



Weekly Geopolitical Report

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

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Horn Review: Weekly Report

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1. Ethiopia

Ethiopia's National Dialogue reached a defining milestone this week as participants achieved consensus across all eight thematic agenda pillars. The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission announced that working groups completed agreement on the remaining pillars of nation-building, federal cities affairs, institution-building, rule of law and human rights, and socio-economic issues, following earlier consensus on peacebuilding, religious affairs, corruption and good governance, and government structure. This progress provides a foundation for the next stages aimed at national cohesion and a shared vision.

This domestic push for peaceful consensus connects to Ethiopia's broader efforts to strengthen national security capabilities. On August 14, Field Marshal Birhanu Julia, described the Special Operations Command as a model force ready for rapid response and preemptive action against threats. During a performance review, he praised its role in past crises, highlighted advanced readiness in armaments and personnel, and stressed the defense forces' dual duty to protect against external adversaries and secure internal peace amid ongoing challenges from divisive groups.

Ethiopia further reinforced its commitment to collective regional security through active participation in the 36th Ordinary Meeting of the Eastern Africa Standby Force Policy Organs in Kampala. An official delegation led by Major General Teshome Gemechu and Ambassador Etsegenet Yimenu joined discussions under the theme of building a more secure Eastern Africa through partnership and innovation. The ministerial session finalized recommendations from the chiefs of defence forces meeting on operational readiness, governance, resource mobilization, and the regional security situation.

These security-focused engagements align with Ethiopia's expanding diplomatic partnerships. On August 15, Ethiopia's Ambassador to the United States, Binalf Andualem, met U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Frank Garcia to reaffirm commitment to stronger strategic and economic ties. Their discussions covered national and regional developments, the need for sustained collaboration on political, economic, and security challenges, and opportunities in Ethiopia's critical mining sector for investment and long-term partnership.

On the multilateral front, Ethiopia used its participation in the BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting in Jaipur to call for stronger cooperation among emerging economies. The delegation emphasized addressing global challenges such as rising debt, high borrowing costs, climate shocks, and financial fragmentation, while

advocating greater representation in international institutions, enhanced trade and investment ties, knowledge-sharing, and closer alignment with the New Development Bank as Ethiopia advances toward accession.

Complementing these strategic efforts, bilateral engagement with Saudi Arabia on August 11, focused on practical cooperation in tourism. Members of the House of People's Representatives Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs Standing Committee met a Saudi tour operators' delegation to discuss enhancing the sector. Both sides highlighted historical ties, Ethiopia's infrastructure improvements for visitors, and mutual interest in jointly promoting tourist attractions and historical heritage.

Ethiopia was also selected on August 12, to host the African Mayoral Leadership Initiative Leadership Forum in Addis Ababa and Bishoftu this October, following discussions between Minister of Urban and Infrastructure Chaltu Sani and AMALI's executive director. The initiative has already strengthened mayoral capacity, urban digitalization, and revenue mobilization in Ethiopian cities.

Supporting long-term national resilience, the Information Network Security Administration pledged intensified efforts to build a qualified cybersecurity workforce. Director General Tigist Hamid opened the fifth National Cyber Talent Summer Camp, which trains youth in cybersecurity, software, artificial intelligence, and related fields across multiple universities, underscoring the link between skilled human capital and successful digital transformation.

2. Sudan

Sudan's conflict entered another consequential phase during the week as the RSF made significant advances in the Blue Nile region, fighting continued across Kordofan and Darfur, and the Sudanese leadership intensified efforts to define a political process on its own terms. The developments highlighted the simultaneous evolution of three interconnected dynamics: a widening military contest along Sudan's southern and southeastern peripheries, an increasingly active regional and continental diplomatic environment, and an attempt by the authorities in Khartoum to translate recent military and political consolidation into a broader national dialogue.

Military developments were dominated by the Blue Nile theatre, where the RSF and its ally, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) under Abdelaziz al-Hilu, captured the strategic town of Geisan after the SAF withdrew from the area. The development came amid continued fighting around Kurmuk, another strategically important town near the Ethiopian border, where both sides issued competing claims regarding control and battlefield gains. The SAF said it had repelled attacks on Kurmuk, while the RSF-SPLM-N alliance continued to press its offensive across the frontier region. The loss of Geisan represents a significant setback for the army in a theatre that

has become increasingly important since the expansion of fighting into Blue Nile earlier this year. Its location near both the Ethiopian and South Sudanese borders also gives the conflict an increasingly regional dimension, particularly as military operations and accusations regarding cross-border support continue to shape relations between Khartoum and its neighbors.

The fighting in Blue Nile also reinforced the changing geography of Sudan's war. While Darfur and Kordofan remain the principal theatres of large-scale confrontation, the sustained contest for Kurmuk, Geisan, and surrounding areas has opened a strategically sensitive southeastern front. Control over these border regions carries military significance beyond the immediate battlefield, affecting supply routes, cross-border movement, and the ability of armed groups to operate across a frontier connecting Sudan with the wider Horn of Africa.

At the same time, drone warfare and long-range attacks remained a central feature of the conflict. Khartoum and other areas continued to face drone threats, while reports of an army drone strike in Darfur that killed at least 35 people drew renewed attention to the civilian cost of aerial warfare. WHO reported that a substantial proportion of Sudan's health facilities are no longer functioning, while El Obeid continued to face the combined effects of displacement, insecurity, and a deteriorating healthcare system.

The humanitarian consequences of the war remained severe. Reports from El Obeid highlighted the growing strain on displaced families and hospitals as the conflict continues to disrupt access to food, healthcare, water, and other essential services. The crisis has been compounded by the repeated targeting and destruction of civilian infrastructure across multiple states. Beyond Sudan's borders, refugees in Chad continued to face severe shortages, including limited access to clean water, demonstrating how the humanitarian effects of the war are increasingly extending across the region.

Politically, the most significant development was the continued effort by SAF commander and Sovereign Council Chairman Abdel Fattah al-Burhan to advance a national dialogue initiative. Burhan held previously unannounced discussions on the issue before publicly outlining his conditions for political engagement. He indicated that guarantees and forms of amnesty could be considered for those participating in dialogue, while simultaneously ruling out the political return of RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo. The position reflects an important contradiction at the center of the emerging initiative: the authorities are presenting dialogue as a path toward comprehensive reconciliation while seeking to define in advance the political boundaries of that process and exclude the principal military rival from any future political order.

This approach appears to reflect the confidence of a leadership seeking to consolidate its position rather than negotiating a settlement between equal belligerents. The language of dialogue has therefore increasingly been accompanied by the language of state

restoration, military legitimacy, and institutional consolidation. Prime Minister Kamil Idris also indicated that dialogue would begin soon as part of a process leading toward reconciliation, elections, and a future political transition.

The initiative generated broad reactions among Sudanese political actors, reflecting continuing divisions over the future structure of a political settlement. The central question remains whether dialogue can bridge Sudan's fragmented political landscape while the war itself continues and the two principal military forces remain locked in active confrontation. The exclusion of Hemedti from the political equation may strengthen Burhan's position among his supporters, but it also highlights the difficulty of reconciling a vision of national dialogue with the reality that one of the war's principal belligerents continues to control extensive territory and military capabilities.

Regional and continental diplomacy also became more active during the week. The African Union rejected foreign interference and the establishment of parallel governments in Sudan, reaffirming its support for the country's unity and sovereignty. At the same time, the AU's current engagement with Sudan drew renewed attention to the effectiveness of African-led diplomacy and the need to translate repeated political declarations into a more coherent mediation effort. IGAD also remained engaged with the Sudan file, continuing to advocate for a Sudanese-led path toward peace and recovery. These developments reflect a broader attempt by African institutions to reclaim diplomatic relevance in a conflict increasingly shaped by competing regional and international initiatives.

Relations between Khartoum and Addis Ababa also appeared to remain an important diplomatic concern. Reports indicated that Malik Agar, a senior Sudanese official with close familiarity with the Blue Nile region, was pursuing quiet efforts to ease tensions with Ethiopia. This comes at a particularly sensitive moment, given the expansion of fighting along the Ethiopian border and Sudanese accusations in previous months regarding cross-border support for armed groups operating in Blue Nile. The combination of military escalation around the frontier and renewed diplomatic engagement suggests that both countries have an interest in preventing the Sudanese conflict from generating a wider bilateral security crisis.

Taken together, developments during the week revealed a conflict marked by simultaneous military expansion and political consolidation. The RSF's advance in Geisan demonstrated that the SAF remains vulnerable on important fronts despite its efforts to project renewed control and institutional authority. Meanwhile, the struggle for Kurmuk and the wider Blue Nile region has added a significant border dimension to the war, increasing the strategic importance of Sudan's relations with Ethiopia and the wider Horn of Africa.

3. Egypt

A Hamas delegation held talks with Egypt's intelligence chief on a Gaza plan, continuing Cairo's role as a primary channel for discussions involving Palestinian factions. The meetings focused on ceasefire-related arrangements and practical steps, reflecting ongoing Egyptian involvement in mediating between Hamas and external parties amid persistent efforts to stabilize the border and manage humanitarian and security spillover from the conflict.

Egypt called for a complete Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in the aftermath of the Rome negotiations, aligning its public position with demands for full implementation of prior frameworks. The statement emphasized sovereignty concerns and the need to prevent prolonged military presence, positioning Cairo as an advocate for de-escalation on the northern front while monitoring implications for broader regional stability.

Saudi and Egyptian foreign ministers discussed escalating regional tensions, with Cairo expressing support for Gulf states facing attacks on shipping and infrastructure. The consultations covered shared security challenges and coordinated responses, underscoring Egypt's interest in solidarity with energy-producing partners whose stability affects its own economic and strategic calculations across the Red Sea and beyond.

Egypt and the United Kingdom jointly stressed the importance of implementing a Gaza peace plan, calling on all parties to meet their obligations. The shared messaging highlighted the necessity of reciprocal compliance to advance ceasefire arrangements and humanitarian access, reflecting Cairo's continued diplomatic engagement with European partners on the Palestinian file.

Egypt and Turkey emphasized the need for closer coordination on Gaza, Libya, Sudan, and other regional crises during high-level contacts. Officials from both sides pointed to overlapping interests in managing interconnected conflicts and supporting institutional processes, framing enhanced bilateral alignment as a means of addressing multiple theaters simultaneously.

President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and Jared Kushner underscored that all parties must fulfill their obligations under the Gaza ceasefire. The exchange reinforced Egyptian insistence on implementation and monitoring, while maintaining channels with influential American intermediaries involved in shaping postwar diplomatic and security arrangements.

Egypt's intelligence chief received a Hamas delegation to discuss the Gaza ceasefire, sustaining direct security-level dialogue with the movement. These contacts allowed for detailed exchanges on compliance, border management, and practical steps, consistent with Cairo's long-standing practice of handling sensitive Palestinian files through intelligence channels.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan traveled to Egypt amid questions surrounding a Saudi Arabia-Turkey-Pakistan defense arrangement. The visit provided an opportunity for consultations on emerging multilateral security frameworks and bilateral priorities, as Cairo assessed the implications of new regional pacts for its own strategic positioning.

