and energy. Concrete follow-up areas reportedly include renewable solar power projects in Tesseney, Kerkebet, and Barentu, alongside financial sector reforms. The engagement points to growing interest by multilateral development actors in selective economic cooperation with Eritrea, particularly in infrastructure and technical sectors where the country remains underdeveloped but potentially significant.

On 19 April 2026, Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs upgraded its travel advisory for Eritrea to "exercise special caution," citing renewed military activity along Eritrea's borders with Ethiopia, Sudan, and Djibouti. The advisory also referenced intermittent disruptions along the Eritrea-Ethiopia corridor, landmine risks, and limited consular access due to the absence of a Finnish diplomatic mission in Asmara. While framed as a routine security update, the change reflects continued external concern over volatility in Eritrea's frontier zones and the broader fragility of border security dynamics in the Horn of Africa.

## 5. Djibouti

During the period of April 20 to April 27, 2026, Djibouti's political landscape remained defined by the consolidation of President Ismail Omar Guelleh's sixth term following the April 10 presidential election, as official results confirmed his overwhelming victory with 97.8% of the vote against Mohamed Farah Samatar's 2.19%. International recognition quickly followed, most notably through a formal congratulatory message from Chinese President Xi Jinping, who reaffirmed the comprehensive strategic partnership between Beijing and Djibouti and pledged continued cooperation under the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).

At the same time, international observer missions from the African Union and IGAD completed their post-election assessments, generally characterizing the process as peaceful while also noting the absence of major opposition participation due to the widespread boycott, leaving the broader political climate still shaped by opposition criticism of the constitutional amendments that enabled Guelleh to seek a sixth term.

Diplomatically, the week was marked by intensified regional engagement centered on Djibouti's strategic partnership with Ethiopia and its role in wider Horn of Africa integration. Djibouti's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdoukader Houssain Omar, traveled to Addis Ababa to deliver a special message from President Guelleh to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, after which both countries publicly vowed closer economic and security ties with discussions focused on maritime trade logistics, regional stability, and the Ethio-Djibouti Railway as a central artery of bilateral interdependence.

Parallel to this, IGAD convened a three-day regional consultative meeting in Djibouti City to advance the RECOVER-HORN Regional Climate Resilience Programme with emphasis on food security and disaster risk reduction, while the latter part of the week maintained attention on the technical implementation of the DESSU Corridor Authority designed to streamline port access for landlocked regional states such as South Sudan and Uganda, and including Ethiopia reinforcing Djibouti's diplomatic role as the logistical gateway of the Horn.

On the security front, Djibouti operated under heightened vigilance as the Bab el-Mandeb Strait remained a focal point of geopolitical tension and the government maintained strict maritime customs and security controls amid shifting Red Sea power dynamics. Reports also highlighted Egypt's deepening technical alignment with Djibouti through discussions on upgrading berths at Djiboutian ports for possible naval support, adding another layer to the regional security balance, while Djibouti continued deploying 1,800 troops in Somalia under the African Union transition force as part of its long-standing regional counterterrorism posture.

Internally, security forces conducted a major sweep in District 7 of the capital resulting in the detention of over 330 individuals, including several already wanted by the authorities, followed by the repatriation of illegal migrants as part of a broader anti-crime campaign. Alongside these hard security measures, humanitarian concerns also surfaced after the World Food Programme warned of a 61% pipeline break in food assistance, an 8% rise in vegetable oil prices, and an urgent funding gap of \$7.9 million, indicating that domestic stability during this period was being managed not only through policing and regional military engagement but also under mounting socio-economic pressure.

## **6. South Sudan**

South Sudan's fragile transition process remains under mounting pressure as both regional and international actors intensify engagement. President Salva Kiir visited Addis Ababa for bilateral talks with Ethiopian officials, with both sides agreeing to fast-track the implementation of pending cooperation agreements. The visit underscores Ethiopia's continued diplomatic role in stabilizing its southern neighbor.

At the continental level, the African Union has stepped up its involvement, dispatching assessment missions to evaluate the status of South Sudan's transitional roadmap. AU officials emphasized the need for clear, actionable steps toward elections, reflecting growing concern that repeated delays risk undermining the peace agreement framework.

Domestically, political tensions have intensified following parliamentary endorsement of amendments to the electoral timeline within the peace agreement. Western envoys have warned that such changes—if not broadly consensual—could jeopardize the already fragile peace process. This reflects a widening gap between internal political maneuvering and external expectations for a credible democratic transition.

The security environment remains volatile, particularly in Jonglei State and other conflict-prone regions. Event tracking reports indicate continued intercommunal violence, localized clashes, and population displacement, reinforcing concerns that underlying drivers of conflict—such as competition over resources and weak state authority—remain unresolved.

Humanitarian conditions are deteriorating in tandem. The influx of Sudanese refugees into South Sudan is adding further strain to already overstretched local systems. Authorities have begun registration processes in Lakes State, but capacity constraints and funding shortages continue to limit effective response.

Broader regional dynamics are also feeding into domestic instability. Analysts warn that South Sudan's conflict risks becoming further entangled with the wider Sudan crisis, raising the possibility of prolonged insecurity and cross-border destabilization.

On the economic front, South Sudan is pursuing policy and infrastructure initiatives aimed at long-term stabilization. The government has finalized a national land policy, a significant step toward addressing longstanding disputes over land ownership and usage—one of the structural drivers of conflict.

Regionally, new proposals are emerging to strengthen economic integration. Kenya has floated plans for a regional oil refinery that would process crude from South Sudan and neighboring countries, potentially reducing export dependency and enhancing value addition within the region.

At the same time, bilateral cooperation with Ethiopia continues to expand beyond diplomacy into trade and connectivity, reflecting a broader push for regional economic interdependence as a stabilizing mechanism.

Governance concerns remain central to South Sudan's transition. Civil society actors have called on the African Union to adopt a more assertive and actionable approach in guiding the country's political process. There are growing fears that without stronger oversight, the transition could stagnate or regress.

Additionally, issues surrounding the treatment of South Sudanese citizens abroad—in countries such as Egypt, Sudan, and Libya—have drawn official concern, highlighting the broader vulnerabilities faced by South Sudanese populations both domestically and in the diaspora.

South Sudan stands at a critical juncture. While diplomatic engagement and policy initiatives suggest movement toward stabilization, persistent delays in the transition process, combined with ongoing insecurity and humanitarian strain, continue to undermine progress. Without credible electoral preparations and unified political commitment, the risk of renewed large-scale conflict remains significant, particularly as regional crises exert additional pressure on the country's fragile state structures.

## **7. Somalia and Somaliland**

### **Somalia**

The formal appointment by Israel of veteran diplomat Michael Lotem as its first non resident Ambassador to Somaliland on April 20 has triggered a sustained diplomatic crisis. The Federal Government of Somalia condemned the move as a violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity with Minister of Information Daud Aweis characterizing it as an aggressive act. In response, Mogadishu has actively mobilized international backing securing public support from Türkiye while the African Union Commission issued a formal condemnation reaffirming Somalia's unity under the AU Constitutive Act and recalling the Peace and Security Council's January 6, 2026 position that any unilateral recognition is null and void. Concurrently unconfirmed reports

circulated regarding a potential Somali ban on Israeli shipping through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait though federal authorities have not officially verified or endorsed such a measure.

Following the development above Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi Irro departed on April 23 for a working visit to the United Arab Emirates. The trip occurs as official relations between the Federal Government of Somalia and Abu Dhabi remain strained adding a layer of geopolitical complexity to the Horn of Africa's alignment dynamics.

Somalia-Oman Bilateral Talks High-level discussions were held in Muscat between Somali and Omani officials focused on enhancing cooperation across multiple sectors. The talks represent Mogadishu's ongoing diplomatic outreach to regional partners amid the current political transition period.

EU Approves €75 Million for AUSSOM. The Political and Security Committee of the EU Council approved an additional €75 million under the European Peace Facility for the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM). The funding which brings total EU support to successive AU led missions in Somalia to nearly €2.8 billion since 2007 will cover troop allowances non-lethal equipment and related services to strengthen operational readiness and support the handover of security responsibilities to Somali forces.

U.S. Airstrikes against ISIS-Somalia In coordination with the Federal Government of Somalia and Somali Armed Forces U.S. Africa Command conducted airstrikes against ISIS-Somalia positions in the Golis Mountains area approximately 90 kilometers southeast of Bossaso in the Puntland region. The operation aimed to degrade the group's ability to threaten U.S. interests, Somali security, and regional stability. No casualty details were released for operational security reasons.

