



IDEAS CONNECTIONS SYNERGY

Weekly Geopolitical Report

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

Coverage Period: Feb 02 – Feb 08

Publication Date: February 08, 2026

Issue No. 6 | 2026

For analytical and informational purposes only

Horn Review: Weekly Report

Feb 02 – Feb 08, 2026

1. Ethiopia

Ethiopia has accelerated preparations for its seventh national election, scheduled for June 1, 2026, with institutional coordination emerging as a central priority. The National Election Board of Ethiopia convened a broad consultation forum in Addis Ababa that brought together regional administrators, political parties, security officials, and civil society actors, a configuration that reflects a deliberate attempt to pre-empt the fragmentation that has complicated previous electoral cycles. Voter awareness initiatives are already underway, supported by digital platforms for both voter and candidate registration, signaling a modernization effort intended to improve accessibility while strengthening administrative control.

Yet progress reviews across regions revealed persistent gaps, particularly in security assessments. This acknowledgment subtly reinforces a longstanding reality: in transitional political environments, electoral credibility depends as much on the stability of the surrounding security landscape as on procedural competence. The early identification of vulnerabilities therefore suggests a preventative posture rather than a reactive one.

These preparations unfolded alongside Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's parliamentary call for a fundamental reorientation of Ethiopia's conflict-resolution culture. By tracing the country's historical reliance on coercion, from interpersonal disputes to national politics, the Prime Minister framed peace not simply as a political arrangement but as a societal transformation requiring trust, institutional maturity, and sustained dialogue. His endorsement of the National Dialogue Commission underscored the belief that structured conversation can surface shared aspirations even within polarized contexts.

The emphasis on integrating Tigray's population more fully into national political life adds another layer to this narrative. Moving a region from perceived periphery toward active participation signals an effort to normalize post-conflict politics without erasing the memory of rupture. The redeployment of the African Union monitoring team to Mekelle reinforces this trajectory. Oversight mechanisms often indicate that peace processes have entered a supervisory phase, no longer defined by active confrontation, yet not fully insulated from fragility. Their presence quietly affirms that implementation, rather than agreement alone, is the decisive stage of reconciliation.

Parliamentary discussions also extended outward, linking domestic cohesion to regional realities such as external interference, interstate rivalries, and shared water resources. This framing situates internal stability as inseparable from the broader Horn of Africa security

environment, implicitly arguing that national dialogue strengthens Ethiopia's capacity to navigate external pressures.

Within the same address, the Prime Minister articulated Ethiopia's connection to the Red Sea as both demographic logic and economic necessity, while carefully distancing the claim from militarized interpretation. By proposing joint investments, land swaps, and market-based arrangements, the argument shifts the conversation from territorial entitlement toward cooperative development. The language suggests an awareness that the objective is framed may matter as much as the objective itself; positioning access within an economic rather than coercive paradigm reduces immediate alarm while keeping long-term strategic interests intact.

Ethiopia's external messaging gained additional visibility at the World Government's Summit in Dubai, where President Taye Atske Selassie called for trust-based partnerships that allow Africa to act as an architect of its own trajectory amid global realignment. His remarks highlighted renewable energy, artificial intelligence, and digital finance, sectors associated less with traditional development and more with forward-looking economic competition. Referencing the African Continental Free Trade Area and infrastructure corridors such as LAPSSET further situated Ethiopia within an emerging geography of connectivity, where transport routes and integrated markets increasingly shape geopolitical relevance.

Domestic achievements cited in the address, expanding energy generation through GERD, rising agricultural output, record coffee production, and plans for a major aviation hub, collectively project a narrative of momentum. At the same time, the acknowledgment of financing constraints and the appeal for public-private partnerships suggest a pragmatic recognition that ambition must be matched by diversified capital sources. The repeated mention of secure trade routes, particularly the Red Sea, subtly connects economic aspirations with strategic geography.

This outward orientation was mirrored in a series of bilateral engagements. High-level discussions with Saudi Arabia explored upgrading relations to a strategic partnership encompassing political coordination, economic investment, and cooperation on regional peace. Shortly thereafter, the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary visited Addis Ababa, concluding agreements on energy and investment following talks with senior Ethiopian leadership. Viewed together, these engagements point toward a widening diplomatic spectrum that stretches across the Gulf and Europe.

Such simultaneity is rarely accidental. Engaging multiple partners across different economic and political centers broadens strategic optionality, allowing Ethiopia to attract investment while avoiding the perception of anchoring itself too firmly within any single sphere of influence.

Debates surrounding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam resurfaced in this context when Prime Minister Abiy rejected claims of foreign financing, reiterating that the project was built entirely through domestic resources. Beyond factual clarification, the statement reinforces the dam's symbolic role as an expression of national agency, a project insulated from external conditionalities even as Ethiopia deepens international cooperation elsewhere.

Regional diplomacy around the Nile added a further dimension. Kenya's foreign minister held talks with Ethiopia's Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos shortly after engaging his Egyptian counterpart, creating a quiet diplomatic sequence that hints at an emerging preference for dialogue over rigid alignment. The interaction suggests that regional actors are increasingly exploring flexible channels of communication capable of easing historically polarized debates.

Ethiopia issued one of its strongest diplomatic warnings in recent years, formally accusing Eritrea of territorial incursion and direct support to armed groups operating inside Ethiopian territory while demanding the immediate withdrawal of Eritrean forces. Officials described the troop presence and alleged collaboration with militants as "acts of outright aggression," signaling that Addis Ababa is no longer willing to treat the issue as a peripheral border dispute but as a violation of sovereignty. This represents a bold move in a fractured time, a calculated assertion of state authority meant to deter further escalation while reinforcing Ethiopia's position as a defender of territorial integrity. By pairing firm language with openness to dialogue if sovereignty is respected, Ethiopia projects strength without abandoning diplomatic space, a posture likely intended to rally international legitimacy while placing strategic pressure on Asmara.

Security cooperation advanced through the inaugural meeting of the Ethiopia-Kenya Joint Defence Committee in Nairobi, building upon a defense agreement signed the previous year. Institutionalizing such coordination reflects a growing recognition that contemporary threats, from extremist networks to transnational crime, are rarely confined by borders. Establishing formal mechanisms allows responses to become more predictable and less improvisational, a hallmark of maturing security relationships.

This development coincided with signals from U.S. Africa Command indicating deeper American security and economic engagement in East Africa, including large-scale military exercises scheduled for 2026 across Kenya, Tanzania, and Djibouti. The convergence of bilateral defense initiatives and expanded external involvement suggests the gradual emergence of layered security arrangements in the region, where local partnerships intersect with broader strategic interests tied to maritime routes and commercial corridors.

Across domestic reforms, parliamentary messaging, diplomatic outreach, and security coordination, the week's developments collectively portray a state attentive to both

internal consolidation and external positioning. Elections and dialogue processes aim to stabilize the political core, while diversified partnerships and cooperative security frameworks expand Ethiopia's room for maneuver within a competitive regional landscape.

What emerges is less a dramatic shift than a pattern of calibrated movement, one that favors engagement over alignment and negotiation over confrontation. In a region often shaped by abrupt geopolitical swings, the steady accumulation of such signals points toward an approach grounded in flexibility, strategic patience, and an awareness of Ethiopia's growing weight within the Horn of Africa.

2. Sudan

Sudan's conflict intensified further this week, marked by escalating drone warfare, mounting civilian casualties, worsening famine conditions, and sharpening international condemnation. Attacks on humanitarian operations emerged as a defining feature, reinforcing concerns that the conflict is entering a phase of deliberate civilian and aid-targeting with grave humanitarian consequences.

Fighting persisted across multiple fronts, with renewed clashes reported in North Kordofan, Blue Nile State, and Darfur. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) stated that they repelled an RSF attack in Blue Nile State, underscoring continued volatility and the RSF's capacity to sustain pressure beyond its traditional strongholds.

Drone warfare featured prominently. Multiple reports documented RSF drone strikes in North Kordofan, including attacks that destroyed aid convoys and killed civilians. At least 25 civilians were reported killed when a humanitarian convoy was struck, intensifying scrutiny over the expanding use of drones and their impact on non-combatants. Analysts noted that the reliance on long-range aerial attacks reflects both tactical adaptation and a growing willingness to accept civilian harm.

Sudanese authorities accused external actors of sustaining the RSF's military capacity, condemning what they described as global silence over the supply of weapons to the paramilitary group. These accusations unfolded amid heightened regional sensitivity over foreign involvement in the conflict.

The humanitarian crisis deteriorated sharply. The United Nations and the United States condemned RSF drone strikes on aid deliveries, warning that attacks on humanitarian convoys in famine-hit areas constitute grave violations of international humanitarian law. Egypt and Türkiye separately echoed these condemnations, reinforcing rare diplomatic convergence around civilian protection.

Famine conditions continued to spread. Experts warned that additional towns in Darfur are now experiencing famine-level conditions, driven by conflict, displacement, access

constraints, and repeated disruptions to aid delivery. The destruction of relief convoys further eroded already fragile lifelines for vulnerable populations.

According to the latest IOM displacement snapshot, displacement and return dynamics remain highly fluid, with new waves of displacement reported alongside limited, fragile returns in some areas. Aid agencies stressed that returns are largely unsustainable in the absence of security, services, and food access.

Civilian casualties continued to rise as attacks increasingly affected displacement sites and humanitarian corridors. Reports documented deadly attacks on displaced civilians, prompting international religious and humanitarian bodies to express alarm over the scale of suffering and the erosion of norms protecting civilians in war.

The expanding use of drones against civilian and aid targets drew growing international scrutiny, with rights advocates warning that continued impunity risks normalizing tactics that deliberately blur the line between military and humanitarian objects.

Diplomatic activity intensified but remained fragmented. Saudi Arabia publicly condemned foreign interference in Sudan, following deadly RSF attacks, framing external involvement as a destabilizing factor prolonging the conflict. The UAE stated that it welcomes a US-backed peace plan for Sudan, signaling openness to renewed diplomatic engagement even as fighting escalates.

Djibouti on Sunday announced that Sudan has rejoined IGAD, ending a two-year suspension imposed in January 2024 over the participation of RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo in an IGAD summit. Djibouti, the bloc's current chair, said Sudan's return was confirmed through an official letter from Khartoum following Prime Minister Kamil Idris's late-January visit. The move comes shortly after IGAD issued its first condemnation of the RSF and is intended to restore regional coordination.

Sudan's Prime Minister engaged with international religious institutions, including a visit to the World Council of Churches, as Khartoum sought broader international support and legitimacy amid deepening isolation.

