



Weekly Geopolitical Report

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Horn of Africa and Beyond

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Horn Review: Weekly Report

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1. Ethiopia

African foreign ministers and senior officials gathered in Addis Ababa for the 49th Ordinary Session of the African Union Executive Council held from July 28, under the theme of assuring sustainable water availability and safe sanitation systems to advance Agenda 2063. The meeting addressed pressing continental challenges driven by population growth, urbanization, climate change, and water stress, with discussions focused on strengthening cooperation, improving water governance, and mobilizing investments to support public health, food security, and economic resilience across Africa.

Ethiopia's Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos opened the session by declaring that the global order is undergoing profound transformation through geopolitical shifts, technological disruption, climate pressures, and competition over strategic resources. He urged Africa to seize the moment as an active strategic actor rather than a passive observer, calling for a stronger, more effective African Union that articulates continental priorities, secures financial independence, and manages natural resources through African-led frameworks to drive shared prosperity and institutional reform.

On the sidelines of the Executive Council, Minister Gedion held bilateral talks with counterparts from Burundi, Zimbabwe, and Benin to deepen partnerships and advance Agenda 2063. Discussions with Burundi's Édouard Bizimana emphasized sustainable AU financing and accelerating existing draft agreements, while talks with Zimbabwe's Amon Murwira reaffirmed longstanding friendship and agreed to convene a Joint Ministerial Commission; Benin's Corinne Amori expressed interest in Ethiopia's artificial intelligence progress and practical implementation of prior accords.

Further bilateral engagements continued as Minister Gedion met Congo's and Angola's foreign ministers to expand cooperation on continental priorities, including artificial intelligence, climate resilience, and elevating economic ties as a core pillar of partnership. He later conferred with Cameroon's Lejeune Mbella Mbella, who congratulated Ethiopia on successfully hosting the session and supported efforts to strengthen AU financial capacity, while both sides explored ways to broaden economic collaboration beyond their 60-year diplomatic relations.

Parallel to continental diplomacy, Ethiopia and the United States advanced commercial ties when Finance Minister Ahmed Shide met U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Africa Mark Mitchell. They reviewed Ethiopia's macroeconomic and structural reforms that enhance competitiveness and the investment climate, explored expanded trade, private-

sector partnerships, and potential U.S. financing support for the new international airport project, reaffirming mutual commitment to deeper economic engagement.

Azerbaijan's National Assembly Speaker Sahiba Gafarova arrived in Addis Ababa for an official visit aimed at deepening bilateral relations and was received by Ethiopian officials. She held discussions with House of People's Representatives Speaker Tadesse Chafo, who highlighted investment opportunities in agriculture, industry, mining, tourism, and ICT under recent reforms, while Gafarova affirmed Azerbaijan's interest in education, people-to-people ties, and agriculture. The Speaker also met Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed for productive talks on strengthening strategic partnership and mutual growth.

President Taye Atske Selassie bid farewell to the outgoing ambassadors of Finland, Norway, and India, praising their contributions to longstanding ties. The Finnish ambassador highlighted expanding opportunities in trade, innovation, and technology; the Norwegian envoy underscored climate, forestry, and Green Legacy cooperation ahead of Ethiopia's COP32 hosting; and the Indian ambassador noted progress on agreements from Prime Minister Modi's visit, BRICS momentum, and growing investment prospects.

The World Public Summit convened in Addis Ababa for the first time in Africa under the theme "A New World: Africa in Shaping a Shared Future," drawing more than 700 participants from 54 countries. Organizers and speakers, including the Russian ambassador, framed the event as recognition of Africa's rising role in multipolar global dialogue and affirmed Ethiopia's position as a continental hub for public, humanitarian, and strategic conversations.

Ethiopia reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to Somalia's peace and security at the Extraordinary Summit of AUSSOM Troop-Contributing Countries held in Kampala. The Ethiopian delegation stressed the need to protect hard-won gains against terrorism, honor the sacrifices of regional forces, support the African Union mission's stabilization and transition efforts, and pursue collective African solutions for lasting stability across the Horn of Africa.

In a detailed interview, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed emphasized that advancing prosperity through Medemer synergy, unity, and collective progress represents Ethiopia's only viable path to survival and sustainable development. He described extensive national consultations that forged consensus on inclusive political and economic reforms, highlighted the foundational historical integration of the Amhara and Oromo peoples through intermarriage, alliances, and shared struggles including Adwa, and argued that simultaneous political and economic transformation is essential to overcome fragmentation.

Building on these themes, the Prime Minister asserted that today's Ethiopia possesses the institutional resilience and capacity to counter any threats to its national existence while resolving internal disputes through dialogue rather than external alliances. He criticized armed groups in Amhara and Oromia, defended the Pretoria Agreement as a turning point that silenced guns and enabled development across northern regions, rejected politicized narratives, and called for constructive engagement based on evidence, national unity, and collective reform rather than violence or conspiracy.

Amid these developments, On August 1, 2026, TPLF-aligned forces (referred to as “Army 70”) launched an attempted cross-border attack into Ethiopia from Sudanese territory near Sherarina. Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) quickly repelled the operation. The attack's real importance lies in its strategic implications rather than its military failure. It showed organized planning, use of heavy weapons and mechanized units, and apparent external support reportedly involving elements of Sudan's SAF, Egyptian interests, and Eritrea. This points to a wider regional alignment aimed at destabilizing Ethiopia, not just a local insurgent action.

The incident highlights the incomplete and contested status of the 2022 Pretoria Agreement. The deal has effectively split the TPLF into factions that accept federal authority and hardline rejectionists who reject it. These hardliners have resumed militarized rhetoric, forced conscription, and open calls for regime change in Addis Ababa, echoing the unprovoked TPLF attack that started the 2020–2022 war. Sudan's unstable western border has become a useful staging ground for such operations, adding a new layer of regional complexity alongside Eritrea's longstanding hostility. Ethiopia's policy of restraint is presented as deliberate: by sticking to the Pretoria framework and avoiding major escalation, the federal government preserves legitimacy and international support (especially from the US and EU). At the same time, repeated provocations risk weakening deterrence if not met with enough force. External diplomatic tools (US sanctions, European appeals) have had limited effect on these hardline networks. The dual approach going forward: revive credible political dialogue and implementation mechanisms under Pretoria, while strengthening Ethiopia's border defenses, intelligence, and coordination with neighbors.

Overall, the August 1 event signals a shift from post-war stabilization to a contested “hybrid” peace marked by proxy threats and shifting alliances. Lasting stability will depend on Ethiopia continuing to combine strategic restraint, credible military deterrence, and sustained political engagement.

2. Sudan

Sudan's conflict this week was characterized by continued military momentum for the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in parts of Kordofan, mounting pressure on the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) through localized defections, and a renewed intensification of drone warfare that continued to exact a heavy civilian toll. At the same time, regional diplomatic engagement gathered pace, with IGAD renewing efforts to support a Sudanese-led political process even as the conflict remained firmly defined by battlefield dynamics. The week's developments underscored the widening gap between military realities on the ground and the limited progress toward a negotiated settlement.

The military balance continued to shift incrementally in favor of the SAF. Following recent advances in North Kordofan, Sovereign Council Chairman Abdel Fattah al-Burhan convened the country's first Security Council meeting since the battlefield gains, highlighting the strategic importance Khartoum attaches to its ongoing counteroffensive. Government media also announced that an RSF unit had surrendered with its full complement of military equipment, joining a growing number of localized defections reported in recent months. While these incidents do not fundamentally alter the overall military balance, they suggest increasing pressure on some RSF formations as the army seeks to consolidate territorial gains across central Sudan. Nevertheless, the RSF sought to project continued resilience, with senior commanders publicly vowing to return to Khartoum and continue military operations despite recent setbacks, signaling that the movement remains committed to pursuing a military rather than negotiated outcome.

Drone warfare continued to define the conflict's evolving operational landscape. Rights groups reported that an SAF drone strike on a courthouse in Nyala, South Darfur, killed at least 35 civilians and injured dozens more, renewing concerns over the increasing use of long-range aerial strikes in densely populated urban areas. The incident came amid continued reports of drone attacks targeting strategic infrastructure across Darfur and Kordofan, reinforcing warnings that unmanned aerial systems have become one of the conflict's most consequential force multipliers. The growing reliance on drone capabilities has enabled both sides to strike well beyond traditional frontlines while significantly increasing civilian exposure to the conflict.

The humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate despite localized military gains. Across the border in Chad, Sudanese refugees faced worsening shortages of safe drinking water as overcrowded camps struggled to cope with continuing arrivals from Darfur and western Sudan. Humanitarian agencies warned that inadequate access to water, sanitation, and basic services is compounding an already severe protection crisis among displaced populations. Inside Sudan, continued fighting and aerial bombardments further complicated humanitarian access and reinforced concerns that civilian infrastructure remains increasingly vulnerable to attack.

Regional dimensions of the conflict also became more visible during the week. Sudanese military operations increasingly intersected with the Ethiopia-Sudan frontier following reports that SAF carried out strikes against Rapid Support Forces positions allegedly located inside Ethiopian territory near the Blue Nile border. The reported cross-border operation, if confirmed, would represent another indication that the Blue Nile front is assuming greater regional significance, with armed actors operating in close proximity to and potentially across international boundaries. The episode further underscored how Sudan's civil war is increasingly generating security implications beyond its immediate frontlines, heightening sensitivities along one of the Horn of Africa's most strategically important border regions.

Diplomatic activity intensified as regional and international actors sought to sustain momentum for a political settlement. IGAD's Executive Secretary concluded a high-level mission to Sudan, reaffirming the organization's commitment to a Sudanese-led pathway toward peace, recovery, and national reconstruction while emphasizing that dialogue remains the only viable route toward ending the conflict. Parallel international efforts also focused on accountability. In Washington, the U.S. Congress advanced landmark legislation designed to strengthen sanctions, enhance accountability mechanisms, and increase pressure on individuals responsible for atrocities committed during the war. The proposed measures reflect growing international recognition that humanitarian assistance alone is insufficient without parallel efforts to address impunity and constrain external support for the belligerents.

Economic pressures continued to weigh heavily on Sudan's wartime economy. Farmers reported rising production costs linked to disruptions in global supply chains and higher input prices, placing additional strain on agricultural production during a critical period for food security. The continued deterioration of rural livelihoods illustrates how external geopolitical shocks and the domestic conflict are reinforcing one another, further weakening Sudan's productive sectors and increasing dependence on humanitarian assistance.

Taken together, developments during the week suggested that Sudan's conflict remains firmly locked in a cycle of military escalation despite growing diplomatic engagement. While the SAF appears to be consolidating tactical gains and placing additional pressure on RSF formations, the paramilitary group's continued willingness to sustain offensive operations indicates that neither side is yet prepared to compromise. As drone warfare expands, humanitarian conditions worsen, and regional actors intensify diplomatic efforts, Sudan's trajectory continues to be shaped by the simultaneous interaction of battlefield developments, regional security dynamics, and an increasingly urgent search for a viable political settlement.

3. Egypt

Egypt's conclusion of a substantial European financing package for national grid modernization, structured around a major European Investment Bank loan and accompanying Commission grant, advanced Cairo's long-term strategy of positioning itself as a renewable energy transit hub capable of integrating large-scale capacity by the end of the decade. The arrangement simultaneously deepened European strategic dependence on Egyptian infrastructure while providing Cairo with external capital that reduced exposure to Gulf financing conditions shaped by the intensifying regional conflict.