Separately, on April 21 AFRICOM conducted an airstrike against Al-Shabaab in the vicinity of Wadajir approximately 90 kilometers southwest of Kismayo. The operation conducted in coordination with Somali forces sought to degrade the group's capacity to threaten Somali security and regional stability. Casualty figures were not disclosed.

NISA Raid Kills 33 Al-Shabaab Fighters in Middle Shabelle. Somalia's National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) reported coordinated operations supported by international partners that killed at least 33 Al-Shabaab fighters in the village of Guulane, Middle Shabelle region. Intelligence indicated the militants had gathered to plan a new wave of attacks near Mogadishu with nearly 90 fighters assembled prior to the intervention. NISA urged public cooperation via hotlines to report insurgent movements.

Puntland Appoints Special Commander for Al-Miskaad Mountains. Puntland regional authorities named a new special commander to oversee operations in the Al-Miskaad

Mountains area, aimed at countering insurgent presence in the northeastern sector of the region.

On top of that , AUSSOM Commander Engages Officials in Barawe, The commander of the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia held meetings with Somali government officials in Barawe as part of ongoing coordination for security handover and stabilization efforts.

Opposition Declares President Illegitimate After May 15. Opposition leaders including members of the Somali Future Council and former Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble have formally announced that President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud will no longer be recognized as head of state once his term expires on May 15. This declaration followed meetings with influential Hawiye traditional elders at the residence of former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed in Mogadishu. The opposition has formed a National Salvation bloc warning of an impending constitutional vacuum and accusing the government of moving to extend power via constitutional changes and delayed elections.

Following that Parliament’s mandate expired on April 14 and Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre publicly defended on April 21 the revised constitution’s extension to five year presidential and parliamentary terms signed into law in March 2026. The move has been rejected by opposition groups and some federal member states, deepening the impasse. Government officials have reportedly defected to the opposition as the president’s term approaches its end.

Senate Speaker Breaks Silence on Election Impasse, Senate Speaker Abdi Hashi Abdullahi following a prolonged absence due to health issues announced on April 25 that he would now constantly appear in public meetings to clarify his position amid the deepening dispute. He offered blunt criticism of the governing system noting that authorities and citizens often fail to abide by laws. His statement came as tensions over term extensions and the electoral roadmap persisted.

Clan Elders Weigh “National Salvation” Plan, Opposition leaders and Hawiye clan elders convened on April 20 at the residence of former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed to discuss a national salvation plan as the presidential term nears its end. The discussions centered on political transition, electoral processes and consensus building ahead of the May deadlines with expectations of formal recommendations by week’s end.

Former Custodial Corps Chief Declares “No Government” in Somalia, General Mahad Abdirahman, former custodial corps chief delivered a assessment on April 25 declaring that state authority has effectively collapsed. His statement reflects growing concerns among security sector figures regarding the trajectory of the political crisis.

Southwest State Leadership moves regarding President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud on April 26 persuaded a leading contender in the race for Southwest State president to withdraw effectively clearing the field for a presidential ally. The move is viewed within the context of federal regional power dynamics amid the broader impasse over expired mandates and term extensions.

In a maritime security development armed gunmen reportedly six individuals seized the fuel/product tanker Honour 25 late on April 22 approximately 30 nautical miles off the north eastern coast between Hafun and Bandarbeyla in the Puntland region. The vessel carrying an estimated 18,500 barrels of fuel and 17 crew members including 11 Pakistanis and an Indonesian captain was transiting from Berbera to Mogadishu at the time of the attack. The tanker was taken into Somali territorial waters. The UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) and Puntland Maritime Police Force confirmed the boarding signalling a potential resurgence of Somali piracy amid regional instability. EU Naval Force Atalanta continues to investigate the incident.

Separately, EU Naval Force Atalanta and maritime security sources investigated a possible armed boarding or piracy event involving a tanker near the Xaafuun area with some links to an April 21 incident that remained under follow up investigation as of April 22. Official confirmation of this specific event has not been issued.

## **Somaliland**

**Somaliland Rejects Joint Ministerial Condemnation of Israel Envoy Appointment.** The Government of Somaliland issued an official statement published between 18 and 20 April strongly rejecting a joint declaration by foreign ministers from multiple Arab, Muslim majority and African nations. The joint statement had criticized Israel's appointment of Mr. Michael Lotem as its first non-resident ambassador to Somaliland. Hargeisa described the collective rebuke as an unacceptable interference in its sovereign foreign policy and affirmed that its diplomatic engagements violate no state's territorial integrity.

**Somaliland Defends Ties with Israel Amid Iranian Criticism.** Following Iranian condemnation of Israel's ambassadorial appointment the Somaliland government issued a formal defense of its bilateral relations with Israel. The statement widely reported around 22 April reiterated Hargeisa's sovereign right to establish international partnerships and dismissed external criticisms as politically motivated interference.

**Somaliland Congratulates Israel on Independence Day,** On 23 April coinciding with Israel's Independence Day the Somaliland Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a public statement extending sincere congratulations to the State of Israel. The communication explicitly reaffirmed Somaliland's commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation and advancing shared.

Following that, Israel Formally Appoints First Ambassador to Somaliland. On 26 April Israel completed the formal appointment of Mr. Michael Lotem as its first ambassador to Somaliland. Ambassador Lotem a veteran diplomat previously serving as roving economic ambassador to Africa will be based non residentially. Somaliland welcomed the step as concrete affirmation of its de facto sovereignty while international criticism from Somalia, the African Union and others continued.

President Irro Undertakes Working Visit to the United Arab Emirates On 23 April, Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi Irro traveled to the United Arab Emirates for a multi-day working visit at the invitation of UAE officials. Discussions focused on strengthening diplomatic relations, economic cooperation and development of Berbera Port.

Following that on 24 April, further coverage revealed that President Irro's engagements in the UAE included private high-level talks in Dubai addressing economic cooperation a comprehensive Berbera port development strategy and broader geopolitical positioning in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden region. While characterized as a working visit, the trip generated analysis regarding potential diplomatic or economic gains following Israel's recognition of Somaliland.

Somaliland Welcomes Taiwan President Lai's Visit to Eswatini. Somaliland expressed public support for President Lai Ching-te's official visit to Eswatini one of Taiwan's remaining formal diplomatic allies in Africa. The endorsement reflected Somaliland's ongoing strategic ties with Taiwan as part of its broader push for diversified international partnerships.

African Union Reiterates Strong Condemnation of Israel Envoy Appointment. Around 19–20 April the African Union Commission issued a renewed and emphatic condemnation of Israel's appointment of a non-resident ambassador to Somaliland. The AU reiterated that it does not recognize Somaliland as an independent state and declared any unilateral recognition or equivalent diplomatic step as null and void. Multiple member states including Türkiye publicly backed Somalia's position characterizing the Israeli move as a threat to regional stability and Somalia's territorial integrity. Somaliland viewed these statements as politically motivated attacks on its de facto sovereignty.

Muslim World League Denounces Envoy Appointment. On 21 April the Muslim World League based in Mecca issued a strong statement denouncing Israel's ambassadorial appointment as a violation of Somalia's sovereignty and territorial unity. MWL Secretary General Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa described the move as a threat to regional and international peace, contradicting international law, the United Nations Charter and the AU Constitutive Act.

Suspected Somali Pirates Hijack Oil Tanker Honour 25. Between 23 and 25 April international and regional media reported the hijacking of the oil tanker Honour 25. The vessel had departed from Berbera Port in Somaliland en route to Mogadishu before being seized off Puntland's north eastern coast. The incident raised immediate concerns over a potential resurgence of Somali based piracy with implications for regional shipping security, maritime trade routes and vessels linked to Somaliland's critical port infrastructure.

## **8. Yemen**

On April 20–21, a new round of UN-facilitated military talks concluded in Amman under the Military Coordination Committee, bringing together representatives of Yemen's internationally recognized government, the Saudi-led coalition, and the Houthis. Led by the office of UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg, the discussions focused on reducing hostilities, improving security conditions, and sustaining dialogue amid wider regional tensions. While no major breakthrough was announced, preparations for a broader follow-up meeting involving all delegations suggest cautious progress in preserving the relative lull that has largely held since the 2022 truce.

On April 22, Egypt's foreign minister held talks with Yemeni Foreign Minister Shaya Mohsin Zindani on bilateral relations and regional developments. While presented as a routine diplomatic exchange, the meeting reflects Cairo's continued interest in Yemen as Red Sea security and maritime routes remain central to wider regional competition. For the internationally recognized Yemeni government, such engagements also form part of efforts to sustain Arab diplomatic backing amid a still-fragile internal and regional environment.