At the same time, international commentary highlighted the widening gap between diplomatic initiatives and battlefield realities, with humanitarian actors warning that political maneuvering has yet to translate into meaningful protection for civilians or relief access.

Assessment

This week underscores Sudan's accelerating descent into a high-intensity humanitarian catastrophe. The normalization of drone strikes on aid convoys, the spread of famine conditions, and the convergence of international condemnations point to a conflict increasingly defined by civilian exposure rather than military maneuver. While diplomatic

statements and peace proposals continue to circulate, they remain disconnected from ground realities, as humanitarian space shrinks and civilian survival becomes ever more precarious.

3. Egypt

In a bid to expand its influence, China pursued a military foothold in Egypt on February 2, 2026, by courting local elites to offset U.S. dominance. Beijing offered advanced training programs and infrastructure deals, aiming to secure access to strategic ports and bolster Egypt's defense capabilities amid shifting global alliances.

Transitioning to regional peace efforts, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Jordan's King Abdullah II emphasized the urgent need for full Gaza ceasefire implementation during a call on February 3. They called for humanitarian aid corridors and international oversight to prevent escalation, highlighting shared concerns over Palestinian stability.

Shifting to African engagements, Egypt intensified its military presence in Sudan by deploying advanced drones on February 4, ostensibly for support but primarily to safeguard its Nile water interests and border security. This move reinforces Cairo's strategic positioning rather than genuine stabilization in the conflict-ridden nation.

On the economic front, Turkey and Egypt emerged as top importers of Ukrainian soybeans by late January, reported on February 5, reflecting diversified supply chains amid global disruptions. This trade surge underscores Egypt's efforts to ensure food security through stronger ties with agricultural exporters.

Ahead of sensitive negotiations, Egypt and Saudi Arabia jointly advocated for de-escalation and conducive conditions for US-Iran talks on February 2. Their statement urged restraint from all parties, positioning the Arab nations as mediators to avert broader Middle East instability.

In discussions on African crises, Egyptian and Sudanese foreign ministers convened on February 3 to explore comprehensive settlement paths for Sudan's internal strife. While framed as peacebuilding, Egypt's involvement prioritizes protecting its geopolitical leverage, including influence over regional resources and alliances.

Marking a diplomatic milestone, Egypt and Turkey announced plans to elevate their relations to a strategic level during President Erdogan's visit to Cairo on February 6. This upgrade includes enhanced cooperation in defense, energy, and trade, signaling a reconciliation after years of rivalry.

Furthering legal ties, Qatar and Egypt signed a mutual judicial assistance agreement in criminal matters on February 7. The pact facilitates extraditions and information sharing,

strengthening bilateral efforts against transnational crime and fostering Gulf-Arab solidarity.

Reaffirming its stance on African unity, Egypt's foreign minister declared on February 4 a firm rejection of any attempts to partition Sudan. This position, while couched in sovereignty terms, serves to consolidate Egypt's sway in the region, countering rival influences that could threaten its strategic priorities.

During their summit in Cairo on February 8, Erdogan and el-Sisi addressed key issues including the Gaza crisis, where they urged an immediate humanitarian truce; regional conflicts like Libya and Syria, committing to joint mediation; economic cooperation targeting \$15 billion in trade; defense pacts for technology sharing; and Eastern Mediterranean energy disputes, agreeing on dialogue to resolve maritime boundaries.

In nuclear diplomacy, Egypt's foreign minister met with the IAEA chief on February 5 to discuss de-escalating US-Iran tensions. They explored verification mechanisms and confidence-building measures, with Egypt positioning itself as a neutral facilitator to protect its interests in a stable Persian Gulf.

4. Eritrea

On February 7th, Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a public letter to Eritrea's Foreign Minister, Osman Saleh, following a TPLF offensive inside Ethiopia with reported Eritrean backing. In the letter, Addis Ababa accused Eritrea of "outright aggression" through its support for rebels and the occupation of Ethiopian territory by Eritrean troops. The letter demanded the withdrawal of these troops and an end to support for rebel forces, while calling for negotiations with Asmara on "all issues of mutual interest," including the issue of Assab.

This diplomatic intervention comes amid escalating tensions between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Addis Ababa appears to be working to prevent further escalation while demonstrating its increasing frustration with Eritrea's ongoing involvement in Ethiopia's internal security matters. Eritrea's response, not yet provided, will likely determine the trajectory of this increasingly tense relationship.

Prior to the issuing of this letter, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed detailed the circumstances of the fallout with Eritrea in his address to Parliament on February 3rd. He stated that "during the war, when allied forces began taking control of Tigray's cities, Eritrean troops had demolished homes, looted properties, destroyed industries and seized machinery in places such as Adwa, Aksum, Adigrat and Shire." He identified the targeting of civilians in Tigray by the Eritrean Defence Forces and Eritrea's subsequent opposition to the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement between the Federal government and the TPLF as the primary causes of the breakdown in relations.

A report released by Middle East Eye on February 6th, citing "two Arab officials," stated that "Egypt is trying to broker deeper security links between Eritrea and Saudi Arabia, with an eye towards checking the UAE's influence as it increases military ties to Ethiopia." According to the article, Eritrea requires Saudi Arabian support to arm itself, as its forces are ill-equipped in comparison to Ethiopia.

Egypt, which has its own tensions with Ethiopia, has been increasingly leveraging pressure points around Ethiopia's borders. An alliance between Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Eritrea would likely intensify the already visible bloc formation in the region and could further destabilize an already fragile area.

Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki turned 80 on February 2nd. Isaias has ruled the country for more than 30 years and continues to maintain an iron grip on power.

Ethiopian security forces detained 118 Eritrean nationals in Turmi city on February 1st. They are reportedly migrants involved in illegal human trafficking operations. This is part of a larger trend of Eritrean migrants being trafficked through the south of the country.

The Houthis released a statement condemning what they described as "Eritrean forces carrying out a direct armed attack using live ammunition against civilian Yemeni fishermen within the territorial waters of the Republic of Yemen in the Red Sea, resulting in deaths and injuries, as well as the detention of a number of fishermen who were forcibly taken away."

The Houthis have a fraught relationship with Eritrea. During the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen, Eritrea hosted a UAE military base that served as a launch point for Emirati operations against the Houthis. In addition, Eritrea has a record of seizing other states' ships and detaining foreign nationals in the Red Sea.

Human Rights Watch released a report detailing the Eritrean government's continued repression of its population both domestically and abroad. The report highlights the continuation of indefinite military and national service, which forces much of the adult population into what amounts to forced labor with paltry pay and harsh conditions, including documented cases of torture, sexual and gender-based violence, and abusive labor practices.

The report confirms that Eritrean forces continue to occupy parts of Ethiopia's Tigray region, where they commit serious abuses including sexual violence, disappearances, and looting. With over 660,000 Eritreans in exile—representing roughly 18 percent of the estimated 3.8 million population—the report underscores the scale of the refugee crisis driven by domestic repression. In July 2024, the UN Human Rights Council renewed the mandate of the UN special rapporteur on Eritrea, citing "deep concern" at ongoing abuses, while the government continues to refuse cooperation with international human rights mechanisms.

5. Djibouti

The period featured Djibouti actively pursuing economic partnerships for connectivity and multilateral engagement.

On February 4, Djibouti Telecom alongside Ethio Telecom of Ethiopia and Sudatel Group of Sudan, formalized a tripartite partnership agreement to establish a new regional fiber optic corridor. This agreement building upon a memorandum of understanding signed in December 2024 is designed to interconnect the national networks of the three operators. The stated objectives are to enhance regional digital connectivity, substantially boost data capacity, mitigate the risk of service outages through redundant terrestrial pathways and support growing digital demands across the Horn of Africa and beyond.

Parallel to these Djiboutian officials engaged in discussions aimed at attracting U.S. investment in key sectors notably renewable energy and commodity exports. These talks held within the context of broader trade promotion efforts including frameworks like the African Growth and Opportunity Act specifically highlighted opportunities in wind, solar, and geothermal energy development as well as in the salt export industry.

Furthermore, Djibouti hosted a regional multilateral event reinforcing its institutional role. On February 8, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) launched its Second Regional Training on Business and Human Rights in Djibouti City. The five-day program running until February 12 brings together participants from IGAD member states Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda alongside international partners including the United Nations and the European Union. The training focuses on integrating human rights principles into business practices with a special emphasis on the health and social development sectors.

6. South Sudan

Security conditions across South Sudan deteriorated further this week, with intensified military operations, rising civilian casualties, and deepening humanitarian access constraints prompting grave international concern. Fighting expanded across Jonglei, Upper Nile, and Western Equatoria, reinforcing warnings that the country is entering another high-risk escalation phase.

The government launched a renewed offensive against opposition forces, with clashes reported across multiple flashpoints. In Jonglei State, fighting in Bariet County left at least 15 people dead, while a UN flash update warned of ongoing hostilities, displacement, and severe access constraints. In Yambio County, gunfire forced civilians to flee into surrounding bush areas, underscoring the growing insecurity beyond traditional frontlines.

A particularly grave incident was reported when a hospital was hit by a government air strike, according to Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), further intensifying scrutiny of the

conduct of hostilities. Separate reports indicated that government authorities blocked humanitarian access in opposition-held areas, compounding civilian vulnerability amid active military operations.

The humanitarian situation worsened markedly. The United Nations warned that escalating violence is driving displacement, disrupting aid delivery, and increasing civilian harm. The UN Secretary-General strongly condemned the escalation and called for an immediate halt to military operations, while humanitarian agencies reported the destruction of health facilities, including a Save the Children-supported health center, and repeated obstruction of relief efforts.

Displacement continued to rise in conflict-affected counties, with civilians fleeing fighting, aerial attacks, and ground clashes. Aid agencies stressed that access restrictions, insecurity, and damaged infrastructure are undermining life-saving assistance at a time of heightened need.

Civilian casualties remained high, with repeated reports of deaths from ground clashes and air operations. International and local organizations warned that continued attacks on protected sites, including hospitals and aid facilities, may constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law.

Analytical and opinion reporting emphasized that South Sudan's protracted conflict reflects systemic governance failures, warning against ethnic reductionist narratives that obscure political accountability, militarization, and elite competition as core drivers of violence.

Politically, relations between Juba and Washington remained strained. The government defended its position on reciprocity in negotiations with the United States, including issues related to deportees and bilateral engagement, amid broader international pressure over human rights and conflict conduct.

Economically, South Sudan faces widening fiscal stress. Authorities indicated the country will rely on fresh borrowing to cover a growing budget gap, highlighting deep structural weaknesses as conflict disrupts oil revenues, service delivery, and macroeconomic stability.