Egypt used its improved relations with Türkiye to strengthen its regional security and economic influence, converting diplomatic rapprochement into expanded coordination on shared concerns. The approach aimed to broaden Cairo's options across Mediterranean, Red Sea, and African issues while balancing relationships with multiple external partners.

Tensions between Egypt and Ethiopia over Nile water resources continued to influence regional dynamics, with potential effects on external mediation efforts in Africa. Cairo maintained its prioritization of downstream water security as a core national interest, shaping its diplomatic posture toward upstream developments and related international initiatives.

4. Eritrea

OSINT tracking identified 27 suspected cargo flights between 3 July and 8 August connecting Turkey, Egypt, Belarus, Port Sudan, Massawa in Eritrea, and East Qwainat airbase in southwestern Egypt. The tracking indicates repeated Belarusian IL-76TD flights from Minsk to Massawa, with satellite imagery reportedly confirming the aircraft at the Eritrean port, while Turkish A400M flights originating from Baykar's facility in Tekirdag travelled to East Qwainat, an airbase reportedly hosting Turkish Akinci UCAVs. Although the available evidence does not establish the contents of individual flights, the pattern points to an expanding network of air and logistics links associated with military support to the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF).

Eritrea's significance in this network lies principally in its potential role as a transit and logistical node rather than necessarily as a direct supplier of military equipment to the SAF. Repeated flights into Massawa place Eritrean territory within a broader supply architecture connecting Turkey, Egypt, and Sudan, complementing the increasingly visible military relationship between Cairo and the SAF. Massawa's location on the Red Sea gives it particular utility for moving matériel toward Sudan while providing an alternative route alongside Egyptian airbases and Port Sudan. If sustained, this activity would reinforce Eritrea's emerging importance in the regional logistics networks surrounding the Sudan war and further integrate Asmara into the strategic alignment supporting the SAF.

On August 14, Martin Plaut reported that Eritrean public media sources were claiming that Eritrean-supplied tanks and heavy artillery had been moved through Adigrat, May Mekeda, and Mekelle towards the Raya-Alamata-Kobo axis in southern Tigray. The reported deployment allegedly includes seven tanks, five ZU-23 anti-aircraft guns, long-

range weapons, and other artillery, although Plaut stressed that the quantities, origin, and movement of the equipment had not been independently verified. The reports come amid heightened military activity around Raya and recent clashes involving TPLF-affiliated and Ethiopian federal forces elsewhere in Tigray, raising concerns that the emerging Tsimdo alignment between Eritrea's PFDJ and the TPLF may be acquiring a military dimension.

The significance, if the deployment is confirmed, would lie in what it suggests about Asmara's broader military strategy rather than simply in the movement of individual weapons. As Plaut argues, positioning Eritrean-supplied equipment and aligned forces deeper inside Tigray could provide Eritrea with strategic depth, allowing a future confrontation with Ethiopia to be fought further from Eritrean territory while making Tigray the principal buffer and potential battlefield. This would represent a potentially consequential evolution of Tsimdo from political rapprochement into a loose security arrangement directed against the federal government. For Eritrea, such an arrangement would also fit a broader strategy of cultivating forces within Ethiopia capable of containing Addis Ababa without requiring Asmara to absorb the initial costs of a direct confrontation.

The Popular Blue Revolution Movement (Brigade Nhamedu) in Israel held its third congress on 7–8 August, where delegates formally endorsed its transition into the Eritrean Blue Revolution Front (EBRF). The decision follows an earlier vote in which 84.6 percent of participants supported transforming the movement into a unified front. The congress also approved a revised organizational structure and reaffirmed the movement's stated objective of ending PFDJ rule, with the Israel branch declaring its full integration into the EBRF. The development is significant primarily as an organizational consolidation within the Eritrean opposition rather than as evidence of a change in the balance of power between the opposition and Asmara.

The move reflects the broader effort by Brigade Nhamedu and associated opposition actors to overcome the fragmentation that has long limited the effectiveness of Eritrea's diaspora opposition. Formalizing the EBRF structure could provide a more coherent political framework for mobilization across different diaspora communities, although the practical extent of this consolidation remains unclear. The emphasis placed by the congress on unity, organizational discipline, and resolving internal disputes suggests that the movement views fragmentation as a major obstacle to its objective of challenging the PFDJ. For Asmara, the development is nevertheless relevant because a more coordinated diaspora opposition could increase political pressure on the regime and strengthen the opposition's ability to organize internationally, even if it currently lacks the capacity to directly threaten the government's hold on power.

5. Djibouti

On August 10, Japan deployed a Kawasaki P-1 maritime patrol aircraft to Djibouti for its long-running anti-piracy operation off Somalia, according to Militarnyi, citing Japan's Ministry of Defense. The P-1, operated by the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, is replacing a P-3C patrol aircraft as part of the rotation of Japan's counter-piracy detachment. Japan has maintained the mission since 2009, with Djibouti serving as its principal operating base, and this marks the first reported deployment of a P-1 to the country. The deployment will support surveillance and protection of shipping along the Gulf of Aden and waters off Somalia.

The deployment comes as maritime insecurity across the Red Sea and surrounding waterways has given Japan a broader interest in maintaining a forward presence in the region. Djibouti hosts Japan's only overseas military facility and provides a strategically positioned base from which Tokyo can monitor a maritime corridor critical to its commercial and energy supply chains. While the P-1 deployment remains formally tied to the anti-piracy mission and should not be interpreted as a new Japanese military commitment to the Red Sea crisis, the continued modernization of Japan's Djibouti-based capability underscores the country's determination to retain an operational foothold in the western Indian Ocean. The base's proximity to facilities operated by the United States and China also gives Japan's presence a wider strategic significance within the increasingly militarized security environment around the Horn of Africa.

Fox News reported on August 12 that the intensifying Houthi threat to Red Sea shipping could prompt Washington to reconsider its military posture along the Horn of Africa, with particular attention to its longstanding presence in Djibouti. The article cited former British ambassador Edmund Fitton-Brown, who argued that there is growing concern in Washington over Djibouti's reliability as a host, partly because of China's expanding military and commercial presence there. Other analysts interviewed by Fox News suggested that the Houthi threat could increase the value of alternative positions on the African side of the Red Sea, particularly Somaliland, although Bill Roggio noted that Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti remains geographically better positioned to monitor and deter threats to the Bab el-Mandeb.

The significance for Djibouti is therefore less an imminent US withdrawal than growing pressure on the country's position as Washington's principal military hub in the Horn. The Houthi campaign has increased the strategic value of Red Sea basing while simultaneously exposing the risks of relying heavily on a single host where China also maintains a military facility and where the United States has limited control over the wider political environment. A move toward greater engagement with Somaliland could consequently serve as strategic redundancy, giving Washington an alternative without necessarily displacing Djibouti. For Djibouti, however, the discussion is consequential: its

longstanding value to the United States may increasingly depend on whether it can remain the most operationally useful and politically reliable platform for projecting power into the Red Sea.

On August 9, a U.S. military aircraft crashed near Chabelley Airfield in Djibouti, with the incident subsequently confirmed by U.S. Africa Command. According to Demócrata, AFRICOM said the crash caused no injuries or material damage and that an investigation was underway to establish the cause. Initial indications reportedly showed no evidence of external interference, although the type of aircraft and precise circumstances of the crash were not disclosed in the statement cited by the report. The incident was first acknowledged by the U.S. Embassy in Djibouti, which provided few details at the time.

The crash is unlikely to have immediate strategic consequences, but it highlights the operational intensity of the U.S. military presence around Chabelley, a key facility supporting American air operations in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea. Its proximity to Camp Lemonnier makes Djibouti central to Washington's ability to conduct surveillance and respond to developments in Yemen and Somalia, particularly as Houthi activity has increased across the Red Sea. The absence of initial indications of external interference is important given the wider security environment, as there is currently no basis to link the crash to hostile action. Nevertheless, the incident adds to the operational risks associated with maintaining a concentrated U.S. military footprint in Djibouti at a time when Washington is simultaneously considering the need for greater redundancy in its Red Sea basing arrangements.

6. South Sudan

South Sudan faced another difficult week marked by deadly communal violence, worsening humanitarian pressures, and continued uncertainty over the country's political transition. While preparations for elections and the implementation of the 2018 peace agreement remain central to the national political agenda, developments during the week highlighted the persistent gap between institutional commitments and conditions on the ground. Violence in Warrap State, a deepening funding crisis affecting refugees, and renewed movement on transitional justice all underscored the multiple pressures confronting the country.

The most serious security development occurred in Warrap State, where armed violence reportedly killed more than 60 civilians. UNMISS condemned the attacks and called for greater protection of civilians, once again drawing attention to the threat posed by localized armed and intercommunal violence. The incident demonstrated that insecurity in South Sudan extends beyond the political and military divisions at the national level. Communal disputes, armed groups, and recurring local conflicts continue to produce significant civilian casualties and undermine state authority in areas where security institutions remain weak. Such violence also raises broader concerns about the country's

readiness for elections, particularly as a credible political process will require a more stable security environment across the country.

Humanitarian pressures also intensified during the week as funding shortages threatened assistance for hundreds of thousands of refugees living in South Sudan. Humanitarian organizations warned that more than 600,000 refugees could face severe reductions in life-saving support as funding gaps place food assistance and other essential services at risk. The situation is particularly serious because South Sudan is simultaneously confronting widespread domestic humanitarian needs while hosting large numbers of people displaced by the continuing war in neighboring Sudan.

The growing funding crisis illustrates the increasingly regional nature of South Sudan's humanitarian burden. Continued arrivals from Sudan have added pressure to communities and humanitarian systems already struggling with food insecurity, displacement, flooding, and limited access to public services. A reduction in international assistance could therefore have consequences beyond hunger, potentially increasing pressure on vulnerable communities and deepening competition over already scarce resources. The week's developments reinforced concerns that humanitarian needs are continuing to grow faster than the resources available to address them.

Politically, attention remained focused on South Sudan's uncertain transition and the question of whether the institutions established under the peace process can move from planning to implementation. Commentary during the week continued to highlight concerns over the country's readiness for elections and the risks of pursuing a political timetable without sufficient progress on peace and security. The central challenge remains whether South Sudan can advance toward elections without allowing the electoral process itself to become another source of instability.

At the same time, the African Union moved forward with the process of establishing South Sudan's Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing by naming nominees for the body. Civil society organizations welcomed progress but called for concrete action to ensure that transitional justice mechanisms are fully operationalized. The commission is a key component of the peace agreement and is intended to address the legacy of conflict and promote national reconciliation. However, the long delay in implementing transitional justice provisions has created widespread concern about whether political commitments will translate into meaningful accountability and healing.

Questions surrounding governance and implementation also remained prominent. Calls for stronger mechanisms to oversee national development reflected frustration with the gap between government plans and their practical execution. Meanwhile, criticism of the continued recycling of political elites highlighted deeper concerns about whether South Sudan's political system is capable of generating institutional renewal. Together, these debates point to a broader challenge facing the country: the need to move beyond repeated

political agreements and policy commitments toward institutions capable of delivering security, development, and public services.

