



Weekly Geopolitical Report

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

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Horn Review: Weekly Report

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1. Ethiopia

On June 21, 2026, Ethiopia's National Election Board announced the final results of the June 1 parliamentary elections, with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's Prosperity Party securing a commanding majority of 438 seats out of 486 contested in the House of Peoples' Representatives, representing roughly 90% of the seats. This decisive victory grants the party a strong mandate to continue its reform agenda for the next five years, enabling sustained focus on economic transformation, peacebuilding and institutional strengthening.

This electoral success drew swift international congratulations, reflecting broad diplomatic support for Ethiopia's democratic process and leadership. Leaders from Pakistan, China, Qatar, Malaysia, Burundi (as AU Chairperson), India, and Russia, among others, extended messages praising the results and reaffirming commitments to deeper bilateral and multilateral partnerships in trade, investment, security, and regional stability. For instance, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Ethiopia's PM Abiy exchanged messages on June 26 emphasizing warm, expanding ties and shared goals of peace and prosperity. Similar affirmations came from China on June 25, highlighting all-weather strategic partnership, and from IGAD, which commended the peaceful conduct and Ethiopia's role in the Horn of Africa. Russia welcomed Ethiopia's election outcome as a clear demonstration of public support for ongoing reforms. These responses are anticipated to bolster Ethiopia's global standing, attract further investment, and enhance South-South cooperation.

On June 23, President Taye Atske Selassie received credentials from eleven newly appointed ambassadors from countries including Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Ghana, Portugal, and others, signaling Ethiopia's commitment to expanding economic, political, and people-to-people partnerships across diverse regions. In parallel diplomatic engagements, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud arrived in Addis Ababa for an official working visit focused on strengthening bilateral ties, regional security, and economic cooperation between the neighboring countries.

Domestically, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed addressed the "Ethiopia Delivers" Summit under the theme "From Reform to Lasting Change," highlighting tangible outcomes of the Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda. Key achievements include reducing inflation from over 30% to single digits, projected economic growth of around 10.2% for the fiscal year through enhanced export competitiveness, and infrastructure milestones like the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. He urged citizens to build on these gains through

unity and the Medemer philosophy, positioning the reforms as a foundation for intergenerational prosperity and resilience.

On June 24, Ethiopia's National Dialogue Commission announced eight broad agenda areas for upcoming national talks scheduled for the following month. These encompass nation-building, government structure and system, governance of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa, religious issues, rule of law and human rights, social and economic matters including farmers and pastoralists, corruption and good governance, and peacebuilding with conflict resolution. Derived from extensive public consultations involving over 200,000 participants, the agendas aim to foster inclusive dialogue on longstanding challenges to promote lasting national consensus and stability.

On June 25, East African Affairs Advisor to the Prime Minister Getachew Reda stated that the Eritrean regime continues pursuing a strategy of weakening Ethiopia as part of its survival calculus, noting that a stable and prosperous Ethiopia challenges its foundations. He called for strategic foresight, regional economic cooperation, and people-centered development in Tigray while distinguishing between TPLF leadership ambitions and the broader population's needs.

On June 23, Ethiopia showcased its economic reform agenda and major investment opportunities at the UK–Ethiopia Trade & Investment Forum in London. Foreign Minister Dr. Gedion Timothewos said reforms are creating a more competitive, investor-friendly economy, backed by stronger growth, rising confidence and expanding private-sector participation. From agribusiness to the digital economy, forum discussions spotlighted Ethiopia's expanding market and strategic position as a gateway to Africa. State Minister for FDRE Government Communication Service Tesfahun Gobeza and Prime Minister's Press Secretary Billene Seyoum underscored reform progress and emerging opportunities, particularly in agribusiness and digital transformation.

On June 26, the Council of Ministers held its 57th regular session and passed several key decisions with significant and lasting implications for development financing, infrastructure, and policy frameworks. The Council endorsed three major loan agreements with the International Development Association (IDA): a 437.4 million SDR loan for a sustainable and inclusive development policy operation, a 145.5 million SDR loan for a community-based land management program, and a 54.6 million SDR loan for the Climate-Resilient Irrigation Development for Sustainable Productivity Project. These agreements were approved for submission to the House of Peoples' Representatives after confirming compliance with national loan policies.

Additionally, the Council advanced Ethiopia's accession to the New Development Bank through a draft proclamation, aiming to provide alternative sources of financing for national development, support infrastructure projects, strengthen macroeconomic stability, and deepen linkages with South-South financial systems. The Council also

reviewed and advanced service fee regulations for institutions under the Ministries of Water and Energy, the Ethiopian Archives and Library Service, and the Educational Assessment and Examination Service to improve self-financing while maintaining service quality.

Furthermore, it approved the implementation of an updated Construction Industry Policy to address gaps in technological progress, urbanization, and infrastructure demand, alongside a new Urban Development Policy intended to build on two decades of progress in urban governance, economic competitiveness, service delivery, and rural-urban linkages. These comprehensive decisions are expected to drive infrastructure expansion, enhance macroeconomic resilience, improve service delivery, promote sustainable productivity, and support long-term economic transformation.

On June 27, Ethiopia called for stronger BRICS cooperation in space science and technology during meetings in Bengaluru, India. This engagement, leveraging the Entoto Observatory, demonstrates Ethiopia's ambition to utilize space applications for sustainable development, disaster risk management, and socioeconomic progress in an emerging multipolar world, with potential implications for capacity building and joint initiatives among member nations.

Security advancements were highlighted on June 28 when National Intelligence and Security Service Director General Ambassador Redwan Hussein detailed a comprehensive transformation program to modernize border and airport security through data-driven intelligence, AI, cyber sovereignty measures, and better coordination. This initiative aims to counter threats like terrorism and trafficking while safeguarding geo-strategic interests and supporting Ethiopia's international hosting role.

Economically, Ethiopian Airlines Cargo Service earned the 2026 AFLAS Award for best cargo service in Africa on June 28, based on stakeholder votes. This recognition highlights investments in infrastructure and innovation, reinforcing Ethiopia's position in global supply chains and advancing its Vision 2035 ambitions.

On June 28, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed inaugurated the Entoto–Kebena River and Riverside Development Project in Addis Ababa. This project underscores the government's commitment to urban renewal, environmental sustainability, and improved livability, with expected positive long-term effects on city integration, green infrastructure, and resident well-being as part of broader post-election transformation efforts.

In Tigray on June 26, the Regional Council ordered implementation of a controversial security decree that includes compulsory military service, broad and vague powers, imprisonment, and the death penalty for certain offenses. Widely criticized by Human Rights Watch as repressive and seen by diplomatic observers as potentially inconsistent

with the Pretoria Agreement, this development has sparked serious concerns over forced recruitment, civilian impacts, and risks of heightened tensions or renewed instability in the region.

Reports emerged that U.S. Ambassador Ervin J. Massinga canceled a planned trip to Tigray, where engagements with specific local figures had been anticipated. A concurrent U.S. Embassy statement expressed support for the people of Tigray, called for full implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, political dialogue, and AU-led processes, while indicating plans for a future visit. This sequence may reflect cautious diplomatic engagement amid peace process sensitivities, with potential implications for international involvement and pressure toward dialogue rather than escalation.

These interconnected developments, from electoral consolidation and diplomatic reaffirmations to economic reforms, national dialogue preparations, urban and infrastructure projects, security modernization, aviation and space advancements, and ongoing Tigray challenges collectively signal Ethiopia's strategic push toward stability, inclusive growth, and elevated regional and global influence in the coming period.

2. Sudan

The final week of June brought Sudan's war to one of its most concentrated moments of international diplomatic activation since the fall of El Fasher. The RSF's encirclement of El Obeid entered its most acute phase, the United States imposed dual-track sanctions on supply networks feeding both belligerents, a sharp exchange at the UN Security Council on chemical weapons allegations opened a new front in the diplomatic battle, and the Sudanese pound broke through 5,000 to the dollar. None of the week's activity generated a ceasefire or any enforceable commitment from either party.

El Obeid continued to absorb the most concentrated international alarm of the war. RSF drone strikes hit a power substation, fuel stations, a dialysis center, a girls' school, and a funeral gathering, with at least 50 civilians killed across the city and wider North Kordofan over ten days of continuous strikes. The attacks forced the closure of several medical facilities and water stations and triggered widespread power outages. The RSF has maintained substantial troop concentrations around the city, which has been under siege-like conditions for eighteen months, drawing direct comparisons to the eighteen-month siege of El Fasher that ended with the RSF's October 2025 offensive and the atrocities that followed.

The UN Security Council demanded an immediate halt to the RSF assault on June 20. The foreign ministers of France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom issued a joint warning of an impending ground offensive. HRW called on the Human Rights Council to convene an urgent debate or special session and explicitly named the UAE as an external actor whose support for the RSF should be

unequivocally condemned. The SAF has held the city and launched counter-drone operations targeting RSF positions, though fighting has added further civilian displacement.

Burhan's stated posture is one of unconditional military pursuit: the army, he said, would operate with the precision of "digging with a needle" until the RSF is entirely dismantled, a formulation that closes the door on any truce not conditioned on RSF disarmament and dissolution. US Senior Advisor Massad Boulos told the Security Council on June 27 that both warring factions are dragging out a war of attrition at the expense of millions of civilians and accused the SAF of rejecting a US-proposed nationwide humanitarian truce that morning. Sudan's UN envoy Al-Harith Idriss flatly denied the rejection, stating that Khartoum had sent Boulos a formal response including a revised military withdrawal schedule before the session began.

The Security Council session also produced a sharp confrontation over chemical weapons. Boulos announced a second round of US sanctions on Sudan for the SAF's alleged use of chemical agents, calling it a flagrant violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Idriss rejected the allegations, stating that a year of bilateral investigations and field visits by US technical teams, including soil samples collected from four separate areas, had produced no verified evidence. He insisted the matter belongs before the OPCW, where Sudan holds a seat on the executive board.

Separately, the first round of sanctions announced on June 27 targeted procurement networks on both sides. The Treasury designated three associates of Talent Bridge SA, a Panama-registered front company used to recruit former Colombian military personnel for the RSF. On the SAF side, sanctions hit Target Multiactivity Company for importing Indian-manufactured explosives for military aerial bombs, SBL Energy and its chief executive for over 200 shipments of explosives-related materiel since 2024, and the state-owned Ports Engineering Company for importing military uniforms and ammunition components from UAE and Turkish suppliers. The dual designation is significant as US public acknowledgment that both parties are sustained by external procurement pipelines, though the practical enforcement gap between sanction and supply disruption remains wide.

The economic picture deteriorated sharply. The Sudanese pound reached 5,100 to the dollar in parallel market trading on June 28, continuing a decline that has accelerated since the currency crisis of mid-June. The Central Bank issued new directives requiring all banks to apply a unified exchange rate for import financing and continued foreign currency injections at a rate of 1,220 pounds per UAE dirham in an attempt to slow the slide. An economist interviewed by Dabanga warned that monetary and administrative measures alone will not halt the pound's decline given the structural absence of productive capacity and export revenue underlying the currency's collapse.

On the RSF side, Africa Intelligence reported that Hemeti is actively challenging Port Sudan's monetary stranglehold in RSF-held areas, with the parallel currency and banking infrastructure growing more institutionalized. Providing partial relief to the macro picture, China signed a debt cancellation agreement on June 28, forgiving four interest-free loans totaling 344 million yuan, approximately \$50 million, against Sudan's total external debt of \$66.8 billion. Port Sudan also received large-capacity container ships for the first time, with a vessel from the Transmar-Atlantic line carrying approximately 900 containers and a Sharaf shipping line vessel exceeding 1,500 containers, signaling a modest recovery in maritime confidence following the resumption of transshipment operations on June 16.