International monitoring bodies continued to flag South Sudan as one of the world's most fragile conflict settings. Global conflict trackers and UN reporting underscored the risk of further escalation absent meaningful political dialogue, restraint by armed actors, and restored humanitarian access.

Assessment

This week confirms South Sudan's trajectory toward renewed nationwide escalation. Government offensives, air strikes affecting civilian infrastructure, blocked humanitarian

access, and spreading localised violence point to a shrinking protection environment for civilians. Combined with fiscal stress, political deadlock, and eroding international confidence, current dynamics suggest mounting risks of protracted instability rather than de-escalation.

7. Somalia and Somaliland

Somalia

The period was dominated by diplomatic mobilization in response to the Israel-Somaliland recognition issue with President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud conducting high level visits to Qatar and Egypt to consolidate international opposition and seek support.

President Mohamud arrived in Doha for an official visit focused on strengthening partnership. The center piece of his diplomatic messaging was delivered at the Al Jazeera Forum where he issued a strong condemnation of Israel's recognition of Somaliland. He characterized the move as a flagrant violation of Somalia's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and international law, explicitly linking it to broader concerns over stability in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. The President vowed that Somalia would confront any attempt to establish an Israeli military base in Somaliland framing it as an unacceptable foreign interference that risked destabilizing the entire Horn of Africa. This visit served to align Somalia's position with a key media and diplomatic hub, leveraging Qatar's regional influence to amplify Mogadishu's stance against the recognition.

In meetings with President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the two leaders issued a joint condemnation of Israel's recognition denouncing it as an illegal act contrary to the charters of the United Nations and the African Union. They jointly warned that such actions could escalate regional tensions and potentially benefit extremist groups. Beyond the strong rhetorical alignment, the talks had a concrete financial dimension. According to credible sources, President Mohamud specifically sought Egypt's diplomatic assistance in persuading Saudi Arabia to commence direct financial support to the Federal Government highlighting Cairo's role as a potential intermediary with Riyadh.

Parallel with these presidential tours Saudi Arabia independently reaffirmed its support for Somalia's unity on February 6 warning against external interference. Turkey's President Erdogan publicly stated his government's rejection of Israel's recognition further solidifying a coalition of states opposing the move.

Security developments showcased both offensive counter-terrorism successes and an expansion of international military partnerships.

The National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) was active. On February 3, an operation with international support in Middle Shabelle's Qaahira area killed seven Al-Shabaab militants and destroyed their facilities. In a separate high-profile action in

Mogadishu, NISA arrested Abdifitaah Ahmed Godane, son of late Al-Shabaab leader Ahmed Abdi Godane on charges of street crime and robbery.

A major development was the formalization of enhanced air support from Turkey. Following the handover ceremony for the new Somali National Army (SNA) Chief, Brig. Gen. Ibrahim Mohamed Mohamud on February 4, Turkish F-16 fighter jets conducted demonstrative low flights over Mogadishu. This was officially confirmed on February 5 by Defence Minister Ahmed Moallim Fiqi as a deployment to bolster the SNA's air capabilities and support joint counter terrorism operations against Al-Shabaab.

Domestic politics were seen by a mix of reconciliation, escalating federal-regional tensions and political discord in Mogadishu.

In a positive development, Jubaland President Ahmed Madobe announced a reconciliation deal with key political rivals, Senators Ilyas Badal Gaboose and cleric Dahir Ahmed Abdullahi aiming to foster regional unity. A rare show of federal-regional cohesion was witnessed in Puntland where federal and Puntland officials including President Said Abdullahi Deni jointly attended a traditional clan ceremony in Galdogob marking a public gesture of unity.

However, these were counterbalanced by serious tensions. The Jubaland administration later accused the Federal Government of overreach and actions threatening federalism. A major security incident unfolded in Baidoa where heavy clashes erupted between South West State forces and rival militias over a land dispute resulting in casualties and disruption before being contained on February 5.

In the capital, the political standoff over constitutional amendments intensified. Following reports on February 3 that the government was open to dialogue to break the election impasse including allowing armed regional guards for talks the situation deteriorated. President Mohamud's push for further amendments faced parliamentary resistance, leading to the deployment of police inside the parliament building on February 7 to quell opposition from MPs.

Somaliland

The period was a highly proactive and strategically focused diplomatic offensive led by President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi (Irro) on the global stage, primarily centered on participation in the World Governments Summit in Dubai and the explicit advancement of partnership with Israel.

President Irro departed for the United Arab Emirates on February 2 to attend the World Governments Summit. His attendance for the second consecutive year was leveraged as a premier platform to articulate Somaliland's narrative of progress in state building, peace,

democracy, and development, while actively pursuing investment and diplomatic engagement.

The most concrete development was the President's exclusive announcement to Reuters on February 3 from Dubai. He stated that Somaliland expects to soon sign a comprehensive trade and partnership agreement with Israel, the first nation to recognize its independence. In his remarks, he outlined Somaliland's resource offerings including minerals, oil, gas, agricultural products, and marine resources such as meat and fish as the foundation for this economic partnership. He framed the potential for cooperation as limitless, explicitly citing access to Israeli technology, innovation, and investment as critical to building a sustainable economy for Somaliland. This announcement was immediately followed by confirmations, reported on February 4, of plans for a forthcoming presidential visit to Israel to finalize the deal.

Parallel to this, President Irro engaged in an intensive schedule of high level bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the summit throughout the period.

On February 4, he met with senior officials from a diverse array of nations, including the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, Kenya, and Senegal, as well as with Israeli representatives. These engagements were formally aimed at expanding diplomatic outreach, attracting investment and strengthening ties in trade, security, and technology.

An interaction occurred the same evening, with President Irro attending a high level dinner meeting with Prince Edward, Duke of Edinburgh, and UK MP Sir Gavin Williamson an effort to deepen and legitimize ties with the United Kingdom.

The summit concluded on February 6, with President Irro reflecting on its success and Somaliland's active participation in global dialogues on governance and innovation, signalling a continued commitment to this avenue of international engagement.

This diplomatic push generated immediate and significant regional backlash. By February 5, both Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had publicly reaffirmed their support for Somalia's territorial integrity and explicitly rejected Israel's recognition of Somaliland with Erdogan stating Turkey would not accept decisions related to Somaliland. This solidified a clear diplomatic front against Somaliland's strategy highlighting the regional divide.

8. Yemen

On 8 February 2026, Yemen's Saudi-backed Presidential Leadership Council announced a new 35-member cabinet following weeks of consultations in Riyadh, aiming to govern a country divided between Houthi-controlled northern regions and a fragmented south administered from Aden. The cabinet, larger than its predecessor and including three women ministers, brings together figures from varied political and regional backgrounds

and comes after the collapse of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council and the withdrawal of Emirati forces from southern Yemen, developments that have strained Saudi–UAE relations. The new government has pledged to improve living conditions and public services, combat corruption, and restore state institutions, but faces major challenges related to security sector fragmentation, southern separatist opposition, ongoing Houthi rejection of its authority, and deepening humanitarian needs.

On 5 February 2026, Saudi Arabia significantly expanded its political and financial involvement in Yemen after forcing the withdrawal of UAE-backed forces, allocating billions of dollars to stabilize areas controlled by the internationally recognised Yemeni government. Riyadh has budgeted at least \$3 billion this year to pay salaries for Yemeni soldiers and civil servants, including southern fighters previously funded by Abu Dhabi, while offering political incentives to unify fragmented southern factions under Saudi leadership and pressure the Houthis into negotiations. The strategy combines cash injections, mediation with southern separatists, and tighter control over military structures, but faces major obstacles from Yemen's entrenched war economy, internal divisions, and the unresolved conflict with the Iran-aligned Houthis, making any durable settlement a long-term challenge.

In early February 2026, elite Yemeni forces in the south, particularly the National Resistance Forces led by Tarek Saleh, shifted their allegiance from the United Arab Emirates to Saudi Arabia following the withdrawal of Emirati troops and Riyadh's rapid intervention. Saudi Arabia moved to replace UAE forces across areas controlled by the Presidential Leadership Council, including Aden, Lahj, Hadhramaut, and the west coast, taking over the payment of military and civil service salaries and funding humanitarian services previously backed by Abu Dhabi. The realignment reflects Riyadh's efforts to consolidate control, unify fragmented armed groups under a single command, and stabilize southern Yemen, while highlighting how loyalty among fighters has become closely tied to who provides salaries, services, and security in a country whose state institutions remain deeply weakened by years of war.

A UN terrorism monitoring official has warned that Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is expanding its presence in Yemen and emerging as the group's most active affiliate. Speaking in London, Colin Smith of the UN Security Council's monitoring team said AQAP has grown wealthier, restored its ability to pay fighters, and is increasingly focused on external and maritime operations. The UN estimates Al Qaeda's global membership at about 25,000.

The warning follows recent instability in Yemen, where shifting control between rival forces has created security gaps that AQAP is accused of exploiting, including through the looting of weapons from vacated bases. The UN also reported growing links between

AQAP and Somalia's Al Shabab, alongside concerns that Al Qaeda and ISIS are adapting tactics and propaganda, with increased emphasis on practical guidance for attacks.

Israeli officials are reportedly preparing for the possibility that Yemen's Houthi movement could launch missile and drone attacks against Israel in the event of a US military strike on Iran. Security assessments suggest the Houthis would align with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in such a confrontation. Israel's military leadership has reviewed the threat and instructed forces to update target information in Yemen, coordinating with intelligence and air force units. Meanwhile, US-Iran talks are expected in Oman, aimed at de-escalating tensions over Iran's nuclear program.

9. Kenya

Last week Kenya expanded its diplomatic reach in ways that reflect broader strategic priorities. President William Ruto appointed new envoys and deputy ambassadors to key capitals, including Denmark, Somalia, Russia, and Tanzania, as part of a push to deepen political, economic and security ties abroad. This broadening of Kenya's diplomatic footprint is tied to national economic goals and efforts to strengthen cooperation with partners on security and development issues.

In parallel, Kenya and Egypt's foreign ministers held talks to boost bilateral cooperation, underscoring ongoing efforts to solidify ties with North African partners on trade, investment, and regional stability.

Kenya also continues to manage a complex security environment both at home and as part of broader regional initiatives. While domestic security threats such as financial networks linked to terrorist financing remain an issue, Kenya is also deepening defence ties with neighbours like Ethiopia, including launching a joint defence committee to support military cooperation and intelligence sharing. These efforts reflect shared concerns about extremist activity and cross-border instability in East Africa. Additionally, Kenyan forces remain engaged in international security efforts, such as the UN-backed multinational mission in Haiti, with recent agreements to support medical evacuation and repatriation for Kenyan police in that mission.