Taken together, the week's developments underscored South Sudan's continuing struggle to manage interconnected security, humanitarian, and political pressures. The deadly violence in Warrap demonstrated the persistence of local insecurity, while the funding crisis threatening refugees exposed the fragility of the country's humanitarian response. Renewed movement on transitional justice offered a potential institutional opening, but progress will ultimately depend on whether commitments are followed by implementation.

As South Sudan approaches a critical stage in its political transition, the central issue remains the relationship between peace and political progress. Elections, transitional justice, development planning, and institutional reform cannot be treated as separate processes. Their success will depend on improvements in security and the implementation of the broader peace framework. Without this, the country risks adding new political pressures to an already fragile environment rather than creating a sustainable path toward peace and stability.

7. Somalia and Somaliland

Somalia

In August 11 the Somali Parliament elected a new Speaker widely regarded as the foremost Turkish asset in Mogadishu in which a development that has drawn objections from opposition factions. Former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and other opposition leaders have voiced strong opposition to the outcome setting the stage for potential political confrontation. Turkish officials have reportedly warned that Ankara will move to arrest and exile opposition leaders including former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed should they persist in their defiance according to statements attributed to a veteran Turkish diplomat.

Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre delivered a public rebuke of international partners on August 11 accusing them of maintaining a cultural problem in their engagement with Somalia. The Prime Minister charged that donors and partners continue to treat Somalia as if it remains in a transitional period without laws, constitution or meaningful governance structures. He argued that international actors still seek to dictate policy and must adapt to Somalia's established institutions and National Transition Plan criticizing operations managed from Nairobi and asserting that Somalia outperforms many East African countries across multiple indicators.

Federal state relations continued to strain particularly regarding security sector integration and control. Puntland state authorities announced the integration of surrendered federal

government aligned forces into state security structures following recent Puntland seizures of federal bases in Galkayo and elsewhere. In a related development General Jimale Takar commander of the Somali National Army's 54th Division rejoined Puntland's security forces and agreed to integrate Danab units under Puntland command representing a blow to Mogadishu's authority and the fragility of federal security integration efforts.

Public sentiment in Somalia's Southwest State turned visibly against Turkish involvement in the country following airstrikes near Baidoa. Videos circulating on social media showed residents burning the Turkish flag while displaying regional banners with protesters accusing Turkey of conducting strikes that caused civilian casualties, livestock losses and property damage in rural areas linked to forces loyal to ousted Southwest President Abdiiaziz Laftagareen. The demonstrations reflect growing resentment over Turkey's deeper involvement in Somalia's internal political disputes. Critics including former officials and academics, have described Turkish overreach, alleging resource motives and excessive intervention. Turkey has not issued an immediate public response to the specific flag burning incidents or civilian casualty claims.

The Somali National Army achieved a milestone on August 16 with the graduation of 3,000 newly trained soldiers at the Xananbuure Training Centre in Galgaduud presenting the largest single graduation class since the collapse of the central government in 1991. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud serving as Commander in Chief attended the ceremony alongside Galmudug President Ahmed Abdi Qoorqoor, Defence Minister Ahmed Moallim Fiqi and other senior officials. The recruits drawn from across the country completed nearly a year of basic training encompassing military skills, discipline, legal instruction, and combat tactics. The training was conducted under a Saudi funded program stemming from a February defence agreement under which the Kingdom committed to training approximately 5,000 Somali soldiers with this graduation representing the majority of that pledge delivered in a single cohort. Foreign instructors from Romania, Ukraine, and Sudan participated in the program with Saudi officials monitoring progress throughout the training cycle.

In operation in the Tawakal area of Lower Shabelle NISA reported killing seven Al-Shabaab militants and wounding several senior commanders in a planned strike on a group facility. Key figures present or targeted included Yonis Moallim Abuukar, who had been linked to the Mushani area; Abuu Haji Fareey, identified as the Tawakal commander; Ayaatullaahi, associated with the Lower Shabelle front; and Abdifitaah Rooble, responsible for extortion activities in the Baladul-Amin area. NISA framed the operation as part of sustained efforts to degrade leadership structures and attack planning sites. The claims could not be independently verified and Al-Shabaab did not immediately comment on the reported operation.

A separate operation in the Maxaas district of Hiiraan region targeted a house where senior Al-Shabaab figures were gathered. NISA again with international partner support conducted a planned strike resulting in the deaths of three commanders identified as Abdi Hafid who was responsible for the explosives unit; Daalibaan, who led a rapid response or reinforcement unit and Omar Hussein, a front commander. Senior Hiiraan regional commander Mustaf Caato was reported to have been seriously wounded and evacuated to El Bur for treatment with two additional commanders also reported wounded.

In Middle Shabelle near Jowhar NISA reported killing nine Al Shabaab militants including two senior commanders in a targeted operation. The commanders were identified as Ahmed Ali Jimale described as the top commander for Jowhar district, and Gedi Mohamed Nur Adde, head of operations in the Dumaaye and Dabagaalo areas. Seven members of Al Shabaab's local Hizbul militia accompanying them were also killed. NISA described the Middle Shabelle sting as successful and part of sustained efforts to degrade leadership and operational capacity. Al-Shabaab did not immediately comment on the reported operation and claims could not be independently verified.

In the Tardo area of Hiiraan region, NISA reported killing three senior Al-Shabaab commanders and five of their guards in a targeted operation on Sunday with four other militants wounded. Those killed were identified as Said Huriye, said to oversee extortion collections in eastern Hiiraan; Hamza Bakool, commander of fighters in the region; and Osman, head of a unit known as Fursaan. Among the wounded was commander Khalid Iro while Abdikarim Yusuf Ahmed, described as responsible for Tardo, reportedly escaped. Claims could not be independently verified, and Al-Shabaab did not immediately respond to the reported operation.

Ethiopian troops serving under the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia formally transferred the Buurhakaba Forward Operating Base to the Somali National Army's 60th Division in early August with reporting and related withdrawal activity highlighted on August 10. The base had been held by Ethiopian forces since 2014. Buurhakaba located town in the Bay region along the key Baidoa Mogadishu road is largely surrounded by Al-Shabaab controlled or contested areas raising concerns about the Somali National Army's capacity to hold the position independently.

The African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia head Ambassador El Hadji Ibrahima Diene received Turkish Ambassador to Somalia Alper Aktaş in Mogadishu for discussions focused on their longstanding partnership in support of Somali led peace, security and stability. Both sides emphasized sustained international cooperation and agreed to continue strengthening joint actions, reflecting the deepening Turkish role in Somalia's security architecture alongside the African Union mission.

On another note, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda made an intervention stating that Uganda's nearly two decade military deployment in Somalia was driven primarily by

solidarity with Ethiopia, whose national security was threatened by instability in Somalia rather than by direct support for Somalia itself. Despite the uncertainty surrounding the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission, Ugandan Defence Minister Kiryowa Kiwanuka confirmed that Uganda would remain in Somalia with arrangements expected to evolve under a pre existing bilateral agreement with Somalia in addition to African Union mission contributions. Other troop contributing countries were also reported as exploring options for continued presence.

The United Nations Support Office in Somalia closed registration for licensed auctioneers to sell mission property including vehicles, generators, shipping containers, security watchtowers, medical equipment and prefabricated accommodation. This followed an August 6 tender and reflected the United States decision to end funding support for the United Nations Support Office in Somalia and the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission logistics by the end of 2026 accelerating drawdown planning for the approximately 12,000 troop mission.

Sudan's Ambassador met with Somalia's Foreign Minister Abdisalam Ali in Mogadishu to discuss regional political and security conditions, the ongoing conflict in Sudan and strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation on shared interests. Parallel Sudan Egypt contacts occurred on similar themes, suggesting broader regional diplomatic coordination on the Sudan crisis.

China announced the deployment of its 49th naval escort fleet for the Gulf of Aden and Somali waters with the guided missile destroyer Kunming, guided missile frigate Yueyang and supply ship Luomahu scheduled for deployment in mid-August. The task group will relieve the 48th fleet, continuing anti-piracy and shipping protection operations under United Nations resolutions, a mission China has maintained since 2008.

A United States District Judge lifted a stay allowing the Trump administration to terminate Temporary Protected Status for Somalis following a June 2026 Supreme Court decision limiting judicial review of certain Temporary Protected Status terminations. The ruling, issued around August 14, affects approximately 1,100 or several thousand Somali nationals, depending on counting methodologies including pending applications who had held deportation protections and work authorization. Former Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem had cited improved country conditions as the basis for termination while challengers alleged bias. United States Citizenship and Immigration Services guidance confirmed the designation's termination effective around mid August 2026 with employment authorization documents under the relevant categories no longer valid.

Somaliland

The Minister of Interior and National Security, Abdalle Mohamed Arab also known as Abdalle Mohamed Carab or Sandheere has issued a series of public statements alleging that the prolonged tensions and intermittent conflict affecting the western regions of Awdal and Salal are not contrary to some characterisations primarily a manifestation of intra clan disputes. Minister Arab definitively described the situation as external fitna or discord deliberately orchestrated from outside Somaliland's borders.

In his remarks the Minister specifically accused the Federal Government of Somalia of direct involvement in fomenting instability in the area. He further implicated the Republic of Djibouti in these efforts and expressed his government's deep suspicion that the Republic of Türkiye is actively working to undermine local peace initiatives and prevent a lasting resolution among the affected communities. Minister Arab linked the current spike in external pressure and interference to the recent momentum gained by Somaliland in the realm of international recognition suggesting that these actions are intended to destabilise the country and detract from its growing international standing.

On another front, Somaliland Objects to Uncoordinated UN Delegation Visit to Laascaanood. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation issued an official press statement expressing the government's strong objection to a recent high level United Nations delegation visit to the city of Laascaanoo situated within the Sool region. In its statement, the Ministry said that the visit was conducted without prior coordination with the Somaliland authorities in Hargeisa and framed the government's objection in terms of a fundamental violation of Somaliland's sovereignty and established administrative protocols for international engagements within its territory.

Somaliland Government Reasserts Sovereignty in Response to Federal Visa System. Local sources and media reports including coverage from Hiiraan Online indicated that the Federal Government of Somalia's newly implemented electronic entry system has caused complications for members of the Somaliland diaspora and foreign investors planning travel to Somaliland. The federal system's requirements which Somaliland does not recognise as having any jurisdiction within its territory, conflict directly with Somaliland's own established visa on arrival and entry procedures. Reports indicated that a number of travellers cancelled or postponed their summer travel and business visits following the application of the federal system's requirements. This has resulted in a marked reduction in diaspora returns during the traditional peak season and the postponement of critical investment-related visits, thereby negatively impacting the local economy.

Vice President and Acting President, Mr. Ali Aw Abdi received the Danish Ambassador to Somalia, His Excellency Steen Sonne Andersen at the Presidential Palace for high level talks focused on strengthening and deepening the bilateral relationship between

Somaliland and the Kingdom of Denmark. The discussions covered a wide range of areas of mutual interest with a particular emphasis on security cooperation, the consolidation of stability, social development programming, and the enhancement of economic infrastructure.

Agenda items pertaining to democratic governance and the conduct of elections featured prominently in the conversation. During the meeting Acting President Aw-Abdi expressed his deep appreciation to the Danish government for its sustained financial and developmental assistance to Somaliland.