## **9. Kenya**

Kenya this past week showed steady political momentum and strategic continental leadership from April 20 to 26, 2026. Parliamentary business proceeded smoothly, as the Senate convened on April 21 for its Fifth Session and offered positive assessments of President William Ruto's record in service delivery, including the Social Health Authority. The most prominent geopolitical development came on April 24, when Nairobi hosted the inaugural summit on African infrastructure; President Ruto used the occasion to call on African nations to finance their own projects, stressing the need for greater continental autonomy and reduced reliance on external debt while pointing to emerging partnerships, including with France.

The second half of the week turned to hands-on domestic outreach in politically important central counties. On April 25, President Ruto toured Murang'a County, where he handed over milk coolers to dairy farmers in Gatanga and Kigumo, commissioned the Kangari-Gacharage road, and inaugurated modern markets in Kangari, Kabati, Saba Saba, and

Ciumbu. The following day, April 26, he continued in Tharaka Nithi County by officially opening the new Chuka Modern Market, part of a KSh 1.5 billion county-wide program, and announcing major commitments that included KSh 7 billion for the Nithi Bridge, dual-carriageway upgrades to the Makutano-Meru-Maua road, KSh 7.5 billion for 5,000 affordable housing units, and KSh 2.7 billion for 6,000 student hostel beds; he also addressed residents directly during a church service at Presbyterian Teachers' College in Rubate.

On the same day, President Ruto issued a statement mourning the death of Prof. Raphael Munavu, whom he had appointed in 2022 to lead the Presidential Working Party on Education Reform and later the Konza Technopolis board, describing the professor's work as vital to the country's human-capital development agenda. Overall, the period reflected an administration focused on delivering development promises in core constituencies and advancing African-led solutions on the global stage, with no major realignments, diplomatic travels, or political controversies noted.

## **10. The Gulf Countries**

### **Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia's diplomacy over the past week has been heavily concentrated on de-escalating the US-Iran confrontation and stabilizing the broader region. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman personally pressed President Trump in a call to prioritize a Lebanon ceasefire, framing it as essential to keeping the Iran negotiations alive. That push proved decisive, with Trump announcing a 10-day truce on April 24, which was subsequently extended by three weeks after direct Lebanon-Israel talks in Washington. Saudi envoy Prince Yazid bin Farhan then flew into Beirut meeting President Aoun, Speaker Berri, and Sunni MPs to consolidate the fragile truce and push for full implementation of the Taif Agreement on state authority over weapons.

In parallel, the Kingdom used its ties with Pakistan to steady the US-Iran talks, hosting Sudanese Transitional Council head General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan in Jeddah on April 20 to discuss efforts to end Sudan's war and safeguard its sovereignty. Also King Salman received a written message from Djibouti's President Guelleh on strengthening bilateral relations. Beyond mediation, Riyadh broadened its strategic partnerships: Ukrainian President Zelenskyy met the Crown Prince in Jeddah to advance security cooperation including air-defense expertise along with energy, infrastructure, and food security projects.

On the diplomatic front, Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan engaged in a flurry of high-level calls. He spoke with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi about de-escalation and easing regional tensions, while the Qatari Prime Minister held a similar call on the same day, urging all parties to engage with mediation efforts to address root causes

of the crisis. Prince Faisal also coordinated with the Qatari Prime Minister on April 26 to review bilateral cooperation and discuss the US-Iran ceasefire, highlighting the unified Gulf push for stability.

## UAE

The UAE's diplomacy pivoted on two urgent priorities: locking in the fragile US–Iran ceasefire and transforming its own security vulnerability into a driver of deeper strategic partnerships. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan worked the phones with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio jointly condemning what they described as Iran's "unprovoked and terrorist missile attacks" against the Emirates and several states, and reviewing the consequences for energy supplies, maritime security, and global economic stability. The call welcomed President Trump's ceasefire announcement while insisting on sustainable political solutions. Earlier, on April 24, Sheikh Abdullah held talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, with both sides expressing a shared position on the need to resume negotiations for a lasting resolution to the Strait of Hormuz crisis.

The Emirates also hosted UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper issuing a joint statement that condemned Iran's attacks in the strongest terms and formally agreed on a framework for enhanced cooperation covering foreign affairs, defense, trade, AI, and the energy transition. Underpinning this diplomatic offensive was a parallel mediation track: the UAE announced the success of its efforts between Russia and Ukraine, securing the exchange of 193 prisoners from each side 386 individuals in total highlighting Abu Dhabi's ability to bridge even the most intractable conflicts.

Meanwhile, Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval met President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi on April 26 to discuss regional stability, security concerns, and the deepening Comprehensive Strategic Partnership against the backdrop of evolving West Asian tensions following the Israel–Iran war.

In the Horn of Africa, the UAE's engagement blended economic statecraft, hard security positioning, and the sharpening rivalry with Saudi Arabia. the UAE moved to reassure Kenya that trade and travel links remain uninterrupted despite the tightening Strait of Hormuz crisis, with Minister of State Saeed bin Mubarak Al Hajeri pointing to the UAE–Kenya Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement as a vehicle for deeper cooperation in logistics, infrastructure, and renewable energy.

In Somaliland, President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi Irro departed for a working visit to the Emirates, where he planned several days of talks with officials and participation in the World Governments Summit in Dubai a trip that unfolded against the backdrop of Somalia's January 2026 decision to terminate all bilateral agreements with Abu Dhabi, nullifying defense, security, and port cooperation pacts.

The Sudan file further illustrated Abu Dhabi's assertive posture: reports this week highlighted that the UAE and Saudi Arabia appear to be backing opposing sides in the Sudanese conflict, with Pakistan pausing a key arms deal that might have deepened the rift. The Emirates has consistently denied arming the Rapid Support Forces. Taken together, the week captured a UAE foreign policy that is reactive absorbing Iranian missile fire while binding Washington, London, Moscow, and New Delhi more tightly to its side, and leveraging ports, trade pacts, and security partnerships to entrench its influence from Berbera to Nairobi even as competition with Riyadh intensifies across the Red Sea basin.

## **Qatar**

Qatar's diplomatic tempo matched the intensity of a region poised between war and dialogue. The country's activities were structured around three interlocking goals: buttressing the fragile US–Iran ceasefire through relentless mediation advocacy, coordinating with powers across the Middle East and beyond to solidify a platform for de-escalation, and protecting its political and security equities in the Horn of Africa.

Doha's most urgent work was on the US–Iran file. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Majed al-Ansari publicly endorsed extending the truce if the Islamabad talks failed, warning that a return to hostilities “would choke the global economy” and stressing the need to restore full freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. That position was reinforced at the highest level, when Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani spoke with President Trump to review the ceasefire, highlight its importance for maritime security and supply chains, and reaffirm Qatar's commitment to supporting Pakistan-led mediation.

The diplomatic push culminated when Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani held separate phone calls with Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdel Ati, and Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan. In the Iran call, Araghchi briefed him on Tehran's latest initiatives and challenges, and Sheikh Mohammed welcomed Iran's diplomatic approach, stressing Qatar's readiness to continue playing a constructive mediating role. With Egypt, the two ministers discussed de-escalation efforts, while Sheikh Mohammed insisted that all parties must respond to mediation to address root causes through dialogue and reach sustainable agreements.

Outside the Gulf arena, Qatar joined 15 other Arab and Islamic nations on April 18–19 in a coordinated, high-profile diplomatic move, strongly condemning Israel's appointment of a diplomatic envoy to “Somaliland,” considering it a “blatant violation of the sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Somalia.” The ministers warned that such unilateral actions represent a dangerous precedent that “could undermine stability in the Horn of Africa region, negatively impacting regional peace and security”.

In parallel, Qatar redoubled its support for political stability in Libya: on April 26, Ambassador Khalid Al-Dosari met with Libyan Presidential Council head Mohammed Al-Menfi in Tripoli to underscore Qatar's commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation, supporting UNSMIL's political process, and advancing efforts to unify Libyan institutions. In its own neighborhood, Doha enhanced its coordination with Oman and Turkey to bolster regional stability and also coordinated with Saudi Arabia and the UAE under the GCC framework to reinforce the ceasefire.

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

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

The DRC's security landscape this week was defined by a stark disconnect between high-level mediation and escalating theater-level violence. While the Washington and Montreux talks produced a new protocol for humanitarian access, prisoner releases, and ceasefire verification, this diplomatic momentum was immediately neutralized by reported Rwandan-backed M23 drone strikes in South Kivu that claimed four civilian lives. In response to this volatility, the new MONUSCO chief, James Swan, executed a high-stakes visit to rebel-held Goma to demand the reopening of strategic infrastructure and a cessation of drone warfare, while simultaneously addressing the deepening ADF-linked crisis in Ituri. This sequence confirms that despite internationally brokered de-escalation pledges, the chasm between paper agreements and ground-level kinetic realities remains a primary structural bottleneck.