10. The Gulf Countries

Saudi Arabia

Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia have agreed to work closely to promote peace and stability in the Horn of Africa, according to a statement from the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on February 7th. Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos held discussions with his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, exploring ways to strengthen bilateral relations and enhance cooperation on issues of mutual interest. The two ministers emphasized elevating their longstanding partnership to a higher strategic level and

discussed regional security matters, political and economic cooperation. The meeting follows discussions between Ethiopia's Minister of Labour and Skills Development, Muferihat Kamil, and Saudi embassy officials on legal labour migration amid the continued repatriation of Ethiopian citizens. Since September 2025, a total of 45,093 Ethiopians have been repatriated from Saudi Arabia as part of a program launched in March 2024 aiming to bring back around 70,000 citizens living in what the Ethiopian government described as "difficult conditions," following reports of abuse against Ethiopian migrants by Saudi authorities.

Turkiye's President Erdogan travelled to Saudi Arabia and met with Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Selman on Tuesday Feb 3. The meeting comes after a bolstering of ties between the two countries amidst a growing rift between Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Erdogan stated that his country signed "major" "defence cooperation deals" and that the two will enhance their cooperation in the defence industry.

Discussions around Turkiye possibly joining Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in what is being described as "Islamic NATO" also indicate a growing axis politics in the Middle east.

On February 8th, Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement condemning "criminal attacks" by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in North and South Kordofan states that have killed dozens of people, including women and children. The statement denounced "foreign interference" by "some parties," including the "continued influx of illegal weapons, mercenaries and foreign fighters," without specifying which parties. The condemnation followed a drone attack by the RSF on displaced families that killed at least 24 people, including eight children, and a series of raids on humanitarian convoys. The statement comes amid allegations by Sudan that the UAE has been arming the RSF—claims the UAE has denied. Sudan filed a case against the UAE at the International Court of Justice last year, accusing it of "complicity in genocide" against the Masalit community in West Darfur.

On February 8th, Saudi Arabia's Defense Ministry announced that the kingdom and the United States are holding the Blue Defender 26 joint naval exercise at King Faisal Naval Base in Jeddah. The ministry stated the training "aims to enhance joint military cooperation and exchange expertise," and included "the execution of field and tactical scenarios" demonstrating "a high level of professionalism and combat readiness." The exercise comes after Riyadh and Washington signed agreements in several fields, including defense, worth \$270 billion, according to remarks by US President Donald Trump during his speech at the US-Saudi Investment Forum held in Washington in January.

On February 7th, Syria and Saudi Arabia signed several strategic agreements across multiple sectors, signaling Riyadh's growing support for the new Syrian government following the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024. The agreements include

developing telecommunications infrastructure and digital connectivity systems, establishing a Syrian-Saudi airline company, and operating the Syrian Modern Cables Company. Saudi Investment Minister Khalid al-Falih announced the launch of the Elaf Investment Fund for major projects in Syria and the reactivation of banking transfer channels between the two countries after economic sanctions were lifted. Additional agreements include developing a new Aleppo International Airport, water desalination projects, and the Silk Link digital infrastructure project. Saudi Arabia is considered among the key allies of Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa, alongside Turkey and Qatar, and has been a major supporter of Damascus since the transition to the new government.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz began a three-day visit to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates on February 4th, aimed at expanding cooperation in the energy and defense sectors and reducing Germany's dependence on the United States and China. Merz stated that Germany needs new partnerships more than ever, noting that global politics is increasingly shaped by major powers. He emphasized that although not all of Berlin's partners share the same values and interests, they agree on the need to preserve a global order based on mutual respect and adherence to agreements. The visit marks a significant shift in relations between Germany and Saudi Arabia, which had deteriorated following the 2018 killing of Saudi dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

During the Saudi-Arab-African Economic Conference held in Riyadh on February 6th, the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) signed \$533 million worth of agreements with African countries, according to Finance Minister Mohamed Al-Jadaan. Al-Jadaan stated that Saudi Arabia is "working with partners to support Ghana and other countries regarding their debt." Additionally, Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman signed preliminary agreements with several African nations, including Nigeria in the oil and gas sector, Senegal, Ethiopia, and Chad for energy cooperation, and Egypt to establish "high-level financial dialogue." The SFD, which helps finance projects in developing countries, has granted over \$10.7 billion in financing to 46 African nations since its inception in 1975, supporting development projects in telecom, transport, agriculture, energy, social infrastructure, mining, and industry.

Bloomberg reported on February 2nd that Israel is increasingly doubtful it can normalize relations with Saudi Arabia any time soon, dismayed by what it sees as "hostile moves by the kingdom to expand its defense ties and confront the United Arab Emirates," an Israeli ally. According to Bloomberg, Israeli officials are weighing whether the shifts are temporary or if Saudi Arabia is "permanently redrawing the balance of power in the region in a way that would make normalization impossible." A confidant of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and an Israeli diplomat, both speaking anonymously, confirmed the concern is real. Bloomberg noted that Saudi Arabia signed a defense alliance with nuclear-armed Pakistan in September, and Turkey confirmed last month it was in talks to join the regional pact, while tensions between Saudi Arabia and the UAE

erupted into the open in December when the kingdom gave Emirati forces 24 hours to withdraw from Yemen. Saudi Arabia responded in a statement that it "remains open to normalization with Israel provided a path to Palestinian statehood is assured," adding that "rejecting the two-state solution undermines this historic opportunity and perpetuates the conditions for continued violence and suffering."

UAE

The UAE undertook several high-profile diplomatic initiatives this week, most notably hosting the World Governments Summit, which was attended by Ethiopia's president.

President Mohammed bin Zayed also received the heads of state from Gabon and the Democratic Republic of Congo, during which a series of economic agreements were signed.

These deals, particularly the one with the DRC, are likely to strengthen the UAE's access to the country's critical minerals. The UAE has prioritized the development of artificial intelligence and aspires to become a global leader in this field.

During his trip to the Gulf, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz also visited the UAE and met with President Mohammed bin Zayed.

The UAE's economic influence is visibly expanding, and Germany, as a leading European state, appears intent on deepening its relations with the Gulf monarchies independently of the United States.

On Sunday, the Emirati Foreign Ministry issued a statement welcoming the US peace plan for Sudan. Previously, on February 4, the UAE had pledged USD 400 million to support the US-led humanitarian intervention.

The UAE is widely reported to be backing the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan and has reportedly faced pressure from the United States and other international actors to halt arms transfers as part of broader peace efforts.

As an analysis by The Cradle published on 6 February 2026, the article argues that Israel's recognition of Somaliland in December 2025 has triggered a strategic realignment in the Horn of Africa, bringing Israel, India, the UAE, and Ethiopia into a loosely coordinated Red Sea axis. The move is framed as a response to heightened maritime insecurity following mid-2025 regional escalations, positioning Somaliland as a politically usable and strategically located platform for securing the Gulf of Aden and Bab al-Mandab. Within this configuration, Israel contributes advanced security capabilities, India provides maritime doctrine and naval reach, the UAE supplies capital and port management, and Ethiopia anchors the alignment on the continent through its need for alternative maritime access via Berbera.

The analysis situates this emerging axis as a regional counterweight to Chinese influence in Djibouti and a southern pillar of the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor, while also constraining Iranian and Turkish maneuverability in the Red Sea arena. At the same time, it highlights structural constraints, including African Union norms on territorial integrity, Ethiopia’s internal stability, and expected pushback from China, Egypt, and Turkiye. Somaliland is thus portrayed not as a peripheral actor, but as a strategic hinge where maritime security, corridor politics, and great-power competition increasingly intersect.

As reported by Anadolu Agency on 8 February 2026, Algeria has begun formal procedures to cancel its air services agreement with the United Arab Emirates, notifying that the termination will be communicated through diplomatic channels in accordance with Article 22 of the accord and reported to the International Civil Aviation Organization. The agreement, signed in 2013 and ratified in 2014, allowed unrestricted designation of carriers, flight frequencies, and operational capacity for airlines from both countries. Algerian authorities did not disclose the reasons for the decision, and no official response had been issued by the UAE at the time of publication.

Qatar

The Democratic Republic of Congo and the M23 rebel group signed terms for monitoring their ceasefire during Doha-mediated talks, reaffirming their commitment to the November 2025 Doha Framework Agreement for Peace. Observed by the US, the African Union, and Togo, with technical support from UN peacekeepers (MONUSCO) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the agreement includes deploying MONUSCO teams to recently recaptured areas like Uvira and establishing communication channels to ensure effective oversight and continued implementation of the ceasefire.

Iran described its latest indirect talks with the United States in Oman as a “good start,” while Washington called the discussions “very good,” though no concrete roadmap has emerged to ease fears of a potential US attack. Led by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and US envoy Steve Witkoff, with mediation by Oman, the talks focused on resuming diplomatic and technical negotiations, but tensions remain high due to US demands on Iran’s nuclear program, ballistic missiles, and support for regional armed groups. Both sides signaled willingness to continue discussions, even as Iran demonstrated military readiness, including a new ballistic missile test, and domestic opinion remains divided over the prospects for diplomacy versus escalation.

11. Africa and The Sahel Region

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

South Africa has announced it will withdraw its troops from the UN peacekeeping mission in eastern DRC before the end of 2026, ending nearly three decades of involvement. The country's roughly 700 troops are part of the broader MONUSCO operation tasked with stabilising conflict zones dominated by armed groups. South African officials said the decision is part of a wider defence realignment, though they stressed continued support for multilateral peacebuilding efforts with the Congolese government. This move comes as eastern DRC remains mired in persistent fighting between government forces and rebel groups, raising questions about how MONUSCO will adapt its strategy and what impact the drawdown could have on civilian protection and regional stability.

The DRC continues to be a geopolitical focal point due to its mineral wealth and conflict dynamics. U.S.-backed investors are in talks to acquire a significant stake in major copper and cobalt mining assets from Glencore, Washington's increasing interest in securing critical mineral supply chains. These resources are central to global energy and tech sectors, making the DRC a key arena in strategic competition, especially vis-à-vis Chinese influence in the region.

The broader security backdrop remains strained. The March 23 Movement (M23), backed by external actors and operating mainly in North and South Kivu provinces, has extended territorial reach in eastern DRC, prompting widespread displacement and ongoing humanitarian crises. Recent U.N. Security Council actions extended the peacekeeping mission mandate and condemned foreign military involvement linked to the conflict.

Additionally, bilateral efforts continue between DRC and Rwanda under the U.S.-brokered peace framework, including talks on dismantling long-standing rebel factions such as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). Implementation of peace commitments, especially troop withdrawals and civilian protections, remains a major diplomatic and security test..