Sudan's Foreign Minister welcomed a prisoner exchange initiative proposed by UN Personal Envoy Haavisto, described as the first international effort specifically targeting a swap since the war began. Sudan had previously written to the Security Council claiming 20,000 people are held in RSF detention facilities in Darfur. In a separate bilateral development, Burhan received South Sudan's National Security Service Director General Akec Tong Aleu in Khartoum on June 25 for talks on border security and bilateral coordination.

Assessment

El Obeid has crystallized the structural failure of the international response to Sudan's war. The pattern for this week was identical to the pattern documented at El Fasher: warnings accumulate, statements multiply, and the parties calculate that the cost of proceeding exceeds the cost of the diplomatic noise. Burhan's "digging with a needle" formulation and the SAF's contested rejection of the US truce proposal both indicate a military leadership that has concluded it can absorb international pressure while continuing offensive operations. The dual US sanctions are the most concrete enforcement action in weeks, but designating procurement networks does not sever them, and the announcement of a second sanctions round on chemical weapons grounds without yet having produced verified evidence in bilateral channels is a signal of diplomatic frustration as much as legal certainty. Sudan ends the week with its currency at 5,100 to the dollar, its largest city under sustained aerial assault, and its two belligerents no closer to any framework that places civilian protection above strategic calculation.

3. Egypt

Egypt intensified diplomatic pressure at the United Nations Security Council this week to halt Rapid Support Forces territorial advances across North Kordofan, actively coordinating ceasefire initiatives with American, Saudi, and Turkish mediators. While Cairo publicly emphasizes mitigating El Obeid's severe humanitarian crisis, this intervention is anchored in existential strategic imperatives. A fragmented southern neighbor directly threatens Egyptian national security by accelerating uncontrolled refugee spillover into an already strained domestic economy. Furthermore, Cairo

desperately requires a stable, unified Sudanese state apparatus to safeguard its historical Nile Basin water rights and prevent hostile militant groups from entrenching themselves along the increasingly vulnerable Red Sea trade corridor.

Building upon these collaborative multilateral channels, Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty hosted his counterparts from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan in Cairo on June 21 for the fourth consultative R-4 summit. This crucial gathering focused on establishing a synchronized crisis management framework across the Middle East, specifically targeting conflict reduction in Gaza and the United States and Iran hostilities. By consolidating this formidable quadrilateral Muslim grouping, Cairo is proactively asserting its indispensable regional mediator status. Strategically, Egypt seeks to institutionalize a collective diplomatic architecture capable of preventing localized disputes from spiraling into broader instability, thereby shielding vital trade routes and preserving the fragile regional balance of power.

The immediate economic necessity of protecting these trade routes was demonstrated days later when Cairo officially praised the interim American and Iranian truce formalized via the Islamabad agreement. Characterizing the breakthrough as a turning point for peace, the Foreign Ministry urged both adversaries to build upon this momentum to resolve outstanding grievances. Egypt's enthusiastic endorsement is tied directly to domestic fiscal survival. Prolonged maritime warfare across the Gulf and the Red Sea has severely depressed Suez Canal transit revenues, exacerbating Cairo's severe currency shortage. Consequently, securing a durable Gulf ceasefire is not merely an abstract diplomatic preference, but an urgent economic prerequisite to stabilize global shipping lanes and restore national fiscal health.

Cairo's proactive Gulf mediation drew explicit international validation on June 22 in New Delhi, where Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met Egyptian National Security Secretary Youssef Alaa Eldin to mark seventy years of bilateral ties. During the summit, Wang praised Egyptian regional leadership and welcomed Cairo's de-escalation diplomacy, while Egypt thanked Beijing for its international advocacy and pledged deeper integration into the BRICS economic mechanism. This high-level engagement highlights Cairo's calculated strategy of strategic balancing. By nurturing ties with Beijing, Egypt secures vital Belt and Road infrastructure investments for its Red Sea economic zone while subtly signaling to Washington that it possesses powerful alternative global partners.

This policy of strategic diversification extends beyond economic diplomacy into Moscow's hard security sphere, evidenced by the mid-June arrival of Russian S300VM long range air defense systems at Alexandria port. Fulfilling a billion-dollar contract originally negotiated in 2014, these Antey 2500 surface to air missile canisters provide the Egyptian military with a formidable two-hundred-kilometer interception radius against

advanced aerial threats. Upgrading this defensive shield significantly enhances Cairo's conventional deterrence posture across the volatile Middle Eastern theater. Crucially, the acquisition reinforces Egypt's long-term determination to insulate its armed forces from historical American military aid fluctuations by institutionalizing enduring, independent defense supply chains with major Eastern powers.

4. Eritrea

In a response article published by Al Jazeera on 25 June, Ali Ibrahim Ahmed, Eritrea's ambassador to Qatar, rejected allegations made earlier by Getachew Reda, Advisor for East African Affairs to the Ethiopian Prime Minister, and Redwan Hussein, Director General of Ethiopia's National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), that Eritrea and its allies were seeking to undermine the Pretoria Agreement and precipitate renewed conflict in Ethiopia. In their article, the two Ethiopian officials argued that Eritrean operatives had cultivated alliances with anti-government actors and that Asmara viewed reconciliation and stability in Ethiopia as contrary to its strategic interests. Responding to these accusations, the Eritrean ambassador maintained that Eritrea had been drawn into the Tigray war at the request of the Ethiopian federal government and contended that Addis Ababa's recent claims for sovereign access to the sea and its regional policies are, according to him, the principal drivers of current tensions. According to the ambassador, Eritrea supports a peaceful and stable Ethiopia and has no interest in destabilising its neighbour. The exchange underscores the increasingly entrenched war of narratives accompanying deteriorating relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

The Eritrean opposition movement known as the "Green Revolution" accused the Eritrean government of fueling instability across the Horn of Africa and argued that regional peace cannot be achieved without addressing Eritrea's internal political crisis. In remarks carried by Ethiopia's state-affiliated media outlets Fana Media Corporation (FMC) and the Ethiopian News Agency (ENA), the movement's chairman, Mohammed Ahmed Asenai, stated that the Eritrean government has historically relied on regional conflicts and support for armed groups to sustain its rule. Asenai further outlined a post-Isaias vision centred on political transformation, economic integration with Ethiopia, and the development of cooperative arrangements over Red Sea access, including in ports, transport, and trade. The statements are notable both for their unusually explicit endorsement of closer Ethiopian-Eritrean integration after regime change and for highlighting the growing convergence between segments of the Eritrean opposition and Ethiopian narratives that portray political change in Asmara as a prerequisite for regional stability.

Human Rights Watch warned on June 23 that a new security and mobilisation proclamation issued by the TPLF after reasserting control over Tigray in early June establishes a coercive system of military recruitment that bears "troubling similarities" to

Eritrea's national service system. The organisation highlighted provisions allowing compulsory mobilisation, harsh penalties for draft evasion and dissent, collective punishment of families, and prison terms of up to 25 years for criticism of the recruitment campaign. Human Rights Watch further noted reports of forced roundups, including of minors, and argued that the emerging system mirrors key features long associated with Eritrea's model of indefinite and coercive militarisation. The report is significant in that it frames the TPLF's current mobilisation drive not merely as a response to deteriorating security conditions but as a process of the "Eritreanization" of Tigray's governance and security structures, drawing explicit parallels with one of the region's most criticised systems of state control.

On 27 June, PEN International renewed its campaign for the 12 Eritrean writers and journalists who have been held incommunicado since the September 2001 crackdown on independent media and dissent, demanding that Eritrean authorities provide proof that they are still alive ahead of the 25th anniversary of their detention on 18 September. The organization described the detainees—who include journalists, poets, playwrights and editors—as among the world's longest-detained writers and journalists, noting that they have been held without charge, trial, access to lawyers or contact with their families for nearly a quarter of a century. PEN argued that the continued disappearance of the group represents both a severe assault on freedom of expression and a broader attempt to silence independent voices and erase a generation of Eritrea's intellectual and cultural life.

The eastern-based Libyan administration headed by Osama Hamad announced a ban on the entry of citizens from Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia through all land, sea and airports under its control. While the measure was officially framed as an effort to regulate the entry of foreign nationals, it carries particular significance for Eritreans, for whom Libya has long served as a key transit route towards Europe. The decision further complicates migration pathways for Eritreans at a time when the war in Sudan has already disrupted one of their principal escape corridors, increasing the obstacles facing those seeking to leave the country and potentially redirecting migration flows towards alternative and often more dangerous routes.

5. Djibouti

Between June 22 and June 29, 2026, Djibouti's political and diplomatic agenda was dominated by the strengthening of its strategic partnership with Ethiopia, the expansion of industrial and financial cooperation with China and other international partners, and the commemoration of its forty-ninth Independence Day. President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh officially congratulated Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed following the Prosperity Party's victory in Ethiopia's legislative elections, describing the outcome as an important step for the continued development of the Ethiopia–Djibouti economic corridor and the broader stability of the Horn of Africa. Operating from its headquarters in Djibouti City,

IGAD also welcomed Ethiopia's electoral process, reaffirming its support for regional stability and democratic institutions. These developments reinforced the enduring strategic partnership between Addis Ababa and Djibouti, where economic interdependence, political coordination, and shared regional interests continue to serve as key pillars of stability and integration in the Horn of Africa. At the same time, Economy and Finance Minister Ilyas Moussa Dawaleh unveiled a new industrial cooperation roadmap in Beijing, seeking expanded Chinese investment in green industrial parks, salt processing, light manufacturing, and seafood industries as part of Djibouti's long-term economic transformation strategy.

Domestically, Djibouti celebrated the forty-ninth anniversary of its independence from France on June 27 through official ceremonies and national commemorations that highlighted the government's Vision 2035 agenda. The celebrations emphasized national unity, state-building, infrastructure modernization, and Djibouti's growing role as a regional logistics, trade, and investment hub. Policy discussions following the national celebrations focused on accelerating economic diversification, strengthening public sector reforms, improving debt management, and expanding productive sectors while maintaining the country's position as the principal gateway for Ethiopia's international trade. Regionally, IGAD continued advancing cross-border cooperation by finalizing preparations for pilot Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) qualification programs involving Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, and South Sudan, reflecting the organization's continued commitment to regional integration and workforce development.

On the strategic and economic front, Djibouti continued strengthening its position as a critical energy and logistics hub for the Horn of Africa. Senior government officials held discussions with Horizon Djibouti Terminals Limited to advance feasibility studies for expanding fuel storage and hydrocarbon infrastructure, supporting long-term regional energy security amid evolving Red Sea dynamics. The government also finalized implementation timelines for a \$750 million financing framework with the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC), directing investments toward strategic energy imports, food security, healthcare logistics, and national supply chain resilience. Together, these developments reinforced Djibouti's strategy of combining strong partnerships with Ethiopia, expanded international investment, modern infrastructure, and regional diplomacy to consolidate its position as one of the Horn of Africa's most important centers for trade, connectivity, and economic cooperation.

6. South Sudan

South Sudan's National Elections Commission announced on June 22 that the country's first general election since independence will be held on December 22, 2026, formally triggering the six-month countdown mandated by the National Elections Act. The

announcement, delivered by NEC Chairperson Professor Abednego Akok Kacuol in Juba, was the fifth rescheduling of a vote originally due in 2015. The Commission acknowledged openly that it faces severe funding shortfalls and unresolved legal gaps and called on the government to urgently amend existing frameworks and provide basic operational resources within a short period.

The core problem the announcement left unaddressed is that the R-ARCSS requires three prerequisites to be completed before elections: a permanent constitution, a national population census, and institutional reforms including the unification of armed forces. None is finished. The SPLM-IO was excluded from the political consultations that reaffirmed the December date, despite being a principal signatory to the peace agreement. Machar himself remains on trial in Juba on treason charges his faction describes as politically motivated, appearing periodically in a cage before a special court. A UN inquiry has separately found that South Sudan's leadership is systematically dismantling the peace agreement the election is nominally meant to complete. The NEC chairperson closed his announcement with a call to democratic ownership, telling citizens that voting is the only constitutional route to political power. The formulation was accurate as far as it went, which was not very far.