The UN Security Council's April session shows ]the fragility of regional stability, as Rwanda reaffirmed the neutralization of the FDLR as a non-negotiable existential requirement while the Council extended MONUSCO's mandate through late 2026. This diplomatic maneuvering coincided with a strategic pivot on the ground: a SADC-EAC summit called for immediate negotiations just as SADC initiated a phased withdrawal of SAMIDRC forces and Ukraine finalized its total disengagement from MONUSCO to prioritize its own national defense. Coupled with the controversial U.S. deportation of Congolese nationals via third-country arrangements, these developments highlight a period where incremental diplomatic progress was consistently challenged by shifting military alignments and the persistence of entrenched local conflict.

### **Mali**

Mali's military government faced a catastrophic security inflection point, as a rare, coordinated offensive by JNIM and Tuareg separatists struck nationwide, including the capital. The assassination of Defense Minister Gen. Sadio Camara and his family in a suicide bombing at his Kati residence dealt a decapitation blow to the military leadership, while simultaneous strikes hit Bamako, Mopti, Sévaré, and Gao. Most critically, the fall of Kidal to Tuareg rebels forcing a negotiated withdrawal of Malian forces and Russian

Africa Corps allies effectively dismantled the junta's core security narrative, marking a definitive strategic reversal despite official claims that the situation remains under control.

The diplomatic fallout from the recent assaults was immediate, with ECOWAS and the UN condemning the violence as a systemic threat to Sahelian stability. For Moscow, the loss of Kidal and the assassination of Gen. Camara, a primary architect of the Mali-Russia rapprochement, represents a significant operational failure that undermines the Kremlin's security narrative in the region. Despite the lifting of ECOWAS sanctions, Mali remains diplomatically isolated, prioritizing its Alliance of Sahel States (AES) pact and the deployment of the Russian Africa Corps over traditional regional cooperation. This pivot underscores a hardened commitment to a sovereign security model, even as the collective shift toward Russia faces its most severe kinetic stress test to date.

### **Burkina Faso**

Burkina Faso's week was dominated by a sharp escalation in jihadist violence close to the capital, the military posed against assertive diplomatic outreach aimed at reversing the junta's isolation. The two strands of unrelenting insecurity and a concerted push for regional reintegration defined the period from Monday April 20 to Sunday April 27.

The al-Qaeda-linked Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) attacked a military position in Bagmoussa, barely 40 kilometers southeast of the capital. At least 25 soldiers and members of the "Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland" (VDP) paramilitary force were killed, several more were reported missing, and the military post was looted and destroyed. JNIM claimed responsibility and circulated a video of a captured VDP soldier. In response, the Council of Ministers, chaired by President Ibrahim Traoré in Bobo-Dioulasso on Friday, adopted a draft law creating a new military reserve. Defense Minister Célestin Simporé announced a plan to recruit and train up to 100,000 reservists by the end of 2026, intended to "build a pool of reservists that can be mobilized immediately".

Diplomatically, the standout development was the visit of Burundian President Évariste Ndayishimiye, the current African Union chair and AU Special Envoy for the Sahel to Ouagadougou beginning Monday April 20. In talks with Captain Traoré, Ndayishimiye pledged to submit an "objective" report to his African counterparts aimed at enhancing cooperation with the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) and building a "strong bridge" to reconnect Burkina Faso with the AU, from which it has been suspended since the January 2022 coup.

The Military leader is aggressively re-engineering its diplomatic architecture, bypassing ECOWAS to engage directly with the AU while deepening a "flexible" strategic alliance with Russia highlighted by an invitation to the 2026 Moscow summit and unrestricted military procurement. This shift is bolstered by Chinese humanitarian aid and targeted

Italian investment in digital sovereignty, focusing on technology transfers in drones and agritech to bridge rural gaps by 2030.

## **Niger**

Niger's past week was defined by an aggressive pivot in its foreign policy architecture and a hardening stance against traditional Western influence. The military government's decoupling from France reached a critical threshold as General Amadou Abdramane declared a "war with France," underscored by a formal general mobilization decree to counter alleged French-backed destabilization. To offset resulting economic pressures, Niamey secured a vital \$400 million loan from the China National Petroleum Corporation repayable in crude oil

while simultaneously fortifying regional ties through border security talks with Libya and reaffirming its commitment to Morocco's Atlantic access initiative. This strategic realignment signals a decisive shift toward financial and logistical autonomy, prioritizing non-Western partnerships to stabilize the junta's fiscal and sovereign standing.

Niger's security environment deteriorated further as the escalating rivalry between al-Qaeda and Islamic State affiliates reached a violent milestone, with an ISSP assault in the Tillabéri region killing 35 JNIM operatives. This unprecedented clash underscores the jihadist expansion and the state's receding authority in western Niger, even as Russia entrenches its military presence by deploying advisors to train Nigerien counter-terrorism forces. Mirroring the Burkina Faso model, this Russian pivot consumes the junta's strategic bandwidth; consequently, Niger maintained zero public engagement with the Horn of Africa, as domestic insurgency management and power consolidation remained the administration's sole operational priorities.

## **Chad**

Chad's week showcased an assertive diplomatic and military posture abroad, even as internal fragility and the spillover from Sudan's war underscored the state's vulnerabilities. President Mahamat Idriss Déby concluded a landmark three-day state visit to Algeria on April 22, signing twenty-eight agreements and establishing a new strategic partnership centered on border security, intelligence-sharing, and counterterrorism. Almost simultaneously, Déby announced the deployment of 1,500 soldiers to Haiti under the UN-backed Gang Suppression Force, reinforcing Chad's reputation as a reliable peacekeeping contributor. Yet at home, a water-point dispute in Wadi-Fira province erupted into communal violence on April 26, leaving at least forty-two dead and exposing the brittle reality behind the projection of state authority.

The Horn of Africa intruded primarily via the Sudanese border, Chad now hosts 1.3 million Sudanese refugees, with nearly 15,000 new arrivals since January and a \$428

million humanitarian funding gap threatening basic services in camps like Oure Cassoni. On the domestic political front, the National Assembly endorsed constitutional revisions extending the presidential term to seven years and eliminating term limits, effectively clearing the path for Déby to remain in power indefinitely. Diplomatically, UAE Minister of State Saeed bin Mubarak Al Hajeri met Chad's Foreign Minister in N'Djamena on April 23 to reaffirm bilateral cooperation, while the African Union convened a meeting on overlapping crises in Chad and Somalia, keeping N'Djamena firmly on the continental peace and security agenda.

## **Equatorial Guinea**

Pope Leo XIV's historic April 21 visit to Malabo, the first in 44 years exposed the stark structural contradictions of President Teodoro Obiang's regime, placing Equatorial Guinea's deep inequality under a global microscope. Despite an oil-fueled GDP per capita of \$13,000, over half the population remains in poverty, a paradox the Pope addressed through a scathing critique of resource "colonization" and the "lust for power" driving mineral plunder. This high-wire diplomatic encounter forced a rare concession from President Obiang on the necessity of wealth redistribution reforms, centering the papal message of empowerment and justice as a direct challenge to the status quo.

Malabo skillfully leveraged its geopolitical utility this week through a flurry of elite courtship, deepening commercial and security ties with the United States via high-level courtships with Deputy Secretary Landau and White House advisor Stephen Miller. These discussions prioritized U.S. oil investments, maritime security, and migration policy, contrasting sharply with escalating friction with France following an unauthorized military helicopter landing in Bata, which Malabo branded a security threat. While President Obiang diversified his security portfolio through military cooperation talks with Egypt, the administration's focus remained strictly tethered to the Gulf of Guinea; consequently, any strategic engagement with the Horn of Africa's political architecture was conspicuously absent from the record.

## **12. North Africa**

### **Morocco**

Sudanese refugees in Morocco remain caught between border controls and paperwork, according to Al Jazeera's feature on the eastern frontier. The report follows people who fled Sudan's war through Libya and Algeria, then faced detention, pushbacks, and legal uncertainty after reaching Morocco. UNHCR data also shows Sudanese making up the largest share of new arrivals in Morocco in 2025.

Security cooperation moved to the forefront as Morocco and the United States signed a 2026–2036 defense roadmap in Washington, while African Lion 2026 added new

interoperability tests, including secure Link-16 communications between U.S. and Moroccan forces. Together, those moves deepen Rabat's military partnership with Washington and explain why The Africa Report cast the trend as politically awkward for Algeria.