Mali

Over the past week, Mali has remained at the center of a complex interplay between security challenges, diplomatic engagements, and regional geopolitical maneuvering. A central development has been the renewed engagement of the United States with Mali. U.S. envoy Nick Checker visited Bamako to discuss security cooperation, economic development, and regional partnerships. This visit is notable as one of the highest-level U.S. Mali interactions in months, signaling Washington's intent to re-engage the Sahel after years of estrangement following the military coups. Beyond bilateral ties, the

envoy's discussions also encompassed Mali's neighbors, Burkina Faso and Niger, underscoring the interconnected nature of Sahelian security. The U.S. approach emphasizes not only military and counter-terrorism cooperation but also economic stabilization, which has become increasingly critical amid persistent violence.

Security challenges in Mali remain severe and directly affect both governance and commerce. Attacks along the Senegal and Mali trade corridor have stalled the movement of goods, with reports of thousands of containers delayed due to fear of armed incidents. This disruption illustrates how militant activity particularly by groups such as JNIM extends beyond tactical assaults to undermine regional economic stability and state authority. Fuel blockades and targeted attacks have further weakened the government's reach, heightening vulnerability in both urban and rural areas.

Complicating Mali's security landscape is the country's deepening strategic relationship with Russia, particularly in military and counter-terrorism cooperation. While Western engagement has fluctuated, Russian influence has expanded, positioning Mali as a key node in Moscow's growing footprint in the Sahel. At the same time, Mali remains a central player in the Alliance of Sahel States, alongside Burkina Faso and Niger, which seeks to coordinate military operations against extremist threats. These dynamics highlight Mali's delicate balancing act between competing external powers while attempting to assert regional leadership and maintain internal stability.

Mali's current challenges are Security threats, economic disruptions, and the rivalry between Western and Russian interests create a volatile environment that demands careful diplomatic maneuvering.

Burkina Faso

The Burkina Faso's military government under Captain Ibrahim Traoré has taken a major turn in its internal governance by officially dissolving all political parties. A decree approved by the junta's Council of Ministers dismantled the entire multiparty system that had already been suspended since the 2022 coup, transferring party assets to the state and repealing the laws that had governed political organisations. The government claims this move is part of a broader effort to "rebuild the state" and reduce divisions, but critics see it as a stark rollback of political freedoms and a deep contraction of democracy in the Sahel nation. This action is further to strain Burkina Faso's diplomatic relations with regional bodies like the African Union and the United Nations.

Security conditions in Burkina Faso remain volatile amid a long-running Islamist insurgency that has displaced millions and left large parts of the country outside effective state control. Armed groups linked to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State continue to hold sway in several regions, contributing to ongoing threats and violence. Humanitarian operations are increasingly constrained by the junta's policies, with aid workers reporting

restrictions and red tape that are undermining relief efforts in areas controlled by jihadist groups. This squeeze on humanitarian access comes as civilian needs grow and regional security cooperation efforts such as the joint Sahel military force with Mali and Niger remain under pressure to respond to transnational threats.

Niger

Security dynamics in Niger have been dominated by a brazen Islamist militant assault on Niamey's main airport, which took place around January 29–30 and continued to shape discussions this week. Footage and reports show Islamic State affiliated fighters moving freely on the airport tarmac and damaging aircraft before Nigerien forces repelled them and killed about 20 attackers; several planes and a helicopter were destroyed or damaged in the clash. Niger's military government blamed France, Benin, and Ivory Coast for allegedly backing the attack, a claim those countries deny which has shown diplomatic tensions even as no civilian casualties were reported. Government officials have since inspected and reviewed airport surveillance and security measures in response. This attack refers to the deepening Islamist insurgency threat within Niger and reflects broader instability across the Sahel band that also affects Mali and Burkina Faso.

Diplomatically, Niger's relations with its neighbours and regional partners remain strained. In recent weeks, the country's political leadership has maintained a hard line in its disputes with Benin and other neighbors, contributing to border closures and reciprocal expulsions of diplomats linked to allegations of interference. These tensions, which extend beyond last Sunday but continue to influence the present moment, reflect broader friction tied to shifting alliances in West Africa after Niger's 2023 coup and its realignment away from some traditional partners. Niger also remains central to the Alliance of Sahel States, a new regional security bloc coordinating military efforts against extremist groups and aimed at pooling defense resources among Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Meanwhile, foreign governments, including in Europe, continue to reassess travel advisories and security cooperation as jihadist violence persists.

Chad

Chad has made notable strides in diplomacy by formally joining the African Union's anti-corruption evaluation mechanism. On February 3, Chadian officials hosted the AU Advisory Council on Corruption, signaling a willingness to align with continental governance norms and strengthen regional partnerships. It positions Chad as a cooperative player in African governance frameworks, potentially opening avenues for political engagement, economic support, and stronger ties with neighboring Sahel states. In parallel, Chad continues to navigate delicate regional dynamics, maintaining a careful balance between Western partners and emerging Sahel alliances, including the Alliance of Sahel States, which focuses on joint security operations and counter-terrorism initiatives.

Security challenges remain pressing. While no major new attacks were reported last week, Chad's borders, particularly with Sudan, continue to be affected by regional conflicts, including clashes involving the Rapid Support Forces and Sudanese Armed Forces. Violent extremist groups in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin continue to threaten civilian populations and challenge state authority, highlighting persistent vulnerabilities. Internally, governance and human rights concerns such as restrictions on political expression and past abuses by security forces complicate efforts to strengthen stability and attract international support. Combined with ongoing humanitarian pressures from refugee flows and regional instability, Chad faces a complex mix of security, political, and diplomatic challenges as it seeks to assert its role in the Sahel and broader African context.

12. North Africa

Morocco

In a display of international military collaboration, a NATO training team from Allied Joint Force Command Naples wrapped up an advanced civil-military operations course in Rabat, Morocco, on January 30, 2026. The program, held at the Ecole des Langues des Forces Armées Royales, focused on enhancing interoperability with the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces through theoretical sessions, case studies, and exercises on civil preparedness and operational planning, receiving praise for its practical relevance and fostering stronger regional security ties.

Shifting to domestic politics, Moroccan Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch announced on February 7, 2026, during a rally in El Jadida, that he would not seek re-election as leader of the National Rally of Independents party. This decision precludes his return as prime minister post-September elections, amid criticisms over conflicts of interest and youth protests demanding reforms, though he highlighted achievements in economic recovery and social programs.

Meanwhile, escalating tensions in Western Sahara saw units of the Sahrawi People's Liberation Army launch a targeted bombardment on Moroccan positions in the Mahbes sector on February 6, 2026. The attack struck bases in Laaran and a tank position in Aguid Arkan, inflicting reported heavy losses, as part of ongoing hostilities that underscore the protracted conflict over territorial sovereignty in the region.

Algeria

In a step toward enhanced bilateral ties, Libyan and Algerian experts convened in Tripoli on February 2, 2026, to evaluate cooperation across sectors including economy, energy, agriculture, and security. This preparatory meeting sets the stage for Algeria hosting the

High Joint Executive Committee, with signed minutes outlining strategies to boost trade and joint initiatives amid regional economic challenges.

Similarly, Egypt and Algeria reaffirmed their strong historical ties, with President El-Sisi welcoming remarks from President Tebboune. This reflects a commitment to solidarity and cooperation, essential for navigating the complexities of the region.

Transitioning to aviation diplomacy, Algeria officially terminated its air services agreement with the UAE on February 7, 2026, originally signed in 2013. The move stems from escalating tensions over the UAE's backing of Morocco in the Western Sahara dispute and perceived meddling in African affairs, with formal notifications sent through diplomatic and international channels.

Amid military procurement concerns, the US issued threats of sanctions against Algeria on February 5, 2026, over its intent to acquire Russian Su-57 fighter jets. Citing the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, officials warned during a Senate hearing that this could strain relations, especially as Algeria continues receiving Su-35 aircraft amid rivalries with Morocco.

In a lingering security case, Algerian national Kamel Bourgass, convicted of murdering a British detective in a 2003 Al Qaeda-linked attack, sought parole and deportation to Algeria on February 4, 2026. Despite expressing remorse after serving his minimum sentence, the board denied release, citing risks to public safety and difficulties in monitoring him abroad.

Libya

Newly released U.S. Department of Justice documents have unveiled Jeffrey Epstein's ambitious scheme from 2011 to seize billions in frozen Libyan assets amid the country's post-Gaddafi turmoil. The disgraced financier, leveraging connections with former MI6 and Mossad officials, targeted \$80 billion in sanctioned funds, including \$32.4 billion in the U.S., proposing contingency-fee legal battles to recover what he deemed "stolen" wealth for reconstruction. While the plans fizzled into preliminary talks, they underscore enduring vulnerabilities in Libya's financial recovery, where UN sanctions under Resolution 1973 continue to lock away vital resources despite ongoing legal committees formed by the Tripoli government.

Building on these economic shadows, diplomatic bridges appeared to strengthen across Libya's divides as U.S. Advisor Massad Boulos facilitated a pivotal Paris meeting on January 27 between senior officials from the war-torn nation's eastern and western factions. Boulos highlighted the talks' productivity in advancing national unity and stability, aligning with President Trump's peace agenda to foster a thriving economy. This engagement signals cautious optimism for reconciliation, potentially easing the path to

elections postponed since Saif al-Islam Gaddafi's 2021 bid, as external mediators like the U.S. push for Libyan-led solutions amid persistent factional rifts.

Tragedy struck Libya's political landscape on February 3 when Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, the once-presumptive heir to his father's regime, died at 53 in Zintan under murky circumstances. Reports conflict: Al Arabiya cited an armed ambush by four gunmen sparking a deadly shootout with his guards, while local outlets described a fatal stroke triggered by panic during a botched arrest amid clashes. Once a reformist figure turned presidential hopeful, his demise, whether assassination or natural, intensifies uncertainties in Libya's fragile transition, prompting condolences from figures like Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh and fueling debates over accountability in the post-2011 era.

Shifting focus to international partnerships, Pakistan deepened ties with Libya's eastern leadership during a high-level Islamabad visit by a delegation including Prime Minister Osama Hamad, Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, and his son Saddam. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called for sustained dialogue to bolster bilateral relations, emphasizing mutual interests in peace and development, while the Libyan side praised Pakistan's stabilizing role. This comes as Islamabad negotiates a Benghazi consulate, linked to a \$4 billion defense deal signed in December, potentially tilting diplomatic scales toward Haftar's Libyan National Army, which controls key oilfields, and expanding military cooperation in training and arms amid the east-west divide.