South Sudan's Economic Cluster, chaired by Vice President James Wani Igga, resolved on June 26 to lift the withdrawal limits that commercial banks have imposed on customers. For months, citizens queuing outside banks were limited to withdrawing between SSP 50,000 and SSP 100,000 per visit, regardless of account balances. The cap, originally introduced by the Bank of South Sudan in September 2024 at a ceiling of SSP 10 million, had progressively tightened as the physical cash crisis deepened. The cluster directed the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank to implement the decision and develop strategies to address underlying financial challenges and approved the formation of an Inter-Agency Economic Reform Task Force. The announcement brought symbolic relief but limited immediate prospect of resolution, since the withdrawal limits were a symptom rather than a cause of the liquidity crisis. The South Sudanese pound remains among the weakest currencies on the continent, oil export disruptions have constrained dollar inflows, and the parallel cash economy operating in foreign currency has grown in proportion to the collapse of public trust in the formal banking system.

This same week, South Sudan and the United States signed a \$146 million health sector agreement, a notable commitment in a period when US development financing across the region has been contracting.

Kiir awarded an honorary general's rank in the South Sudan People's Defense Forces to 91-year-old Israeli veteran David Uri Ben-Uziel, known during the liberation period by the nom de guerre General John, in a ceremony at the State House in Juba. Ben-Uziel, a former Mossad operative, led a clandestine mission to support the Anyanya One rebel

movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, working under the command of Joseph Lagu during the first Sudanese civil war. His team constructed a makeshift airstrip inside a forest to parachute in supplies from Kenya, including medicines, uniforms, and weapons. Kiir described the honor as recognition of the bonds formed during the liberation struggle and their lasting significance in the bilateral relationship. The ceremony coincided with a meeting between South Sudan's Foreign Minister and his Israeli counterpart, with both sides discussing expanding ties and aid. The recognition of Ben-Uziel at this moment in the political calendar carries a diplomatic signal worth reading: with Juba navigating relationships across an increasingly fragmented regional environment, the public affirmation of the Israel relationship is a calibrated choice.

On border security, South Sudan's NSS director General Akec Tong Aleu travelled to Khartoum on June 25 and met Burhan, with discussions focused on bilateral relations and joint measures to secure the shared border. The meeting was also attended by Sudan's General Intelligence Service director Ahmed Ibrahim Mufaddal. It builds on a visit by Sovereign Council Deputy Chairman Malik Agar to Juba in January, indicating a sustained security-track channel between the two governments even as Sudan's internal conflict generates displacement flows that directly affect Upper Nile State.

The humanitarian situation in Jonglei and along the Ethiopian border continued to deteriorate. UNHCR's Gambella sub-office reported ongoing arrivals of South Sudanese crossing into Ethiopia, with the emergency response in Gambella under severe strain across protection, education, and shelter. CARE documented the situation of mothers and families displaced from Jonglei, describing conditions of acute need amid limited humanitarian access. Over 120 SPLM-IO members defected to the government's SPLM-IG in Koch County of Unity State, citing positive leadership by local commanders, a development the government framed as evidence of political consolidation but which the opposition described as coercion under conditions of active conflict.

Assessment

The election date announcement is the week's most consequential development, but its significance lies less in the date itself than in what its announcement before the prerequisites are met reveals about the government's approach to democratic transition. Setting a date creates international legitimacy pressure and a procedural timeline, but it does not create a permanent constitution, unify a divided command structure, or return the principal opposition leader to political participation. The SPLM-IO's exclusion from the consultations that produced the date means the election, if held, would proceed without the faction that the peace agreement is designated as the primary opposition. The banking decision and the health deal both point to genuine economic distress, managed through measures that address access rather than the underlying structural causes. South Sudan

ends the week having set the most consequential date in its fifteen-year history under conditions that ask that date's credibility a live and contested question.

7. Somalia and Somaliland

Somalia

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud speaking during Somalia's Independence Day celebrations on the night of June 25 declared that his administration would undertake a comprehensive review of its policy toward Somaliland and the northern regions. The President emphasized that the policy reassessment aims to rebuild trust and identify approaches capable of addressing the concerns of communities in the northern areas. He reiterated the government's commitment to achieving national unity through dialogue and patience while acknowledging the challenges that have historically complicated efforts to resolve the political divide.

A serious political controversy came up following remarks made by Defence Minister Ahmed Moalim Fiqi during his visit to Beledweyne, the capital of Hiran region. The Minister stated that opposition leaders were alive solely because President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud had chosen to spare them which a comment that immediately drew widespread condemnation. Clan militias from rival factions reportedly attempted to block the Minister's departure from the area.

The situation escalated further when former intelligence chief Abdullahi Mohamed Ali Sanbalolshe publicly responded to the Defence Minister's comments. Sanbalolshe accused the government of orchestrating a killing plot targeting him, former Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire and dozens of clan elders. He framed Fiqi's remarks as confirmation of the alleged plot rather than a just threat.

The Somali National Army with the support of local forces conducted offensive operations targeting Al-Shabaab positions in the Middle Shabelle region over a three day period from June 24 to June 26, 2026. According to a statement issued by the Defence Ministry on June 26 at least 30 Al-Shabaab fighters were killed during coordinated strikes against group holds in Gayfo, Ruun Idiris and Cali Gaduud. Military officials reported that the targeted locations were being used by Al-Shabaab to store weapons, military equipment and operational supplies. The initial offensive began on June 24 with an attack on an Al-Shabaab facility in Gayfo followed by follow up operations on June 25 that struck three additional sites in Ruun Idiris and another gathering point for fighters in Cali Gaduud which military sources described as a staging area for planned attacks.

US AFRICOM Resumes Airstrikes Against Al-Shabaab After Brief Pause. United States Africa Command conducted a series of airstrikes against Al-Shabaab militants in southern Somalia on five separate days during the week ending June 27, 2026, marking the

resumption of American military operations after a month-long lull. According to statements from AFRICOM the strikes occurred primarily in the vicinity of Kismayo where the Al-Qaida affiliate has maintained an operational presence for many years. A specific strike was confirmed on June 23, 2026, in coordination with the Federal Government of Somalia and the Somali Armed Forces targeting Al-Shabaab elements near Quumbi approximately 23 kilometers southeast of Afmadow in the Lower Juba region. The operations have placed the U.S. military's strike campaign in Somalia on a record breaking pace for 2026 with the recent operations bringing the total count to 68 strikes for the year. AFRICOM officials clarified that the preceding month-long pause was not related to an operational stand down.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud delivered a speech during the Independence Day anniversary period that contained references to the concept of Greater Somalia. The President referred to Ethiopia's Somali Region, Kenya's Northeastern Province and Djibouti as missing parts of a unified Somali nation, reviving pan Somali nationalist sentiments that have historically been a source of regional tension. The rhetoric evokes memories of past conflicts, including the 1977-1978 Ogaden War.

Somali President Attends Djibouti Independence Day Celebrations. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud traveled to Djibouti on June 26 to participate in the country's Independence Day celebrations commemorating the 49th anniversary of Djibouti's independence from France. The President and his delegation were received at Djibouti's international airport by senior government officials. The visit also provided an opportunity for bilateral talks with President Ismail Guelleh, during which the two leaders discussed issues of mutual interest and regional cooperation.

EU Imposes Visa Restrictions on Somalia Amid Migrant Readmission Dispute. The European Union announced new visa restrictions on Somali citizens intensifying a growing dispute between Brussels and Mogadishu concerning the return of Somali nationals residing without legal status in European countries.

Following that, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud addressed the EU's decision to tighten visa procedures for Somali nationals reaffirming his government's readiness to receive Somali citizens who no longer have legal status in European countries. The President emphasized that Somalia has never refused to accept the return of its citizens but highlighted the primary challenge of verifying the identities of individuals being repatriated. He noted that some deportees returned to Somalia from Europe were later discovered not to be genuine Somali nationals raising serious concerns about the procedures used to establish nationality and complicating the verification process. The President distinguished between Somali migrants who had obtained legal status in Europe, expressing gratitude to host countries for granting such opportunities and those who had lost their legal status whom Somalia wishes to welcome back.

On another note, Somalia and Croatia formalized a Memorandum of Understanding on political consultations during a meeting in Dubrovnik, Croatia, on June. The agreement was signed by Somalia's Foreign Affairs Minister Abdisalam Ali and his Croatian counterpart Gordan Grlić Radman on the margins of the Dubrovnik Forum. The MoU establishes a framework for regular dialogue aimed at strengthening diplomatic relations and bilateral cooperation between the two countries in areas including politics, diplomacy, international cooperation and government to government engagement.

Somalia Joins Fifteen International Maritime Conventions in Major Legal Reform. The Ministry of Ports and Marine Transport announced on June 27 that Somalia has acceded to fifteen international maritime conventions, protocols, and legal instruments presenting the country's largest maritime legal reform since independence. The move is intended to modernize Somalia's maritime legal framework and align national regulations with international rules on shipping safety, maritime security, seafarer standards, and protection of the marine environment. The Ministry noted that Somalia had previously joined only three international maritime agreements since 1960. The newly ratified instruments cover a comprehensive range of areas including search and rescue at sea, seafarer training and certification, collision prevention, ship tonnage measurement, facilitation of maritime traffic, and safety of life at sea.

On different note the Somali Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press statement on June 23 welcoming the Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Iran as a positive step toward de-escalation, dialogue, and regional stability. Somalia commended the diplomatic approach and expressed support for peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms.

Somaliland

President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi Irro returned to Hargeisa on June 25 to a jubilant public reception following a week long working visit to Israel. The welcome reflected public interest in the outcomes of what supporters describe as a major diplomatic breakthrough and a new chapter in Somaliland's international engagement. Across major roads and intersections in the capital, large government themed billboards showcasing key moments from the President's visit including meetings with senior Israeli leaders and the signing of cooperation agreements had been erected ahead of his arrival. The public displays, which began appearing before the President's return, celebrated what is regarded as one of the most significant diplomatic missions in Somaliland's modern history. One billboard featured President Irro alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with the message The people of the Republic of Somaliland thank the Government and people of Israel for the recognition they have granted to their country. Another prominently displayed message described the visit as a victory for Somaliland's diplomacy.

On another front, Somaliland authorities ordered all undocumented foreign nationals to leave the territory within ten days which is an act described as essential for strengthening national security and stability. State Minister for Interior Abdirashid Mohamed Ahmed instructed security agencies to enforce the order carefully stating the security agencies are instructed to organize undocumented foreign nationals so that they can leave the country within 10 days. "I am instructing the public to report anyone they suspect to the security agencies. We are protecting our security; it is everyone's responsibility." The Minister emphasized that Somaliland has received growing international attention and expects more foreign investment, making security and stability a priority. He urged the public not to take the law into their own hands stressing that handling matters involving undocumented foreigners is the responsibility of the government and immigration authorities. Foreign nationals legally residing in Somaliland were assured they are safe and will not be affected by the order.

The National Electoral Commission of the Republic of Somaliland held a high-level consultative meeting at its headquarters on June 22 with the National Political Parties Taskforce. During the meeting NEC officials presented a preliminary voter registration plan, outlining the commission's overall vision, key objectives, guiding principles, and ongoing preparations for the implementation of a comprehensive voter registration process across Somaliland.

Somaliland Defence Minister Mohamed Yusuf Ali speaking on the side lines of a business conference in Tel Aviv during the President's visit confirmed that Israel is training Somaliland's military and police forces but dismissed reports that Israel was in negotiations to establish a military base in the territory as rumours. He stated There is no Israeli military presence or military bases in Somaliland. But Israel is helping Somaliland. They are supporting to train some of our police and military.