Diplomatically, Abu Dhabi and Rabat reinforced their close alignment in a phone call between the UAE president and King Mohammed VI on April 22, 2026. The official readout said they discussed fraternal relations, regional developments, and issues of common interest, underscoring that Morocco's Gulf ties remain active even as North African rivalries sharpen.

Economically, an Egyptian-Emirati consortium plans to invest €200 million in an integrated tourism project in Essaouira, on Morocco's Atlantic coast. Ecofin says the first phase would cover 2.5 million square meters and include around 800 hotel rooms, retail space, golf courses, and boutique hotels, fitting Morocco's push to expand coastal tourism capacity before 2030.

## **Algeria**

Algeria's state visit diplomacy with Chad produced the week's most consequential development: the two presidents said they were fully satisfied with bilateral ties and pledged fresh momentum after signing roughly 30 cooperation agreements. The package centers on energy, mining, renewable energy, transport, education and trade, while also tightening security coordination and regional positions on Libya, the Sahel and Sudan.

The Algeria-Azerbaijan meeting was smaller in scale but fits the same pattern of widening Algeria's external partnerships. In Algiers, Rabah Beghali received Shahin Ismayilov, and both sides reaffirmed their intent to raise parliamentary ties to a higher level. APS and Algerian Radio say the visit also fed into discussions on hydrocarbons and broader cooperation.

## **Libya**

Political resistance set the tone for the week. The Gathering of Libyan Revolutionary Leaders rejected the so-called Boulos project, portraying it as a foreign-driven arrangement that could violate sovereignty and affect Tripoli's status. That pushback echoed an earlier High Council of State vote rejecting a Boulos-linked power-sharing proposal, showing how fragile outside-mediated formulas remain.

From there, the focus shifted east, where Khalifa Haftar used separate meetings with British and Russian representatives in Benghazi to stress institutional unity and continued political dialogue. Libya Observer said the UK meeting with Ambassador Martin Reynolds centered on unifying state institutions and elections, while LANA reported a similar emphasis in Haftar's talks with Russia's ambassador.

That diplomatic thread continued in Moscow, where the Libyan-Russian Joint Committee met for the first time in more than 25 years. The Libyan delegation was led by Transport Minister Mohamed Al-Shahoubi and Acting Foreign Minister Taher Al-Baour, while Sergey Tsivilev headed the Russian side. Talks covered energy, Russian companies' return, direct flights, infrastructure, and training.

In Tripoli, Deputy Defense Minister Abdul Salam Al-Zoubi and British Ambassador Martin Reynolds discussed specialized education and training to improve military performance and build a more disciplined force. The UK Embassy in Tripoli lists Reynolds as ambassador, confirming the local report's identification and underscoring Britain's continuing support for defense reform.

Turkey then reinforced the military-integration theme. Its Defense Ministry said Ankara backs a "One Army, One Libya" formula after the Flintlock exercise in Sirte, where forces from Libya's east and west trained alongside Turkish and U.S. personnel in the first joint event of that kind since 2014. The ministry also highlighted long-running Turkish training and support programs.

Syrian officials in Damascus explored restoring passenger and cargo sea links with Libya to boost trade and humanitarian ties, in meetings between port chief Qutaiba Badawi and Libya's chargé d'affaires Walid Ammar. The talks also touched customs coordination and technical cooperation, suggesting a pragmatic economic opening despite wider regional fragmentation.

## **13. Middle East**

### **Iran-Israel conflict**

Israel opened the week by saying it had foiled an Iranian network's plan to hit the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline and Israeli or Jewish targets in Azerbaijan. The claim widened the conflict beyond the core Iran-Israel battlefield, because it linked sabotage, energy infrastructure, and regional reach in one move. Tehran has not publicly accepted Israel's account.

That same day, Trump pushed back on claims that Israel had steered him into war with Iran. He said Israel "never talked" him into it, framing the campaign instead as a response to Iran's nuclear ambitions and broader hostility. The statement mattered because it signaled that Washington wanted the war read as an American decision, not an Israeli one.

Iran then deepened the internal-security dimension by executing two men it said were tied to Israel's Mossad. Reuters reported the judiciary's claim that they were convicted of cooperation with Israeli intelligence and attack planning, while the opposition denied the

charges. The executions show how the war has fused external conflict with a harder domestic crackdown inside Iran.

The escalation quickly moved to the sea when U.S. forces seized the Iranian container ship *Touska*, which sources said was likely carrying dual-use equipment. Washington treated the move as blockade enforcement, while Tehran condemned it as armed piracy. That seizure became the immediate trigger for the next round of maritime retaliation in and around Hormuz.

Iran's foreign minister then raised the diplomatic temperature by calling the U.S. blockade of Iranian ports an act of war. Reuters reported that Tehran tied any resumption of talks to pressure being lifted, especially the maritime restrictions. The message was clear: diplomacy could not restart while the naval squeeze remained in place.

Washington answered by extending the ceasefire with Iran indefinitely, but only to keep negotiations alive. Trump said the pause would remain in place while Iran considered proposals, yet the U.S. blockade stayed intact. The result was a fragile gap between de-escalation and coercion, with neither side willing to concede the central issue.

Tehran's reply was equally hard-line. A senior Iranian official told Reuters that Iran would not negotiate under pressure and would not enter talks that looked like surrender. The demand that sanctions and blockade conditions be eased first showed that the ceasefire did not solve the core dispute; it merely postponed the next rupture.

Pakistan became the first visible staging ground for the diplomatic effort, but Islamabad was locked down while waiting for a meeting that never properly materialized. Reuters described sealed districts, disrupted transport, and officials still braced for sudden movement. The security posture showed how tentative the talks were: the city was preparing for diplomacy even as no agreement to talk existed.

That uncertainty sharpened further when Trump canceled the planned trip by U.S. envoys to Pakistan. Reuters said he was dissatisfied with Iran's proposal and told Tehran, in effect, to call directly if it wanted to negotiate. The cancellation undercut confidence in mediation and left Pakistan managing the political fallout of a process that had not yet begun.

At sea, Iran seized two container ships in the Strait of Hormuz, pushing the crisis from blockade to direct interdiction. Reuters reported that the ships were taken toward Bandar Abbas after Tehran said they had violated maritime rules. The seizure showed that the confrontation had moved beyond rhetoric: control of commercial traffic itself had become the battlefield.

Iran then took the seized vessels to port, confirming the detention of crews and keeping shipping uncertainty high. Reuters said countries were checking on seafarers' safety while

the ships were moved toward Bandar Abbas. This was more than a symbolic act; it turned the strait into a zone where commercial shipping could be stopped, redirected, or held.

Analysts warned that the threat was widening because Iran was using fast-boat swarms to complicate the maritime picture. Reuters said the tactic suggested U.S. pressure had not neutralized Iran's naval capacity and that reopening Hormuz would remain difficult. The shift mattered because it introduced a cheap, flexible, and hard-to-police layer of risk for merchant traffic.

The domestic U.S. debate stayed limited despite the escalation. AP reported that the Senate rejected a war-powers resolution aimed at curbing Trump's authority over Iran. That vote mattered less for immediate policy than for what it signaled: Congress was divided, but the executive still had room to sustain the military pressure.

The conflict then returned to Lebanon, where Israel entrenched its hold over southern territory by warning residents to stay away from a belt near the border and the Litani River. Reuters said the move solidified a de facto buffer zone despite the ceasefire. In practical terms, the truce was narrowing into Israeli-controlled geography rather than a full withdrawal.

Violence in southern Lebanon did not pause. Reuters reported at least four people killed in separate attacks as the ceasefire strained further. Israel said it was hitting Hezbollah positions, while Lebanese reports described civilian and combatant deaths. The episode showed how easily localized strikes could undermine the broader diplomatic effort even without a formal collapse.

Israel soon escalated its own language, saying it would strike Hezbollah "forcefully." Reuters linked the warning to the continuing shelling and rocket fire in the south, where the ceasefire had not ended hostilities so much as reduced their tempo. The message was intended to deter Hezbollah, but it also signaled that Israel was preparing for a prolonged contest.

Trump then announced that the Lebanon-Israel ceasefire would be extended by three weeks. Reuters framed the move as an attempt to preserve a fragile pause and keep political space open for talks. The extension was important because it showed Washington trying to manage two fronts at once: sustaining diplomacy in Lebanon while the Iran confrontation remained unresolved.