The drone strike on a U.S.-owned floating storage and regasification unit at Damietta Port, which ignited fires on gas vessels along Egypt's Mediterranean coast, represented a deliberate expansion of the U.S.–Iran confrontation into Egyptian maritime space. The incident threatened critical energy import infrastructure and forced Cairo to confront the risk that Iranian-aligned actors or reciprocal operations could convert Egyptian territory into a secondary theater, thereby elevating the domestic security costs of residual neutrality.

Launch of the Egypt Exports initiative by the Ministry of Investment sought to expand the national exporter base and generate additional foreign-currency inflows precisely as Red Sea and Mediterranean disruptions constrained traditional trade routes. The program reflected an economic imperative to offset declining transit revenues and to diversify commercial partnerships beyond the immediate conflict zone, preserving fiscal space for domestic stability measures.

Authorization of syndicated mortgage financing mechanisms by the Financial Regulatory Authority aimed to unlock liquidity for high-value real-estate development at a moment when regional capital flight and risk premiums threatened private investment flows. The framework served Cairo's interest in sustaining construction-sector employment and urban expansion while insulating the domestic property market from the broader credit tightening induced by energy-price volatility.

Joint ministerial sessions accelerating industrial infrastructure and job-creation projects in Upper Egypt governorates demonstrated a deliberate effort to redistribute economic activity away from the densely populated and conflict-exposed northern coastal zones. The initiative advanced regime priorities of managing internal social pressures through targeted development while reducing concentration of strategic assets near potential Mediterranean flashpoints.

Cairo's formal diplomatic condemnation of attacks on Arab sovereign territory, specifically warning that U.S.–Saudi operations against Iranian-backed targets in Iraq risked uncontrolled regional destabilization, articulated Egypt's preference for containing

escalation rather than aligning with either principal combatant. The statement preserved Cairo's mediator credentials and protected its residual influence over Palestinian and Gulf files while signaling sensitivity to public opinion regarding external military interventions on Arab soil.

Prime Minister Madbouly's confirmation that emergency teams had contained Damietta fires and that domestic gas distribution remained uninterrupted served to reassure both domestic consumers and international energy partners of operational resilience. The assessment underscored Cairo's determination to prevent any perception of vulnerability that could invite further targeting or trigger capital outflows from critical infrastructure sectors.

Iranian Foreign Minister Araghchi's denial of responsibility for the Damietta strike, coupled with assertions of Egypt's valued partnership status and warnings against alleged Israeli false-flag activity, reflected Tehran's interest in preventing Cairo from drifting toward the U.S.–Israeli security orbit. The messaging sought to maintain Egyptian neutrality as a diplomatic buffer while complicating any narrative that would justify expanded Egyptian countermeasures against Iranian-aligned networks.

Issuance of media guidance by the State Information Service instructing international agencies to rely exclusively on official Egyptian statements regarding Damietta illustrated Cairo's determination to control the information environment surrounding the incident. The directive aimed to limit external framing that could portray Egypt as either a passive victim or an emerging party to the conflict, thereby protecting the regime's carefully calibrated non-alignment posture.

Declaration by an Egyptian-backed Gaza administrative committee of readiness to restore municipal services and civil administration following Hamas disarmament advanced Cairo's longstanding objective of shaping post-conflict governance structures in the neighboring enclave. The move reinforced Egypt's claim to primary influence over Gaza's future while positioning Egyptian institutions as indispensable to any sustainable ceasefire arrangement with Israel.

President El-Sisi's consultations with French President Macron on Middle East security, defense coordination, and Red Sea shipping protection sought to embed Egyptian interests within a European diplomatic track capable of balancing American pressure. The talks reflected Cairo's calculation that diversified great-power engagement could expand its room for maneuver between Washington, Tehran, and Gulf capitals during periods of acute escalation.

High-level discussions with a Ugandan delegation in Cairo covering trade, Nile water management, and Horn of Africa security demonstrated Egypt's continued prioritization of upstream hydrological leverage and regional stability along its southern periphery. The

engagement advanced Cairo's strategic interest in constraining potential Ethiopian influence while cultivating alternative African partnerships that could offset Mediterranean vulnerabilities created by the wider conflict.

Publication of Financial Regulatory Authority data showing a 14.7 percent year-on-year expansion in investment-fund assets to EGP 470.9 billion illustrated underlying domestic capital-market resilience despite external geopolitical shocks. The growth provided Cairo with evidence of investor confidence that could be leveraged to attract further private inflows even as regional energy and shipping risks intensified.

The Central Bank of Egypt's leadership in producing Africa's first Financial Stability Report covering forty-six nations projected Egyptian institutional capacity beyond its borders and reinforced Cairo's ambition to shape continental macroprudential norms. The initiative advanced soft-power objectives in African financial governance while positioning Egypt as a stabilizing node amid the economic turbulence generated by Middle Eastern conflict.

Central Bank data revealing that commercial banking assets had reached EGP 26.887 trillion in the first quarter of 2026 underscored balance-sheet strength that enabled the financial system to absorb external volatility without immediate liquidity stress. The expansion supported regime efforts to maintain credit availability for priority industrial and infrastructure projects during a period of elevated regional risk premiums.

Launch of a nationwide lease-to-own industrial land program aimed at lowering capital barriers for manufacturing investors reflected Cairo's determination to accelerate domestic production capacity and reduce import dependence. The framework sought to convert geopolitical disruption into an opportunity for industrial localization while offering foreign investors structured access to Egyptian territory under more flexible ownership terms.

Economic ministers' evaluation of transferring state holding-company ownership into specialized asset-management vehicles formed part of a broader debt-reduction strategy designed to improve sovereign balance-sheet metrics. The restructuring advanced efforts to free fiscal resources for security and subsidy priorities while signaling to international markets a willingness to pursue structural reform amid external pressures.

Egyptian diplomatic outreach to Washington, Tehran, and Gulf capitals following the temporary U.S. suspension of strikes on Iranian energy infrastructure sought to position Cairo as a potential facilitator of de-escalation. The mobilization reflected Egypt's enduring interest in preventing uncontrolled expansion of the conflict into additional Mediterranean and Red Sea theaters that would directly threaten its energy security and commercial arteries.

4. Eritrea

Saudi Arabia is assembling a new multinational maritime security coalition bringing together eight Red Sea and Gulf of Aden states, including Egypt, Sudan, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Somalia, as concerns over maritime security and shipping disruptions intensify. According to reports citing the Saudi Ministry of Defence, the proposed alliance would also include Jordan and Yemen and would focus on protecting international shipping lanes, energy routes, and collective maritime interests across the Red Sea, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and the Gulf of Aden. The initiative follows a 30 July meeting involving military representatives from 43 countries and an EU delegation and is expected to include mechanisms for intelligence sharing, joint exercises, and coordinated maritime operations.

For Eritrea, participation in a Saudi-led maritime framework would represent another step in its gradual regional diplomatic re-engagement and could increase its strategic relevance along the Red Sea corridor. The initiative also reflects Saudi Arabia's effort to institutionalize a littoral-state security architecture that reduces reliance on external naval coalitions while giving regional actors a greater role in maritime governance. The inclusion of Egypt, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia places several of the Red Sea's most strategically located states within the same security framework, potentially creating new channels for military coordination despite persistent political tensions among some members. The coalition is unlikely to resolve underlying regional rivalries, but it signals that Red Sea security is increasingly being organized through overlapping regional arrangements centred on the strategic importance of the Bab el-Mandeb and surrounding maritime corridors.

An AFP report published on 31 July highlighted worsening water shortages in Eritrea's capital, Asmara, with residents describing chronic disruptions that have forced households to ration water, purchase expensive supplies from private tankers, and collect rainwater during the wet season. According to AFP, interviewees requested anonymity because of the risks associated with criticizing the government in Eritrea's tightly controlled political environment. The report cited research published in **Advances in Geographical and Environmental Sciences**, which attributed the shortages to a combination of population growth, climate pressures, aging infrastructure, and weak water management, while noting that Asmara remains heavily dependent on seasonal reservoirs. Eritrean authorities did not respond to AFP's requests for comment.

The report points to a deeper infrastructure and governance challenge rather than a temporary seasonal disruption. Asmara's reliance on irregular water distribution and costly private alternatives suggests increasing pressure on urban service delivery, with poorer households facing disproportionate economic burdens. Because independent reporting inside Eritrea remains severely restricted, the precise scale of the shortages is

difficult to verify, but the consistency of accounts reported by AFP and the broader pattern of infrastructure constraints suggest that water insecurity has become a significant urban vulnerability. The shortages also reinforce the contrast between Eritrea's growing strategic importance in Red Sea geopolitics and persistent domestic constraints in basic public infrastructure.

A 31 July article by Michael Rubin in *Middle East Forum* criticized reported U.S. efforts to improve relations with Eritrea, arguing that engagement with President Isaias Afwerki's government would undermine broader American interests in the Horn of Africa. Rubin contended that Egypt has increasingly incorporated Eritrea into a regional strategy aimed at countering Ethiopia and questioned the strategic rationale behind U.S. Envoy Massad Boulos's reported interest in easing sanctions on Eritrea. He argued that Eritrea's ties with Iran and the uncertainty surrounding President Isaias's eventual succession make the country an unreliable strategic partner. These are Rubin's assessments rather than established policy conclusions.

The article is notable less for its factual reporting than for what it reveals about growing debate in Washington over Eritrea's role in Horn of Africa strategy. Rubin's argument reflects scepticism that tactical engagement with Asmara can be separated from Eritrea's alignment with Egypt and its use as a geopolitical pressure point against Ethiopia. His criticism also highlights a broader policy dilemma: whether U.S. engagement with Eritrea should be viewed as a pragmatic attempt to influence Red Sea security dynamics or as a move that risks reinforcing an anti-Ethiopia regional alignment. The piece illustrates the increasingly contested nature of U.S. policy toward Eritrea amid wider competition over the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa.

5. Djibouti

Ethiopia has transferred land in Mojo to Djibouti for the construction of a dedicated heavy-vehicle parking terminal, reviving a logistics project that had reportedly been stalled for nearly 25 years. The facility is intended to reduce congestion and improve freight movement along the Ethio-Djibouti transport corridor, which handles the overwhelming majority of Ethiopia's international trade. The agreement was formalized during a land handover ceremony attended by senior Ethiopian and Djiboutian officials, who presented the project as part of a broader effort to improve corridor efficiency and regional economic integration. The development follows recent bilateral discussions focused on transport infrastructure, including the Ethio-Djibouti railway and port connectivity.

The project is strategically significant because it addresses a practical bottleneck in Ethiopia's external trade system rather than introducing a new transport corridor. A dedicated parking terminal for Djiboutian freight vehicles could improve turnaround times, reduce logistics costs, and enhance the reliability of the corridor, which remains

Ethiopia's primary maritime access route despite its efforts to diversify port options. The agreement also reinforces the depth of Ethiopia–Djibouti interdependence, with both governments prioritizing incremental infrastructure improvements that strengthen the existing corridor. While the terminal alone will not resolve broader structural challenges in Ethiopia's logistics network, it represents a concrete step toward increasing the efficiency and resilience of one of East Africa's most important trade arteries.