On another development Israel and Somaliland Economic and Bilateral Talks Advance. The diplomatic engagement between the State of Israel and the Republic of Somaliland saw a development with a meeting between Israel's Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, His Excellency Yossi Shelley and Somaliland's representative in the UAE, Mr. Masoud Abdi Ali. The discussion reported on 12 August with follow up coverage centred on capitalising on the opportunities arising from the Israeli government's formal recognition of Somaliland.

Somaliland Expresses Solidarity with UAE Following Attack on Vessels. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation issued a strong statement condemning the attack on two vessels affiliated with the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company while transiting the Strait of Hormuz. The statement expressed the government's full solidarity with the United Arab Emirates and categorically rejected any acts that threaten the security and safety of international navigation or the freedom of maritime trade. Somaliland called for the strict respect of international law in order to preserve regional stability and security.

8. Yemen

Between August 10 and 17, Yemen experienced a marked escalation in fighting between the Iran-backed Houthis (Ansar Allah) and the Saudi-backed internationally recognized government (IRG), raising the prospect of a broader breakdown in the relative stability that has prevailed since the April 2022 UN-brokered truce. The escalation unfolded across several fronts, including government-held territory, the Red Sea coast, maritime shipping routes and Saudi territory. UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg warned that Yemen faced its highest risk of a return to large-scale conflict since the 2022 truce, as renewed fighting coincided with wider regional tensions surrounding the US-Israel confrontation with Iran. While a nationwide war had not fully resumed by August 17, the intensity and geographic spread of the latest clashes represented a significant deterioration from the previous period of relative calm.

The most visible escalation occurred around the government-held port of Mokha on Yemen's Red Sea coast, where the Houthis conducted a sustained campaign of missile

and drone strikes from around August 9. The attacks reportedly caused casualties, damaged port infrastructure, piers, supplies and fishing vessels, and ultimately led to the suspension of commercial and maritime operations. The Houthis said the strikes were directed against Saudi-backed military mobilizations, weapons depots and government forces, while Yemeni officials described significant economic losses resulting from the attacks. The campaign is strategically important because Mokha is a government-controlled foothold on the Red Sea and sits close to the Bab el-Mandeb, making the fighting simultaneously a domestic military confrontation and a potential threat to maritime security.

The escalation also directly affected commercial and military-linked shipping in the Bab el-Mandeb. On August 11, the vessel *Tihamah* was attacked in waters off Yemen, with the Houthis claiming that it was transporting Saudi military equipment while Yemeni authorities said it was carrying food supplies. Three ballistic missiles reportedly struck the vessel, killing four crew members, while a subsequent attack on a rescue operation killed two additional people. The incident demonstrated the growing risks to maritime traffic as the Houthis attempt to extend their confrontation with Saudi Arabia beyond the Yemeni battlefield. It followed the group's earlier declaration of a maritime blockade against Saudi-linked shipping and its broader "siege for siege" strategy, which seeks to frame attacks on regional commerce as retaliation for Saudi military and economic pressure.

Fighting simultaneously intensified inside Yemen, particularly around Marib and other government-held areas. Houthi missile and drone attacks targeted government military positions, while clashes were also reported in Taiz and elsewhere along the frontlines. The IRG responded with counteroperations in Marib, Al Jawf and other areas, with government forces claiming on August 16 that they had conducted 181 military operations across 24 hours using drones, artillery and rocket launchers. These claims, including reported Houthi casualties and the destruction of military equipment and weapons depots, remain difficult to independently verify, while casualty figures from both sides have varied considerably. Nevertheless, the frequency of operations indicates that the escalation is no longer confined to isolated exchanges and is beginning to involve coordinated military activity across several governorates.

Saudi Arabia has become increasingly central to the confrontation. Houthi attacks have targeted areas in southern Saudi Arabia and reportedly sought to strike energy infrastructure, while Riyadh has reinforced the IRG and is reportedly considering support for a ground campaign aimed at pushing Houthi forces away from the Red Sea coast. At the same time, Saudi policy appears calibrated to avoid an immediate return to the large-scale intervention that characterized the earlier phase of the war. Riyadh has denied imposing a siege on Yemen, emphasized the continued movement of goods to northern ports and maintained diplomatic engagement, while its recent defence arrangements with Türkiye and Pakistan suggest a broader effort to strengthen its regional security position.

The combination of military reinforcement and diplomatic caution indicates that Saudi Arabia is seeking to contain the Houthi threat without allowing the confrontation to develop into an uncontrollable regional war.

The immediate concern is therefore less the outbreak of a full-scale nationwide conflict than the gradual erosion of the restraint that has characterized Yemen since 2022. The renewed exchanges have already linked the Yemeni conflict more closely to the wider regional confrontation, while attacks on ports and shipping create an additional risk to Red Sea navigation and regional energy security. The humanitarian consequences could also be substantial in a country where millions already face acute food insecurity and where infrastructure remains severely degraded. For now, the conflict remains below the threshold of a renewed nationwide war, but the combination of Houthi maritime operations, cross-border attacks, Saudi military preparations and intensified IRG operations has created a significantly more volatile security environment than existed earlier in the year.

9. Kenya

Kenya's geopolitical developments this week were driven less by a major diplomatic confrontation and more by economic statecraft, debt management and the intensifying domestic political contest ahead of the 2027 election. Nairobi continued to position itself as a state willing to work simultaneously with Western institutions, China, Japan and other international lenders rather than tie its economic strategy to a single external partner. At home, President William Ruto moved further toward consolidating his broad based political arrangement with sections of the Orange Democratic Movement, while resistance within the opposition continued to grow.

The clearest foreign policy development came through Kenya's search for new sources of financing. On 12 August, Central Bank Governor Kamau Thugge confirmed that an IMF delegation is expected in Nairobi for consultations that will include discussions over a new IMF supported programme, potentially involving fresh lending. Kenya's previous \$3.6 billion IMF arrangement ended in 2025, leaving the government looking for another framework through which to manage financing pressures and economic reforms. Only two days later, the Finance Ministry revealed an unusually diversified borrowing strategy. Kenya is considering its first \$300 million panda bond in China, more than \$500 million in Japanese financing including a possible Samurai bond, an approximately \$815 million Eurobond and a planned \$1 billion debt for food security arrangement with the US International Development Finance Corporation.

Taken together, these moves demonstrate Kenya's continuing strategy of geopolitical hedging. Nairobi is not choosing China over the United States, or Western financial institutions over Asian capital. Instead, it is attempting to obtain financing from all sides while retaining room for manoeuvre. This gives Kenya greater diplomatic flexibility, but

it also illustrates the degree to which public debt and financing requirements are influencing foreign policy. Kenya's ability to maintain this balancing strategy will increasingly depend on whether it can reduce expensive debt while avoiding political backlash from austerity or additional taxation.

Internally, the week also marked an important stage in preparations for the **2027 general election**. On 10 August, Ruto brought leaders associated with the broad based government together in Naivasha, arguing that cooperation between Kenya Kwanza and ODM had combined elements of their competing 2022 political programmes and accelerated implementation of government projects. The IEBC simultaneously moved the country further into the election cycle by setting out key electoral timelines, while political parties intensified mobilisation one year before the vote. Ruto also launched discussions around Vision 2060 on 12 August, presenting technology, artificial intelligence and climate change as reasons Kenya needs a new long term development framework beyond Vision 2030.

However, the attempt to consolidate the political centre remains contested. Divisions inside and around ODM became particularly visible on Sunday, 16 August, when the Linda Mwananchi movement, associated with figures including Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna and Babu Owino, took its mobilisation campaign into Homa Bay. Roads were reportedly barricaded, tyres were burned and police used tear gas during confrontations as the convoy moved through the county, although large crowds eventually attended the rallies. The significance is larger than the rally itself: Ruto is attempting to bring much of the established opposition into a broad governing coalition, while another opposition current is trying to preserve an anti-government political platform ahead of 2027.

Overall, Kenya ended the week balancing two fronts. Internationally, it is pursuing a highly pragmatic economic diplomacy that keeps China, Japan, the United States, the IMF and international capital markets simultaneously engaged. Domestically, however, the political environment is becoming more competitive as the election approaches. Kenya therefore remains one of East Africa's most diplomatically flexible states, but its external influence will increasingly be affected by whether the government can control its debt pressures and manage a potentially turbulent transition into the 2027 electoral season.

10. The Gulf Countries

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's political, diplomatic, and security landscape was marked by a significant transformation in its regional security posture, as Riyadh moved toward institutionalizing a more autonomous and collective defense architecture amid the continuing spillover from the U.S.–Iran confrontation and persistent Houthi threats. The most important development was the formal launch of the 14-member Red Sea Defense Alliance,

bringing together Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, Jordan, Pakistan, Qatar, Yemen, and other regional partners to protect freedom of navigation across the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Bab al-Mandeb. The coalition reflects Riyadh's growing determination to assume greater responsibility for regional maritime security as Houthi attacks and the blockade of commercial routes increasingly threaten energy exports and international trade. Saudi Defense Ministry spokesman Brigadier General Turki Al-Malki described the initiative as a response to the need to unify regional defense efforts. At the same time, Riyadh continued implementing the Makkah Joint Defense Agreement with Turkey and Pakistan, establishing political and military coordination mechanisms involving defense ministers, foreign ministers, and military chiefs under a collective-security framework in which an attack on one member is treated as an attack on all. The agreement represents a major development in Saudi Arabia's evolving security doctrine and a move toward greater regional deterrence and reduced dependence on external protection, while U.S. President Donald Trump publicly welcomed the arrangement as an important step toward Middle Eastern self-defense.

Security pressures along Saudi Arabia's southern frontier remained significant as Houthi forces continued to threaten Saudi territory and energy infrastructure. Authorities issued an early-warning alert for Jazan province following persistent concerns over drone and missile attacks, while Riyadh increasingly appeared to be reassessing its approach to Yemen. Rather than relying primarily on accommodation and truce-building, Saudi strategy has increasingly focused on strengthening and coordinating anti-Houthi forces and pushing the movement away from strategically important Red Sea coastlines. The Houthi maritime blockade also continued to severely disrupt Saudi commercial and energy logistics, with oil shipments through the Bab al-Mandeb reportedly approaching a virtual halt despite the deployment of maritime monitoring capabilities. These developments have reinforced the strategic importance of the newly established Red Sea coalition and increased pressure on Riyadh to develop alternative mechanisms for protecting its energy exports and maritime interests.

Diplomatically, Saudi Arabia remained heavily engaged in efforts to prevent the broader regional conflict from developing into a wider war. Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan held consultations with Qatar focused on regional de-escalation and the strengthening of Gulf security mechanisms, while Riyadh continued advocating political solutions, respect for international law, and coordinated regional responses to emerging security threats. Saudi Arabia also joined the UAE, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Turkey in a joint Arab-Islamic statement condemning Israel's rejection of the U.S.-backed Gaza peace roadmap. The participating states called for the implementation of the proposed political framework, an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, and the restoration of the Palestinian Authority's role. In parallel, Saudi Arabia moved to deepen its institutional relationship with Sudan, preparing to establish a Strategic

Cooperation and Coordination Council intended to provide a comprehensive framework for managing bilateral relations. The proposed council is expected to address ten economic files and strengthen political, economic, and institutional coordination between Riyadh and Khartoum, reflecting Saudi Arabia's broader effort to consolidate its influence across the Red Sea and Horn of Africa.