Hezbollah rejected the truce's practical value, saying it was meaningless while Israeli strikes continued. Reuters reported that the group kept pointing to bombings, assassinations, and village demolitions as proof that the ceasefire lacked credibility. This mattered because Hezbollah was not treating the truce as a settlement, but as a temporary constraint under active violation.

The group also claimed a tactical success by downing an Israeli Hermes drone over Lebanese territory. Reuters said the incident underscored that Hezbollah still retained air-defense capability despite Israeli pressure. Even if the broader balance of power favored Israel, the drone loss showed that the battlefield remained contested in the air as well as on the ground.

Israel responded to that pressure by ordering residents of Deir Aames to evacuate ahead of planned action. Reuters said it was the first such warning inside Lebanon since the ceasefire, which made the move politically significant as well as militarily threatening. The warning reinforced the sense that Israel was still shaping the operational map, not simply reacting to Hezbollah fire.

The human-rights angle sharpened when the UN warned that Israeli strikes and Hezbollah rockets could breach international law. Reuters said the office documented attacks on civilians and residential buildings in both Lebanon and Israel. That intervention mattered because it shifted the debate from battlefield success to civilian protection, and it implicitly challenged both sides' claims of lawful restraint.

Washington answered the legal criticism with its own justification. Reuters reported that the State Department's top legal adviser said the war was grounded in self-defense against Tehran's long record of aggression. The point of the argument was not just legal; it was strategic, presenting the campaign as continuity with previous Iranian threats rather than a new war chosen in haste.

Outside the immediate conflict zone, China and Saudi Arabia moved to protect the shipping artery at the center of the crisis. Reuters said Xi Jinping called on the Strait of Hormuz to remain open during a call with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The call showed that major powers were already framing the crisis as a global energy problem, not just a regional war.

Iran's foreign minister later traveled to Oman to discuss ending the war and securing Hormuz. Reuters reported that Araqchi used the meeting to argue for a regional security framework free of foreign interference. The Oman channel is important because it keeps diplomacy alive even as Tehran insists the U.S. military presence is part of the problem, not the solution.

The wider economic shock was becoming visible in Europe. Reuters said logistics firms such as DHL, DSV, and Kuehne+Nagel were set for stronger first-quarter profits because disrupted shipping increased demand for freight alternatives. That boom is a side effect of conflict, not resilience: it reflects rerouted supply chains, higher costs, and a trade system forced to adapt to insecurity.

Beyond company profits, the global economy was starting to feel the strain. Reuters said factories faced higher production costs and weaker activity as the energy shock spread

through supply chains. This is where the conflict broadens from military and diplomatic crisis into macroeconomic pressure, because shipping disruption, fuel costs, and uncertainty now affect sectors far beyond the Gulf.

The fighting in Lebanon remained especially costly. Reuters reported Israeli strikes killing 14 people, including women and children, and warned residents to leave towns north of the Litani River. The scale of the casualties made clear that the ceasefire was failing to protect civilians even as diplomats kept trying to preserve the framework.

Gaza also continued to register civilian deaths, even though its conflict is separate from the Iran-Israel war. Reuters said Israeli attacks killed at least four Palestinians, including a woman in Khan Younis, while the military said it was investigating the incidents. The Gaza violence matters because it reinforces the region-wide pattern of overlapping wars and fragile, partial ceasefires.

Overall, the week moved in a familiar pattern: diplomacy was launched, stalled, and then squeezed by military moves at sea and on the Lebanese front. The common thread is that every ceasefire remained conditional, every channel of dialogue remained fragile, and every new strike created another reason for the next round of talks to fail.

## **Turkey**

On 22 April, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte's visit to Ankara delivered the week's clearest hard-security message: the alliance said it would do whatever was necessary to defend Turkey after intercepting missiles fired from Iran toward Turkish airspace. The timing mattered because Ankara was trying to project calm while showing that NATO guarantees on its southeastern flank still held.

The same visit also highlighted Turkey's industrial role inside NATO. Rutte toured ASELSAN, praised Turkey's defense-industrial progress, and linked cooperation to preparations for the next NATO summit in Ankara. The message was that Turkey is not only a frontline state, but also a producer shaping how the alliance thinks about deterrence, procurement, and wartime resilience.

In Istanbul, NATO's annual Nuclear Policy Symposium added another layer to that picture. The gathering brought together experts from across the alliance, and Rutte used it to stress credible nuclear deterrence in a more dangerous security environment. Hosting the event reinforced Turkey's role as a venue where NATO's strategic thinking is being refreshed, not just showcased.

Erdogan then used his talks with Rutte to push his longer-running mediation line on Ukraine. Ankara said it was working to revive Russia-Ukraine negotiations and bring the leaders back to direct talks, keeping Turkey positioned as one of the few capitals still able

to speak to both sides. That posture remains central to Ankara's wider geopolitical strategy.

The mediation effort gained extra weight when Reuters reported that Ukraine had asked Turkey to host a Zelenskyy-Putin meeting. That request confirmed that Ankara's neutrality is still seen as useful in both Kyiv and Moscow, and it showed how Turkey keeps turning battlefield relevance into diplomatic leverage without formally abandoning either side.

Erdogan also widened the frame in a call with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, warning that the U.S.-Iran confrontation was weakening Europe and could worsen without diplomacy. He urged European NATO members to take on more responsibility. The exchange tied Turkey's security anxieties to the broader European debate over burden-sharing and strategic autonomy.

Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan was then sent to London for talks on the Iran and Ukraine wars, along with broader NATO cooperation. Reuters reported that the visit reflected Turkey's effort to keep open channels with Britain while positioning itself inside the main diplomatic conversation on both regional wars and maritime security.

Fidan's comments on the Strait of Hormuz added a maritime-security dimension to that diplomacy. He said Turkey could consider helping clear mines from the strait if a U.S.-Iran deal holds, framing the idea as humanitarian rather than partisan. Because Hormuz is central to global energy flows, the offer had obvious strategic weight.

At home, the central bank kept its key rate at 37 percent, citing the fallout from the Iran war and volatile energy prices. The decision showed how external conflict was feeding directly into Turkey's inflation and growth outlook. Even without direct military involvement, Ankara is being forced to price regional instability into domestic monetary policy.

Erdogan also turned to Washington after the White House dinner shooting, calling Trump to express support and condemn what Ankara described as an assault on democracy and press freedom. The gesture was symbolic, but it kept U.S.-Turkey ties visible at a moment when violence in the United States and regional uncertainty were both in the spotlight.

Diplomatically, Turkey was conspicuous by its absence from the Cyprus-hosted EU-Middle East summit on 23-24 April, where European leaders met regional partners to discuss Iran, energy, and maritime security. Ankara saw the omission as another sign that the Cyprus dispute continues to spill into wider regional diplomacy, even though Turkey remains central to the same security map

That summit also fed a broader debate about Europe's security architecture. Reuters reported that EU leaders were moving toward a mutual-assistance blueprint as doubts

about NATO's reliability persisted. For Turkey, the irony was obvious: the bloc was discussing regional defense and energy without one of the region's most consequential NATO members in the room.

Inside Turkey, the most visible political shock was the Şanlıurfa municipal probe, which led to the detention of 49 people, including former AKP mayor Şeref Albayrak. The case centered on bid-rigging and corruption allegations, and it reminded observers that the struggle over local power and party control remains acute, especially in the southeast.

Justice Minister Akın Gürlek's review of 638 unsolved murder files broadened that domestic picture. The government presented the move as a clean-up of impunity, but critics saw another test of whether politically sensitive cases would be pursued consistently. The initiative mattered because it intersects with public trust, rule of law, and the state's selective-justice debate.

Pressure from Europe stayed in the background as lawmakers in the Council of Europe pushed for targeted sanctions over Turkey's failure to implement European Court of Human Rights rulings. The motion kept Ankara's legal obligations in the spotlight and reinforced that Turkey's friction with Europe is not only geopolitical, but also judicial and institutional.

## Syria

Syria's week opened with Ahmed al-Sharaa's Gulf tour, beginning in Saudi Arabia on 21 April. SANA framed the visit around his meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and the effort to deepen bilateral relations and economic cooperation. It marked another step in Damascus's drive to normalize itself in Arab diplomacy after years of isolation.

He then met Qatar's Emir in Doha on 22 April, with both sides focusing on trade, investment, and regional stability. The message from SANA was clear: Syria wants Gulf capital and diplomatic backing, not just symbolic rehabilitation. Doha matters because it gives Damascus another channel into the Arab and regional agenda.

Al-Sharaa's stop in Abu Dhabi carried a similar signal. He met UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed to discuss bilateral cooperation and regional developments, while both sides stressed stability and respect for sovereignty. Taken together, the Gulf tour showed Damascus leaning on Arab partners to help anchor its postwar recovery.