Djibouti has rejected any attempt to impose unilateral transit fees or taxes on vessels passing through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, following reports that Yemen's Houthi movement was considering such a measure. In an official statement, Djibouti argued that the strait is governed by international law and that any toll imposed by a single party would violate the legal regime applicable to international navigation, undermine the sovereignty of littoral states, and threaten maritime security. The government reaffirmed its commitment to freedom of navigation and stated that it could pursue diplomatic, legal, and security measures, in coordination with regional and international partners, to protect the status of the waterway. The statement reflects Djibouti's position as a littoral state whose economy and strategic importance are closely tied to the uninterrupted flow of maritime trade through the Red Sea corridor.

The statement is strategically significant because it directly challenges Houthi efforts to translate military influence in the Red Sea into a form of economic or political leverage over international shipping. Djibouti's response reinforces the position of Red Sea littoral states that the Bab el-Mandeb is an international maritime corridor rather than a waterway subject to unilateral control by armed actors. It also aligns Djibouti more closely with broader regional efforts, particularly those led by Gulf and international maritime coalitions, to preserve freedom of navigation and prevent the fragmentation of the Red Sea's legal and security architecture. For Ethiopia, whose external trade remains overwhelmingly dependent on Djibouti's ports and access through the Bab el-Mandeb, the dispute highlights the continued vulnerability of its maritime supply chain to instability in Yemen and the wider Red Sea theatre.

Saudi Arabia has moved to institutionalize a Red Sea maritime security framework by advancing a coalition of littoral states, including Djibouti, Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia, Jordan, and Yemen, to coordinate the protection of shipping lanes across the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The initiative follows a 30 July meeting involving military representatives from 43 countries and comes amid escalating maritime disruptions linked to Houthi attacks on commercial shipping and threats to impose transit fees in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. Djibouti's subsequent rejection of any unilateral taxation of vessels passing through the strait reinforced its commitment to freedom of navigation and the international legal regime governing one of the world's most important maritime chokepoints. By explicitly opposing unilateral control over the Bab el-Mandeb, Djibouti

aligned itself with broader regional efforts to preserve the strait's status as an international maritime corridor.

These developments suggest that Djibouti is becoming a central African anchor of an emerging Saudi-led Red Sea security architecture rather than merely joining another ad hoc maritime coalition. The proposed framework appears designed to create a coordinated littoral-state mechanism that can respond to Houthi threats, protect commercial and energy routes, and reduce the ability of non-state actors to exert leverage over international shipping. For Djibouti, participation strengthens its position as a gateway between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean while reinforcing the strategic importance of its ports and military partnerships. The inclusion of Eritrea, Egypt, Sudan, and Somalia within the same framework is particularly significant because it creates new channels for security coordination among states that occupy the African side of the Bab el-Mandeb, indicating that Red Sea governance is increasingly being organized through regional institutions centred on coastal-state cooperation rather than exclusively through external naval powers.

Italy and Djibouti signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 23 July to expand cooperation on critical infrastructure, subsea telecommunications, energy connectivity, and strategic dialogue, with the agreement announced during a high-level seminar in Rome focused on the Bab el-Mandeb and Red Sea corridor. According to Decode39, the partnership is intended to strengthen cooperation on resilient infrastructure, digital networks, and regional connectivity at a time when Houthi attacks in the Red Sea and instability affecting the Strait of Hormuz have increased the strategic importance of the Indo-Mediterranean corridor. The agreement places particular emphasis on subsea infrastructure, telecommunications cables, and energy interconnections, reflecting growing concern over the security of maritime and digital networks linking Europe, Africa, and Asia. Italian officials also linked the initiative to the broader objectives of the Mattei Plan, which seeks to deepen Italy's strategic engagement with African partners.

The agreement illustrates how Djibouti's role is expanding beyond port logistics into the protection of critical maritime and digital infrastructure. Italy's focus on subsea connectivity and energy resilience aligns with a broader European effort to secure the infrastructure underpinning trade, communications, and financial networks across the Red Sea corridor. When viewed alongside the emerging Saudi-led coalition of Red Sea littoral states, the partnership suggests that Djibouti is becoming a central platform where European connectivity initiatives and Gulf-led maritime security arrangements increasingly intersect. The convergence of these initiatives reinforces Djibouti's position as a pivotal geostrategic hub at the entrance to the Bab el-Mandeb and highlights the growing integration of maritime security, digital infrastructure, and regional connectivity in Red Sea geopolitics.

Yemen's recently appointed Foreign Minister Afrah al-Zouba held a telephone conversation with Djiboutian Foreign Minister Abdelqader Omar to discuss bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries. According to the Yemeni government, the ministers emphasized coordination among Red Sea littoral states to protect international navigation, safeguard Red Sea security, and strengthen regional stability. The discussion focused particularly on the threat posed by the Houthis to maritime security and commercial shipping through the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb corridor. The call comes amid heightened regional concern over Houthi attacks on commercial vessels and reported discussions about imposing transit fees in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

Although the conversation may partly reflect the diplomatic outreach of Yemen's newly appointed foreign minister, its emphasis on littoral-state cooperation is more significant in the current regional context. The call aligns with a broader pattern of coordination among Red Sea coastal states that includes Djibouti's opposition to unilateral control of the Bab el-Mandeb and the emerging Saudi-led maritime security framework. Djibouti's engagement with Yemen on navigation security reinforces its increasingly prominent role in efforts to institutionalize a coastal-state security architecture centered on protecting international shipping lanes. The discussion suggests that maritime security coordination is becoming an increasingly important pillar of Djibouti's regional diplomacy as Red Sea states seek collective mechanisms to manage the expanding security challenges generated by the Yemen conflict.

6. South Sudan

President Salva Kiir dismissed central bank governor Johnny Ojais without explanation, replacing him with Addis Ababa Othman as part of a wider reshuffle of senior government ranks that analysts read as an attempt to consolidate power amid uncertainty over succession, with the country's first-ever elections, twice postponed, now set for December 22, 2026. That vote is looking shakier by the week: Kiir signed amendments to the 2018 revitalized peace agreement that removed the legal requirement tying elections to completion of a permanent constitution and a census, clearing the way for the December poll, but critics warn institutions remain weak, insecurity persists, and civic education is lacking.

The peace-deal's own watchdog, RJMEC, went further, warning in its latest quarterly report that political, legal, security and humanitarian conditions necessary for a credible, peaceful and inclusive vote remain largely absent, and that fundamental prerequisites for a credible election have yet to be met with less than six months to go. RJMEC also flagged that the amendments were submitted to parliament without the commission's required consent, weakening the oversight role of IGAD and the African Union as guarantors, and that fighting has continued in Upper Nile, Jonglei, Unity and Equatoria, with the

permanent ceasefire only partially implemented and force unification, disarmament and security-sector reform all stalled. It also noted the continued detention of First Vice President Riek Machar and the dismissal of opposition lawmakers from parliament have weakened inclusive governance — Machar has been held since March 2025 and is on trial with seven co-defendants on treason, murder and crimes-against-humanity charges tied to the Nasir attack, a case that effectively broke apart the 2018 unity government.

South Sudan is now exposed to international enforcement action after a US federal judge recognized and enforced a \$1.02 billion ICSID arbitration award in favour of Qatar National Bank, stemming from a 2018 debt-restructuring deal South Sudan later defaulted on. A legal expert quoted by Eye Radio said Juba's options are to voluntarily pay, negotiate a settlement, or risk QNB pursuing South Sudan's or the central bank's commercial assets abroad, since the award is binding under Article 53 of the ICSID Convention and there is no appeal through national courts. This lands on top of an economy already squeezed by falling oil revenue, cash shortages and inflation.

July 30 was Martyrs' Day, and Kiir led the country in honoring those who died in the liberation struggle, including founding leader John Garang, and called on citizens to promote peace. At a related event, a Defense Ministry official urged South Sudanese youth to reject destructive politics and instead pursue education, skills, and nation-building, warning security forces that professionalism and lawful conduct toward civilians are the foundation of legitimacy.

. Germany's development agency GIZ continued rolling out 5,000 "dignity kits" with menstrual hygiene supplies to women and girls, partnering with government ministries and groups like IsraAID to reach areas including Juba, Gondokoro and Rajaf. Separately, on the US side, USCIS confirmed that Temporary Protected Status work permits for South Sudanese (and Ethiopian) nationals remain valid through August 6, 2026 under a federal court order, even though DHS had previously moved to terminate South Sudan's TPS designation, a decision now tied up in ongoing litigation.

Kiir is tightening his grip and pushing ahead toward a December election, while the peace agreement's own guarantors, courts, and creditors are all signaling that the foundations for a credible vote and for the state's finances are shaky.

7. Somalia and Somaliland

Somalia

The opposition alliance, operating under the Somali Future Council and comprising a former president, former prime ministers, senior opposition figures and the leaders of the Puntland and Jubaland regional administrations issued an open letter on July 27. The letter proposed the establishment of an inclusive transitional council to oversee the

constitutional and electoral process until national institutions could be renewed through an agreed process. The opposition argued that Somalia was in a dangerous phase without a legitimate agreed framework for governance citing disputes over constitutional amendments, the electoral model, and political legitimacy. The letter was addressed to leaders, defense ministers, and military chiefs of AUSSOM troop contributing countries, linking political settlement to the sustainability of the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia amid funding concerns. This initiative was followed by reporting the next day that international partners were pressing Somali leaders for a comprehensive political deal before the end of August, with possible reviews of development support and cooperation if the impasse continued.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud opened the eighth session of the Federal Parliament on August 1 in a joint sitting of the House of the People and the Upper House at Villa Hargeisa. The President urged lawmakers to advance legislation, strengthen state institutions, and support the security and democratic transition. He highlighted gains against Al-Shabaab, commitment to one-person-one-vote elections, economic development, and institutional reforms. The session follows the resignation of former House Speaker Aden Madobe, who was elected president of Southwest State, and is expected to include election of a new Speaker.

In a related development, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud directed cabinet ministers and senior officials holding Kenyan passports or national identity cards to surrender them immediately. Officials were told to choose between their positions or the Kenyan documents. The order comes amid diplomatic tensions after senior Somali officials were denied entry at Nairobi's airport over travel documents. Somalia's citizenship law permits dual nationality; some ministers reportedly questioned the directive.

The Puntland State celebrated its 28th anniversary on August 1, marking the date of its founding in 1998 with military parades, official events, and messages highlighting resilience, infrastructure, education, and healthcare progress. Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre congratulated the region as a pillar of stability and federalism, while some voices called for greater independence.

Galmudug State held landmark direct elections on July 30, with polling stations closing after voters participated in direct elections for the state assembly and local councils across 11 districts. More than 200,000 people had registered to vote. Voting opened at 7:00 a.m. at nearly 300 polling stations and largely proceeded peacefully under tight security, with some stations staying open longer to accommodate queues. The National Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission described the process as smooth overall and opened investigations into possible procedural breaches at some stations. Candidates included 369 for the state assembly and 924 for local councils. Federal officials, including the Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister, visited or voted. The vote, rescheduled

from July 25, marked a step toward universal suffrage after decades of indirect elections and was held amid broader national political disputes over electoral reforms and constitutional changes. Results were expected after counting.

A commentary on offshore oil prospects emerged, with a former Puntland minister publicly questioning optimistic statements about Turkish-supported offshore oil development. The former minister warned that commercial production could remain years away, potentially not before around 2034 even with discoveries, due to technical and financial challenges.