UAE

The United Arab Emirates' political, diplomatic, and security landscape was dominated by continuing maritime pressure in the Strait of Hormuz, efforts to safeguard national commercial interests, and a deliberate diplomatic strategy designed to prevent further escalation. Several ADNOC-linked commercial vessels were targeted in the Strait of Hormuz, including two vessels struck during the week and another carrier subsequently hit by a missile. Although no injuries were reported, the incidents demonstrated the continuing vulnerability of Emirati shipping and energy infrastructure as regional military tensions remained high. In response, Abu Dhabi maintained a measured security posture centered on deterrence, diplomacy, and adherence to international law rather than direct military escalation. The UAE simultaneously expanded alternative transportation and logistics routes through Fujairah and Khor Fakkan, using maritime, road, rail, and air connections to reduce exposure to disruption around the Strait of Hormuz and maintain the flow of essential commodities, particularly food and pharmaceutical supplies. Persistent regional insecurity also continued to affect aviation, with longer flight routes and disruptions as airlines sought to avoid hazardous airspace.

The UAE also intensified its regional diplomatic engagement while maintaining a careful approach toward the broader conflict. Abu Dhabi joined Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Pakistan, and Indonesia in condemning Israel's rejection of the U.S.-backed Gaza peace roadmap, warning that opposition to the initiative and rejection of Palestinian statehood could undermine efforts toward a two-state solution. At the same time, reports indicated that the UAE was expanding quiet diplomatic channels with Tehran, including discussions over a possible localized ceasefire mechanism intended to protect critical Emirati infrastructure from the wider U.S.–Iran confrontation. This approach reflects Abu Dhabi's preference for combining credible deterrence with direct diplomatic engagement, particularly where continued escalation could threaten its ports, energy infrastructure, aviation sector, and broader position as a regional commercial hub.

Beyond the immediate Gulf crisis, the UAE continued to expand its international economic and diplomatic partnerships. In South America, Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa hosted UAE Minister of State for Artificial Intelligence Omar Sultan Al Olama in Quito to advance cooperation in trade, investment, and artificial intelligence, reflecting Abu Dhabi's growing interest in technology-driven economic partnerships. The UAE also pursued stronger economic relations with Zimbabwe through high-level discussions

between UAE Minister of State Sheikh Shakhboot bin Nahyan Al Nahyan and President Emmerson Mnangagwa, while official engagement with India continued to underscore the importance of the country to the UAE's broader geo-economic strategy. Taken together, these engagements demonstrate Abu Dhabi's effort to protect its immediate security interests while continuing to diversify its international economic partnerships and preserve its role as a major trade, investment, and logistics center.

Qatar

Qatar's political, diplomatic, and security landscape was shaped by continued efforts to mediate regional tensions, protect its sovereignty, and maintain maritime security amid the wider confrontation involving Iran and other regional actors. Doha remained heavily engaged in diplomatic efforts to contain escalation, maintaining communication with Gulf and international partners while emphasizing the need for de-escalation and negotiated solutions. Qatar joined Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Pakistan, and Indonesia in a joint statement condemning Israel's rejection of the U.S.-backed Gaza peace roadmap and stressing the importance of preserving the prospects for a two-state solution. At the same time, Qatar maintained high-level consultations with regional governments and international partners regarding the deteriorating security environment, reinforcing its traditional role as a mediator while adapting its diplomacy to the growing security pressures facing the Gulf.

Maritime security remained a major concern for Doha. Qatar strongly condemned the Iranian missile attack against an Emirati ADNOC tanker in the Strait of Hormuz, describing the incident as a violation of international law and warning against using the strategic waterway as an instrument of political pressure. Qatari officials continued to emphasize the importance of restoring freedom of navigation and ensuring that the Strait remains open to international commercial shipping. Doha also coordinated closely with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states on regional security and de-escalation, with Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani maintaining direct communication with regional counterparts. These efforts demonstrate Qatar's attempt to preserve diplomatic channels while simultaneously responding to the security implications of the expanding regional conflict.

Relations with Iran also experienced a period of sovereignty-related friction. Qatar rejected Iranian allegations that it was secretly holding surviving Iranian military pilots following an earlier incident involving an aircraft that entered Qatari airspace. Doha maintained that the aircraft had violated Qatari sovereign airspace without responding to warnings, prompting defensive measures, while search-and-rescue operations recovered the remains of one pilot. Qatar invited Tehran to examine the operational details of the incident, signaling an effort to prevent the dispute from becoming a broader bilateral confrontation. Alongside this, Doha continued strengthening its wider diplomatic network

through its second round of political consultations with Somalia, covering trade, aviation, and food security, while senior Qatari and U.S. officials reviewed bilateral relations and regional developments.

Qatar also welcomed the Makkah Joint Defense Agreement between Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan, indicating support for emerging regional security mechanisms while continuing to favor diplomatic solutions. Doha simultaneously condemned escalating Israeli settler violence in the occupied West Bank and called for stronger international measures to protect Palestinian civilians. Overall, Qatar sought to balance its established role as a regional mediator with a more active security posture designed to protect its sovereignty, maritime interests, and strategic partnerships as instability continued to spread across the Gulf.

11. Africa and The Sahel Region

Mali

Between August 10 and August 16, 2026, Mali's political, diplomatic, and security landscape centered on the operationalization of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), the launch of a joint regional military force, and continuing tensions with Western partners. The most significant security development was the official launch by Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger of a 5,000-strong joint Sahel force during a ceremony in Bamako led by General Assimi Goïta. The force is intended to strengthen cross-border military coordination against Islamist insurgencies and reflects the AES states' broader effort to develop independent security structures outside traditional Western and ECOWAS frameworks. Alongside the force's establishment, Malian armed forces continued counter-insurgency operations in central areas, where JNIM and affiliated militant elements maintained pressure through attacks, transport blockades, and disruption of government-controlled areas.

The security situation was further complicated by growing concerns over militant financing. A United Nations report indicated that an approximately \$50 million hostage ransom payment made in late 2025 had provided significant financial resources to Al-Qaeda-linked JNIM, strengthening its capacity to conduct operations and cross-border offensives across the Sahel. The disclosure highlighted the increasingly sophisticated financial mechanisms supporting militant organizations and underscored the difficulty of containing insurgencies through military operations alone. For Mali and its AES partners, the findings reinforce the argument for greater intelligence-sharing, coordinated border security, and joint disruption of militant financing networks as part of their emerging regional security architecture.

Politically and diplomatically, Bamako also issued a presidential pardon to Yann Vezilier, a French national previously convicted and accused of plotting a coup against the Malian

government. The clemency represented a notable diplomatic gesture amid Mali's strained relations with France and demonstrated the government's willingness to use judicial decisions as part of its broader diplomatic positioning. At the regional level, the AES continued advancing economic and defense integration through new administrative and import measures designed to strengthen the bloc's emerging institutional structures. These developments indicate that Mali's current strategy is increasingly focused not only on military cooperation but also on building an alternative regional political and economic framework capable of reducing dependence on ECOWAS and traditional external partners.

Niger

Between August 10 and August 16, 2026, Niger's political, security, and diplomatic developments were dominated by the consolidation of the Alliance of Sahel States, the operationalization of the new joint military force with Mali and Burkina Faso, and the military government's continuing emphasis on sovereignty and resource nationalism. The 5,000-strong AES joint force, established by Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, continued its operational alignment during the week, with its primary command structure anchored in Niamey. The force is intended to improve cross-border coordination against Islamist insurgencies and strengthen the three countries' capacity to respond collectively to threats that extend beyond national borders. This development represents a further institutionalization of the AES security framework and reflects the three military-led governments' determination to reduce reliance on ECOWAS and Western-backed security arrangements.

Niger's security environment remained closely connected to developments across the wider Sahel and Lake Chad Basin. Regional actors continued adjusting their defensive positions as insurgent movements-maintained pressure across border areas, while neighboring Nigeria pursued separate high-level security discussions with the United States in Washington on August 12–13. These discussions reflected Abuja's concern over the potential spillover of instability from the central Sahel and the wider need for coordinated responses to regional terrorism. For Niger, the emergence of competing security frameworks presents both an opportunity for deeper cooperation with Mali and Burkina Faso and a challenge in maintaining functional security relations with neighboring states such as Nigeria, particularly as the AES continues to distance itself from established regional institutions.

Politically and diplomatically, Niamey, Bamako, and Ouagadougou continued tightening their institutional ties and working toward the consolidation of independent regional structures outside ECOWAS. Niger's military administration maintained its emphasis on national sovereignty, resource nationalism, and strategic economic partnerships, with new infrastructure and industrial resource agreements emerging as important components of its

broader development strategy. The combination of defense integration, economic cooperation, and political coordination suggests that the AES is gradually moving beyond a purely security-based alliance toward a more comprehensive regional framework. For Niger, this process remains central to the government's effort to establish greater strategic autonomy while managing the economic and security pressures generated by its changing relationship with Western and West African institutions.

DRC

Between August 10 and August 16, 2026, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) experienced continued political tensions over constitutional reform alongside renewed diplomatic efforts to stabilize the eastern conflict and worsening humanitarian and health pressures. On August 11, a coalition of 65 civil society organizations, including LUCHA and Filimbi, petitioned President Félix Tshisekedi to abandon plans for a constitutional referendum, arguing that the country's economic difficulties and continuing insecurity in the east made such an initiative an inappropriate use of state resources. At the same time, reports indicated that Tshisekedi had assembled an internal advisory team that included former political figures associated with ex-President Joseph Kabila to develop a roadmap for an inclusive national political dialogue. The initiative reflects growing recognition within the political establishment that the country's overlapping governance and security crises require broader political engagement, although civil society actors remain skeptical about whether such a dialogue would genuinely address the underlying political tensions.

Diplomatic activity intensified during the week through international efforts to sustain the DRC-Rwanda peace process. On August 12–13, representatives of the DRC and Rwanda joined mediators from the United States, Qatar, and the African Union in Geneva for the sixth meeting of the Joint Security Coordination Mechanism, designed to follow up on the Washington and Doha peace frameworks. Confidence-building measures also included a direct handover of detainees and prisoners between the Congolese government and M23, facilitated by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Meanwhile, preparations for the 46th SADC Summit in Durban placed the eastern DRC crisis prominently on the regional agenda, demonstrating that the conflict continues to require simultaneous diplomatic engagement through African, U.S., Qatari, and regional mechanisms.

Security and humanitarian conditions in eastern DRC nevertheless remained highly unstable. Localized clashes continued between pro-government Wazalendo fighters and M23 elements, particularly across South Kivu and the northern and southern conflict axes, while M23 maintained significant influence over important areas of the east. Humanitarian conditions were further aggravated by a sharp increase in gender-based violence, with health zones such as Uvira recording more than 1,100 rape cases in recent months amid persistent displacement and insecurity. At the same time, the country continued confronting the 17th Ebola outbreak, involving the Bundibugyo strain, with

confirmed deaths reportedly surpassing 2,011 and the WHO and Africa CDC warning that community transmission remained difficult to trace. The convergence of armed conflict, displacement, sexual violence, and a major health emergency therefore continued to place severe pressure on the Congolese state and humanitarian response.