Yemen's Houthi movement issued a strong warning against any Israeli military presence in Somaliland following reports alleging that Israel had deployed a small contingent of troops to Somaliland and discussions over the possible establishment of an Israeli military base. The threat highlights regional concerns regarding the growing security cooperation between Israel and Somaliland and the potential implications for the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden maritime security environment. Somaliland authorities and Israeli officials have consistently denied that any Israeli military base exists or is being planned.

The Federal Government of Somalia continued its diplomatic efforts to counter Somaliland's international engagements. Somalia urged Arab League members to avoid relations and investment with Somaliland and to refrain from allowing use of their territories, ports, or financial systems for facilitating ties with Somaliland with Somalia considering Somaliland to be part of its territory. Somalia has previously described any

engagement with the "secessionist administration of the northern region of Somalia" as "a violation of its sovereignty."

8. Yemen

Yemen's Chargé d'Affaires in Addis Ababa (a representative of the PLC, the internationally recognized government), Ambassador Abdulqader Hadi, held talks with Ethiopian Foreign Ministry Director General for Middle East, Asia and Indian Ocean Affairs Ambassador Dewano Khader on strengthening bilateral relations and expanding cooperation across various sectors. While the meeting produced no concrete agreements, it reflects Yemen's continued efforts to maintain diplomatic engagement with Ethiopia despite its prolonged internal conflict and growing regional turmoil. For Ethiopia, the consultations underscore the strategic importance of Yemen as a neighbour across the Red Sea and as a key stakeholder in the security of the Bab el-Mandeb corridor, whose stability remains increasingly intertwined with developments in the Horn of Africa and the wider Middle East.

Houthi leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi warned that the group would target any Israeli presence in Somaliland, following Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi's visit to Jerusalem and the opening of a Somaliland representative office there. The Houthis argued that an Israeli foothold in Somaliland would amount to an attempt to project influence over the Gulf of Aden, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and the wider Red Sea, pledging to act unilaterally if necessary. The statement marks a notable expansion of Houthi strategic messaging beyond the immediate theatre of Yemen and Israel's war, extending the group's security perimeter into the Horn of Africa and further linking Red Sea geopolitics with political developments on the African side of the Bab el-Mandeb. It also suggests that any future Israeli-Somaliland security cooperation could become another potential flashpoint in the increasingly interconnected Red Sea security environment.

Israeli media reported that the Israeli military has updated its operational plans for Yemen and is preparing for the possibility of renewed fighting with the Houthi movement, including potential strikes against the group's leadership. Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz stated that Israel's "account" with the Houthis remains open and warned that the group would pay a heavy price for attacks against Israeli targets and interests. The reports suggest that Israel is seeking to maintain military pressure on the Houthis despite the recent de-escalation with Iran and is prepared to exploit opportunities to target senior Houthi commanders. The developments point to the increasing likelihood that the Yemen front will remain an active theatre in Israel's broader regional confrontation with the Iran-aligned "Axis of Resistance", while also raising the prospect of renewed disruptions to Red Sea security and maritime traffic.

9. Kenya

The week of June 22 to June 28, 2026, was one of the most politically revealing periods in Kenya's recent public life. It did not revolve around a single event, but around several overlapping tensions: the struggle for accountability after past protest killings, public suspicion toward foreign backed security and health projects, the government's continued search for infrastructure investment, and renewed scrutiny from international financial institutions. Together, these developments showed a country trying to remain a regional diplomatic and economic hub while facing deep domestic mistrust at home.

The first major issue of the week was the controversy over the United States backed Ebola quarantine facility at Laikipia Air Base near Nanyuki. On June 22, Health Minister Aden Duale was found in contempt of court for failing to stop construction despite an earlier court order. The facility was intended to host Americans exposed to Ebola during an outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but many Kenyans opposed it because Kenya had not recorded an Ebola case and because the project appeared to be moving forward without enough public consultation. The Law Society of Kenya and Katiba Institute challenged the plan, arguing that Kenya's health system was already overstretched and that the government had not properly addressed the risks or the public interest.

By June 23, Duale told the court that he had ordered an immediate halt to the project. Yet the controversy did not disappear. Reports that medical equipment and specialist staff had continued arriving, and that satellite imagery from June 22 showed additional tents, paved areas, and container like structures, strengthened the impression that the project had advanced despite judicial resistance. Politically, this became more than a health policy dispute. It became a sovereignty question. Many citizens saw the facility as an example of Kenya carrying risk for a powerful partner. The government, on the other hand, framed it as part of Kenya's long standing health and security partnership with the United States. That tension between strategic partnership and public consent defined the debate.

The second major development was economic and geopolitical. On June 24, Kenya signed a 154.2 billion shilling, or roughly \$1.2 billion, agreement with China Road and Bridge Corporation to expand Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. The project aimed to nearly triple the airport's annual passenger capacity from about 7.5 million to 22 million. It included a new terminal, upgrades to existing infrastructure, and improvements to both airside and landside operations. The deal was significant because it revived a major airport expansion effort after the collapse of the earlier Adani linked plan. It also showed Kenya's effort to defend Nairobi's role as an East African aviation hub at a time when Ethiopia and Rwanda are investing heavily in competing airport infrastructure.

This airport deal carried geopolitical meaning. Kenya was not simply building an airport; it was positioning itself in a regional competition over logistics, airlines, tourism, cargo,

diplomacy, and investor confidence. The fact that the contractor was Chinese also mattered. Kenya continues to balance relations with Western partners, China, African development finance institutions, and regional competitors. In the same week that the United States backed Ebola facility was facing court and public resistance, a Chinese backed infrastructure agreement moved forward as a symbol of Kenya's development ambitions. This contrast captured Kenya's foreign policy dilemma: the country wants external capital and strategic partnerships, but each relationship brings domestic political costs.

The most emotionally charged moment of the week came on June 25, the second anniversary of the deadly 2024 anti-government protests. Families of victims, activists, opposition figures, and ordinary citizens attempted to march toward Parliament to remember those killed and to demand justice and compensation. The 2024 protests had been triggered by proposed tax increases and the rising cost of living, and they ended with protesters breaching Parliament and security forces killing dozens. Two years later, those wounds remained open.

The government had recently announced a compensation program for nearly 2,000 victims of protest related human rights abuses. President William Ruto described the payments as an acknowledgment that harm had occurred, while insisting that the program was not an admission of guilt or a reward for violence. But for many families and activists, compensation without accountability was not enough. They wanted prosecutions, credible investigations, and guarantees that excessive force would not continue during future demonstrations.

The state response on June 25 deepened the contradiction. Police blocked major roads into Nairobi, barricaded Parliament, closed parts of the central business district, and used tear gas against demonstrators. Interior Minister Kipchumba Murkomen said 355 people had been arrested across Nairobi and other towns, defending the operation as necessary to protect businesses and prevent chaos. But journalists and witnesses reported that many ordinary Kenyans appeared to be among those detained. The sight of grieving families and activists being blocked from laying flowers near Parliament gave the day a powerful symbolic meaning. It suggested that the government wanted to control not only protest, but also public memory.

Opposition leaders used the moment to align themselves with the victims' families and the broader accountability movement. Figures including Kalonzo Musyoka, Martha Karua, and former Chief Justice David Maraga marched alongside activists and families. Their presence showed that the protest anniversary was not only about mourning the dead; it was also becoming part of the early political battlefield ahead of the 2027 election cycle. The government's challenge is that the youth led protest movement is not fully controlled by traditional opposition parties. It is partly leaderless, digital, emotional, and

built around anger toward corruption, police violence, economic pressure, and political arrogance. That makes it harder for the state to manage through normal elite negotiation.

June 25 also brought another important development: the International Monetary Fund said it had shared a draft governance diagnostic assessment with the Kenyan government and was waiting for comments. This assessment was designed to identify governance weaknesses and corruption vulnerabilities, and it could shape talks over a new IMF supported program. This was politically important because Kenya's fiscal choices have been at the center of repeated unrest since 2024. Tax increases, debt pressure, spending priorities, and allegations of corruption all feed public anger. An IMF backed governance review therefore touched the same nerve as the protests: whether the state can ask citizens for sacrifice while convincing them that public money is being managed honestly.

A separate governance issue also appeared during the week when Kenyan prosecutors prepared murder charges against nine students accused of starting the Utumishi Girls School dormitory fire that killed 16 girls in May. Although this was not a geopolitical event, it added to the week's broader theme of state responsibility and institutional failure. The case raised questions about school safety, overcrowded dormitories, emergency exits, and enforcement of basic public safety standards. The Education Ministry had already suspended the school principal and closed hundreds of schools after earlier fire tragedies. This showed that Kenyan politics during the week was not only about elections and foreign policy, but also about whether public institutions can protect citizens in everyday life.

By June 26 to June 28, the political atmosphere was shaped largely by the aftermath of the June 25 demonstrations. The central question was whether Kenya's government could convert compensation and public statements into genuine accountability. The security response suggested that the state still viewed mass mobilization primarily as a threat to order. Activists and families, however, framed the same mobilization as a demand for justice. This gap between state security language and citizen rights language remains one of the central conflicts in Kenyan politics.

10. The Gulf Countries

Saudi Arabia

On June 25 Prince Faisal bin Farhan, Minister of Foreign Affairs represented the Kingdom at the joint Gulf Cooperation Council and United States ministerial meeting hosted in Manama, Bahrain. The session was co-chaired by U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Bahraini officials. The discussions provided a critical forum for addressing pressing regional security challenges with a particular focus on the situation in the Strait of Hormuz and the imperative of ensuring maritime navigation security. During the meeting, Secretary Rubio and the GCC ministers reviewed the implementation of the

understanding between the United States and Iran concerning its nuclear program and missile capabilities. The Kingdom through His Highness the Foreign Minister scored its commitment to diplomatic solutions and de-escalation advocating for dialogue as the primary means to resolve issues and maintain regional stability.

In parallel with the multilateral engagement in Manama, the Kingdom continued its bilateral dialogue with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan held a telephone conversation with his Iranian counterpart, Mr. Abbas Araghchi during this period. Their discussions focused on the negotiations between the United States and Iran and the regional context. The exchange was part of the Kingdom's continued efforts to advance dialogue and review regional developments within the framework of the bilateral understanding reached in 2023.

Emerging around June 24 reports have indicated that Saudi Arabia is actively preparing to host a summit in Riyadh. This initiative aims to bring together the Gulf states and Iran and potentially other regional neighbours for a forum focused on post-war reconciliation, rebuilding diplomatic ties and enhancing regional cooperation. This initiative is positioned as a distinct and complementary track to the separate US-Iran nuclear negotiations.

On June 28 Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia held a telephone call with President Emmanuel Macron of the French Republic. Their conversation centered on the latest developments in the region. The Crown Prince and President Macron discussed diplomatic efforts to achieve de-escalation, the importance of securing regional security and stability and the critical need to uphold the freedom of navigation, specifically in the strategic Strait of Hormuz. Both leaders expressed their support for broader diplomatic initiatives.

On June 28 a helicopter operated by Aloula Aviation which is a subsidiary of Saudi Aramco crashed near Ras Tanura. The Ministry of Energy has confirmed that all fourteen individuals on board were Saudi nationals and tragically perished in the incident. An official investigation has been launched to determine the cause of the crash. The incident has drawn national attention and regional and Arab leaders have conveyed their condolences to the families of the victims and to the leadership of the Kingdom. The Ministry of Energy is providing updates as the investigation progresses.

In line with its regional leadership role the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has led Gulf and Arab condemnation of recent Iranian actions. As reported on June 28, the Kingdom explicitly denounced the attacks that have impacted Gulf States. Saudi Arabia has called for immediate de-escalation to prevent a wider conflict while simultaneously supporting the implementation of a truce and advocating for stability talks concerning the Strait of Hormuz.