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services released an update on July 29 regarding the termination of Temporary Protected Status for Somalia, superseding a prior July 24 notice. This is a US domestic immigration policy matter affecting Somali nationals in the United States.

Former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, chair of the Somali Future Council, questioned Somalia's readiness to fully assume security responsibilities after a potential AUSSOM drawdown. He warned that political divisions and other issues could undermine gains and urged honest assessment of the armed forces, political conditions, and economy.

Reporting dated July 28 noted that some of Somalia's international partners had warned the federal government to reach a comprehensive political agreement before the end of August 2026. Diplomatic sources said the message was delivered to a senior presidential official and forwarded to President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. Concerns centered on the prolonged impasse over constitutional amendments, the electoral process, and federal-member state relations, which risked undermining state-building, institutional reform, and security efforts. Diplomatic sources indicated that development support, project financing, political cooperation, and even diplomatic relations could be re-evaluated if no deal was reached, though no formal aid suspension was announced.

Somalia's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Abdisalam Ali, led the Somali delegation at the opening of the 49th Ordinary Session of the African Union Executive Council in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on July 28. The session was held under the theme of assuring sustainable water availability, with Somalia joining other African leaders in addressing shared challenges.

On the margins of the AU Executive Council, Foreign Minister Abdisalam Ali held consultations with Kenya's Prime Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, Musalia Mudavadi, on July 28. They discussed immigration issues, agreed to enhance coordination on consular affairs and people-to-people mobility, and reaffirmed commitment to strengthening bilateral relations on matters critical to regional stability. This occurred amid recent strains, including reported entry denials of Somali officials linked to passport issues.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud met U.S. Africa Command Commander Gen. Dagvin R.M. Anderson in Mogadishu on July 30. Discussions focused on counterterrorism cooperation, the regional security situation, ongoing operations against Al-Shabaab, and expanding defense cooperation. The president thanked the U.S. for support strengthening the Somali National Army. Gen. Anderson reaffirmed U.S. commitment to counterterrorism assistance, troop development, and strategic cooperation. In subsequent follow-up reporting on August 1, Gen. Anderson stated that the United States has not turned its back on Somalia and remains committed to counterterrorism support, while noting that continued long-term engagement depends on Somalia reducing political infighting and assuming greater security responsibility. He explicitly ruled out plans for a U.S. military base in Somaliland and reaffirmed U.S. policy supporting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and 12 other nations announced a new defensive maritime alliance to protect shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden amid Houthi threats and broader regional tensions. The coalition aims to safeguard freedom of navigation, trade routes, and energy supplies through intelligence sharing, joint exercises, and coordinated operations.

Significant regional diplomatic activity centered on the future sustainability of the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia, with a three-day extraordinary summit in Kampala addressing funding and operational challenges.

On July 29, AUSSOM Force Commander Lt Gen Sam Kavuma briefed a meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Forces of Troop Contributing Countries and the Somali National Armed Forces in Kampala. Delegates represented Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, Egypt, and the African Union Commission. This was the opening military-level session of a three-day extraordinary summit focused on the future sustainability of AUSSOM amid funding and logistical challenges linked to the approaching end of certain UN support.

On July 30, Defence Ministers of AUSSOM Troop Contributing Countries plus Somalia met in Kampala, building on the prior day's Chiefs of Defence Forces meeting. Participants included AUSSOM SRCC and Head Amb. El Hadji Ibrahima Diene and Force Commander Lt Gen Sam Kavuma. Focus areas included the mission's future sustainability, operational challenges, financing amid declining donor support including risks to UN logistical backing, regional security cooperation, and supporting Somalia's stabilization and counter-Al-Shabaab efforts. Participants included representatives from Burundi, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, the AU, UN, and IGAD.

At the Heads of State summit on July 31, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud opposed including references to Somalia's internal political affairs or calls for national political dialogue in the draft communiqué. He argued that Somalia's political matters are internal and should not be internationalized or regionalized, preferring the document focus on

security and financing. Reports indicated a dispute over the wording, with some sources noting efforts to edit or adjust the text.

The three-day extraordinary summit concluded with a Heads of State and Government session chaired by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. Participants included leaders or representatives from Uganda, Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Egypt, Burundi, and others, plus AU and UN officials. Key outcomes included reaffirmation of African commitment to Somalia and the mission, with Museveni stressing Pan-African solidarity against extremism and that Africa would not abandon Somalia. The summit endorsed efforts toward an 18 to 24 month transition plan for handing security responsibilities to Somali forces, while seeking continued or extended international support and exploring new resource mobilization avenues. Participants pledged to remain engaged, sustain operations against Al-Shabaab, strengthen coordination, and pursue predictable financing amid the funding crisis linked to U.S. decisions on UN logistical support. AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf pledged continued political, diplomatic, and financial mobilization for the mission and an orderly transition.

In follow-up reporting on the Kampala summit communiqué, troop-contributing country leaders called on the UN Security Council to extend logistical and operational support for AUSSOM by 18 to 24 months. This would enable an orderly, phased transition, strengthen Somali security institutions, and facilitate the transfer of responsibilities. They appealed for additional international financing, intensified operations against Al-Shabaab, preservation of Somalia's unity, and prioritization of national interests over divisions. Recommendations were to be forwarded to the AU Peace and Security Council before submission to the UN Security Council.

On July 28, top officials from AUSSOM, the United Nations Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia, and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia met to resume discussions on implementing Human Rights Due Diligence Policy mitigation measures. Participants included AUSSOM's Deputy Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission and Officer-in-Charge Amb. Mouktar Osman Karie, UNTMIS Officer-in-Charge Raisedon Zenenga, and UNSOS Acting Assistant Secretary-General and Head Qurat-ul-Ain Sadozai. They reaffirmed commitment to collaboration and compliance reviews in support of the AUSSOM mandate.

Suspected Al-Shabaab militants killed five Kenyan security officers in a clash in Mandera County near the Somali border on July 29. Kenyan police reported that the incident involved a patrol team from the Special Operations Group Alungu that encountered militants around noon on July 28 near Wantey Dam. Four of the dead were Special Operations Group members and one was a National Police Reservist. A reinforcement team was later hit by an improvised explosive device that destroyed an armored vehicle,

with no additional casualties reported. Police pursued the militants. Al-Shabaab has a history of cross-border attacks in the region.

Security officials from Puntland confirmed on July 27 that Somali pirates who seized the Tanzanian-flagged chemical tanker M/T Asana, hijacked around July 16 in the Gulf of Aden, were holding the vessel and its crew at anchorage near the northeastern fishing town of Jifle in Puntland. Conflicting reports existed on crew numbers and nationalities, with some accounts mentioning mostly Indian crew plus others. Pirates were reportedly supplying the ship, and there were indications they might move it further south toward clan strongholds. Other previously hijacked vessels were also noted as held in the area. This formed part of a reported resurgence of piracy activity in the Gulf of Aden and Somali waters.

Somaliland

A notable development was the establishment of a specialized Extractives Police Unit, formalized through an agreement signed on July 29 between the Ministry of Interior and Security and the Ministry of Energy and Minerals. The new unit, which is to be embedded within the broader Somaliland Police Force, is tasked with the specific mandate of protecting the nation's mineral resources and related strategic assets. Ministers Abdalle Mohamed Arab and Eng. Ahmed Jama Barre underscored that the creation of this specialized entity addresses a long-standing requirement to prevent the illegal exploitation of natural wealth, particularly as Somaliland enters a phase of expanded exploration activities.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially opened the Republic of Somaliland Diaspora Week conference, with main events scheduled to take place from August 2 to 6 across Hargeisa, Borama, and Burco. This annual platform serves as a critical conduit for engaging the Somaliland diaspora, focusing on themes of investment, knowledge transfer, talent retention, and sustainable national development. The launch activities saw the participation of high-ranking government officials, diaspora members, scholars, and various international partners, reflecting the administration's commitment to leveraging its global citizenry for domestic progress and international advocacy.

The most significant diplomatic interaction occurred on August 1, when President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi (Irro) held strategic talks in Hargeisa with Major General Claude K. Tudor Jr., Commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command Africa (SOCAFRICA), accompanied by a senior U.S. delegation. The discussions were comprehensive, covering the expansion of bilateral security cooperation, with a significant focus on maritime security in the vital waterways of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Bab al-Mandab Strait. President Irro leveraged the meeting to highlight Somaliland's more than 850 kilometers of coastline as a strategically critical asset for international shipping lanes, while also reaffirming its record of relative peace and

functioning institutions. He expressed a clear readiness to deepen cooperation with the United States in counterterrorism, anti-piracy, and combating organized crime. Major General Tudor reciprocated by noting the shared interests between the two parties and affirming the United States' readiness to strengthen collaboration in areas of intelligence sharing, professional exchanges, and broader capacity building. Both sides committed to expanding cooperation on mutual security priorities.

In a parallel and clarifying diplomatic development, coverage dated August 2 reiterated statements from AFRICOM Commander General Dagvin R.M. Anderson, who reaffirmed that the United States has no current plans to establish a military base in Somaliland. General Anderson's remarks served to reinforce the longstanding U.S. policy of supporting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Somalia, stating unequivocally that this position has not been altered despite shifting regional geopolitical dynamics. This clarification provides context to the broader U.S.-Somaliland security dialogue, establishing boundaries while acknowledging the practical areas of mutual interest being pursued.

The high-level talks between President Irro and SOCAFRICA Commander Tudor were squarely positioned within this framework. The discussions delved into specific mechanisms for enhancing security cooperation that directly address the threats of terrorism, piracy, and organized crime that affect the stability of the Horn of Africa. President Irro's emphasis on Somaliland's coastline and its vulnerability to illicit activities highlighted the government's understanding of its frontline role in securing regional maritime corridors.

In a significant development concerning humanitarian and social governance, senior Somaliland government officials convened with international partners for a two-day strategic meeting of the Somaliland Mixed Migration Task Force (MMTF) in Borama. The forum, which included directors-general and representatives from key ministries such as Foreign Affairs, Justice, Resettlement and Humanitarian Affairs, Interior, Employment and Social Affairs, the Human Rights Commission, and Immigration and Border Control, alongside the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the European Union (EU), was aimed at strengthening coordination on mixed migration issues. The discussions covered the complex challenges posed by refugees, asylum seekers, labor migrants, and victims of trafficking, with a focus on border management, protection protocols, information sharing, and the application of rights-based approaches. The forum was designed to generate actionable recommendations to improve institutional cooperation and policy implementation, reflecting a concerted effort to manage migration challenges in the Horn of Africa through a cohesive and humane framework. The presence of IOM and EU delegates underscores the international community's commitment to supporting Somaliland's governance structures in this critical area.

8. Yemen

Sudan's SAF-aligned authorities and Yemen's internationally recognized government discussed strengthening coordination among Red Sea littoral states to protect international navigation and regional stability. According to the Sudanese foreign ministry, the 1 August telephone conversation between the two foreign ministers focused on maritime security threats and cooperation in the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb corridor. The discussion followed recent Saudi-led talks involving Sudanese and Yemeni military representatives on a proposed regional maritime security coalition.

The call reinforces a broader trend of Red Sea coastal states increasing security coordination in response to Houthi attacks on commercial shipping and growing concerns over freedom of navigation. It also suggests that the SAF-aligned authorities are seeking a more active role in emerging Saudi-backed maritime security arrangements, despite Sudan's ongoing internal conflict and fragmented political landscape.