That reintegration continued in Cyprus, where al-Sharaa joined the EU-regional partners summit in Nicosia. SANA cast the meeting as part of broader consultations with Europe on regional and international developments. His presence mattered because it put Syria back into a multilateral forum where energy, security, and migration were all being discussed together.

Al-Sharaa used the Nicosia platform to say Syria could serve as a secure corridor linking the Gulf and Central Asia with Europe. The argument blended economics and geopolitics: if Syria can stabilize its borders and territory, it can become a transit state for trade and energy rather than a permanent security problem.

At the UN Security Council, Syria won a notable diplomatic opening when members backed the 2026 humanitarian plan and emphasized aid, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. The session showed that major powers now see Syria's stabilization as part of the wider regional balance rather than as a purely domestic issue.

Damascus also used the UN forum to accuse Israel of repeated violations on Syrian territory and to tie those raids to regional escalation. In parallel, al-Sharaa urged the EU to take a firmer line against Israeli attacks, arguing that silence would undermine reconstruction and reward further pressure on Syria's borders.

A practical economic relief came from Jordan, where gas pumping to Syria resumed and power supply improved in several provinces. SANA said some areas were again seeing up to 24 hours of electricity for the first time in years. That matters politically because energy stability is now part of Syria's legitimacy and recovery narrative. Security on the ground remained fragile.

On 25 and 26 April, Israeli forces raided areas in Quneitra and the Yarmouk Basin, setting up temporary checkpoints and detaining civilians before withdrawing. The repeated incursions underscored how the southwest remains one of the most volatile edges of Syria's transition, despite diplomatic progress elsewhere.

Against that backdrop, Damascus pushed transitional justice forward. On 24 April the Interior Ministry said it had arrested Amjad Youssef, the main suspect in the Tadamon massacre, and on 26 April the first public trial of Atef Najib opened in Damascus. Together, the two moves signaled a state eager to show accountability for Assad-era crimes.

## **14. Europe**

The EU's most significant development was the formal adoption of a €90 billion Ukraine support loan and its 20th sanctions package against Russia on April 23, marking one of the largest coordinated fiscal-security packages since the start of the war. The sanctions expand restrictions on Russian energy exports, financial channels, maritime logistics, and sanctions evasion networks, while the loan is structured to sustain Ukraine's macroeconomic and military resilience through 2027. This decision followed Hungary lifting its veto after internal EU bargaining linked to energy transit disputes.

Germany continued consolidating its long-term shift toward becoming Europe's principal conventional military power. The key strategic development is the ongoing

implementation of its 2030s Bundeswehr modernization doctrine, which prioritizes force expansion, industrial scaling, and sustained defense spending increases in response to Russia's war and uncertainty over U.S. security commitments.

France intensified its push for European strategic autonomy, particularly in defense and deterrence discussions within the EU. Paris continues to frame Europe's security environment as structurally unstable due to simultaneous crises in Ukraine and the Middle East, advocating stronger EU military independence and long-term deterrence capacity.

France remains central to discussions on whether Europe should develop independent nuclear deterrence extensions or enhanced Franco-British strategic frameworks, reflecting long-term uncertainty about U.S. reliability.

Hungary played a critical role in EU diplomacy this week by initially blocking the Ukraine support package and sanctions expansion before ultimately lifting its veto after resolving energy-related disputes with Ukraine.

This episode confirms Hungary's continued status as a conditional veto actor within EU Russia policy, though its leverage is increasingly constrained by broader coalition pressure and institutional alignment among major EU states.

Bulgaria experienced a politically significant shift toward a leadership bloc perceived as more Russia-leaning. While not immediately altering EU policy, this introduces a potential internal EU divergence point on sanctions enforcement, Black Sea security coordination, and energy alignment.

Strategically, Bulgaria represents a soft underlayer of vulnerability within EU consensus politics, particularly in maritime and energy transit geography.

## **15. Global Powers**

The United States' geopolitical posture over April 20–27, 2026 was defined by a fragile but intensifying managed confrontation with Iran, increasingly intertwined with global strategic competition, regional repositioning, and domestic constraints. The U.S.–Israel war on Iran remained the central axis, operating under a Pakistan-mediated ceasefire originally agreed on April 7 but structurally weakened by continued coercive measures and stalled diplomacy.

On April 20, Pakistan signaled confidence that Iran would participate in talks with the United States, reflecting continued reliance on Islamabad as the primary mediation channel. However, this optimism quickly eroded. By April 20–21, President Donald Trump announced an indefinite extension of the ceasefire, explicitly maintaining the U.S. naval blockade while pausing further strikes to allow space for negotiations. The blockade—initiated earlier in April—remained a central coercive tool, targeting Iranian

maritime trade and costing Tehran substantial economic losses while triggering Iranian countermeasures.

Despite the extension, diplomatic momentum deteriorated almost immediately. Iran signaled reluctance to engage under blockade conditions, and by April 25, Trump cancelled a planned envoy mission to Pakistan, effectively halting momentum toward a second round of talks. This cancellation marked a turning point: the ceasefire shifted from a pathway to negotiations into a mechanism for controlled pressure.

Simultaneously, the United States hardened its legal and strategic justification for the war. On April 24, U.S. officials publicly framed the conflict as justified by decades of Iranian “aggression,” indicating a consolidation of political and legal narratives to sustain the campaign domestically and internationally.

From April 22 onward, the conflict increasingly transitioned into a gray-zone maritime confrontation. Iran escalated asymmetric tactics in the Strait of Hormuz, including interference with commercial shipping, while the United States maintained what it described as an “ironclad” blockade posture. This dynamic contributed directly to global economic consequences: oil prices surged significantly during the week as shipping disruptions and stalled talks heightened uncertainty in energy markets.

By April 26–27, diplomacy had not collapsed entirely but had become fragmented and indirect. Iran advanced a new proposal through Pakistani mediators, focusing on reopening the Strait of Hormuz and sequencing broader negotiations, while deferring the nuclear issue. President Trump responded by signaling that Iran could “call” to negotiate, underscoring a shift toward ad hoc, leader-driven engagement rather than structured diplomacy. In parallel, Iran’s foreign minister moved to engage Russia, indicating a deliberate strategy to internationalize the negotiation framework and dilute U.S. leverage.

A critical additional development during the week—absent from many baseline summaries—was the emergence of a new U.S. strategic track in the Horn of Africa centered on Eritrea. Multiple reports confirmed that Washington is actively exploring a reset of relations with Asmara, including the potential lifting or easing of sanctions. This initiative is directly linked to the Red Sea theater: U.S. policymakers are seeking to counter Iranian influence and secure maritime corridors by engaging Eritrea’s geostrategic coastline. The move reflects a broader recalibration of U.S. regional strategy, where the Horn of Africa becomes an extension of Gulf security competition rather than a separate policy domain.

At the same time, the conflict produced global systemic spillovers. U.S.–China tensions intensified as Beijing expanded economic pressure tools, particularly in critical supply chains, exploiting U.S. distraction in the Middle East (reported separately during the week). In Europe, U.S. resource allocation pressures raised concerns about delayed

military support, suggesting emerging strain in alliance commitments. Regionally, the United States expanded precautionary security measures across its Middle East footprint, anticipating possible Iranian-linked retaliation beyond the Gulf.

Domestically, the U.S. faced rising internal pressures. Public opposition to the war increased, and political divisions sharpened ahead of the War Powers Resolution timeline. This internal strain was underscored by a security incident in Washington, D.C., where a shooting near the White House Correspondents' Dinner led to the evacuation of President Trump and highlighted escalating domestic polarization intersecting with wartime conditions (widely reported across outlets during April 25–26).

On the diplomatic and sanctions front, Russia faced one of the most significant coordinated Western pressure packages of 2026 to date. On April 23, the European Union formally adopted its 20th sanctions package against Russia, alongside a large-scale financial support package for Ukraine. The sanctions targeted energy revenues, financial networks, crypto channels, and military-industrial supply chains, signaling continued tightening of Europe's long-term economic containment strategy. This was accompanied by a €90 billion EU loan package to sustain Ukraine's fiscal and defense capacity, reinforcing the structural asymmetry in economic endurance between Kyiv and Moscow.

Russia's response to sanctions remained consistent: framing Western measures as economically destabilizing for global energy markets and developing economies, while leveraging its continued role as a major oil exporter to maintain strategic relevance.