UAE

On 22–26 June, Abu Dhabi became a central stop in Secretary of State Marco Rubio's Gulf diplomacy. Rubio's visit was specifically aimed at reassuring Gulf partners that the emerging U.S.–Iran arrangement would not come at the expense of Gulf security. Emirati officials, like their counterparts elsewhere in the GCC, sought clarification on sanctions relief, maritime security arrangements, and how Washington intended to address Iran's missile and proxy networks. Rubio reiterated that any final agreement would protect Gulf allies and rejected the idea of Iran imposing tolls or restrictions on international shipping through Hormuz.

On 26 June, UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan held a rare direct call with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. The UAE emphasized the need to protect maritime corridors and ensure freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz while also urging adherence to the U.S.–Iran agreement. The call was notable because it represented one of the highest-level publicly reported UAE–Iran contacts since the conflict and signaled Abu Dhabi's preference for de-escalation and dialogue.

A broader strategic development throughout the week was growing Gulf concern that Iran had emerged from the war politically and strategically stronger than many Gulf governments had anticipated. Regional diplomats and analysts told Reuters that confidence in American security guarantees had been shaken, prompting Gulf states, including the UAE, to reassess long-term security assumptions and diversify diplomatic channels with regional actors.

The economic dimension also became increasingly important. As tensions around Hormuz intensified again toward the end of the week, Gulf financial markets reacted cautiously. Investors closely monitored shipping security, insurance costs, and energy exports. For the UAE, whose economy depends heavily on trade, logistics, ports, aviation, and energy exports, preserving confidence in maritime routes remained a top strategic concern.

Following the Iranian missile and drone attacks against Bahrain and Kuwait on 28 June, the UAE issued one of the strongest condemnations in the Gulf. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs described the attacks as a "flagrant violation" of Bahraini and Kuwaiti sovereignty and reaffirmed full solidarity with both countries. The statement reflected Abu Dhabi's concern that the collapse of the ceasefire framework could destabilize the entire Gulf security environment.

11. Africa and The Sahel Region

Mali

Between June 22 and June 29, 2026, Mali continued to prioritize national security, economic sovereignty, and the protection of strategic infrastructure amid a challenging regional security environment. Security monitoring remained intense following reports of unidentified aerial activity near Bamako, prompting continued vigilance by national defense authorities despite the absence of confirmed attacks or damage within the capital. Although armed confrontations around Bamako declined during the week, the security environment remained sensitive as authorities continued efforts to secure major transport routes and protect critical national infrastructure from insurgent threats affecting other parts of the country.

A major economic development during the week was the Malian government's successful acquisition of a majority 56 percent stake in the national telecommunications company SOTELMA, reversing its privatization after seventeen years. The agreement restored state control over one of the country's most important strategic communications assets, serving approximately 8.5 million subscribers. The move represented a significant step in Mali's broader policy of strengthening national economic sovereignty, expanding government oversight of strategic sectors, and reinforcing domestic control over critical digital infrastructure to support long-term national development and modernization.

Burkina Faso

Between June 23 and June 29, 2026, Burkina Faso's political and diplomatic agenda was dominated by a historic realignment of its foreign policy, marked by the formal termination of diplomatic relations with France and a continued emphasis on sovereign decision-making under the transitional government. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected a European Parliament resolution criticizing the country's human rights situation, describing it as interference in Burkina Faso's internal affairs and reaffirming the government's commitment to pursuing an independent foreign policy. This position culminated on June 26 when the government officially announced the severance of diplomatic relations with France, arguing that bilateral ties no longer reflected mutual respect or trust. Authorities subsequently ordered the closure of the French embassy within one week, making the decision one of the most significant shifts in Burkina Faso's external relations since the beginning of the transition and reinforcing the country's broader strategic reorientation.

Security remained centered on sustaining nationwide counter-insurgency operations and protecting critical transport corridors from militant activity. Security forces maintained heightened deployments across vulnerable regions to safeguard major highways, preserve the movement of goods and civilians, and strengthen territorial control in areas exposed to

armed attacks. These operations formed part of the government's broader effort to reinforce national stability while supporting ongoing economic activities despite persistent security challenges. The continued focus on protecting strategic corridors reflected the importance of maintaining internal connectivity and supporting state authority across the country.

Niger

During the week, Niger advanced a series of major political and diplomatic initiatives centered on national sovereignty, regional cooperation, and security. The transitional government formally notified the United Nations of its withdrawal from the International Criminal Court, reaffirming its policy of strengthening domestic judicial authority and sovereign decision-making. Diplomatically, Niamey continued negotiations with Benin regarding the reopening of their shared border, maintaining that any agreement should include robust security guarantees, intelligence cooperation, and mutual commitments to prevent hostile activities from either side of the frontier. The government also intensified coordination within the Alliance of Sahel States alongside Mali and Burkina Faso, reinforcing regional cooperation on political, economic, and security matters while deepening integration among the three member states.

Security operations remained focused on protecting vulnerable border regions from persistent terrorist threats. Nigerien defense forces sustained counterterrorism operations across the Tillabéri and Diffa regions in response to continued attacks by armed extremist groups operating near the country's frontiers. Alongside these operations, humanitarian authorities finalized food distribution plans under the 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan to support more than 1.5 million vulnerable and internally displaced people before the onset of the annual lean season. The week's developments reflected Niger's continued emphasis on strengthening sovereign institutions, expanding regional partnerships within the Sahel, maintaining pressure against insurgent groups, and addressing growing humanitarian needs.

DRC

Between June 22 and June 29, 2026, Djibouti's political and diplomatic agenda was dominated by the strengthening of its strategic partnership with Ethiopia, the expansion of industrial and financial cooperation with China and other international partners, and the commemoration of its forty-ninth Independence Day. President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh officially congratulated Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed following the Prosperity Party's victory in Ethiopia's legislative elections, describing the outcome as an important step for the continued development of the Ethiopia–Djibouti economic corridor and the broader stability of the Horn of Africa. Operating from its headquarters in Djibouti City, IGAD also welcomed Ethiopia's electoral process, reaffirming its support for regional stability and democratic institutions. These developments reinforced the enduring

strategic partnership between Addis Ababa and Djibouti, where economic interdependence, political coordination, and shared regional interests continue to serve as key pillars of stability and integration in the Horn of Africa. At the same time, Economy and Finance Minister Ilyas Moussa Dawaleh unveiled a new industrial cooperation roadmap in Beijing, seeking expanded Chinese investment in green industrial parks, salt processing, light manufacturing, and seafood industries as part of Djibouti's long-term economic transformation strategy.

Domestically, Djibouti celebrated the forty-ninth anniversary of its independence from France on June 27 through official ceremonies and national commemorations that highlighted the government's Vision 2035 agenda. The celebrations emphasized national unity, state-building, infrastructure modernization, and Djibouti's growing role as a regional logistics, trade, and investment hub. Policy discussions following the national celebrations focused on accelerating economic diversification, strengthening public sector reforms, improving debt management, and expanding productive sectors while maintaining the country's position as the principal gateway for Ethiopia's international trade. Regionally, IGAD continued advancing cross-border cooperation by finalizing preparations for pilot Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) qualification programs involving Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, and South Sudan, reflecting the organization's continued commitment to regional integration and workforce development.

On the strategic and economic front, Djibouti continued strengthening its position as a critical energy and logistics hub for the Horn of Africa. Senior government officials held discussions with Horizon Djibouti Terminals Limited to advance feasibility studies for expanding fuel storage and hydrocarbon infrastructure, supporting long-term regional energy security amid evolving Red Sea dynamics. The government also finalized implementation timelines for a \$750 million financing framework with the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC), directing investments toward strategic energy imports, food security, healthcare logistics, and national supply chain resilience. Together, these developments reinforced Djibouti's strategy of combining strong partnerships with Ethiopia, expanded international investment, modern infrastructure, and regional diplomacy to consolidate its position as one of the Horn of Africa's most important centers for trade, connectivity, and economic cooperation.

Chad

Between June 23 and June 29, 2026, Chad's political and security agenda remained overwhelmingly shaped by the continuing conflict in neighboring Sudan and its humanitarian consequences. The government concentrated on managing the rapidly growing influx of Sudanese refugees, which exceeded 932,000 during the week, placing significant pressure on public services and host communities across the eastern provinces

of Ouaddaï and Wadi Fira. National discussions increasingly focused on strengthening humanitarian coordination, preserving social cohesion, and improving mechanisms to manage competition over water, grazing land, and other natural resources in border areas affected by large-scale displacement.

Diplomatically, Chad continued to position itself as a constructive regional actor while maintaining a policy of neutrality toward the Sudanese conflict. International engagement intensified after senior European representatives announced plans to consult President Mahamat Idriss Déby on humanitarian and regional stabilization initiatives aimed at supporting dialogue and reducing cross-border tensions. Throughout the week, N'Djamena maintained balanced diplomatic engagement with regional and international partners, emphasizing humanitarian cooperation, border stability, and peaceful conflict management without formally aligning with either side in Sudan's civil war.

Security developments remained focused on protecting Chad's eastern frontier against the spillover effects of the Sudanese conflict. The Chadian Armed Forces sustained reinforced deployments along the nearly 1,400-kilometer border, maintaining strict surveillance and border control measures following repeated security incidents near frontier communities. Authorities continued enforcing restrictions on uncontrolled cross-border movement while strengthening military readiness to safeguard national territory, preserve border security, and prevent further regional instability from affecting Chad's internal security environment.

12. North Africa

Libya

Foreign ministers from the United States, Turkey, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia recently issued a joint statement fully endorsing the United Nations roadmap for Libyan elections. Meeting as the Cairo Quartet, these nations strongly affirmed their collective support for Libya's sovereignty, unity, and pending electoral timeline. This crucial diplomatic development significantly reinforces international pressure on fractured Libyan political factions to cooperate and promptly finalize democratic transitions.

Building on this international momentum, Libya's United Nations-led technical committee successfully reached a vital consensus regarding the framework for upcoming presidential elections. Comprising representatives from the House of Representatives and High State Council, the committee finalized these proposals during a virtual conference in Tunis. By successfully navigating these complex legal hurdles, this crucial agreement paves the definitive path toward establishing a legitimate basis for national elections.

To finalize these diplomatic and legal breakthroughs, United States Special Envoy Massad Boulos announced Washington's readiness to host a potential unity pact signing

ceremony. Speaking at a recent conference, Boulos noted that Libyan institutions have broadly agreed upon unified budgets and joint military commands. Emphasizing a purely facilitative American role, he projected that comprehensive national elections could successfully occur within the next two to three years.

Despite this diplomatic optimism, severe internal political divisions continue threatening Libya's fragile power-sharing agreements. Issa al-Aribi, a parliamentarian aligned with eastern factions, recently warned that the House of Representatives might abandon the unified national budget. Demanding immediate payment for regional pensions and stalled eastern development projects, this confrontation exposes persistent rifts that currently risk derailing critical financial unification agreements reached earlier this year.

Compounding these delicate fiscal challenges, the Central Bank of Libya recently experienced a significant cybersecurity incident affecting its digital infrastructure. Officials announced that the system breach, which initially disrupted various banking services earlier in June, has been fully contained. The bank reassured the financial sector that no customer data or account balances were compromised, successfully restoring public confidence in the nation's digital banking stability.

Amidst these financial and cyber threats, Libyan authorities are actively striving to improve institutional integrity and transparency. In Tunis, Libya's Administrative Control Authority signed a comprehensive memorandum of understanding with France's COFICERT. This strategic accord focuses on enhancing governance, anti-money laundering measures, and anti-corruption training. Officials praised the vital partnership as a necessary step toward curbing financial crime and eventually attracting robust foreign investment.