Yemen's internationally recognized government warned that the Houthis were seeking to replicate Iran's approach to strategic waterways by using maritime disruption in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait as a tool of political and economic pressure. Speaking to journalists in Riyadh on July 27, newly appointed Yemeni Foreign Minister Afrah al-Zouba said the Houthis wanted to "copy the Iranian model" by threatening two critical maritime chokepoints, the Strait of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandeb. Her remarks came after the Houthis declared a maritime blockade targeting Saudi-linked shipping on July 20, which the Yemeni government and its regional partners have portrayed as part of a broader effort to expand Iranian influence through allied actors in the region.

The warning followed a sharp decline in maritime activity through Bab al-Mandeb after the Houthi announcement. According to The National, ship traffic through the strait reportedly fell by more than half following the declared blockade, underscoring the vulnerability of the corridor that connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden and serves as a major route for global energy and commercial shipments. Saudi Arabia has responded by conducting strikes against what it described as Houthi military facilities and pledged to protect maritime navigation, while the Houthis have claimed attacks against Saudi energy infrastructure, including facilities linked to Saudi Aramco, although these claims were not independently confirmed. The developments have increased fears that Yemen could be drawn back into wider conflict after a period of relative calm.

The dispute over maritime access intensified further after Reuters reported on July 29, citing regional sources, that the Houthis were considering imposing fees on vessels transiting Bab al-Mandeb, with discussions allegedly involving Iranian officials during a Houthi visit to Tehran earlier in July. The report suggested that such a move would mirror Iran's use of pressure over the Strait of Hormuz to influence maritime traffic, although the claims remain unverified. The Houthis later rejected the allegations, with the Houthi-run

Humanitarian Operations Coordination Center denying plans to charge ships and stating that its transit coordination services remained free. Nevertheless, the episode highlights the growing strategic significance of Bab al-Mandeb as a point of competition between the Houthis, Yemen's internationally recognized government, and regional powers seeking to secure one of the world's most important maritime chokepoints.

According to The Guardian, Saudi Arabia is preparing for a possible military escalation against the Houthis, including potential naval operations in the Red Sea and a possible land offensive inside Yemen. Citing Yemeni sources, the newspaper reported that Saudi forces were concentrating around areas in central Yemen, including al-Bayda governorate, while some forces were reportedly repositioned from eastern Yemen. The reported preparations come after the Houthis announced a blockade targeting Saudi shipping on July 20, threatening a major artery for Saudi energy exports and prompting Riyadh to pursue a multinational maritime coalition to secure navigation in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb Strait.

9. Kenya

Over the past week, Kenya remained an influential geopolitical actor in East Africa, balancing its strategic security partnerships with growing domestic political pressures. While the country's foreign policy continued to emphasize regional stability and international cooperation, internal political developments increasingly shaped both government priorities and Kenya's international image.

The week's most significant geopolitical development was the resolution of a diplomatic dispute between Kenya and the United Kingdom regarding military cooperation. After a brief suspension, both governments agreed to resume military training exercises conducted by the British Army Training Unit Kenya (BATUK). The disagreement had arisen after Kenyan lawmakers sought stronger legal accountability for British personnel operating in the country, particularly in response to longstanding allegations involving criminal offences and environmental damage associated with past training exercises. The decision to restore the programme reflects the strategic importance of the Kenya-UK defence relationship, particularly as both countries continue to cooperate in counterterrorism efforts against the al-Shabaab insurgency in neighbouring Somalia. For Kenya, maintaining this partnership reinforces its position as one of the region's principal security allies while preserving the economic and military benefits that accompany British military engagement.

Beyond its bilateral relations with the United Kingdom, Kenya continued to project itself as a regional diplomatic and security leader. As one of East Africa's largest economies and a key member of regional organisations, Nairobi remains central to efforts aimed at promoting stability within the Horn of Africa. Its close cooperation with Western partners, combined with its continued participation in regional security initiatives,

highlights Kenya's broader objective of maintaining peace while strengthening its influence within African and international affairs. Although no major regional agreements were announced during the week, Kenya's diplomatic posture remained focused on preserving strategic partnerships amid an increasingly complex regional security environment.

Domestically, political developments continued to shape the country's geopolitical outlook. Political leaders intensified efforts to consolidate support ahead of the 2027 general elections, with coalition building and regional political realignments becoming increasingly visible. The Mt. Kenya region remains a key battleground as political parties compete for influence in one of the country's most electorally significant voting blocs. At the same time, divisions between the government and opposition continued to dominate public discourse, with debates surrounding governance, accountability, and national cohesion remaining at the forefront of Kenyan politics.

The government also continued to face public scrutiny over economic challenges, including the high cost of living, unemployment, and public service delivery. Although the week did not witness major nationwide protests, the political climate remained shaped by the legacy of previous demonstrations and ongoing concerns regarding police conduct and the protection of civil liberties. These domestic issues have increasingly become intertwined with Kenya's international reputation, as foreign partners continue to monitor governance, human rights, and democratic accountability alongside security cooperation.

Overall, the week's developments demonstrated Kenya's continuing effort to balance its regional leadership ambitions with domestic political realities. The successful resolution of the military cooperation dispute with the United Kingdom reinforced Kenya's strategic importance in East African security, while the country's evolving internal political landscape highlighted the challenges that lie ahead as preparations for the 2027 elections gradually intensify.

How the government manages both its international partnerships and domestic political tensions will play a significant role in shaping Kenya's geopolitical standing in the months ahead.

10. The Gulf Countries

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's political, diplomatic, and security landscape during the week was dominated by an ambitious effort to reshape Red Sea security architecture while simultaneously pursuing crisis diplomacy to prevent a wider regional conflict. Riyadh launched a Saudi-led multinational maritime coalition bringing together regional and international partners to secure the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Bab al-Mandab Strait against growing threats to global shipping, with Sudan emerging as one of the coalition's

core members. At the same time, Saudi military planning indicated preparations for a broader campaign against Yemen's Houthis through tactical force repositioning, reflecting the Kingdom's determination to protect critical energy export routes and maritime infrastructure. Parallel to its military posture, Saudi Arabia intensified diplomatic engagement by consolidating closer strategic coordination with Egypt, Turkey, Somalia, and other Red Sea partners while maintaining active communication with both Washington and Tehran. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman urged the United States to avoid further military escalation with Iran over fears of devastating retaliation against Gulf energy infrastructure, while Saudi officials simultaneously engaged Iranian and Qatari counterparts to reinforce de-escalation mechanisms, preserve freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, and sustain existing understandings aimed at preventing a regional war. By the end of the reporting period, Riyadh remained on heightened security alert as authorities finalized the command structure of the newly established maritime coalition amid continued regional instability and international travel advisories.

UAE

United Arab Emirates adopted a cautious but highly active diplomatic posture as regional military tensions intensified, balancing firm political messaging with efforts to safeguard its economic and commercial interests. Abu Dhabi strongly condemned renewed Iranian missile and drone attacks targeting neighboring Gulf states and Saudi energy facilities while engaging in urgent consultations with Egypt and Jordan to coordinate regional responses. Unlike several Gulf partners, however, the UAE deliberately remained outside the newly established Saudi-led Red Sea maritime coalition, preferring to preserve strategic flexibility and protect its independent regional infrastructure and commercial investments. Security assessments indicated that an informal understanding between Abu Dhabi and Tehran continued to shield Emirati territory from direct military strikes despite broader regional hostilities, allowing critical ports and logistics hubs to remain operational. In response to the deteriorating security environment, international travel advisories warned of potential airspace disruptions and flight cancellations. As regional tensions gradually eased, the UAE cautiously reopened limited trade channels with Iran and permitted the gradual resumption of Iranian commercial flights, signaling a pragmatic effort to stabilize trade flows, maritime commerce, and oil exports while acknowledging that the emerging ceasefire environment remained fragile.

Qatar

Qatar continued to position itself as one of the Gulf's principal diplomatic mediators while carefully managing the operational effects of ongoing regional tensions. Doha intensified high-level consultations with Gulf partners through direct engagement with the United Arab Emirates and continued participation in GCC coordination mechanisms,

reinforcing cooperation on regional security, administrative integration, and the protection of commercial navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. At the same time, Qatar adjusted its transportation and aviation policies to reflect the unstable regional environment, extending the suspension of selected Qatar Airways routes while maintaining normal maritime navigation under enhanced security protocols. Although Qatar supported diplomatic coordination aimed at reducing tensions and preserving regional stability, it deliberately refrained from joining the newly established Saudi-led military maritime coalition, instead maintaining its traditional emphasis on dialogue, mediation, and balanced regional diplomacy while adapting domestic transport and security measures to the evolving security environment.

11. Africa and The Sahel Region

DRC

The Democratic Republic of the Congo experienced a period marked by simultaneous political tensions, international diplomacy, and an escalating humanitarian emergency. The rapid expansion of the Bundibugyo Ebola outbreak became one of the country's most pressing security concerns as conflict in eastern provinces continued to obstruct public health operations. Domestically, constitutional disputes intensified following judicial approval of referendum law, triggering opposition protests and renewed accusations that the reform process could undermine presidential term limits. Internationally, Kinshasa concluded its presidency of the United Nations Security Council after emphasizing stronger international governance over conflict minerals to reduce financing for armed groups in eastern Congo. Meanwhile, international mediation under the Washington Accords continued assessing regional security arrangements, even as the military situation remained largely unchanged, with M23 and allied forces consolidating positions and preventing meaningful implementation of ceasefire commitments.

Mali

Mali's political, diplomatic, and security landscape remained dominated by the worsening insurgency across the Sahel, intensified military operations, and growing international scrutiny of the conflict. International organizations called for investigations into alleged war crimes following the circulation of battlefield footage from earlier clashes, while African Union assessments highlighted a deteriorating security environment fueled by expanding cooperation between the Azawad Liberation Front (FLA) and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM). In response, the Malian Armed Forces launched precision air operations targeting insurgent leadership and logistical infrastructure while tightening domestic security regulations through new mobility restrictions and expanded military exclusion zones designed to limit militant movement. Politically, the release of former Prime Minister Moussa Mara marked a notable domestic development amid continued

military rule. Russian Africa Corps personnel also maintained defensive deployments around strategic military installations as authorities adapted to evolving drone and asymmetric threats across northern and central Mali.

Niger

Niger's political, diplomatic, and security landscape was characterized by continued governance challenges, economic reforms, and persistent insurgent violence along its border regions. As the country marked the third anniversary of the military takeover, domestic and international criticism focused on deteriorating civic freedoms and worsening insecurity under military rule. Economically, Niger secured renewed support from the International Monetary Fund while advancing administrative reforms through the digitization of public service records to improve state management and reduce expenditure. Security conditions nevertheless remained fragile, with a deadly Boko Haram attack in the Lake Chad Basin underscoring the continued threat posed by armed groups operating across the country's southeastern frontier. Following broader regional security assessments, Niger further strengthened defensive deployments across its tri-border region with Mali and Burkina Faso to contain growing activity by Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP), reinforcing its emphasis on border security amid an increasingly volatile regional environment

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic's political, diplomatic, and security environment was shaped by strengthened sanctions implementation, continued insecurity along the Sudanese border, and the ongoing transition of security responsibilities from UN peacekeepers to national forces. Following the extension of UN sanctions against armed groups, authorities intensified enforcement measures targeting illicit arms networks and cross-border movements while reinforcing military deployments along the northeastern frontier amid concerns over fighting spilling across the Sudan border. At the same time, MINUSCA continued restructuring its operational posture by reducing static deployments in favor of mobile patrols and transferring additional former UN bases to national security forces, marking another phase in the gradual localization of security responsibilities. Diplomatic engagement remained closely tied to international peacekeeping efforts, with Rwanda reaffirming its support for stabilization initiatives through its UN contingent. Humanitarian agencies also warned that worsening food insecurity, limited humanitarian coverage, and resource shortages continued to heighten protection risks for internally displaced populations despite localized security improvements.