Chad

Between August 10 and August 16, 2026, Chad's political, diplomatic, and security landscape was shaped by efforts to reinforce internal political stability, heightened security surrounding Independence Day, and continued humanitarian pressure along the Sudanese border. The government continued its national reconciliation efforts following the presidential decree pardoning political prisoners, using the amnesty as an opening to encourage calm, political dialogue, and greater responsibility among domestic political actors. On August 11, Chad marked its Independence Day with official ceremonies and a military parade at the Place de la Nation in N'Djamena, attended by senior civil and military officials. The celebrations took place against a broader backdrop of political sensitivity and regional insecurity, with the government seeking to project institutional continuity and national cohesion while maintaining a strong security posture.

Security and humanitarian concerns remained particularly concentrated in Chad's eastern provinces, where the continuing conflict in neighboring Sudan continued to generate pressure on local authorities and humanitarian organizations. Humanitarian agencies, working alongside Chadian authorities, maintained an accelerated relocation program designed to move vulnerable Sudanese refugees away from volatile areas close to the border toward safer inland locations, including Arkoum in Ouaddaï Province. The relocation effort reflects the growing challenge of managing a large and continuing refugee presence while reducing the exposure of displaced populations to cross-border violence. At the same time, Chadian security forces remained on heightened alert along eastern and Lake Chad Basin perimeters, seeking to prevent the spillover of localized conflicts from Darfur and neighboring areas while also containing persistent extremist threats.

Central African Republic

Between August 10 and August 16, 2026, the Central African Republic (CAR) focused on institutional consolidation, national sovereignty, and strengthening domestic security capacity while facing renewed diplomatic friction with France and controversy surrounding the deportation of third-country nationals from the United States. On August 14, President Faustin-Archange Touadéra delivered a televised address marking the country's 66th Independence Day, calling for broad modernization and transformation across the political, security, economic, social, and environmental sectors. His address emphasized the need to strengthen national institutions and pursue a development agenda centered on greater state capacity. Touadéra simultaneously maintained a firm position on

national sovereignty, arguing that the country's reform and security priorities should not be dictated by external pressure. The message reflected Bangui's broader effort to consolidate political authority while presenting institutional reform as a sovereign national undertaking.

Diplomatic tensions with France also emerged during the week. On August 12, the French Foreign Ministry confirmed that disciplinary proceedings and an administrative investigation had been initiated concerning France's ambassador to the CAR, Bruno Foucher, following security and conduct-related concerns raised by tactical protection units in Bangui. The development added another layer of complexity to already sensitive relations between Bangui and Paris. At the same time, reports emerged concerning the arrival and accommodation in Bangui of non-African third-country nationals deported from the United States. The issue generated local protests and raised questions over the legal and humanitarian oversight surrounding the transfer and detention of individuals who were not citizens of the Central African Republic.

Security-sector consolidation remained an important priority for the government. On August 16, a new cohort of 566 military personnel completed training at Camp Kassaï in Bangui, reinforcing the capacity of the Central African Armed Forces (FACA). The graduation formed part of the government's continuing effort to expand and professionalize national security institutions while reducing dependence on externally controlled security structures. Authorities continued emphasizing self-reliance and the consolidation of territorial control by national forces, alongside existing bilateral security frameworks. Overall, the week demonstrated Bangui's continued emphasis on strengthening state institutions and domestic military capacity while navigating increasingly complicated relations with external partners.

12. North Africa

Libya

The assassination of Major-General Fawzi al-Mansouri, head of military intelligence for eastern-based forces under Khalifa Haftar, by a car bomb in Benghazi's Hawari district exposed acute vulnerabilities within parallel security structures. Such targeted violence against senior intelligence figures underscores the persistent fragmentation of command authority and the capacity of armed actors to strike at the core of competing military institutions with limited immediate accountability.

A series of drone strikes struck energy and power infrastructure in western Libya, including the Zawiya oil complex and a South Zawiya electricity substation, causing major fires, collapses, widespread outages, and reduced generating capacity. The National Oil Corporation's declaration of a maximum state of emergency highlighted how attacks

on critical economic nodes amplify institutional fragility and impose immediate costs on civilian welfare and state revenue.

Clashes in Zawiya and earlier incidents in Surman endangered civilians while damaging infrastructure, including the refinery, prompting the United Nations Support Mission in Libya to condemn the violence and call for accountability, de-escalation, and the withdrawal of heavy weapons from civilian areas. These events illustrate the persistent risk that localized armed confrontations can rapidly escalate into broader threats against population centers and economic assets.

Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah established a new supreme committee for security arrangements in Tripoli, headed by Interior Minister Emad Al-Trabelsi, tasked with overseeing the withdrawal of non-Ministry of Interior forces, control of public buildings, evacuation of checkpoints, and securing of entrances. The initiative reflects an effort by the western-based government to reassert centralized control over the capital's security landscape amid competing armed groups.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan visited Tripoli for meetings with Dbeibah and traveled to Benghazi for discussions with Saddam Haftar and Khalifa Haftar, emphasizing Ankara's "One Libya" policy of supporting national unity without territorial division. The dual engagement demonstrates Turkey's strategic interest in maintaining influence across both eastern and western power centers while positioning itself as a broker of institutional coherence.

United Nations envoy Hanna Tetteh briefed senior officials from ten countries, including the United States, Türkiye, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom, stressing the need for institutional unification, greater east-west security integration, and support for the United Nations roadmap toward elections. The gathering on the margins of the General Assembly underscored external consensus on the costs of prolonged division.

Egypt, Algeria, and Tunisia, operating through their tripartite neighboring countries mechanism, issued a joint call for immediate de-escalation, an end to political division, a Libyan-owned process under United Nations supervision, rejection of foreign interference, support for the 5+5 Joint Military Committee, and unification of institutions leading to elections. The coordinated regional posture seeks to limit external meddling while advancing neighboring states' interest in a stable contiguous neighbor.

Reports indicated accelerated Russian efforts to expand and strengthen military presence at six Libyan airbases through infrastructure funding and related activity. These moves reflect Moscow's continuing interest in securing strategic footholds that enhance its regional projection and leverage amid Libya's unresolved internal competition.

The United States maintained support for the unification of Libya's economic, security, and political institutions, as reflected in statements by adviser Massad Boulos and associated diplomatic efforts. Washington's approach prioritizes institutional consolidation as a means of reducing opportunities for external actors to exploit persistent east-west fragmentation.

Algeria

Algeria, serving as rotating Chair of the African Union Peace and Security Council, chaired the annual consultative meeting between the Council, the Permanent Representatives Committee Sub-Committee on Human Rights, Democracy and Governance, and the AGA-APSA Platform. Discussions centered on strengthening the nexus between governance, democracy, human rights, and peace and security while adopting a coordinated "One AU Approach" to address root causes of conflict across the continent.

Under Algeria's presidency, the Peace and Security Council examined political, security, and humanitarian developments in the Sahel, including terrorism, organized crime, and socio-economic challenges, with briefings from African Union and United Nations officials and prior coordination with Sahel and neighboring states. The focus reflects Algiers' interest in shaping continental responses to transnational threats that directly affect its southern borders and regional influence.

Egypt, Algeria, and Tunisia issued a joint statement through their foreign ministers meeting in Cairo under the Tripartite Neighboring Countries Mechanism, calling for de-escalation and institutional unification in Libya. Participation in this coordinated regional initiative allows Algeria to advance its preference for a Libyan-led process while reinforcing its role as a key northern African stakeholder in neighboring stability.

The Algerian government welcomed a preliminary agreement to cease military operations in the Gulf and Middle East region, expressing appreciation for international mediation efforts and calling for continued engagement while highlighting Lebanon's security requirements. The statement positions Algeria as a diplomatic voice supportive of de-escalation in distant theaters that nonetheless carry implications for broader Arab and African security frameworks.

Algerian diplomacy continued to emphasize support for a Libyan-led political process, free elections, and the withdrawal of foreign forces and mercenaries, reaffirming these positions in African Union contexts and bilateral discussions. This consistent line serves Algiers' longer-term interest in limiting external military footprints along its borders and promoting institutional outcomes aligned with its regional preferences.

Morocco

Morocco and Spain deployed and reinforced security forces, including hundreds of Moroccan personnel with military support, concertina wire, fencing, and maritime barriers, at the Ceuta and Melilla borders in response to social media calls for a renewed mass migrant incursion. The measures underscore Rabat's prioritization of border control as both a domestic security imperative and a lever in its complex bilateral relationship with Madrid.

Moroccan authorities arrested groups suspected of inciting new mass crossing attempts into Ceuta and Melilla and placed them under investigation, while continuously adapting security postures based on assessed risks following earlier surges. These actions demonstrate an effort to disrupt facilitation networks and manage migration pressures that carry significant political and humanitarian consequences for both sides of the frontier.

Spain maintained the border closure and increased its own police and military presence while issuing warnings against any renewed mass entry attempts that could produce further deaths or political fallout. The reciprocal hardening of the frontier reflects mutual recognition of the volatility surrounding irregular migration and the potential for localized incidents to escalate into broader bilateral tensions.

Moroccan Justice Minister Abdellatif Ouahbi criticized aspects of Spain's migrant handling and noted that Morocco continues to raise the status of Ceuta and Melilla in bilateral discussions, seeking a negotiated long-term resolution. The remarks link immediate border security cooperation to unresolved sovereignty questions, illustrating how migration management remains intertwined with deeper territorial and political disputes.

13. Middle East

Iran-Israel Conflict

United States Central Command intensified enforcement of the Strait of Hormuz blockade, redirecting multiple commercial vessels in a move that underscores Washington's determination to assert maritime dominance and impose economic costs on Tehran. This action reflects broader American strategic interests in securing energy transit routes while limiting Iranian revenue streams that sustain proxy networks and missile programs across the region.

President Trump signaled openness to ending hostilities and claiming victory without a comprehensive nuclear agreement, provided the Strait reopens, according to reporting linked to major outlets. The stance reveals a prioritization of short-term de-escalation and domestic political optics over permanent constraints on Iran's nuclear or conventional capabilities, conditioned tightly on restored commercial navigation.

Supreme Leader Khamenei elevated two veteran Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps figures, Mohsen Rezaee and Mohammed Bagher Zolghadr, to senior political and security roles. These appointments indicate an effort to consolidate hardline control amid wartime pressures and to signal internal resilience against external military and economic coercion.

No further negotiations between Israel and Lebanon were scheduled for the coming month. The pause highlights persistent mistrust over Hezbollah's residual capabilities and the difficulty of translating earlier frameworks into durable verification mechanisms along the northern frontier.

Houthi forces conducted an attack that killed seven and wounded thirty, according to Yemeni military accounts, illustrating continued Iranian-aligned spillover into the Red Sea theater. Such operations serve Tehran's interest in dispersing pressure and complicating coalition efforts to isolate the Iranian core from its regional partners.