Expanding upon efforts to rebuild the nation's economy, Acting Foreign Minister Taher Al-Baour recently hosted Indian Undersecretary Suresh Kumar in Tripoli. Their strategic diplomatic discussions centered heavily on expanding bilateral cooperation across crucial sectors, including energy, education, and infrastructure. Both governments expressed strong mutual interest in increasing trade and investments, thereby broadening Libya's foreign partnerships and securing essential development assistance for ongoing national reconstruction.

While diplomatic and economic reconstruction advances in the capital, violent clashes continue undermining stability beyond Tripoli. The Southern Liberation Movement recently launched an assault against forces aligned with Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army. Operating in the deeply fragmented Fezzan region, these southern insurgents captured several fighters and vehicles. This persistent armed contestation vividly illustrates how competing regional militias severely complicate comprehensive national reconciliation efforts.

This fragmented security environment consistently empowers organized crime networks, prompting aggressive countermeasures by state authorities. Misrata port officials recently intercepted a massive smuggling operation, successfully seizing over five tonnes of hashish carefully disguised among legitimate shipping containers. Representing one of Libya's largest drug busts, this critical operation disrupted a major trafficking route commonly utilized to finance illicit regional militias and launder money.

Algeria

Algeria continues to strengthen its multifaceted international partnerships, leveraging diplomatic, economic, and military channels to enhance its regional and global standing. In late June 2026, a parliamentary delegation from Algeria, led by Council of the Nation member Bouguerra Soltani, visited Azerbaijan to participate in the 20th Session of the Parliamentary Union of OIC Member States. During meetings with Azerbaijani officials, including Shahid Ismayilov, Chair of the Committee on Youth and Sports and head of the Azerbaijan-Algeria interparliamentary working group, both sides discussed expanding cooperation. They highlighted successful political and diplomatic relations, shared values, Azerbaijan's role in the Non-Aligned Movement, and opportunities in parliamentary diplomacy, cultural exchanges, humanitarian ties, and youth/student programs. Algeria values Azerbaijan's early recognition of its independence, viewing it as a foundation for deeper bilateral ties.

Building on Algeria's diplomatic outreach, economic engagements have gained momentum, as demonstrated by robust agreements signed with Oman during the 57th Algiers International Fair. Oman's participation, attended by Ambassador Saif bin Nasser Al-Badai and Oman Exports officials, resulted in multiple strategic memoranda of understanding and agreements between Omani and Algerian companies. These pacts focus on key sectors including logistics, food and fisheries, building materials, manufacturing, and commercial products. A delegation of 20 Omani firms showcased diverse offerings from heavy industry and agriculture to pharmaceuticals, perfumes, and handicrafts. The deals support Oman Vision 2040's goals for non-oil export growth and market diversification while opening new investment channels for Omani businesses in African markets through enhanced trade and B2B partnerships.

These economic and parliamentary initiatives complement Algeria's ongoing military cooperation with Russia, exemplified by the recent docking of Russian Northern Fleet vessels at the port of Oran. On June 22, 2026, a detachment including the guided-missile frigate Admiral Kasatonov (or similar vessels in the program) arrived for a four-day visit under the bilateral military cooperation framework. Such port calls underscore the depth of Algeria-Russia defense ties, facilitating naval diplomacy, logistical support, and strategic engagement in the Mediterranean. This activity aligns with Algeria's broader

strategy of balancing partnerships across domains, fostering stability and cooperation amid evolving geopolitical dynamics while reinforcing long-standing alliances.

13. Middle East

Iran-Israel Conflict

Diplomatic momentum initiated the week as the longest lull in the border conflict largely held, despite minor clashes involving Israeli tank shells near Tyre and drones over Beirut. Tensions remained palpable locally, reflecting the twenty casualties from prior shelling on June 20. Concurrently, a new round of direct talks opened in Washington, marking the highest-level dialogue since April. Lebanon's President Aoun insisted on a definitive timeline for Israeli withdrawal. United States officials observed that Lebanon appeared weakened following the recent interim agreement between Washington and Tehran. In response to the diplomatic push, Israeli spokesman Mencer asserted that Hezbollah remained the sole obstacle to peace, while Prime Minister Netanyahu confirmed troops would maintain their positions to counter lingering threats.

Negotiations in Washington progressed toward a "pilot zones" scheme designed to gradually transfer southern Lebanese territory from Israeli control to the Lebanese Armed Forces. United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio supported this transition by endorsing the vetting and training of Lebanese troops. Israeli Envoy Danon suggested a potential eventual withdrawal to the Litani River, though Prime Minister Netanyahu insisted the extensive security buffer zone would remain intact during his tenure. Following American briefings that incorrectly suggested a partial Israeli withdrawal had already occurred, both Israeli and Lebanese officials firmly denied any troop pullback. The Israeli military enforced the buffer zone, demanding the complete disarmament of Hezbollah before considering any major redeployment of its current military forces.

Divisions within the United States administration surfaced before the formal announcement of a mediated framework agreement. Speaking from the United Arab Emirates, Vice President Vance urged caution, stating that ongoing bombardments threatened peace prospects. Conversely, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, in Switzerland, vehemently defended Israel's military campaign targeting Hezbollah infrastructure. Despite these differing tones, Rubio unveiled a formal framework in Washington outlining a phased Israeli withdrawal, Lebanese Army deployment, and a military coordination group. To reinforce this initial deal, the United States pledged one hundred million dollars in immediate humanitarian aid and thirty million dollars for Lebanese military support. Officials emphasized the severe war toll underlying this urgency, citing approximately four thousand Lebanese and thirty-two Israeli fatalities.

Regional actors cautiously welcomed the diplomatic progress, with Egypt playing a prominent supporting role behind the scenes. On June 27, Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr

Abdelatty publicly praised the newly brokered framework and urged Israel to execute a gradual withdrawal from Lebanese territory, advocating for the full restoration of national sovereignty. Emphasizing the necessary implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701, Egypt also highlighted the devastating humanitarian impact, citing an updated toll of 4,246 killed and 12,190 wounded. Cairo continued its quiet diplomatic efforts concerning Gaza ceasefires and border stability, remaining highly vigilant about the conflict's economic spillovers, particularly the threat to Red Sea shipping and the severe revenue losses affecting the strategically vital Suez Canal corridor.

The optimism surrounding the Washington framework encountered immediate resistance on the ground from Hezbollah and its political allies. Hezbollah deputy leader Naim Qassem vehemently rejected the security arrangement, dismissing it as null and void and characterizing the terms as an outright surrender to Israel. In Beirut, supporters mobilized to demonstrate against the American mediated deal, reflecting widespread popular distrust. Amal Speaker Nabih Berri similarly condemned the diplomatic framework, reinforcing the unified opposition among Lebanese Shiite leadership. Vowing continued resistance, Hezbollah officials stated that any ongoing Israeli presence justified retaliatory measures. This outright rejection severely complicated the framework's viability, setting the stage for potential flare-ups on the margins as the group refused to accept the phased redeployment maps.

In stark contrast to Hezbollah's defiant stance, Israeli leadership embraced the security provisions of the new deal while maintaining a rigid military posture. Defense Minister Israel Katz praised the retention of an active security zone and issued direct orders for troops to prepare for an extended stay in southern Lebanon. He emphasized that the military would not withdraw prematurely and must remain operational as long as necessary until Hezbollah is entirely disarmed. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reinforced this uncompromising approach by publicly presenting a map detailing the two designated pilot zones. This simultaneous commitment to the diplomatic framework and an indefinite forward deployment illustrated Israel's strategy of sustaining maximum pressure to ensure all border security demands were definitively met.

Persistent low-level military engagements consistently tested the resilience of the diplomatic progress throughout the week. On June 24, an Israeli drone strike eliminated two individuals in southern Lebanon, with Israeli authorities claiming they were militants while local sources identified them as civilians. This pattern of targeted interventions continued despite the broader pause in large-scale hostilities. By June 27, immediately following the framework's signing, Israeli warplanes and drones launched strikes on the southern towns of Markaba and Nabatieh al-Fawqa. Hitting outside the agreed pilot zones, these strikes resulted in one civilian fatality and two injuries. These sporadic yet lethal security incidents demonstrated how precarious the environment remained, as

ongoing tactical strikes continuously threatened to unravel the meticulously negotiated regional ceasefires.

The week's most significant military escalation occurred on June 28 when Israeli forces deliberately destroyed massive underground infrastructure in southern Lebanon. Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Katz proudly announced the demolition of a sophisticated two hundred-meter Hezbollah tunnel in the town of Majdal Zoun. During this calculated operation, the military seized hundreds of weapons and multiple rocket launchers. Because the United States had been informed beforehand, the strike appeared strategically coordinated despite the recent framework agreement. Hezbollah immediately condemned the destruction as a blatant breach of the ceasefire and vowed a forceful response. Occurring amidst a humanitarian crisis that has displaced over one million Lebanese citizens, the demolition underscored Israel's determination to dismantle hostile border capabilities unilaterally.

Parallel to the Levant crisis, critical diplomatic maneuvers successfully de-escalated a dangerous confrontation in the broader Gulf region. Following an interim agreement that involved temporarily waiving sanctions, Washington and Tehran had sought to stabilize vital shipping lanes through the Strait of Hormuz. After a brief resumption of mutual attacks involving maritime targets and military bases, an unnamed American official confirmed on June 28 that both nations agreed to immediately halt all offensive strikes. This crucial bilateral decision to stand down allowed for the renewal of technical talks aimed at permanently securing the shipping corridor. This détente effectively eased global oil market anxieties, carefully containing the regional spillover even as the volatile situation along the Lebanese border remained fundamentally unresolved.

Turkey

In preparation for the upcoming NATO summit in Ankara, the Turkish government has significantly intensified its domestic security protocols. Turkish security forces conducted a sweeping, coordinated anti-terror operation across the capital, resulting in the detention of 209 suspects alleged to have links to extremist groups, including the Islamic State and various far-left organizations. This aggressive security sweep coincided with Ankara's declaration of a 13-day ban on all public gatherings around the summit venue. While authorities justified the operations as essential preemptive measures to guarantee safety for visiting heads of state, opposition parties criticized the sweeping actions as an excessive use of security pretexts designed to prevent anti-NATO demonstrations.

This domestic tightening of security quickly spilled over into the media sphere, sparking sharp international condemnation regarding civil liberties and press freedom. Dozens of independent and opposition-leaning Turkish journalists representing prominent outlets like Cumhuriyet and Sozcu were abruptly denied media accreditation to cover the NATO event without any formal justification. Human rights organizations and media unions

immediately protested the exclusions, arguing that NATO and host authorities are collaborating to insulate the event from critical domestic press. Compounding these worries, the ongoing security raids resulted in the formal arrest of prominent figures, including LGBTQ+ rights activist and journalist Yildiz Tar, fueling broader allegations that the state is actively utilizing summit logistics to suppress dissenting local voices.

While Turkey maintains an uncompromising grip on internal dissent, its high-stakes summit diplomacy has successfully advanced long-term defense objectives with Western allies. President Erdoğan announced plans for legislative reforms to accelerate the disarmament of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, signaling an aggressive push against Kurdish insurgents. This domestic policy aligns with a major breakthrough in military ties, as the US administration notified Congress of a seven-hundred-million-dollar deal to supply General Electric jet engines for Turkey's indigenous KAAN fighter jet program. This crucial defense agreement sets a highly cooperative tone for the upcoming bilateral meeting between Erdoğan and US President Trump at the Ankara summit, reflecting a notable thawing of past transatlantic tensions over military procurements.

Although Turkey has successfully strengthened its geopolitical standing and military partnerships, its financial sector faces urgent warning signs that could undermine foreign capital inflows. Financial index provider MSCI officially issued a stark warning regarding significant structural transparency and coordinated trading concerns within the Turkish equity market. International institutional investors have repeatedly highlighted instances of artificial price inflation due to an inadequate rule-based framework for calculating a true free-float market capitalization. MSCI noted that unless the Capital Markets Board of Turkey implements tangible and credible market infrastructure reforms, the country risks a formal review and potential reclassification by November 2026, creating a serious economic hurdle for Istanbul's liberalized market ambitions.