Chad

Chad's political, diplomatic, and security landscape during the week was dominated by mounting security concerns along its eastern frontier, expanding regional security cooperation, and intensifying humanitarian pressures stemming from the Sudan conflict. N'Djamena strengthened security coordination with Burkina Faso through high-level intelligence consultations aimed at improving cross-border cooperation against transnational threats, while maintaining a reinforced military presence along the Sudanese border following continued instability and drone-related incidents near Tiné. The government also relied on French aerial surveillance capabilities to enhance monitoring of Boko Haram activity in the Lake Chad Basin under the framework of renewed bilateral military cooperation. Alongside these security developments, Chad faced worsening humanitarian challenges as displacement figures continued to rise, placing additional pressure on already fragile border communities and state resources. Diplomatically, the United States publicly welcomed Chad's decision to withdraw from the International Criminal Court, framing the move as an affirmation of national sovereignty, reflecting N'Djamena's continued efforts to diversify its international partnerships while managing persistent regional security threats.

12. North Africa

Libya

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's meeting in Cairo with Government of National Unity Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah centered on coordinating responses to regional instability while advancing bilateral economic and security linkages. Cairo's engagement reflected a strategic interest in reinforcing influence over western Libyan institutions to limit Turkish and Qatari residual leverage, secure Mediterranean energy corridors, and prevent spillover from the wider Iran-related conflict into North African transit routes.

Libyan Interior Minister Imad al-Trabelsi's discussions with the Italian ambassador on expanding training, capacity-building, coastal security, and anti-migration cooperation advanced Rome's core objective of externalizing Mediterranean border control. The talks served Tripoli's interest in securing European material and political support that could strengthen western institutions against eastern rivals while addressing Italian domestic pressure over irregular arrivals originating from Libyan shores.

Saddam Haftar's high-level consultations in N'Djamena with Chadian President Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno on deepening military coordination against cross-border smuggling, armed groups, and Sahel instability extended the eastern Libyan National Army's southern security architecture. The engagement advanced Benghazi's objective of consolidating control over remote desert frontiers, reducing vulnerabilities exploited by

transnational networks, and positioning eastern forces as indispensable partners for regional stability arrangements independent of Tripoli.

Algeria

Libya and Algeria formalized a water-resources cooperation roadmap during ministerial talks in Algiers, establishing joint technical teams to advance irrigation, desalination, wastewater treatment, and flood-protection projects while addressing shared reliance on the North-Western Sahara Aquifer System. The arrangement advanced Algiers' interest in consolidating hydrological influence across the Maghreb, securing technical partnerships that reinforce its regional standing, and mitigating long-term resource pressures that could otherwise amplify domestic or cross-border instability.

Libya's Customs Authority and Algeria's General Directorate of Customs signed a cooperation agreement in Tripoli focused on enhanced border monitoring, training exchanges, and joint efforts against smuggling and transnational organized crime. The deal served Algiers' strategic priority of hardening its eastern frontier against illicit flows that could undermine economic controls or provide vectors for external interference, while deepening functional ties with western Libyan institutions amid the country's persistent political fragmentation.

Morocco

A large-scale surge of tens of thousands of people, predominantly young Moroccan nationals, crossed into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta over a compressed period at the end of July, producing significant casualties and prompting rapid Spanish military and barrier deployments. The episode highlighted Rabat's capacity to calibrate migration pressure as an instrument of leverage in bilateral relations with Madrid, while exposing the domestic socioeconomic strains that continue to generate outbound mobility and complicate Morocco's management of European partnership dynamics.

13. Middle East

Iran-Israel Conflict

The linkage of a finalized U.S.–Saudi civil nuclear treaty to Riyadh's formal diplomatic recognition of Israel under the Abraham Accords reflected Washington's effort to lock in a durable Arab-Israeli security architecture while extracting maximum leverage from energy and nuclear cooperation. Strategic calculations centered on isolating Tehran's regional network and securing long-term basing and overflight arrangements that would constrain Iranian power projection across the Gulf and Levant.

President Trump's public confirmation of ongoing indirect U.S.–Iran diplomatic exchanges signaled a tactical preference for negotiated de-escalation over open-ended

kinetic operations, driven by concerns over interceptor stockpiles and the risk of broader energy-market disruption. The exchanges aimed to test whether Tehran would accept constraints on its nuclear and proxy activities in exchange for relief from sustained pressure on its maritime and energy assets.

Iranian officials formally rejected an Iraqi-mediated temporary ceasefire proposal that would have required only a pause in airstrikes, insisting instead on a complete and verifiable halt. The rejection underscored Tehran's determination to preserve escalation dominance and avoid any precedent that could limit its ability to respond to attacks on its own territory or those of its aligned forces.

Saudi air forces struck Houthi-controlled telecommunications and defensive positions in Hodeida and on Kamaran Island, seeking to degrade maritime interdiction capabilities that threatened Red Sea shipping lanes critical to both Saudi and Israeli commercial interests. The operation advanced Riyadh's dual objective of protecting energy exports while demonstrating utility to Washington and Jerusalem as a counterweight to Iranian-backed groups.

Intense fighting in the West Bank town of Tell near Nablus resulted in the deaths of two IDF soldiers, highlighting persistent low-intensity friction that Israel sought to contain lest it divert resources from the primary Iranian theater. The engagements reinforced Jerusalem's assessment that Iranian-supported networks continued to probe for secondary fronts capable of stretching Israeli defensive bandwidth.

Brent crude prices surged above one hundred dollars per barrel after Houthi attacks on Red Sea shipping and renewed U.S. strike warnings, illustrating how Iranian-aligned maritime pressure directly translated into global energy-market leverage. The price spike amplified strategic incentives for both Washington and Jerusalem to restore freedom of navigation while complicating Tehran's own revenue calculations.

Houthi long-range drones struck the Aramco refinery complex in Jizan, damaging fuel storage and demonstrating the reach of Iranian-supplied systems into Saudi energy infrastructure. The attack served Tehran's interest in raising the cost of Saudi alignment with U.S. and Israeli objectives while testing Riyadh's willingness to absorb economic pain rather than escalate.

U.S. Central Command released footage of naval interdiction operations enforcing a maritime blockade against Iranian tanker traffic in the Persian Gulf, aiming to constrict Tehran's oil export revenues and signal readiness to interdict the regime's primary hard-currency lifeline. The blockade formed part of a broader effort to impose cumulative economic pressure that could force concessions on nuclear and proxy activities.

Israeli defense analysts assessed that the temporary pause in U.S. strikes on Iranian targets was tactical rather than strategic, projecting that diplomatic stalemate would soon produce

renewed kinetic operations. The assessment reflected Jerusalem's preference for sustained pressure on Iranian nuclear and command infrastructure before any negotiated arrangement could freeze the status quo.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs privately warned the White House that regional air-defense interceptor inventories faced significant depletion, underscoring the material limits of prolonged high-intensity engagement against Iranian and proxy missile and drone salvos. The warning reinforced Israeli arguments for decisive action before defensive stocks fell to critically low levels.

An Iranian Army spokesman announced a reciprocal temporary halt to retaliatory missile attacks on U.S. regional installations, citing a two-day pause in American air operations. The move represented a calibrated attempt to freeze the tactical situation while preserving the option to resume pressure should Washington resume strikes.

The same spokesman warned that any resumption of U.S. bombing would trigger geographic expansion of the conflict across additional Middle Eastern states, articulating Tehran's strategy of raising the political and military cost of continued operations against its homeland. The threat aimed to deter further strikes by advertising the risk of multi-theater escalation.

Iranian naval units intercepted and halted six international merchant vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz, asserting control over a critical chokepoint and demonstrating the regime's capacity to disrupt global energy flows in response to pressure on its own territory. The seizures advanced Tehran's objective of converting maritime vulnerability into strategic bargaining power.

Israel accelerated military-to-military coordination with regional Arab partners to synchronize air-defense postures against Iranian missile threats, seeking to construct de-facto integrated defensive architecture that would multiply the cost of any large-scale Iranian or proxy attack. The outreach reflected Jerusalem's recognition that unilateral defenses alone could not absorb sustained salvos.

Iran's foreign minister alleged that Ukrainian forces had attacked an Iranian merchant vessel at Israeli direction, attempting to internationalize the conflict narrative and portray Tehran as the victim of a broader proxy campaign. The accusation sought to complicate Western support for Ukraine while reinforcing domestic messaging about external encirclement.

Israel's Security Cabinet authorized limited entry of an international peacekeeping force into designated Gaza sectors, calculating that controlled external presence could stabilize the southern front and free resources for the Iranian theater. The decision balanced domestic political constraints with the operational need to reduce simultaneous multi-front pressures.

Israel's Religious Zionism party finalized its primary slate under Bezalel Smotrich with Orit Strock at the head, consolidating hard-line positions on territorial and security issues that would shape coalition dynamics during a period of intense external conflict. The outcome reinforced the political weight of factions least inclined toward territorial or diplomatic concessions.

Prime Minister Netanyahu departed Tel Aviv aboard the official aircraft Wing of Zion for consultations in Washington, underscoring the centrality of U.S.–Israeli coordination in shaping both kinetic targeting and post-conflict political arrangements. The visit reflected Jerusalem's determination to lock in sustained American military and diplomatic support.

IDF Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General Eyal Zamir directed field commanders to manage friction between settlers and Palestinians across the West Bank, seeking to prevent secondary violence from diverting attention or resources from the primary Iranian confrontation. The order revealed operational concern that uncontrolled escalation on the Palestinian front could undermine strategic focus.

President Trump, Vice President Vance, and Prime Minister Netanyahu convened in the Oval Office to review targeting strategies against Iranian nuclear and military assets, aligning U.S. and Israeli priorities on the sequencing and intensity of strikes. The summit reflected shared interest in degrading Tehran's reconstitution capacity before any diplomatic freeze could take hold.

Israeli officials presented detailed intelligence on accelerated Iranian nuclear weaponization and infrastructure repair under Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, arguing that reconstitution timelines required immediate pressure rather than extended negotiation. The briefing aimed to harden American resolve against any arrangement that left core nuclear capabilities intact.

Combined U.S. and Saudi air forces struck Popular Mobilization Forces facilities in Nineveh and Mosul, targeting Iranian-aligned militias that provided both local leverage and potential secondary attack vectors against Israel and U.S. positions. The operation sought to degrade Tehran's expeditionary capacity while demonstrating Saudi willingness to act against Iranian networks.

Ship-tracking data showed twelve commercial vessels, including a UAE LNG tanker, successfully transiting the Strait of Hormuz, indicating that Iranian interdiction efforts remained incomplete and that market participants continued to test the blockade's effectiveness. The breakouts complicated Tehran's ability to impose total economic isolation.