Trump characterized the American approach as "low-keying" or "semi-negotiating" with Iran while monitoring economic strain. This calibrated posture balances military pressure with selective diplomacy, aiming to extract concessions on navigation without committing to full-scale re-engagement or formal talks.

Iran approached the final stages of discussions in Oman concerning alternative Hormuz shipping arrangements, yet conditioned any full reopening on compensation, cessation of threats, and sanctions relief. Tehran's demands reveal a strategy of leveraging chokepoint control to offset wartime losses and extract political recognition of its regional leverage.

Trump demanded compensation from Iran for American lives lost as a precondition for progress in talks. The insistence underscores a transactional framing of conflict termination that prioritizes domestic accountability narratives and financial restitution over purely strategic or nuclear-focused outcomes.

Iranian and German foreign ministers held a telephone conversation focused on Hormuz access and pathways toward ending hostilities. The exchange illustrates European interest in stabilizing energy markets and preventing wider escalation while maintaining limited channels with Tehran amid broader Western pressure.

American markets declined as expectations for rapid Hormuz reopening faded, concurrent with rising oil prices. These movements reflect market sensitivity to prolonged disruption of a critical energy artery and the economic incentives driving both American and Iranian calculations around maritime control.

Central Command disabled the Panama-flagged cargo vessel M/V Vela Nova with Hellfire missiles after it disregarded blockade instructions. The kinetic enforcement action

demonstrates operational willingness to escalate interdiction measures and reinforces the credibility of American claims to temporary dominance over the waterway.

Houthi forces struck the Egyptian-owned cargo ship Tihamah in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, killing four crew members and two rescuers in the first fatal commercial shipping attack of the conflict attributed to the group. The incident expands the geographic scope of Iranian-linked disruption and tests regional responses to threats beyond the Gulf.

United States officials reported neutralization of approximately 1,200 Iranian missiles and drones since the conflict's onset, according to comments by Lieutenant General Rafferty. The cumulative tally highlights the scale of attrition imposed on Iranian standoff capabilities and the resource demands of sustained defensive and offensive operations.

Iran escalated strikes against Kurdish groups in Iraq with at least seven missiles and drones. These operations serve dual purposes of domestic security signaling and distraction from core pressures, while complicating Baghdad's efforts to manage Iranian influence on its territory.

The Wall Street Journal reported that Israel supplied intelligence on an Iranian plot targeting President Trump, potentially involving shoulder-fired missiles. The disclosure underscores intelligence cooperation between Jerusalem and Washington and the persistent Iranian interest in asymmetric retaliation against high-value American leadership.

Trump asserted that the United States holds "total control" over the Strait of Hormuz and expressed distrust of Iranian intentions. The claim advances a maximalist sovereignty narrative designed to deter Iranian interference while preparing domestic audiences for extended military and economic commitments.

A senior Iranian source informed Reuters that Washington and Tehran had not agreed to extend the June ceasefire, contrary to some Turkish reporting. The denial reveals continued divergence over the durability of any pause and the absence of mutual confidence in temporary arrangements.

Central Command Commander Admiral Brad Cooper met Israeli Defense Forces Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir in Israel, praising joint achievements and long-term commitment. The engagement reinforces the operational and political alignment between American and Israeli forces amid ongoing multi-theater pressures.

Israel and Lebanon reached agreement for a monitoring mechanism involving third-country military officials to verify Hezbollah disarmament in designated pilot zones. The arrangement represents incremental progress toward verification after earlier Rome discussions, yet remains limited in geographic and temporal scope.

Iran continued adapting tactics informed by observations of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, including enhanced use of drone swarms for targeting. Such adjustments aim to offset attrition of conventional systems and sustain pressure on adversary air defenses and maritime assets.

Israeli officials from the IDF and Mossad expressed surprise at the speed of Iran's post-conflict military recovery, particularly in ballistic missile reconstitution. The assessment highlights Tehran's residual industrial and organizational capacity to regenerate capabilities despite sustained strikes.

The United States prepared the USS George Washington to relieve the USS Abraham Lincoln in the Middle East theater. The carrier rotation sustains continuous naval presence necessary for blockade enforcement and deterrence without interruption in force posture.

Vice President Vance expressed confidence that oil prices would decline and that Iran would not acquire a nuclear weapon. The statements project optimism regarding economic stabilization and nonproliferation outcomes while downplaying risks of prolonged disruption or incomplete constraints on Iranian programs.

Saudi Crown Prince and the United States Central Command chief discussed defense cooperation and regional tensions. The dialogue reflects Riyadh's interest in strengthening security ties with Washington amid shared concerns over Iranian maritime and proxy activities.

The United Arab Emirates condemned aggressive Iranian actions against Hormuz tankers and ADNOC-affiliated vessels across multiple incidents, attributing the attacks to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as acts of piracy and economic coercion. Abu Dhabi's public stance prioritizes protection of energy infrastructure and commercial shipping critical to its economic model.

United States Energy Secretary noted that approximately nine million barrels of oil transit the Strait of Hormuz daily. The figure underscores the global economic stakes attached to uninterrupted passage and the leverage both sides derive from control or disruption of the waterway.

Trump threatened to declare the Strait of Hormuz American territory after defeating Iran and urged acceptance of higher fuel prices in the interim. The rhetoric advances a long-term sovereignty claim while managing domestic economic expectations during the enforcement phase.

Iran insisted that the Strait remains under its exclusive control and will open or close only by its decision, rejecting any American territorial assertions. Officials including the deputy foreign minister framed the position as a defense of sovereign rights against external imposition.

Hezbollah wounded three Israeli soldiers near Ali al-Taher Ridge, prompting Israeli Defense Forces strikes in southern Lebanon. The exchange illustrates the continued low-level attrition along the northern front and the difficulty of insulating the Lebanon theater from broader regional dynamics.

Israeli airstrikes in the Nabatieh district killed at least eleven people, including children, marking the deadliest day on the Lebanon front since the June framework. The intensity of the response reflects Israeli determination to degrade Hezbollah infrastructure while managing escalation thresholds.

Iran's foreign ministry condemned the Israeli strikes in Lebanon that caused civilian casualties and criticized United Nations inaction regarding alleged violations of international law. The statement seeks to internationalize the Lebanon dimension and portray Iranian-aligned actors as victims of disproportionate force.

Reports indicated that Iranian parliament speaker Ghalibaf maintained contact with Hezbollah despite Lebanese government objections, concurrent with continued Israeli strikes on Hezbollah targets. The outreach demonstrates Tehran's ongoing investment in its Lebanese partner as a deterrent and pressure instrument.

Iranian Foreign Minister Araghchi stated that Tehran had not decided to resume negotiations with the United States and distinguished Oman shipping-route discussions from any full reopening of Hormuz. The separation of tracks preserves Iranian leverage while avoiding premature concessions on core demands.

Qatar denied Iranian claims of detaining Iranian pilots, stating it recovered remains of one individual, at a moment awkward for mediation efforts. The clarification highlights the sensitivity of third-party roles and the risks of contested narratives complicating diplomatic channels.

Israeli Defense Forces conducted additional strikes in southern Lebanon, including Tyre district and Wadi Zibqin, amid reports of further explosions. The sustained tempo indicates continued prioritization of degrading Hezbollah's operational capacity along the frontier.

Iran announced a thirty-thousand-dollar bounty for the killing or capture of American soldiers. The measure aims to incentivize asymmetric attacks and raise the human cost of United States force presence in the theater.

Iran's army chief warned that the United States would regret any attempt to annex the Strait of Hormuz. The statement reinforces Iranian red lines on maritime sovereignty and signals readiness to contest maximalist American claims through continued resistance.

Iranian officials claimed that recent military appointments had disrupted adversary calculations and pledged ultimate defeat of the United States and Israel, concurrent with

mourning ceremonies marking forty days since associated events. The messaging seeks to project internal cohesion and long-term strategic confidence.

No confirmed United States or Israeli airstrikes occurred inside Iranian territory through the mid-period cutoff, reflecting a continued operational pause on the Iranian homeland while pressure persisted on maritime and proxy fronts. The restraint suggests calibrated limits on escalation while other levers of coercion remained active.

Reports circulated of American preparations for tougher economic measures against Iran, with some Gulf partners expressing frustration over the war's duration. These dynamics reveal diverging timelines among coalition members regarding the costs of prolonged confrontation versus the risks of incomplete outcomes.

Turkey

President Erdoğan described a new regional defense pact as a historic responsibility and indicated interest in its expansion, framing the arrangement as essential to collective security in a volatile neighborhood. The rhetoric reflects Ankara's ambition to institutionalize security cooperation that enhances Turkish influence while addressing shared threats and reducing isolation amid shifting Middle Eastern alignments.

Turkey actively courted Egypt for participation in the emerging defense pact, seeking to convert recent diplomatic rapprochement into formal security coordination. This outreach advances Turkish strategic interests in embedding Cairo within a broader architecture that balances Israeli capabilities and strengthens Ankara's position in Eastern Mediterranean and Red Sea theaters.

Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan emphasized the pursuit of stronger regional coordination with Egypt, underscoring mutual interests in managing interconnected crises. The emphasis on bilateral deepening serves Turkey's objective of diversifying partnerships and mitigating the costs of previous regional isolation through pragmatic security and diplomatic alignment.

Fidan met with Saddam Haftar and Turkish forces during his Libya visit, reinforcing Ankara's dual engagement with competing Libyan power centers. The meetings illustrate Turkey's determination to protect its military and economic investments while supporting a unification process that preserves Turkish influence across both eastern and western Libya.

Fidan's travel to Libya coincided with accelerated United States-backed efforts toward institutional unification, positioning Turkey as an active stakeholder rather than a peripheral actor. The timing reflects Ankara's interest in shaping outcomes that safeguard its bases, contracts, and long-term strategic foothold on the southern Mediterranean shore.

Following the Libya itinerary, Fidan proceeded to Egypt, continuing high-level diplomatic sequencing designed to synchronize positions on multiple regional files. The consecutive visits signal Turkey's effort to link North African stabilization with broader Eastern Mediterranean and Gulf security coordination under a more cohesive Turkish diplomatic umbrella.

Fidan characterized Egypt and Turkey as the two largest nations in the Eastern Mediterranean, highlighting their combined demographic, geographic, and military weight. The formulation advances a narrative of complementary power that justifies deeper coordination while implicitly positioning both states as indispensable balancers against other regional competitors.

Analyses linked Turkey's decision to join a Mecca-based defense arrangement to Israeli regional rivalry and recent defense deals, suggesting reactive adaptation to perceived strategic encirclement. Participation allows Ankara to embed itself in Gulf-centered security frameworks while expanding its diplomatic and potential operational reach.

Turkey's National Security Council reviewed the next phase of the "terror-free Türkiye" process, focusing on domestic counterterrorism consolidation and residual threats. The internal security prioritization remains foundational to Ankara's capacity for sustained external projection and regional diplomatic activism.

Turkey warned Russia and Ukraine against expanding their conflict into the Black Sea and Caspian regions, asserting a red line around maritime domains critical to Turkish security and commerce. The warning underscores Ankara's interest in containing great-power confrontation that could disrupt energy routes, naval freedom, and its own regional balancing role.