Paralleling these complex economic frictions, Turkey's international standing is experiencing further diplomatic strain due to persistent territorial disputes with the European Union. The European bloc publicly scolded Ankara for excluding the Republic of Cyprus from high-level preparatory meetings for the upcoming COP31 United Nations climate conference, scheduled to take place in Antalya. Turkey defended the exclusion by stating that Cypriot involvement should solely occur under formal UN auspices, a stance stemming from Ankara's exclusive recognition of the northern Turkish Cypriot administration. This diplomatic snub has drawn sharp condemnation from Brussels, which demands equal treatment for all member states, threatening to complicate EU-Turkey relations and potentially overshadow Turkey's broader global climate leadership goals.

Syria

During a recent United Nations Security Council session in New York, Deputy Envoy Claudio Cordone cautioned that Syria's political transition has reached a critical tipping point. He emphasized that the nation's future stability relies heavily on accelerating political progress. Meanwhile, Syrian and Russian representatives attributed regional destabilization to Israel's border activities, highlighting the complex international engagement surrounding the fragile transitional phase and ongoing regional friction.

Compounding these political challenges, a recent UN report highlighted significant delays in forming Syria's transitional legislature. More than eight months after the initial elections, the People's Assembly remains incomplete. President Ahmed al-Sharaa has yet to appoint the remaining sixty of the 180 parliamentary seats as mandated by the roadmap. This prolonged delay has sparked widespread anxiety regarding governance stability and the overall credibility of the interim political institutions.

These institutional delays are mirrored by stalled local reconciliation efforts, particularly concerning the Druze-majority Sweida region. Internal UN assessments reveal that the September 2025 roadmap for Sweida's political reintegration has completely stalled amidst rising kidnappings and deep-seated local divisions. Envoy Cordone warned that unresolved grievances could push some Druze factions toward secession, signaling severe political rifts that currently threaten the fundamental unity of the newly transitioned Syrian state.

In an attempt to ease mounting public discontent from these internal crises, the Syrian Ministry of Energy implemented nationwide fuel price cuts of between fourteen and twenty percent. Announced on June 27 and effective immediately, the scheme significantly lowered gasoline and liquid petroleum gas costs. Energy Minister al-Bashir framed this reduction as a vital economic reform designed to balance market stability while providing desperately needed consumer relief across the country.

Alongside economic reforms aimed at stabilizing society, the Syrian government has aggressively targeted organized crime, recently announcing a major crackdown on illicit drug networks. The Drug Enforcement Administration orchestrated coordinated raids across Homs and Idlib, arresting two prominent traffickers. Authorities successfully seized weapons and approximately 600,000 Captagon pills. This decisive operation demonstrates the regime's commitment to protecting social order and dismantling the lucrative networks that finance domestic insurgencies.

Despite these domestic law enforcement victories, severe extremist threats persist within the capital, tragically underscored by a devastating car bombing at Saint Elijah's Mar Elias Orthodox Church. The Sunday evening attack in eastern Damascus killed at least nine congregants and wounded twenty-five others. ISIS quickly claimed responsibility for

the massacre, which stands as one of the deadliest sectarian attacks since the regime change, deeply shaking public confidence in urban security.

Addressing this resurgent terrorist threat, United States forces conducted a targeted airstrike in northwestern Syria, successfully eliminating senior ISIS commander Ali Husayn al-Ulaywi. The Pentagon confirmed that the militant leader was actively planning further attacks within Syrian territory. This coordinated strike severely weakens ISIS's operational capacity during a critical period, demonstrating robust, ongoing counterterrorism cooperation between the U.S.-led coalition and President al-Sharaa's newly established transitional government.

This bilateral security cooperation has also prompted unconventional diplomatic requests from Washington. During the recent G7 summit in France, U.S. President Donald Trump publicly urged Israel to allow Syria to engage Lebanese Hezbollah militants directly. Praising President al-Sharaa, Trump suggested that Damascus should shoulder the heavy lifting against Hezbollah. This surprising proposal shocked regional observers, exposing shifting American strategies in the Levant and applying immense geopolitical pressure on Syria.

Syrian leadership swiftly rejected the American president's controversial proposal, firmly denying any intentions to militarily intervene in neighboring Lebanon. President al-Sharaa and media adviser Ahmed Zaidan dismissed the comments as misunderstood rumors, insisting their support for Beirut remains strictly diplomatic. Emphasizing profound respect for Lebanese sovereignty, the government's stance aligned with broad public opposition to regional entanglement, effectively preventing a potential widening of the ongoing Levantine conflict.

While diligently avoiding Lebanese entanglement, Damascus remains firmly focused on securing its southern borders against external pressures. At the UN Security Council, Syrian Ambassador Ibrahim Olabi forcefully demanded that Israel withdraw from southwestern Syrian territories seized after the recent regime collapse. Citing continuous detentions and shelling, Olabi condemned these actions as blatant violations of the 1974 Golan disengagement agreement, heavily underscoring Syria's unwavering territorial claims and diplomatic persistence.

Reinforcing this diplomatic offensive, the Syrian Foreign Ministry issued a strong early morning condemnation of recent Israeli military incursions into the Quneitra and Daraa provinces. Damascus fiercely denounced the cross-border artillery shelling as a severe violation of national sovereignty and international law. By formally urging the United Nations to enforce the established disengagement lines, the government continues to leverage international pressure, which could significantly impact ongoing regional ceasefire discussions.

14. Global Powers

The June 17 Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) faces an existential crisis after a weekend of intense military exchanges. Following sharp warnings from Iranian diplomats that any commercial vessels attempting to bypass Iran's designated route through the Strait of Hormuz would drastically escalate regional friction, Iranian forces launched a series of missile and drone strikes targeting U.S. military assets stationed in Kuwait and Bahrain. In direct response to this attack, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) forces executed targeted airstrikes on June 26. U.S. aircraft hit multiple high-value targets inside Iran, specifically destroying Iranian missile and drone storage repositories alongside coastal radar installations.

While Vice President J.D. Vance publicly maintained that Washington holds all the strategic cards in this dispute, the realities on the ground forced an immediate diplomatic pivot. Early this morning, American officials confirmed that both nations have agreed to a temporary stand-down, with bilateral delegations rushing to a newly scheduled, high-stakes emergency summit in Qatar to salvage the maritime transit framework. This sudden escalation completely overshadowed last week's brief diplomatic breakthrough where Iran had conditionally agreed to the return of United Nations nuclear inspectors to its facilities.

Directly preceding the weekend's clashes, Secretary of State Marco Rubio concluded a high-profile diplomatic tour through the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Bahrain, culminating in a critical ministerial meeting with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in Manama. Rubio's objective was to iron out the ambiguities left by the initial MoU, specifically targeting a loophole regarding who controls the Strait of Hormuz.

Standing alongside Gulf leaders, Rubio explicitly stated that the international community will uniformly reject any mechanism that imposes tolls or transit fees on commercial vessels navigating the strait. Despite domestic skepticism over the State Department's leverage in these negotiations, Rubio sought to reassure Gulf allies that entrenched U.S. asset allocations and integrated air defense systems in the region remain unchanged, even as Washington attempts to navigate a post-war military drawdown.

In a parallel attempt to decouple regional proxy warfare from the core U.S.-Iran negotiations, Washington hosted a formal Trilateral Framework Signing Ceremony involving senior American, Israeli, and Lebanese officials. The agreement was explicitly engineered to establish a permanent cessation of hostilities along the Blue Line and empower the sovereign Lebanese Armed Forces to assume full territorial control of southern Lebanon, effectively displacing non-state actors.

However, the practical enforcement of this pact disintegrated within forty-eight hours. Arguing that underground Hezbollah installations posed an immediate threat to its northern frontier, the Israeli military executed a series of heavy preemptive strikes in

southern Lebanon. This localized escalation occurred immediately after notifying Washington, highlighting the extreme difficulty the Trump administration faces in enforcing top-down stability across its overlapping alliance networks.

Outside of the Middle East, the State Department executed a series of targeted regulatory and humanitarian measures. Washington imposed a fresh wave of severe economic sanctions against specific procurement and financial networks actively fueling the civil war in Sudan. In East Africa, the administration also finalized a separate three-year bilateral health cooperation treaty with South Sudan, executing a key component of its "America First Global Health Strategy" to combat localized infectious diseases.

Simultaneously, the administration's Western Hemisphere policy is facing a severe operational test in South America following a catastrophic sequence of earthquakes in Venezuela. Secretary Rubio is currently scrambling to coordinate a large-scale, life-saving disaster response via specialized teams, an operation made profoundly complex by the fact that the United States formally deposed the Venezuelan executive leadership earlier this year, leaving a deeply fractured institutional landscape for American aid delivery.

On 24 June, the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany jointly expressed concern over new Chinese Coast Guard operations east of Taiwan. Beijing had described the deployment as a "maritime law-enforcement operation," but Taiwan and Western governments argued that the patrols threatened regional stability and freedom of navigation. Chinese vessels reportedly inspected commercial shipping and expanded activities into waters where Beijing has historically maintained a lighter presence. China defended the patrols as legitimate actions to protect sovereignty and maritime order.

The Taiwan issue intensified further on 25 June, when Taiwan conducted a major tabletop exercise simulating a Chinese maritime blockade. The scenario was based directly on concerns that Beijing could use coast guard and law-enforcement authorities, rather than conventional military force, to restrict access to the island. Taiwanese officials described this as one of the most realistic scenarios for future coercion, while China continued defending its recent maritime activities as lawful.

Throughout the week, Beijing continued responding to Taiwan's broader security initiatives. Chinese officials reiterated that they would take countermeasures against what they described as Taiwan's increasingly confrontational intelligence and security policies. This followed Beijing's earlier objections to a new Taiwanese platform designed to collect information regarding Chinese espionage activities.

China also closely monitored the aftermath of the U.S.–Iran negotiations. While Beijing was not directly involved in the Switzerland and Doha diplomatic tracks, it publicly welcomed continued dialogue and de-escalation efforts. Chinese officials presented

diplomacy as the preferred mechanism for resolving regional crises and highlighted China's support for negotiated settlements. Beijing's position allowed it to portray itself as a responsible stakeholder while avoiding direct entanglement in the negotiations.

On 26 June, President Xi Jinping met Cambodian Senate President Hun Sen in Beijing and pledged to establish a formal China–Cambodia security partnership. Xi emphasized deeper strategic trust, security cooperation, and coordination amid what he described as a changing international environment. The announcement is important because it demonstrates China's continued effort to expand security relationships in Southeast Asia while competing with U.S. influence in the region.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met Indian National Security Adviser Ajit Doval in New Delhi on the sidelines of BRICS-related meetings. Indian officials publicly described bilateral relations as "normalizing," indicating continued efforts by both sides to stabilize ties after years of border tensions. While major disputes remain unresolved, the meeting signaled that Beijing and New Delhi are attempting to prevent strategic competition from escalating into renewed confrontation.

A major pillar of Moscow's regional diplomacy was the intensive coordination between Russia and Belarus, culminating in a bilateral meeting between President Vladimir Putin and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko on June 26 in the Novgorod Region. This engagement coincided with the 13th Forum of Russian and Belarusian Regions, where both states accelerated the harmonization of their economic, technological, and defense policies under the Union State framework.

Simultaneously, the Kremlin focused on solidifying its geopolitical grip on the South Caucasus. On June 22, President Putin held high-level talks in Moscow with South Ossetian President Alan Gagloyev, immediately followed by the formal integration of key regional actors into the Russian state apparatus via administrative appointments. These deliberate steps are engineered to project an unshakeable institutional presence along Russia's southern flank, signaling to both regional neighbors and Western observers that Moscow remains the primary arbiter of security across its immediate periphery.