Israel's High Court heard petitions challenging government delays in enforcing military draft obligations on ultra-Orthodox yeshiva students, exposing domestic political tensions over burden-sharing at a moment of intense external security demand. The hearing

illustrated how internal social cleavages could constrain long-term force generation for sustained conflict.

A drone strike on regasification vessels at Egypt's Damietta Port extended the conflict's maritime footprint into the Mediterranean, threatening energy infrastructure critical to European and Israeli supply chains and demonstrating the reach of Iranian-aligned capabilities beyond traditional theaters. The attack raised the strategic cost of continued escalation for multiple regional actors.

President Trump reassured Netanyahu that Saudi recognition of Israel remained embedded in ongoing U.S.–Saudi strategic negotiations, reaffirming the linkage between energy, nuclear, and normalization tracks as a means of consolidating an anti-Iranian coalition. The assurance sought to maintain Israeli confidence in the broader diplomatic architecture.

Trump publicly declared that the United States would respond forcefully to any proxy strikes against American forces, signaling readiness to escalate if Iranian-aligned groups continued attacks. The statement aimed to restore deterrence while preserving negotiating space for a potential bilateral framework.

Saudi Arabia announced a fourteen-nation maritime defense framework encompassing Turkey, Egypt, and other partners to secure the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, seeking to multilateralize protection of Red Sea shipping lanes against Houthi and Iranian pressure. The coalition advanced Riyadh's interest in distributing defensive burdens while embedding Israeli security concerns within a broader Arab-led structure.

Netanyahu consulted U.S. Defense Secretary Hegseth at the Pentagon on military resupply schedules, prioritizing replenishment of interceptors and precision munitions essential for sustained operations against Iranian and proxy threats. The discussions reflected Israeli concern that material constraints could limit operational tempo.

U.S. forces conducted strikes against IRGC drone command centers and assembly sites inside Iran, aiming to degrade the production and launch infrastructure that had enabled repeated attacks on regional targets. The operation sought to impose direct costs on the core Iranian military apparatus rather than solely on peripheral proxies.

A defense analysis reported that allied Patriot and Arrow interceptor stockpiles had fallen by approximately half under sustained engagement, highlighting the finite capacity of existing defensive architectures against Iranian and proxy missile and drone campaigns. The assessment reinforced arguments for either decisive offensive action or accelerated production and resupply.

Hamas signaled conditional acceptance of a U.S.-backed Gaza disarmament framework contingent on full IDF withdrawal, testing whether a southern-front arrangement could

free Israeli resources for the Iranian theater while preserving residual leverage. The signal reflected internal Hamas calculations about survival under prolonged pressure.

The IRGC launched drone attacks on U.S. installations at a Kuwait airbase, demonstrating continued capacity for direct retaliation against American regional presence and signaling that pressure on Iranian territory would produce reciprocal costs. The strike aimed to raise the political threshold for further U.S. escalation.

The U.S.-backed Board of Peace formally published a Gaza roadmap pairing Hamas disarmament with an IDF withdrawal schedule, seeking to stabilize one front so that attention and resources could concentrate on Iranian nuclear and military reconstitution. The framework represented an attempt to sequence conflict termination across multiple theaters.

President Trump authorized a wave of strikes against Iranian oil refining and energy infrastructure, targeting the regime's primary revenue base in an effort to compel concessions on nuclear and regional activities. The decision reflected a calculation that economic attrition could produce strategic effects more rapidly than purely military attrition.

A missile struck a Qatari LNG tanker in the Strait of Hormuz, further elevating global energy prices and illustrating the persistent vulnerability of maritime chokepoints to Iranian or aligned interdiction. The attack reinforced the linkage between kinetic pressure on Iran and immediate market consequences for all major energy consumers.

President Trump suspended planned additional strikes on Iranian infrastructure after negotiators established initial parameters for a bilateral agreement, indicating a temporary preference for diplomatic space over continued kinetic pressure. The suspension reflected an assessment that further escalation risked uncontrolled geographic expansion while a framework might still constrain Iranian capabilities.

Turkey

The lifting of CAATSA sanctions by the United States after the NATO Summit hosted in Ankara, accompanied by signals of potential F-35 program restoration, reflected Washington's calculation that reintegrating Turkish military-industrial capacity would strengthen Alliance cohesion against Iranian and Russian pressures. Ankara leveraged the moment to convert prior isolation into bargaining power, seeking advanced air platforms that enhance its ability to project influence across the eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea while reducing dependence on alternative suppliers.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres's announcement of formal 5+1 Cyprus talks involving Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders plus the guarantor powers reopened a dormant diplomatic track that Turkey has long treated as central to its eastern

Mediterranean energy and maritime claims. Ankara's participation advanced its objective of securing recognition of Turkish Cypriot political equality and preventing unilateral Greek Cypriot exploitation of hydrocarbon resources that could alter regional power balances.

President Erdoğan's hosting of Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, the first such visit in seventeen years, positioned Turkey as a potential stabilizer for Lebanon's sovereignty amid Israeli operations and Syrian instability. The engagement served Ankara's interest in expanding political and economic influence along the Levantine coast, countering residual Iranian networks, and presenting itself as an alternative security partner to both Western and Gulf actors.

Iraq and Turkey's signature of a one-year agreement to transport Iraqi crude through the Ceyhan pipeline offered Baghdad a critical alternative export route while Hormuz disruptions elevated global energy risks. For Ankara the deal reinforced its role as an indispensable energy corridor, generated transit revenues, and deepened structural interdependence that constrains Iraqi tolerance for activities Ankara deems threatening to its border security.

During the Iraqi prime minister's visit, Erdoğan's reaffirmation that Iraqi stability is inseparable from Turkish internal security, together with discussion of the Development Road project, underscored Ankara's dual strategy of military pressure against Kurdish militants and economic integration. The approach aimed to lock Baghdad into cooperative frameworks that reduce the operational space of groups Turkey designates as threats while advancing Turkish commercial access to the Gulf.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan's telephone consultation with Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi on regional negotiation processes maintained a channel of communication that allows Ankara to manage risks arising from Iranian escalation without fully aligning with either Washington or Tehran. The exchange reflected Turkey's interest in preventing uncontrolled spillover that could disrupt its own border regions or energy interests while preserving room for independent mediation.

Announcement that Turkish pilots and maintenance personnel would begin Eurofighter Typhoon training in the United Kingdom ahead of 2030 deliveries marked a concrete step in diversifying Ankara's combat-aircraft inventory beyond U.S. platforms. The program advanced Turkey's objective of building a multi-source air force capable of sustaining operations in contested theaters while deepening defense-industrial ties with European partners less constrained by American legislative restrictions.

Erdoğan's public articulation of a "terror-free region" vision, coordinated primarily with Iraq, framed cross-border security operations as a prerequisite for shifting regional focus toward development. The initiative advanced Ankara's long-term goal of neutralizing

Kurdish militant infrastructure along its southern frontier, creating buffer zones that reduce domestic political vulnerability and open space for Turkish-led economic corridors.

Accelerated military and diplomatic rapprochement with Egypt, including letters of intent on defense-industry cooperation signed during the Egyptian defense minister's visit to Ankara, responded to shared concerns over Red Sea security, Horn of Africa rivalries, and the Gaza conflict's regional reverberations. Both capitals calculated that pragmatic defense collaboration could limit mutual competition in Libya and the eastern Mediterranean while jointly managing threats to maritime commerce.

The United States' imposition of a 12.5 percent tariff on selected Turkish goods under a forced-labor trade action introduced fresh economic friction even as security ties improved. The measure highlighted residual bilateral tensions over labor standards and market access that Ankara must navigate carefully to avoid undermining the broader strategic rapprochement with Washington while protecting domestic export sectors critical to its industrial base.

14. Global Powers

President Donald Trump said the United States and Iran were engaged in what he described as "good talks" and indicated that Washington would hold off on a new attack in the hope of reaching a rapid agreement. The pause came amid continued tensions over the Strait of Hormuz and Iranian attacks involving U.S. and regional targets. Trump nevertheless maintained that the military option remained available if diplomacy failed.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived in Washington for a meeting with Trump, with Iran at the top of the agenda. The talks came amid tensions over the U.S. approach to Iran and disagreements over the direction of regional policy. The meeting was also expected to address Gaza and broader Middle Eastern security issues.

Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met in Washington and discussed efforts to revive negotiations with Russia. The talks also covered Ukraine's potential production of Patriot missile interceptors, highlighting Washington's attempt to combine pressure for a negotiated settlement with continued military support for Kyiv.

Trump's meeting with Netanyahu revealed continued differences between the two leaders. Reuters reported that Trump expressed irritation with Netanyahu, illustrating the tension between Washington's pursuit of negotiations with Iran and Israel's security priorities. The meeting occurred as Trump was simultaneously trying to maintain diplomatic momentum with Tehran.

The administration continued to balance military pressure and diplomacy. Trump warned that the United States could resume attacks if negotiations failed, while Iranian officials

maintained their position on control of maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. The crisis continued to affect regional security and energy markets.

Although occurring just before the seven-day window, Secretary of State Marco Rubio's meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov remained directly relevant to this week's diplomacy. Rubio said Washington remained committed to playing a constructive role in ending the Ukraine war. The meeting was part of continuing U.S.–Russia diplomatic engagement even as Washington maintained pressure on Moscow.

China formally protested U.S. tariffs imposed on Chinese products under Washington's forced-labour policy, calling for their removal. The dispute adds another layer to U.S.–China tensions, which now extend beyond technology and strategic competition into human-rights-related trade restrictions.

Washington's engagement in the Horn continued to attract regional attention following recent diplomacy by Massad Boulos with Egypt, Eritrea and Somalia. Boulos subsequently rejected claims that the United States was attempting to construct an "anti-Ethiopian alliance." The clarification is significant because the U.S. engagement with Cairo, Asmara and Mogadishu has generated concern in Addis Ababa over the emerging regional alignment. The issue is particularly important for Ethiopia because it intersects with the Red Sea, Somalia–Somaliland tensions and Egypt's longstanding dispute with Ethiopia over the Nile.

President Xi Jinping called for a deeper crackdown on corruption within the People's Liberation Army and stressed the need to accelerate military modernization. He emphasized that the PLA must remain under Communist Party control and called for greater use of advanced technologies, including unmanned systems and cyber capabilities. The timing is significant as China moves toward the PLA's centenary and continues a major restructuring of its military leadership.

Beijing and Tokyo disputed whether their foreign ministers had a brief exchange on the sidelines of the ASEAN meetings in Manila. Japan said the ministers discussed bilateral relations, while China said there had been no meeting or even brief exchange. The dispute reflects the increasingly strained relationship, particularly over Taiwan and Japan's security posture.

Reuters reported that Beijing is drawing "red lines" around its economic model ahead of negotiations with the EU and United States. The core dispute concerns China's state-supported industrial capacity, export model and Western demands for greater market access and economic rebalancing. This is one substantive story, not several separate events.

15. Europe

Prime Minister Andy Burnham received Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in his first international meeting as prime minister. The two leaders met at HM Naval Base Portsmouth, where they reviewed UK-led training for Ukrainian forces. Burnham said that "Britain stands with Ukraine, shoulder to shoulder" and warned Russia that London would maintain its support until a "long-lasting and just peace" was achieved. The symbolism was significant because Zelenskyy's visit was Burnham's first engagement with a foreign leader after becoming prime minister, signaling that Ukraine remains at the center of Britain's European security policy.