Externally, Russia deepened its military alignment with North Korea, including high-level visits and expanded cooperation on troops, missiles, and ammunition supply chains in exchange for economic and technological support. This reflects Russia's continued adaptation toward a sanctions-resistant war economy built on alternative external partnerships. Such alignments increasingly formalize a parallel supply ecosystem supporting sustained military operations in Ukraine despite Western restrictions.

The United States extended sanctions waivers allowing limited Russian oil flows to continue through maritime channels, a move designed to stabilize global energy prices amid broader volatility driven by the U.S.–Iran conflict.

The dominant feature of China's external posture this week was a simultaneous escalation of maritime-military signaling around Taiwan and intensifying economic confrontation with the United States, set against a backdrop of expanding Chinese leverage tools in global supply chains and continued strategic hedging in the Middle East crisis environment.

On the military and regional security front, China maintained sustained pressure around Taiwan through multi-domain gray-zone operations and naval deployments. On April 20, Taiwan's defense authorities reported the passage of the Chinese aircraft carrier Liaoning

through the Taiwan Strait, a rare but deliberate signal of operational reach and coercive presence in a sensitive corridor. This was followed during the week by continued monitoring of Chinese aerial and maritime activity in the broader Indo-Pacific, reinforcing a pattern of normalization of high-intensity military signaling rather than episodic exercises.

Politically, Beijing reinforced its territorial framing of Taiwan through diplomatic signaling and external sanctions behavior. On April 24, China imposed export restrictions on dual-use materials targeting several European entities involved in defense cooperation with Taiwan, extending its coercive toolkit beyond its usual U.S.-focused sanctions pattern. This represents an incremental expansion of China's willingness to impose costs on European actors in the Taiwan issue, signaling a widening of the diplomatic battlefield.

Simultaneously, Taiwan's external security posture was reinforced by U.S. pressure. Washington urged Taiwan's legislature to pass a comprehensive defense budget aimed at accelerating procurement of air defense systems, drones, and missile capabilities, highlighting continued U.S. commitment to Taiwan's deterrence architecture amid rising cross-strait pressure. This reflects a broader U.S. Indo-Pacific prioritization that remains structurally intact despite global distractions in the Middle East.

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

### **United Nation**

UN News and related agencies highlighted the worsening drought-driven displacement in Somalia. Drought accounted for three out of four new displacements, with nearly 62,000 people uprooted since the start of 2026. This formed part of broader warnings about the deepening humanitarian crisis in Somalia amid climate shocks, conflict, and funding shortfalls. Similar contextual reporting referenced risks in Ethiopia (e.g, solar initiatives for farming resilience).

### **Africa Union**

The AU maintained steady engagement on broader continental partnerships with relevance to the Horn of Africa. On April 20, 2026, at AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, AU Commission Chairperson H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf received EU Commissioner for International Partnerships H.E. Jozef Síkela. Discussions reaffirmed the strength of the AU–EU strategic partnership as outlined at the 7th AU–EU Summit in Luanda, November 2023, with emphasis on trade, investment, infrastructure, peace and security and alignment with Agenda 2063 priorities such as industrialisation, value addition, and job creation. Both sides reiterated commitment to deepening mutually beneficial cooperation, operationalising joint monitoring mechanisms, and advancing economic resilience. While

not exclusively Horn-focused, the meeting occurred in the context of ongoing AU support for stability in Somalia via AUSSOM and Ethiopia's role in regional dynamics.

On April 20, 2026, the African Union Commission issued a strong statement condemning Israel's appointment of a diplomatic envoy to the self-declared Republic of Somaliland. The AU reaffirmed its long-standing position that Somaliland remains an integral part of Somalia and declared any unilateral recognition of Somaliland null and void under international law.

The AU expressed deep concern that the move risks undermining regional stability in the Horn of Africa and contravenes the bloc's commitment to Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This position was echoed in coordinated statements involving twelve foreign ministers worldwide. The development highlights ongoing AU efforts to preserve continental unity and prevent unilateral actions that could destabilize the region.

On April 21, 2026, at AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, AU Commission Chairperson H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf joined H.E. Taye Atske Selassie, President of Ethiopia, to address the inaugural meeting of the Africa–China Entrepreneurs Summit (CAES). The event focused on strengthening Africa–China economic cooperation, private sector engagement, trade, investment and alignment with continental priorities such as Agenda 2063.

While continental in scope, the gathering in Addis Ababa AU and Ethiopian capital occurred in the broader context of AU efforts to support economic resilience and partnerships relevant to Horn of Africa stability and development.

On April 22, 2026, in Barawe Lower Shabelle region, Somalia, the AUSSOM Commander held meetings with local government officials. The engagements focused on operational coordination, security collaboration, and support for stabilization efforts in the area amid ongoing threats from Al-Shabaab. This field-level interaction underscores AUSSOM's role in working closely with Somali authorities to consolidate security gains in key regions of the Horn of Africa.

On April 22, 2026, at AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, AU Commission Chairperson H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf held two diplomatic meetings:

- With Walter Parris, Chargé d'Affaires a.i. at the U.S. Mission to the AU.
- With H.E. Dr. Afkar Nadhim Ali Al Farsi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the AU.

These engagements occurred in the broader context of AU's continental diplomacy, with relevance to Horn of Africa stability through partnerships on peace, security, and multilateral issues including ongoing AU support for Somalia via AUSSOM.

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

IGAD's activities this week centered on advancing practical regional cooperation to tackle the Horn of Africa's escalating climate challenges. On April 23, 2026, in Djibouti, IGAD's Agriculture and Environment Division (AED) and the IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) convened a three-day regional consultative meeting with technical experts from IGAD Member States. The focus was refining and finalizing the RECOVER-HORN Regional Climate Resilience Programme a bankable initiative designed to address recurrent droughts, floods, land degradation, biodiversity loss and food/livelihood insecurity across the region.

Priority areas under discussion included climate-resilient agricultural systems, climate information and early warning/anticipatory action, integrated natural resources management, livelihood recovery, diversification, and institutional coordination/regional integration. Participants reviewed the programme framework and agreed on coordination mechanisms for inclusive implementation. IGAD Director of Agriculture and Environment Daher Elmi Houssein emphasized the necessity of collective action, stating: The Horn of Africa is facing increasingly complex and interconnected climate challenges that no single country can address alone. RECOVER HORN is therefore a timely regional response that seeks to translate our shared priorities into practical, bankable actions that strengthen resilience, protect livelihoods and support sustainable development across our region. Djibouti's representative Mouktar Mahamoud Waberi welcomed the initiative as a demonstration of regional solidarity. The meeting built on IGAD's comparative advantage in regional coordination, resilience programming, and climate services, marking a concrete step toward evidence based cross-border solutions.

### **Follow-up on Horn of Africa Gateway Project**

Following the 28th Horn of Africa Initiative meeting in Washington, D.C. IGAD-facilitated consultations continued on the Horn of Africa Gateway Project. IGAD Spokesperson highlighted ongoing Ethiopia-Kenya discussions convened under IGAD auspices aimed at connecting borderland communities, boosting trade and expanding economic opportunities in cross-border areas. This aligns with IGAD's broader push for borderlands as a cornerstone of regional resilience and integration.

## **European Union (EU)**

The EU demonstrated continued leadership in supporting Horn of Africa peace, security, and economic development through both multilateral funding and bilateral engagement. On April 21, 2026, the EU Political and Security Committee approved an additional €75 million under the European Peace Facility (EPF) for the military component of the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM). The funds primarily cover troop allowances for uniformed personnel and non-lethal equipment

services, strengthening AUSSOM's operational readiness and mandate delivery in full compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law. This brings the EU's cumulative support to successive AU-led missions in Somalia to nearly €2.8 billion since 2007, positioning the EU as the largest contributor and helping address ongoing funding gaps for countering Al-Shabaab and consolidating security gains in Somalia. The move forms part of the EU's wider integrated approach to peace and security across the Horn of Africa, including capacity-building for the Somali National Army. consilium.

Complementing this security focus, EU Commissioner Jozef Sikela visited Ethiopia on April 20–21, 2026, to open the EU-Ethiopia Business Forum in Addis Ababa running April 20–22. The forum gathered over 500 participants from Ethiopia, Europe, and beyond for discussions and matchmaking in agribusiness, clean energy, digital transformation, health, and manufacturing. It included announcements of investment packages e.g, Digital Economy initiatives, EIB financing for rural communities, resumed EU budget support to Ethiopia and a Memorandum of Understanding on AfCFTA implementation. These steps underscore the EU's emphasis on economic partnership and stability in a key Horn of Africa country. international-partnerships.



# HORN

REVIEW

IDEAS CONNECTIONS SYNERGY

Ideas

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