On June 25, Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova officially detailed Moscow's expanding diplomatic and economic offensive across the African continent. The Kremlin has formally prioritized preparations for the upcoming Third Russia-Africa Summit, scheduled to take place in Moscow in October 2026.

The agenda finalized this week by Russian planners focuses heavily on assisting African nations in reinforcing what Moscow terms their "economic, energy, technological, and food sovereignty." Rather than operating through traditional aid channels, Russia is advancing a model of structural dependency, offering direct workforce training, technical

partnerships, and integrated energy projects designed to permanently detach developing economies from Western financial architectures.

15. Europe

The United Kingdom's dominant story this week was the political transition triggered by the resignation of Prime Minister Keir Starmer on 22 June. After mounting pressure within the Labour Party and declining public support, Starmer announced that he would step down, opening the way for a leadership transition likely to bring Andy Burnham to Downing Street. European leaders immediately responded by praising Starmer's role in rebuilding relations with the European Union and maintaining strong support for Ukraine.

As the week progressed, attention shifted toward Burnham's emerging agenda. On 28 June, he outlined a "10-year mission" centered on devolving power from London to regional authorities, expanding infrastructure investment, promoting reindustrialization, and raising living standards. The proposal was widely interpreted as an attempt to address the political forces that have fueled the rise of Reform UK and broader dissatisfaction with Britain's economic model.

On foreign policy, the UK remained heavily engaged in support for Ukraine. Throughout the week, London continued implementing sanctions against Russian financial, procurement, and shipping networks while coordinating closely with NATO allies. Britain's policy remained among the most hawkish in Europe regarding Russia, with officials emphasizing sustained pressure on Moscow's war economy.

The Iran file also remained a major priority. Following renewed U.S.–Iran tensions in the Strait of Hormuz and emergency diplomacy involving Qatar, Britain quietly intensified sanctions enforcement against entities suspected of violating Iran-related restrictions. The UK's Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation signaled a tougher enforcement posture and increased cooperation with U.S. counterparts as concerns grew over sanctions evasion and financial flows connected to Iran.

Another important development concerned defense modernization. During his final days in office, Starmer advanced a major defense investment plan that reflects lessons from the Ukraine war. The strategy shifts resources toward drones, autonomous systems, cyber capabilities, and uncrewed warfare technologies while reducing emphasis on some traditional naval procurement programs. British defense planners increasingly view future conflicts as requiring greater investment in technological adaptability rather than solely conventional force structures.

Chancellor Friedrich Merz's administration assumed a central role in shaping European security policy by hosting a pivotal E5 leaders' meeting in Berlin on June 24, 2026. Bringing together the heads of state and foreign ministers of Germany, France, the United

Kingdom, Italy, and Poland, the summit served as a critical platform to forge a unified European response to global geopolitical fractures.

In the joint declarations, Berlin pushed for an aggressive expansion of systemic economic sanctions against Moscow, specifically targeting third-party logistics networks enabling the circumvention of trade restrictions. Critically, Chancellor Merz used the summit to advocate for the rapid construction of a "Europeanized NATO", a structural defense architecture engineered to enhance the continent's autonomous industrial manufacturing capacity and lessen material dependence on Washington. This strategic push reflects deep-seated structural anxieties within the German chancellery regarding the predictability of the long-term American security umbrella following the conclusion of the high-intensity U.S.-Iran conflict in the Middle East.

The most severe geopolitical blow to Paris occurred on Friday, June 26, 2026, when the military government of Burkina Faso announced the immediate, total severance of its diplomatic relations with France. Communications Minister Pingdwendé Gilbert Ouédraogo delivered a televised statement accusing Paris of "ceaseless activism" and persistent maneuvers aimed at undermining Burkinabe national interests, framing the rupture as the final step in dismantling France's remaining neo-colonial architecture in the Sahel.

The French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs responded swiftly, condemning the decision as completely hostile and unfounded, while warning that Ouagadougou's actions represent a deeply troubling drift toward regional isolation. The diplomatic severing forces an immediate withdrawal of remaining French institutional assets and prompted Paris to issue urgent, heightened vigilance directives to all French nationals residing inside Burkina Faso.

16. International and Regional Organizations

United Nation

On 26 June 2026, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres announced the appointment of Mohamed Yahya of Somalia as Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), succeeding Joyce Msuya of Tanzania, who was thanked for her dedicated service to the humanitarian cause. Mr. Yahya brings over two decades of experience in development, humanitarian action and peacebuilding, gained across Africa and South Asia at headquarters, regional and field levels and currently serves as UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan, where he leads one of the largest UN presences in Asia and the Pacific and coordinated the UN's response to the 2025 floods. Prior to his assignment in Pakistan, he served as UNDP Resident Representative in Nigeria, leading one of UNDP's largest country offices

and previously coordinated UNDP's Africa Regional Programme, working with the African Union on conflict prevention and stabilization across the continent with earlier roles in West Africa and Afghanistan with the UN and International Alert. Mr. Yahya holds a master's degree in conflict and development and a bachelor's degree in politics and history from SOAS University of London, and speaks Swahili, English and Somali, reflecting his Somali heritage and upbringing in Kenya.

The UN Security Council has expressed alarm over reports of substantial military reinforcements by the Rapid Support Forces around El Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan state warning of the risk of a potential ground offensive that could lead to mass atrocities and demanded that the RSF immediately halt its assault on the city. The Council also voiced deep concern over continued violence across Sudan, where the Sudanese Armed Forces and the RSF have been at war since mid-April 2023, pointing to escalating fighting in the Kordofan states that risks worsening an already dire humanitarian situation. Council members called on all parties to immediately halt the fighting, reiterating that they must protect civilians and comply with international law including the commitments made under the Jeddah Declaration signed in May 2023, which upholds obligations to facilitate safe humanitarian aid delivery and protect civilians. They also raised concern over reports of RSF drone strikes in El Obeid and an increase in drone attacks across Sudan, calling for all abuses and violations to be investigated and for those responsible to be held accountable. The Council urged all UN Member States to refrain from external interference that could fuel conflict and instability, reaffirmed its commitment to Sudan's sovereignty and territorial integrity and reiterated its rejection of any parallel governing authority in areas controlled by the RSF. The UN continued to closely monitor the situation, while IGAD also expressed grave concern over the hostilities in El Obeid with both bodies emphasizing the imminent risk and the urgent need for de-escalation to protect civilians.

Africa Union

On 25 June, the Special Representative of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of AUSSOM, Ambassador El Hadji Ibrahima Diene, met with a delegation from the European External Action Service in Nairobi as part of the 2026 Strategic Review of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy engagement in Somalia. The discussions centered on the implementation of AUSSOM's mandate the progress being made in transitioning security responsibilities to Somali forces and the broader perspectives on how the EU can continue supporting Somalia's long-term stability, resilience and strategic objectives. Ambassador Diene underscored the critical need for joint efforts, complementarity and strong coordination among all partners while reiterating that all support must remain firmly Somali led to ensure lasting peace and security in the country. The meeting reflected the continued partnership between the African Union and the European Union in advancing Somalia's stabilization process.

8th AU-RECs Mid-Year Coordination Meeting Held in Egypt

On 27 June, the African Union, Regional Economic Communities (including IGAD) and Regional Mechanisms convened for the Eighth Mid Year Coordination Meeting in El Alamein, Egypt under the theme "Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063". The meeting brought together key stakeholders to advance the continent's development blueprint Agenda 2063, while also addressing institutional reforms, resource mobilization and closer coordination on integration, peace, security and sustainable development. The discussions took place against a challenging backdrop as AUC Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf had earlier noted that the AU currently operates with only 30% of its required staffing levels and approximately 25% of its global budget, underscoring the urgent need for fiscal discipline and renewed commitment from member states. The meeting served as a critical platform for aligning efforts between the AU and regional bodies reinforcing the collective resolve to tackle shared challenges and move the continent closer to its long-term strategic goals.

AU Commission Chairperson Addresses PRC Closing Session

On 27 June, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, participated in the closing session of the 52nd Ordinary Session of the Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC), where he expressed deep appreciation to the Permanent Representatives for their dedication and constructive spirit, which resulted in significant progress on key matters before the Committee and he also commended the PRC Chair Ambassador Willy Nyamitwe, for his able leadership. The Chairperson briefed the PRC on his recent consultations with heads of Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms underscoring the importance of strengthened coordination and enhanced complementarity in advancing Africa's integration, peace, security and development agenda. On peace and security, Chairperson Youssouf acknowledged that the continent continues to face complex and evolving challenges but expressed confidence in the AU's collective capacity to address them noting the sustained commitment and political will demonstrated by Member States in support of African led solutions. He also updated the Committee on the recent virtual High-Level Summit on the Ebola outbreak, chaired by Burundi's President Évariste Ndayishimiye as AU Champion, which successfully mobilized political support and resources to strengthen the continental response and he expressed gratitude to Member States for their solidarity and generous contributions to affected countries, while commending the Democratic Republic of the Congo for its continued commitment and mobilization of national resources to contain the outbreak. Addressing global developments, the Chairperson observed that the disruption of maritime navigation through the Strait of Hormuz has had significant economic repercussions for African economies, particularly through its impact on global energy markets and supply chains though he expressed hope that the recently announced ceasefire agreement between the US and Iran would contribute to easing regional tensions

and restoring stability. In his concluding remarks, the Chairperson thanked the Permanent Representatives for their seriousness and commitment encouraging them to sustain their efforts in advancing the Union's institutional reform agenda.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

On 25 June 2026, IGAD, with support from the World Bank, held the inaugural meeting of its Soil Health and Fertilizer Hub in Nairobi, bringing together member states, technical partners and researchers to officially set up the Hub's governance and technical structures. Speaking at the event Kenya's Dr. Caroline Kundu emphasized that the Hub marks a decisive step toward tackling soil fertility challenges and strengthening food security, while IGAD's Dr. Senait Regassa reminded everyone that healthy soils are the foundation of livelihoods and economies across the region. During the meeting, participants reviewed the committees' roles agreed on priority actions for the Hub's first work plan and visited KALRO's research center where they explored practical innovations like soil testing, mapping and a long-term fertilizer experiment running since 1976. The visit offered real world scalable solutions that countries can adopt.

From June 26 to 30, IGAD, in partnership with Ethiopia's Information Network Security Administration (INSA), is hosting the Regional Cyber Drill 2026 at INSA headquarters in Addis Ababa. The five day exercise brings together cybersecurity experts, law enforcement agencies and operators of critical infrastructure from seven IGAD member states Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti. The drill is designed as a practical hands on exercise where participants face simulated real world cyber incidents, including attacks on telecommunications, financial institutions, ransomware campaigns and disinformation scenarios allowing countries to test their defense mechanisms, identify gaps and improve incident response capabilities in a controlled environment. Beyond the technical training the program also includes policy dialogue sessions aimed at building a common understanding of cybersecurity strategies across the region. Officially opening the event, IGAD Head of Mission to Ethiopia, Abebaw Belachew, reminded participants that cyber threats do not recognize borders and that a breach in one country can quickly ripple across the entire region making collective preparedness non negotiable and he emphasized that the networks and trust built during this exercise are just as valuable as the technical skills being sharpened.

Similarly, INSA Director-General Tigist Hamid reaffirmed that cybersecurity is now a strategic priority for national security and economic development, stressing that no single country can effectively tackle these evolving threats alone and she reiterated Ethiopia's commitment to regional cooperation and information sharing as central pillars of its cybersecurity approach. The drill is expected to significantly boost regional cyber resilience enhance coordination among member states and lay a strong foundation for a secure and reliable digital ecosystem across East Africa.



HORN

REVIEW

IDEAS CONNECTIONS SYNERGY

Ideas



Connections



Synergy