Germany's Interior Minister announced plans to strengthen security measures following the vehicle attack near Berlin's Pride celebrations, in which one person was killed and more than two dozen injured. The suspect, who was later shot dead by police, had a record of Islamist extremist activity. Prosecutors subsequently said he had recorded a video pledging allegiance to Islamic State. The incident triggered a national debate over intelligence, prevention and the handling of extremist suspects.

Germany's governing conservatives selected Thorsten Frei, a close ally of Chancellor Friedrich Merz, as their new parliamentary faction chief with 91.9% of the vote. The move was part of a broader political reshuffle following internal tensions and provided some political relief for Merz's government.

The Trump administration was considering whether to delay or block the appointment of Aurélien Lechevallier as France's next ambassador to Washington. The dispute followed criticism from France's UN mission over the U.S. vote against extending UN human-rights chief Volker Türk's mandate. The episode has become a new point of tension in already strained U.S.–France relations, with disagreements also extending to tariffs and NATO. No final U.S. decision had been taken, but the issue could complicate the planned arrival of the French ambassador in September.

16. International and Regional Organizations

United Nation

The United Nations' most visible engagement this week was in Kampala, where senior officials from the Department of Peace Operations, the UN mission in Somalia and UNSOS sat through the AUSSOM summit's difficult conversations about what happens after December 2026. That deadline, driven by Washington's decision to pull the plug on logistical support through UNSOS has forced an uncomfortable reckoning over how the mission sustains itself and whether Somali forces will be ready to hold the line. UN representatives engaged directly on the security transition, offering technical perspective on the gaps that need filling and the timelines that need stretching. Away from the summit

spotlight, the UN's broader machinery continued its quiet monitoring of Sudan's humanitarian and human rights situation, though this week belonged more to the regional organizations driving the diplomatic tempo. The contrast captures the UN's current posture in the Horn deeply embedded in the operational realities of Somalia's transition, but more watchful than directive when it comes to Sudan's unfolding crisis

Africa Union

African foreign ministers gathered in Addis Ababa from July 28 to 29 for the 49th Ordinary Session of the AU Executive Council with the future of the Somalia mission looming large over proceedings amid mounting funding pressures. The session unfolded under this year's continental theme on sustainable water availability and safe sanitation systems a timely focus as Africa pushes toward the Agenda 2063 benchmarks. Opening the meeting AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf did not shy away from hard truths pointing to geopolitical tensions in the Middle East that are already rippling through African supply chains via the Strait of Hormuz and calling for bolder financial mobilization to fuel the continent's development ambitions. Ministers worked through a packed agenda, reviewing reports from the Permanent Representatives Committee, budgetary and administrative matters, Africa CDC and African Medicines Agency updates, G20 engagement strategies, progress on the Theme of the Year, appointments to the Board of External Auditors and preparations for the upcoming Mid-Year Coordination Meeting. The session wrapped up with adopted decisions aimed at strengthening continental integration and reinforcing the institutional frameworks that hold the African Union together.

Uganda opened its doors to a pivotal three day gathering at Speke Resort Munyonyo, hosting the Extraordinary Summit of Troop-Contributing Countries to the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia from July 29 to 31. Under the theme To Sustain the Stabilization Process in Somalia the summit brought together Heads of State and Government from Uganda, Somalia, Kenya, Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Egypt, alongside AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, senior UN officials including those from UNSOS and IGAD's Deputy Executive Secretary. The timing was anything but routine.

The Chiefs of Defense Forces kicked things off on July 29 with a sobering briefing from AUSSOM Force Commander Lt. Gen. Sam Kavuma, followed by Defense Ministers on July 30 and the leaders' summit on July 31. Behind closed doors, discussions grappled with hard realities Al-Shabaab's persistence, force generation and capability gaps the readiness of Somali National Armed Forces to shoulder greater responsibility, and the urgent need for resource mobilization. Hanging over it all was the shadow of Washington's decision to end support for UNSOS logistical operations beyond December 2026, a development that forces the AU and its partners to rethink the entire architecture of the mission. Uganda, which has kept boots on the ground in Somalia since 2007,

framed its hosting of the summit as a demonstration of its enduring commitment to regional stability, working hand in hand with the AU, UN, EU and IGAD to find a sustainable path forward.

The leaders' summit on July 31 produced concrete outcomes. Defence ministers had already paved the way by endorsing a push for the UN Security Council to extend AUSSOM's mandate by 18 to 24 months, a buffer meant to prevent a dangerous security vacuum while Somali forces continue building their capacity. When Heads of State took their seats, they reaffirmed an unwavering commitment to a united and stable Somalia anchored in strong institutions, democratic governance, and inclusive dialogue that brings together the Federal Government, Federal Member States, traditional leaders, and local communities. The summit stressed that any transition or exit must be orderly, coordinated, and phased, not driven by arbitrary timelines but by realities on the ground.

Leaders also called for urgent enhancements to air assets, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities, recognizing that the fight against Al-Shabaab demands more than boots on the ground. In a practical move, Foreign Ministers of troop-contributing countries were directed to form a joint task force alongside the Somali government and the AU Commission to craft a sustainable financing strategy, including plans for a donor conference. All recommendations are now set to travel to the AU Peace and Security Council before heading to the UN Security Council. AU Commission Chairperson Youssouf struck a resolute tone, emphasizing African solidarity, the preservation of hard-won gains, and the need for partners to offer predictable support aligned with African priorities, not external prescriptions. President Museveni, hosting the gathering, reaffirmed both Uganda's and the continent's steadfast commitment to seeing Somalia through to lasting peace.

AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf issued a strong condemnation on July 29 following a drone attack targeting vessels stationed at Egypt's Port of Damietta. In his statement the Chairperson conveyed the African Union's full solidarity with the government and people of Egypt commending the swift and effective response of Egyptian authorities that prevented any loss of life. He expressed confidence in the ongoing investigations to establish the full circumstances surrounding the incident. Chairperson Youssouf underscored a deeper concern that the attack represents a serious violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of an AU Member State warning bluntly that Africa must not become a theatre for the spillover of conflicts originating beyond the continent, nor should its critical civilian infrastructure be exposed to such threats. He called for maximum restraint and de-escalation, reaffirming the AU's unwavering commitment to international law, the safety and security of maritime navigation and the protection of civilian infrastructure.

The attack on Damietta, a key Mediterranean port, raises uncomfortable questions about the vulnerability of Africa's coastal installations to external hostilities rippling outward from tensions in the Middle East.

On the sidelines of the 49th Ordinary Session of the AU Executive Council in Addis Ababa, AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf held separate bilateral meetings with Somalia's Foreign Minister Abdisalam Abdi Ali and Benin's Foreign Minister Corinne Amori Brunet, each conversation reflecting a different corner of the continent's complex security landscape. With Somalia the focus was squarely on the upcoming Second AUSSOM Troop Contributing Countries Summit in Kampala and the broader effort to sustain peace and stability through close coordination between the AU, the Federal Government, and international partners. Minister Abdisalam expressed genuine appreciation for the AU's steadfast backing and reaffirmed Somalia's commitment to working with the Commission. The meeting with Benin's Foreign Minister turned toward the Sahel where the two exchanged candid views on the political and security situation, the urgent need for effective multilateralism, and the importance of strengthening ties between the AU and Regional Economic Communities. Chairperson Youssouf commended Benin's democratic governance and welcomed the renewed dialogue between Benin and Niger as well as the ongoing engagement between the Alliance of Sahel States and ECOWAS small diplomatic openings that carry significant weight in a region strained by political fragmentation.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

IGAD's special envoy, Ambassador Moussa Djama Ali, held strategic talks in Juba this week with France's Ambassador to South Sudan, Philippe Michel-Kleisbauer and the EU Delegation's Deputy Head, Lothar Jaschke. The July 28-29 meetings centered on reviving momentum around South Sudan's fragile peace process with specific focus on the constitutional roadmap, preparations for the long-awaited national elections and the critical need to get all political parties talking to each other again. Coming broader regional security discussions on the Horn of Africa, the envoy stressed that success depends entirely on a unified front among international stakeholders, thanking the EU for staying politically and financially committed when it matters most.

A multi-day IGAD-led workshop in Juba continued with a strong focus on deepening the role of South Sudanese actors at both national and subnational levels. Participants from diverse groups shared firsthand experiences and honestly assessed what has worked and what hasn't in supporting the peace agreement. The conversations then shifted toward practical policy options and concrete commitments to widen public participation and lock in a nationally owned, sustainable peace. Running from July 27 to 30 and funded by the European Union under its regional stabilization project, the workshop validated recommendations for more inclusive dialogue. On the margins of these sessions the IGAD Special Envoy briefed South Sudan's Foreign Minister, Ambassador James Pitia Morgan

who reaffirmed the government's commitment to peaceful elections and also held talks with the UK Ambassador covering political dynamics, inter-party dialogue and election preparedness.

IGAD Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu wrapped up a significant high-level mission to Khartoum on July 31, marking a fresh chapter in the Organization's relationship with Sudan after its full return to IGAD earlier this year. In meetings with Transitional Sovereignty Council Chairman General Abdel Fattah Al Burhan and Prime Minister Dr. Kamil Idris, the conversations tackled the difficult realities facing the country from the urgent humanitarian situation and institutional rebuilding to the longer road of post-conflict recovery. Dr. Workneh's message throughout was consistent and clear any lasting peace must be shaped and owned by Sudanese themselves with IGAD standing ready to back that process through dialogue, technical cooperation and sustained diplomatic presence. He also held separate discussions with Foreign Minister Mohi El-Din Salem and Vice President of the Transitional Sovereignty Council Malik Agar, focusing on advancing regional cooperation and breathing new life into Sudan's recovery efforts at a time when both are urgently needed. That commitment was made tangible with the official reopening of IGAD's Mission in Khartoum a move designed to put the Organization shoulder to shoulder with Sudanese partners on the ground. On the sidelines of the mission, Dr. Workneh met with South Sudan's Presidential Advisor on National Security Affairs to H.E president salva kiir , Hon. Tut Gatluak Manime, exchanging perspectives on the interconnected security dynamics shaping the region and the value of quiet, sustained dialogue between neighbors navigating their own fragile transitions. The mission's revival reflects a quiet but critical recognition that Sudan's stability isn't a standalone issue, it is deeply woven into the security and prosperity of the entire Horn of Africa and beyond given the country's role as a historic bridge between the continent and the Middle East. IGAD also acknowledged the continued cooperation of Sudanese authorities and reaffirmed its intention to work closely with the African Union, United Nations and other international partners in the long effort ahead.

IGAD's Deputy Executive Secretary, Mohamed Abdi Ware, represented the organization at an extraordinary summit of troop-contributing countries to the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia, hosted by Uganda on July 31. The gathering brought together nations shouldering the heavy lifting of Somalia's security transition a critical moment as AUSSOM works to contain Al-Shabaab while gradually handing over responsibility to Somali forces. Ware's presence signaled IGAD's firm backing for African solidarity in action, reinforcing that Somalia's stability isn't a distant concern but a shared regional imperative. His message underscored that collective effort, not isolated operations remain the only viable path to lasting peace in Somalia and the broader Horn of Africa.



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