13. Middle East

Israel

On February 2, Israel partially reopened the Rafah crossing with Egypt on a trial basis, permitting limited movement for Gaza residents and up to 50 patients daily for medical treatment in each direction. This follows Israel's seizure of the crossing in May 2024 and comes amid a fragile ceasefire, though broader aid remains restricted. Concurrently, Israel terminated Doctors Without Borders operations in Gaza for failing to disclose staff details, while ongoing military strikes killed at least two Palestinians in Rafah and central Gaza, underscoring persistent tensions.

Building on regional alliances, a prominent Somaliland businessman, Khalifa Ibrahim, lauded Israel's recognition of Somaliland on February 2, highlighting historical Jewish ties to Berbera and pre-recognition collaborations in security, medicine, and education. He dismissed opposition from Turkey and Arab states, emphasizing Israel's 1960 acknowledgment and inviting investments in agriculture, minerals, ports, and tourism to strengthen bilateral relations.

Shifting to northern borders, on February 3, the Israeli military dispersed a non-toxic chemical substance near the Lebanon Blue Line, leading the United Nations Interim Force

in Lebanon to halt patrols for over nine hours due to safety concerns. UNIFIL criticized the action as a violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, assisting the Lebanese army in collecting samples for analysis while expressing worries about environmental and civilian impacts.

Amid escalating threats from Iran, the Israeli army conducted a major drill on February 4 simulating an attack with 2,000 missiles targeting population centers, focusing on rescue operations for casualties and collapsed structures. Held at Zikim base near Tel Aviv, this exercise by the Home Front Command was described as one of the largest in recent times, though official military commentary was withheld.

In East Jerusalem, reports emerged on February 5 that Israel plans to construct an illegal settlement with 1,400 housing units on the site of the recently demolished UNRWA headquarters, following a January 20 operation overseen by Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir. This move, condemned by the UN as violating international law and ICJ rulings, aligns with new Israeli legislation banning UNRWA activities and stripping its immunities, aiming to erase Palestinian refugee narratives.

Addressing domestic unrest, tens of thousands of Arab and Jewish Israelis protested in Tel Aviv on February 5 against surging gang violence in Arab communities, attributed to government neglect under National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir. Triggered by a Sakhnin shop strike over extortion, the rallies highlighted 252 murders in 2025 and 37 in early 2026, calling for urgent action and fostering cross-community solidarity.

On the diplomatic front, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu convened a security cabinet on February 5 to discuss US-Iran nuclear talks in Oman, touting a "buildup of conditions" that could precipitate the Iranian regime's collapse. He stressed close coordination with the US while preparing for potential large-scale strikes against Iran, amid proposals for a non-aggression pact from six Muslim nations.

Expressing concerns over neighboring powers, Netanyahu warned during a Knesset session on February 5-6 about Egypt's expanding military capabilities, advocating vigilant monitoring despite a recent \$35 billion gas deal and the 1979 peace treaty that demilitarized Sinai. This caution reflects ongoing efforts to balance economic ties with security imperatives in the region.

In response to continued violence in Gaza, US Congresswoman Delia Ramirez called on February 7 for halting weapons transfers to Israel through the Block The Bombs Act, arguing that no true ceasefire exists as US-supplied munitions have killed nearly 72,000 Palestinians since October 2023, including recent child casualties. This follows \$6.52 billion in military sales amid persistent strikes.

Culminating the week, Netanyahu is set to meet President Donald Trump in Washington on February 8 to address Iran's nuclear program, ballistic missiles, and support for proxies

like Hezbollah and Hamas. This follows indirect US-Iran negotiations in Oman, which Trump described positively, though Iran rejected missile talks and accused Israel of destabilizing the region.

Turkey

In the realm of economic diplomacy, Turkey announced plans to invest \$500 million in Egypt throughout 2026, as highlighted by experts aiming to bolster infrastructure and energy sectors. This initiative underscores a strategic push to deepen bilateral ties, fostering mutual growth amid recovering relations between the two nations following years of tension.

Building on this momentum, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh, discussing regional stability and joint economic ventures. The encounter signals a thaw in Turkey-Saudi relations, with both leaders committing to enhanced cooperation in trade and security, paving the way for future collaborative projects.

Shifting focus to military collaboration, Egypt and Turkey signed a framework military agreement in Cairo, encompassing joint training exercises and defense technology exchanges. This pact represents a pivotal step in reconciling past differences, strengthening regional alliances against common threats and promoting shared strategic interests.

Complementing these efforts, Egypt and Turkey affirmed their joint support for Syria's sovereignty and territorial unity, emphasizing the need for a political resolution to the ongoing crisis. Their unified stance calls for international involvement in reconstruction, highlighting a collective commitment to stabilizing the war-torn nation.

In a related development, President Erdogan welcomed initiatives promoting peace and stability in Syria, reiterating Turkey's dedication to border security and facilitating refugee returns. This position aligns with broader regional diplomacy, aiming to mitigate conflicts and support humanitarian efforts in the area.

Extending support to other African nations, Turkey reaffirmed its strong backing for Sudan's unity and sovereignty amid internal strife. Erdogan's administration pledged diplomatic and aid contributions, reflecting Turkey's expanding influence in African affairs.

On the Somali front, Turkish F-16 Viper jets were spotted operating from Mogadishu's international airport, as part of ongoing military assistance to the Somali government. This deployment enhances counter-terrorism capabilities and training programs, solidifying and bolstering Turkey's military presence in the Horn of Africa.

During his visit to Egypt, Erdogan criticized Israel's recognition of Somaliland, arguing it undermines Somalia's territorial integrity. He insisted that decisions on the region's future must reflect the collective will of all Somalis.

In economic news, Turkey signed a \$2 billion energy investment agreement with Saudi Arabia, targeting renewable projects and infrastructure upgrades. This deal is poised to generate employment and improve energy resilience, further cementing economic partnerships in the Middle East.

Aiming higher in trade ambitions, Turkey and Egypt set a goal of reaching \$15 billion in annual trade volume, according to ministerial statements. Focus areas include manufacturing, agriculture, and services, capitalizing on recent diplomatic improvements to drive prosperity for both economies.

Turning to global mediation, the US and Iran are set to resume talks in Istanbul, amid warnings from President Trump of severe repercussions if progress stalls. Turkey's hosting underscores its neutral broker status, seeking to ease nuclear and regional tensions through dialogue.

Egypt and Turkey also agreed on supporting national political processes under UN facilitation in conflict zones, stressing the importance of international oversight. This consensus bolsters efforts for inclusive resolutions, with both countries vowing active participation in UN-led initiatives.

Finally, Erdogan highlighted Turkey's diplomatic endeavors to prevent a potential US-Iran war, positioning the nation as a key peacemaker. By facilitating discussions and advocating restraint, Turkey aims to avert escalation, contributing to broader international stability in a volatile geopolitical landscape.

Iran

In the sphere of nuclear diplomacy, Iran formally accepted Turkey's invitation to resume talks in Istanbul on February 3, 2026. Tehran described the venue as "constructive and impartial," insisting that any agreement must include verifiable sanctions relief, recognition of its legitimate regional security interests, and an end to Israel's undeclared nuclear arsenal.

Reacting swiftly, President Trump warned on February 4 that failure to reach a deal within weeks would trigger "the strongest sanctions ever imposed" and leave "all options on the table." The White House simultaneously leaked contingency plans for renewed maximum-pressure campaign, raising alarm in European capitals.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi publicly thanked President Erdogan on February 5 for shielding the negotiations from external sabotage. The gesture underscored

a quiet but deepening Ankara-Tehran alignment, particularly as both capitals seek to shape Syria's post-Assad transition on their own terms.

On Syria, Iran reaffirmed unqualified support for Damascus's sovereignty and territorial integrity on February 6. Officials in Tehran urged the new Syrian leadership to complete the integration of Kurdish areas through dialogue rather than force, while quietly offering intelligence and logistical help to Syrian security forces.

Coordinating directly with Damascus, Iranian military advisers were reported on February 2 to be assisting in the handover of former SDF positions in Hasakah and Raqqa provinces. The advisory presence is deliberately low-profile, aimed at preserving influence without provoking Turkish or American backlash.

Tensions nonetheless surfaced on February 7 when pro-Iranian militias in Deir ez-Zor clashed briefly with advancing Syrian army units before withdrawing in an orderly fashion. Both sides described the incident as "isolated," signalling mutual interest in avoiding a wider confrontation during the fragile transition.

Iran welcomed the announced US withdrawal from Al-Shaddadi base on February 8, viewing it as validation of its long-standing demand for foreign forces to leave Syrian soil. Tehran simultaneously cautioned that any security vacuum must be filled by the legitimate Syrian state, not non-state actors.

Economically, Iran signed a \$4.2 billion natural-gas development and pipeline agreement with Russia on February 5, bypassing Western sanctions and securing long-term markets for its energy exports. The deal also includes technology transfer for Iranian petrochemical plants.

A parallel track opened the same week when Chinese and Iranian officials inked preliminary accords for major investments in Chabahar port expansion and high-speed rail links, part of Beijing's renewed push to revive Belt and Road connectivity through Iran.

As the Istanbul talks approach, Iran proposed on February 8 the creation of a broader "Regional Security Forum" that would include Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the new Syrian government. The initiative frames the nuclear file as only one element of comprehensive architecture needed to stabilize the Middle East.

Syria

Amid regional diplomatic efforts, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan emphasized that Syria's territorial integrity is essential for regional security. During statements on February 3, 2026, he highlighted the risks of division, urging international support for a unified Syria to prevent instability and foster peace, aligning with Turkey's strategic interests in bordering areas.

Complementing this stance, Syria's Foreign Minister met with the Kurdish National Council on February 4, reaffirming commitment to national unity. The discussions focused on integrating Kurdish regions into the central government framework, addressing autonomy concerns while prioritizing sovereignty to avert internal conflicts and promote inclusive governance.

Exploring international involvement, reports on February 5 detailed France's pivotal role in brokering the Syria-SDF agreement. French mediators facilitated talks to ensure Kurdish forces' integration, providing diplomatic guarantees and aid, which aims to stabilize northeastern Syria and reduce foreign influences in the region's complex dynamics.

In a positive development, Erdogan welcomed initiatives promoting peace in Syria on February 6, praising steps toward stability. He reiterated Turkey's support for dialogue and reconstruction, emphasizing secure borders and humanitarian aid, which could enhance cross-border cooperation and facilitate the return of millions of Syrian refugees.

Under a new pact, Syrian security forces entered key northeastern cities on February 7, as announced by officials. This move, part of an agreement with the SDF, involves joint patrols and administrative handover, aiming to consolidate central authority and curb separatist tendencies in areas long controlled by Kurdish militias.

However, challenges persist as Syria's new government struggles to assert authority over Kurds, per an analysis dated February 2. The roadmap includes negotiations on resource sharing and military integration, but tensions over autonomy and past grievances hinder progress, risking renewed clashes without robust international mediation.

A Syrian official confirmed on February 3 that security forces would enter Qamishli under the SDF deal. This strategic city handover includes coordination on counterterrorism and border control, intended to unify defenses and improve local services, though implementation depends on mutual trust between Damascus and Kurdish leaders.

Shifting to military withdrawals, US troops are set to leave Al-Shaddadi base in Syria, reported on February 8. This drawdown, part of broader policy shifts, involves handing over facilities to local forces, potentially altering power balances and prompting concerns over ISIS resurgence in the oil-rich region.

In economic news, a Turkish firm signed a shipbuilding deal at Syria's Tartous port on February 7. The agreement focuses on modernizing infrastructure and constructing vessels, boosting trade ties between Ankara and Damascus, and signaling economic recovery efforts amid post-conflict reconstruction needs.

Finally, following the Damascus-SDF accord, Syrian security forces deployed in northeastern Syria on February 5. This expansion consolidates government presence in Kurdish-held territories, with provisions for shared governance and disarmament, aiming to end fragmentation and support national reconciliation in the war-weary country.

14. Europe

Russia has accused Ukraine of involvement in the shooting of GRU deputy head Lt. Gen. Vladimir Alekseyev in Moscow, saying a suspect was detained and extradited from Dubai and alleging it was intended to undermine peace negotiations; Ukraine denies involvement and suggests internal Russian tensions could be relevant.

There have been ongoing prisoner exchanges between Russian and Ukrainian forces, with recent rounds involving significant numbers on both sides, reflecting limited diplomatic progress and use of swaps as a rare cooperative mechanism amid sustained conflict.

The New START nuclear arms control treaty between the United States and Russia expired in February 2026. Its lapse removes formal limits and verification on strategic nuclear arsenals, raising concerns about a renewed nuclear arms race and unchecked deployments; both sides have signaled willingness to discuss new mechanisms, and high-level military dialogue is being resumed, but there is no replacement treaty.

The European Commission proposed an expanded package of sanctions on Russia targeting energy, financial services, and goods and services supportive of Russia's war economy. Measures under discussion include bans on maritime services to Russian energy shipments, expanded banking restrictions, and further export controls designed to cut Russia's revenues and access to technology.

Separately, EU member states have already legislated to phase out imports of Russian gas by late 2027, and there has been discussion of a full ban on maritime services for Russian crude and LNG.

Efforts to further sanction Russia face political friction within the EU, with countries like Slovakia (and previously Hungary) opposing certain measures due to energy dependencies and economic concerns.

In the Arctic, Canada and France opened consulates in Nuuk, Greenland, signaling diplomatic support for Greenland's sovereignty and closer engagement with the territory amid renewed geopolitical tensions and interest from the United States. The move is interpreted as reinforcing multilateral Arctic relationships and countering U.S. rhetoric about acquiring Greenland.

In UK politics, recent coverage underscores internal challenges for Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour government and efforts within the party to stabilize leadership amid

political pressure, though specifics of any “coup” narrative relate more to domestic party factionalism than an actual constitutional crisis.

In Hungary, U.S. President Donald Trump publicly endorsed Prime Minister Viktor Orbán ahead of Hungary’s April elections, reinforcing ties between Orbán’s nationalist government and the U.S. right. This has implications for EU internal cohesion, particularly on issues like Ukraine policy, where Budapest has sometimes blocked or slowed unified EU actions.

Germany is actively debating economic governance in the EU; broader commentary suggests Berlin is pushing for regulatory reform to strengthen the single market, but the detailed content of those proposals was not directly accessible. Germany’s leadership under Chancellor Friedrich Merz is also seeking to diversify diplomatic and energy partnerships beyond traditional transatlantic ties, notably through Gulf engagements.

The expiration of New START has drawn warnings from the UN Secretary-General and arms control experts about elevated risks of nuclear competition and weakened deterrence stability. Calls persist for renewed arms control frameworks that could involve other nuclear powers, though such negotiations face political and technical obstacles.

15. The United State

The U.S. and Iran held indirect talks in Muscat, Oman, on February 6 (mediated by Omani Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi), described by both sides as a "good start" but yielding no breakthroughs. U.S. representatives included envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner; Iran's side was led by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. Discussions focused on Iran's nuclear program, with the U.S. pushing for concessions (including potential missile limits), while Iran insisted on nuclear-only talks, rejecting zero enrichment and excluding missiles/regional proxies. A second round was expected soon (possibly early the following week). Trump called the talks "very good" and indicated openness to a narrower nuclear-focused deal, but tensions persist with U.S. military buildup (e.g., USS Abraham Lincoln carrier group in the region) and Iran's supreme leader warning of "regional war" if attacked.

Both sides described the initial session as a “good start,” with agreement to pursue further rounds. Tehran insisted the talks focus solely on its nuclear program and maintained its right to uranium enrichment, rejecting inclusion of its ballistic missile program or regional proxy activities in the agenda. Washington sought a broader set of concessions but faces Iranian resistance. The dialogue occurs against a backdrop of elevated tensions, including U.S. military buildup in the region and fresh sanctions.

Netanyahu is scheduled to meet Trump in Washington on February 11 to discuss Iran, amid Israeli concerns over Iran's ballistic missiles as an "existential threat" and readiness for unilateral strikes if red lines are crossed.

Trump has turned to military leaders for diplomacy, including the top U.S. commander in the Middle East, joining Iran talks.

The New START treaty (the last U.S.-Russia nuclear arms control agreement) expired on February 5, 2026, after a one-time extension through February 4. For the first time since 1972, the superpowers have no verifiable limits on deployed strategic nuclear weapons (e.g., warheads, missiles, bombers).

Trump rejected Putin's proposal for a voluntary one-year extension of deployment limits, instead calling for a "new, improved, and modernized" treaty (potentially including China). He indicated the U.S. would not adhere to prior caps post-expiration. Reports suggest informal agreements to observe the "spirit" of New START in the interim, but no formal extension was signed. UN officials and experts warned of risks for a new arms race and heightened global insecurity.

The U.S. hosted a Critical Minerals Ministerial (February 4) with ~55 countries (including Japan, Mexico, the EU, South Korea, India, Australia, Germany, and the DRC) to counter China's dominance in rare earths and other materials vital for defense, EVs, and tech. VP JD Vance proposed a preferential trade bloc with coordinated price floors and investments to prevent market distortions. Secretary of State Marco Rubio emphasized alliances and cracking down on subsidized imports. Related bilateral deals included a U.S.-UK partnership for supply chain diversification.

Trump spoke with China's Xi Jinping (February 4), discussing Iran (Trump pushed isolation of Tehran) and Taiwan. Xi urged prudence on U.S. arms sales to Taiwan; Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te reaffirmed "rock-solid" U.S. ties and unchanged cooperation.

The Trump administration advanced an "America First Arms Transfer Strategy" (February 6 executive action) to prioritize U.S. interests in foreign arms sales, using purchases/capital for leverage.

Executive actions addressed threats from Iran (February 6) and Cuba, including modified duties/sanctions. Zelenskyy stated the U.S. set a June deadline for a Ukraine-Russia peace deal; Russia proposed major U.S. economic deals (~\$12 trillion value) potentially affecting Ukraine.

Trump planned the first "Board of Peace" leaders' meeting on February 19 in Washington for Gaza reconstruction fundraising and global conflict resolution (involving figures like Viktor Orbán). Skepticism persists from allies viewing it as a UN rival.

The U.S. State Department under President Donald Trump approved new arms sales totaling roughly \$15.7 billion to Israel (\$6.67 bn) and Saudi Arabia (\$9 bn). The Israeli package is centered on Apache attack helicopters, light tactical vehicles, and aircraft

support gear; the Saudi package emphasizes Patriot air-and-missile defence systems. The administration frames these sales as strengthening deterrence amid Middle Eastern instability, despite ongoing ceasefire discussions over Gaza and concerns about regional balance.

This Oman-mediated engagement represents the first formal nuclear negotiations since the U.S. participated in striking Iranian nuclear sites in mid-2025. Market and regional indicators showed some short-term easing of geopolitical risk (e.g., oil prices and Gulf equities) linked to diplomatic progress, but underlying mistrust persists, and both sides underscore unresolved disagreements.

President Trump publicly announced he reached a “framework of a future deal” concerning Greenland with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte. This announcement followed Trump’s earlier, controversial statements about acquiring the territory for strategic and security reasons. Independent reporting indicates no formal, binding document has been signed; details remain limited and subject to negotiation. The framework reportedly involves broader Arctic cooperation and may reaffirm U.S. access under existing or updated agreements rather than outright transfer of sovereignty. European and Danish authorities have expressed skepticism about any attempt to bypass Denmark’s sovereign authority.

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President Trump's signing of a one-year extension of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) on February 3, 2026. This revives the preferential trade program—providing duty-free access to the US market for over 1,800 products from eligible sub-Saharan African countries—retroactively from its lapse on September 30, 2025, through December 31, 2026. The short-term renewal (down from initial House proposals for longer periods) aims to preserve jobs and economic ties but introduces uncertainty, as the Trump administration plans to work with Congress to modernize AGOA for greater benefits to US businesses, farmers, and ranchers under an "America First" trade policy. This includes demand for more reciprocal advantages and potential alignment with reciprocal tariffs.

The US hosted the 2026 Critical Minerals Ministerial on February 4, involving representatives from over 50 countries (including several African nations like Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Guinea, Kenya, Sierra Leone, and Zambia). Led by Secretary of State Marco Rubio and other senior officials, it focused on countering

China's dominance in rare earths and minerals essential for tech, defense, and clean energy. Key outcomes included advancing US-backed deals in Africa, such as an MOU witnessed by US officials between Glencore and the Orion Critical Mineral Consortium for potential DRC asset acquisitions (copper and cobalt). This ties into the broader US-DRC Strategic Partnership Agreement (from late 2025, linked to the Washington Accords peace framework between DRC and Rwanda), which designates strategic assets for preferential US investment to promote secure supply chains, transparency, and jobs in the DRC. Implementation advanced with the first Joint Steering Committee meeting and DRC's initial asset shortlist. These moves reflect intensified US efforts to secure African resources amid rivalry with China, including offtake arrangements and de-risking investments.

AFRICOM Commander General Dagvin Anderson visited Nigerian President Bola Tinubu and security chiefs in Abuja on February 8, 2026, to discuss cooperation (exact topics not detailed publicly but aligned with ongoing counterterrorism and regional stability efforts). Broader analyses highlight Trump's transactional "America First" approach reshaping ties—potentially opening doors for China/Russia in some areas—while African nations explore alternatives like new China-South Africa trade frameworks amid US tariffs.

16. Eurasia

The broader international environment continues to reflect a decisive shift toward diversification, resilience, and strategic hedging, particularly across Europe's trade, energy, and security architecture. A European Commission–funded meta-study released under the Global Gateway strategy mapped investment priorities across transport corridors, energy infrastructure, digital connectivity, rail systems, ports, and border procedures to rebuild trade routes linking Europe to Central Asia via the Caucasus. The initiative signals an effort to bypass traditional pathways increasingly exposed to geopolitical disruption, while positioning connectivity itself as a strategic instrument of economic security.

Parallel economic currents reveal a quieter but consequential geoeconomic repositioning by China. Recent Beijing's transition toward micro-integration , embedding company-centered supply chains and localized manufacturing within European markets. The establishment of new Chinese industrial facilities, including aluminum production in Bulgaria, illustrates a model less dependent on headline investments and more oriented toward structural presence. Such diffusion may generate long-term leverage risks for Europe, particularly as Chinese firms integrate deeper into critical sectors while remaining commercially framed rather than overtly geopolitical.

Against this backdrop, European leaders are exploring expanded alliances across Asia, directing greater diplomatic and commercial attention toward large growth markets such

as China and India. The recalibration reflects ongoing “de-risking” efforts rather than abrupt decoupling, as policymakers acknowledge that rapid disengagement from longstanding U.S. dependencies remains improbable. Instead, the emerging approach favors gradual diversification designed to reduce exposure without triggering systemic economic shocks.

Relations between Türkiye and the European Union were similarly reaffirmed as strategically indispensable following high-level talks in Ankara between Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and EU Commissioner Marta Kos. Both sides emphasize the partnership’s relevance for regional stability, migration management, economic resilience, and mobility frameworks such as Schengen visa facilitation, a reminder that geopolitical turbulence often elevates the importance of geographically pivotal states.

Security cooperation is also expanding beyond traditional theaters. South Korea and Poland launched their first security dialogue in Warsaw, agreeing to deepen information-sharing mechanisms related to developments on the Korean Peninsula. The initiative reflects a growing intersection between European and Northeast Asian security considerations, suggesting that threat perceptions are becoming increasingly transregional rather than confined to immediate neighborhoods.

Energy diversification remains a central pillar of Europe’s strategic recalibration. Central Asia is gaining prominence as a potential contributor to the continent’s post-Russian gas landscape, with projects such as expanded stakes in Azerbaijan’s Southern Gas Corridor illustrating how supply chains are being gradually reconfigured. Complementing this effort, the European Union, United States, and Japan advanced cooperation on critical raw materials through a prospective memorandum of understanding aimed at securing mineral supply chains essential for both green transitions and defense industries. Control over such resources is rapidly emerging as a defining axis of economic statecraft.

Engagement with Southeast Asia further reinforces Europe’s outward economic posture. Discussions between ASEAN leadership and UN-Habitat highlighted progress on sustainable urbanization and connectivity, accompanied by new EU-backed development projects designed to support regional integration strategies. These initiatives reflect a recognition that infrastructure partnerships increasingly function as long-term geopolitical anchors.

Meanwhile, great-power alignment continues to evolve across Eurasia. A high-level video call between Presidents Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin emphasized expanding economic cooperation, multilateral coordination, and strategic stability, with planned visits in 2026 signaling sustained political convergence. The deepening of China–Russia ties adds another layer of complexity to Europe’s external calculations, particularly as continental policymakers attempt to balance engagement with deterrence.

Trade frictions nevertheless persist beneath this interconnected landscape. The European Commission imposed anti-dumping measures on several Chinese imports, including industrial steel cylinders and other manufactured goods, underscoring that stabilization efforts coexist with defensive economic policies. Europe's strategy appears increasingly dual-tracked, protecting domestic markets while avoiding outright confrontation.

Taken together, these developments illustrate a continent adapting to structural uncertainty by widening partnerships, securing supply chains, and redistributing strategic risk. Trade corridors, energy access, and industrial resilience are no longer treated as purely economic matters but as foundational components of geopolitical stability. Central Asia and ASEAN are emerging as critical nodes within this recalibrated map, while evolving Eurasian alignments and China's embedded economic presence ensure that competition will remain a defining feature of the global order.

17. International and Regional Organizations

United Nation

Kuwait assumed the UNSC Presidency, prioritizing preventive diplomacy and small-state security. The Council held closed consultations on the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

Briefings focused on famine risks in Darfur and potential expansion of the Sudan arms embargo, alongside condemnation of renewed shelling in El Fasher. Members also debated governance and reconstruction options for Gaza.

Resolution 2812 (2026) renewed the mandate of the Sudan Sanctions Panel of Experts. The Council reviewed developments in Libya following a high-profile assassination and convened an emergency session on global nuclear risks following the New START expiration.

The UNSC issued a press statement condemning drone attacks in Kisangani, DRC. Consultations were held with ATMIS leadership on post-withdrawal security risks in Somalia, while expert-level negotiations began on state responsibility for cyber operations and undersea cable protection.

Africa Union

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission appointed a Special Envoy for Children Affected by Armed Conflict, reinforcing the AU's normative and operational commitments to child protection in conflict settings. The Chairperson also hosted UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper for high-level discussions on regional security dynamics and development cooperation, reflecting sustained UK engagement in African peace and stabilization efforts.

Under Egypt’s chair-ship, the AU Peace and Security Council convened virtually and adopted its annual report on the State of Peace and Security in Africa, providing a strategic assessment of conflict trends, mediation efforts, and emerging security risks across the continent.

The Chairperson received Letters of Credence from newly appointed ambassadors, including representatives of Kyrgyzstan, New Zealand, and South Sudan, reinforcing the AU’s expanding diplomatic network. In parallel, the PSC Committee of Experts met virtually to prepare ministerial-level deliberations on Sudan and Somalia, while the Chairperson held consultations with AU Deans of the Regions to coordinate pre-summit positioning.

The AUC Chairperson formally condemned a drone attack carried out by AFC/M23 forces in Kisangani, Democratic Republic of the Congo, underscoring continued instability in eastern DRC. High-level consultations were also held with Permanent Representatives of AU Regional Economic Communities, alongside accreditation of the UNIDO Representative to the AU. The AU further marked the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, reaffirming continental commitments to gender and human rights norms.

The AU released the official schedule of statutory meetings and side events for the 39th Ordinary Summit. Diplomatic briefings and Addis Ababa urban infrastructure preparations were finalized ahead of ministerial and heads-of-state sessions.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

IGAD launched a week-long internal review of its 2026–2030 Strategy in Djibouti, aligning regional trade objectives with AfCFTA priorities. The Deputy Executive Secretary separately briefed the RJMEC Interim Chairperson on delays in South Sudan’s Revitalized Peace Agreement, amid rising violence in Jonglei State.

Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu met with the Italian Ambassador to Ethiopia to finalize agendas for the IGAD Partners Forum and the Italy–Africa Summit. The IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) issued advisories warning of extreme heat in the southern Horn and heavy rainfall in the central highlands. Reports also indicated that Sudan’s Security and Defense Council approved initial steps toward rejoining IGAD.

The IGAD Committee of Ambassadors validated the 2026 Institutional Budget and reviewed proposed regional security sector reform guidelines. IGAD further issued a statement expressing concern over escalating maritime insecurity in the Red Sea, calling for coordinated regional naval cooperation.

IGAD mediation teams arrived in Djibouti ahead of Sudan's formal reinstatement ceremony. The Secretariat also launched regional training programs on business and human rights to promote responsible private sector investment.

European Union (EU)

EU Budget and Agriculture Commissioners held consultations in Dublin on the 2028–2034 Multiannual Financial Framework ahead of Ireland's EU presidency. The European Council agreed on a €90 billion support package for Ukraine, covering macroeconomic stabilization and defense industrial capacity.

The Council Security Committee discussed new EU-wide information and industrial security standards. High Representative Kaja Kallas visited Finland for consultations on Russian deterrence and transatlantic relations. The EU also expressed concern over the expiration of the New START Treaty, warning of increased strategic instability, while the Council Secretariat issued its “Forward Look” on defense financing and Ukraine support.

EU defense ministers were briefed on plans to mobilize up to €800 billion in defense investment under the Readiness 2030 framework. Policy institutions finalized reports urging a shift toward “sovereign internationalism” in EU external action.

ECOWAS

Nigerian forces intensified counter-insurgency operations in Adamawa State, rescuing hostages from Boko Haram, while regional security briefs reported continued high-profile abductions in Nasarawa State. The Nigeria International Energy Summit 2026 opened in Abuja, emphasizing regional gas diplomacy and energy infrastructure development.

Following high-level consultations in Accra, a communiqué warned that West Africa has become a global epicenter of terrorism, averaging eight attacks per day. The ECOWAS Commission and the African Development Bank launched consultations to extend the Regional Integration Strategy Paper through 2027, while ECOSOCC convened discussions on barriers to free movement within the region.

ECOSOCC announced its upcoming Pre-Summit on the 2026 Theme of the Year (Water and Sanitation). ECOWAS subsequently confirmed the cancellation of its Lomé Summit amid internal political divisions and the withdrawal of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. Consultations with the AfDB on agriculture and energy cooperation were concluded.

Ministers and experts reviewed progress toward full activation of the ECOWAS Standby Force later in 2026. Final preparations were monitored for the handover of the new ECOWAS Headquarters in Abuja.

NATO

NATO's Military Committee initiated final reviews of the 2026 Readiness Initiative, targeting 500,000 high-readiness troops. Secretary General Mark Rutte warned of unprecedented nuclear unpredictability following the collapse of the New START Treaty.

The NATO–Ukraine Council finalized a multi-year interoperability package extending support through 2027. NATO issued alerts on gray-zone attacks against undersea infrastructure in the Baltic and North Seas. Discussions within the Nuclear Planning Group focused on deterrence modernization, and priorities for the Spring 2026 Defense Ministers Meeting were circulated.

The North Atlantic Council issued a formal statement regretting Russia's non-compliance with New START. NATO announced new investments in AI-enabled autonomous defense systems and advanced preparations for Steadfast Defender 2026, as live-fire drills commenced in Poland and the Baltics. Observers arrived in Finland and Sweden to oversee Arctic Command integration.

HORN REVIEW

IDEAS CONNECTIONS SYNERGY

Ideas

Connections

Synergy