Erdoğan accused Israel of seeking to remove the Palestine question from the global agenda, maintaining rhetorical pressure on the issue. Sustained public positioning on Palestine serves domestic political consolidation and preserves Turkey's claim to leadership within broader Muslim and developing-world opinion.

Athens closely monitored Fidan's regional outreach, reflecting Greek sensitivity to Turkish diplomatic activism in the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa. Greek scrutiny highlights the enduring competitive dimension of Aegean and Mediterranean relations even as Turkey pursues wider regional realignments.

Turkey continued repositioning its Horn of Africa engagement from bilateral to more regional frameworks, seeking to convert established military and economic ties into broader influence. The shift aims to secure strategic depth along critical maritime routes and counter competing external footprints in the Red Sea approaches.

Saudi Arabia formed a military alliance to protect Red Sea shipping that included Turkey among its participants, expanding the geographic scope of Turkish security commitments. Inclusion offers Ankara a formal role in safeguarding a vital energy and commercial artery while deepening institutional ties with Gulf partners.

14. Global Powers

The U.S.-Iran conflict continued to dominate Washington's international agenda. On August 10, President Donald Trump demanded that Iran pay compensation for deaths and damage associated with the conflict, adding another obstacle to efforts to reach an understanding over reopening the Strait of Hormuz. Iran maintained that the waterway would remain closed unless Washington accepted its conditions.

The most consequential U.S. security statement came from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on August 13. He said the United States had the military capacity to maintain its naval blockade of Iranian ports indefinitely, rotating forces in and out of the region. The statement signalled that Washington was preparing for a prolonged coercive campaign rather than assuming that the blockade would be a short-term bargaining instrument.

Trump welcomed the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement signed by Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan, calling it a “big, bold, and important first step.” He said the pact showed that Middle Eastern countries were coming together and would be better able to defend themselves. His statement signals support for greater regional security burden-sharing and stronger indigenous defence capabilities, rather than relying solely on U.S. security guarantees.

Washington also began considering a much broader sanctions campaign. Trump indicated that the administration was examining measures against Chinese companies and financial institutions involved in Iranian oil transactions, including secondary sanctions against Chinese independent refineries. The administration has already imposed sanctions affecting more than 1,000 Iranian-linked individuals, vessels and aircraft, while considering additional measures targeting aviation, finance and energy networks.

This is strategically important because the Iran confrontation is increasingly becoming a U.S.-China economic confrontation by proxy. China remains a major buyer of Iranian oil, meaning that Washington's effort to economically isolate Tehran increasingly risks confronting Beijing's energy interests.

The security consequences also became clearer. Shipping through Hormuz fell sharply after attacks on tankers. Reuters reported that only five commodity vessels crossed the strait on Saturday and none on Sunday, compared with 31 the previous weekend. The waterway previously carried roughly one-fifth of global oil and LNG shipments.

Despite the military pressure, the diplomatic track remained stalled.

Iranian officials said on August 12 that there had been essentially no progress toward reviving the interim agreement negotiated in June. Tehran accused Washington of failing to fulfil its commitments concerning the blockade and Iranian assets, while Washington continued to demand that Iran reopen Hormuz.

This creates a fundamental contradiction in Trump's Iran strategy. Washington wants to use maximum economic and military pressure to obtain concessions, while simultaneously seeking a negotiated settlement. The problem is that each escalation makes the diplomatic compromise more difficult.

The United States also intensified diplomatic activity over Gaza.

Trump's envoys, including Jared Kushner and Board of Peace envoy Nickolay Mladenov, met Egyptian, Qatari and Turkish mediators in Cairo on August 16 to advance Trump's Gaza peace plan. Hamas representatives were also involved in the discussions. The American-backed framework calls for an end to hostilities, Hamas disarmament, Israeli withdrawal and reconstruction under a civilian Palestinian administration.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has rejected key elements of the American proposal, particularly provisions involving Israeli withdrawal and restrictions on targeted operations against Hamas members.

This places Washington in an increasingly difficult position. The Trump administration is trying to demonstrate that it can convert military leverage and regional diplomacy into a political settlement, while its principal regional ally is resisting parts of the proposed settlement.

One of the week's most consequential developments in Asia came on August 16, when Trump ordered the Pentagon to substantially reduce the annual Ulchi Freedom Shield exercises with South Korea. Trump cited the cost of the exercises, their allegedly provocative character toward North Korea and his assessment that Kim Jong Un's government was currently "unthreatening and respectful." He also linked the decision to Seoul's refusal to participate in U.S. efforts concerning Iran. The decision is particularly significant because it came immediately before the exercises were scheduled to begin. South Korea nevertheless proceeded with the exercises.

This is more than a dispute over military exercises. It suggests that Trump is attempting to use the U.S.-South Korean security relationship as a bargaining instrument. The administration appears interested in reducing military signalling toward Pyongyang while potentially creating space for another Trump-Kim diplomatic engagement.

But it creates a deterrence dilemma. North Korea conducted ballistic missile tests earlier in August, while Russia and North Korea are simultaneously deepening their security relationship

The apparent reduction in military pressure on the Korean Peninsula was accompanied by a very different message elsewhere in Asia. Elbridge Colby, the U.S. undersecretary of defense for policy, said in Manila on August 10 that Washington was not withdrawing from Asia. Instead, he argued that the United States wanted regional partners to assume greater responsibility for their own defense while maintaining a favorable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific

Hours after Abelardo de la Espriella's inauguration as Colombia's president (around August 7–8), the State Department pledged \$1 billion in security assistance (working with Congress) as part of a renewed partnership. De la Espriella pledged an all-out war on drug cartels, stronger U.S. military ties, and joining Trump's "Shield of the Americas" initiative. By mid-week, Colombia approved joint military operations with the U.S. targeting "narco-terrorism," announced by Hegseth; related cooperation (intelligence, extraditions, coca eradication) advanced under "Plan Patriota 2.0" framing. The U.S. also provided earthquake relief (funding, search-and-rescue teams, C-17 deliveries) after a major quake in Colombia.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on August 14 that Moscow had formally sought explanations from Washington over alleged U.S. intelligence support for Ukrainian attacks against Russia. Lavrov accused the United States of involvement in Ukrainian strikes and warned that Russia would continue countering Western military assistance to Kyiv.

At the same time, Moscow rejected proposals for a new Black Sea ceasefire. Russian officials said they had not received a formal Turkish proposal and dismissed the prospect of reviving the earlier Black Sea grain arrangement.

Putin sent Kim Jong Un a message emphasizing expanding bilateral cooperation and coordination on regional security and stability. The development came as North Korea continued to deepen its relationship with Russia. This is particularly relevant following Trump's decision to reduce U.S.-South Korean military exercises.

15. Europe

The EU and a broader group of 32 countries, including France, Germany, Italy and the UK, condemned Iran over executions of protesters. The joint statement expressed concern over the use of the death penalty against demonstrators and called on Tehran to respect fundamental rights.

This is important because European governments are increasingly separating themselves politically from Washington's more coercive approach toward Tehran. Europe is maintaining pressure on Iran, but its emphasis remains heavily centred on human rights, international law and diplomatic engagement.

Iran detained two French diplomats during a national-security investigation before they were released. Tehran subsequently accused the diplomats of involvement in covert activity and contacts with Iranians.

This is a significant deterioration in French-Iranian relations and demonstrates that the wider U.S.-Iran confrontation is generating direct consequences for European diplomatic personnel.

Rome continues to place considerable emphasis on instability in Libya and the Sahel, irregular migration, energy security and the Mediterranean. This was again reflected in the debate over Europe's security priorities this week.

For Italy, the current Middle Eastern crisis is particularly consequential because disruptions to maritime routes and energy flows directly affect the Mediterranean's economic and security environment.

France, Germany and the UK were reported to be working on their own format for possible future Russia-Ukraine negotiations, reflecting European concern that Washington and Moscow could determine the parameters of a settlement without sufficient European involvement. The initiative is particularly important for Paris because Macron has consistently argued that European security cannot be determined without European participation.

16. International and Regional Organizations

United Nation

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs raised alarms over escalating violence and civilian displacement in Sudan . On August 11-12, clashes in Geisan town, Blue Nile State, killed more than 20 civilians and injured many others, displacing approximately 2,500 people about 500 families, according to the International Organization for Migration . Most displaced persons moved to other locations within the Geisan area, while others crossed the border into Ethiopia. The fighting, described by the Sudanese army as an RSF attack launched from inside Ethiopian territory has intensified in Blue Nile State, which has emerged as an increasingly important front in Sudan's war . OCHA reiterated its call on all parties to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure and ensure safe, unimpeded humanitarian access.

On August 14, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that over 40 million people in East Africa are facing acute food insecurity, particularly in Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia, with 8.3 million children suffering from acute malnutrition . The situation is compounded by disease outbreaks, including over 12,000 cholera cases in South Sudan this year, while the ongoing Ebola outbreak in DRC has prompted neighboring countries to strengthen preparedness measures. The World Meteorological Organization also warned that a major El Niño episode threatens the region with excessive rainfall and devastating floods starting October, further worsening the crisis.

South Sudan and Sudan resumed Joint Political and Security Mechanism talks in Juba from August 9-11, focusing on border security and oil infrastructure. The talks concluded with an MOU on containing cross-border fighters, activating the Abyei Protocol and securing oil export routes. The UN, through the Quintet, continues to support complementary political dialogue in Sudan.

Africa Union

The African Union Peace and Security Council undertook a two day field mission to Sudan from August 15 to 16, 2026, arriving in Port Sudan before proceeding to Khartoum. The delegation, led by Algeria's Permanent Representative to the AU and August PSC Chairperson Ambassador Mohamed Khaled marked the first such visit since Sudan's suspension from the AU following the 2021 military takeover. On August 16, the delegation met with Transitional Sovereignty Council President General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan at the Republican Palace and separately with Prime Minister Kamil Idris. The PSC reaffirmed its firm position on respecting Sudan's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national unity, while expressing deep concern over the ongoing war's heavy human cost and worsening humanitarian crisis. The Council stressed that lasting peace requires dialogue and national reconciliation, condemned external interference and rejected any parallel entities undermining Sudan's unity. Prime Minister Idris briefed the delegation on the government's December 2025 peace initiative and announced that a Sudanese owned national dialogue would begin soon. Ambassador Khaled emphasized the mission was an expression of AU solidarity with the Sudanese people and reaffirmed the Union's commitment to supporting all efforts for a lasting peaceful solution.

On August 11, AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf hosted the quarterly working luncheon in Addis Ababa with ambassadors of the UN Security Council's permanent members (P5) and African members (A3) accredited to the AU. Discussions covered pressing continental peace, security and humanitarian issues, including the AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) the situation in Sudan, developments in the Sahel and Great Lakes regions, the continental Ebola response and UN Security Council reform . Participants welcomed the regular consultations as an

important platform for strengthening strategic coordination and coherence between the AU and UNSC on matters relating to international peace and security.

AUSSOM continued its operational activities and progressive security transfers during the week. On August 10, Sector 5 Deputy Commander Col. Mathias Sibomana visited the Garsale Forward Operating Base in Middle Shabelle to assess security, review operational readiness and engage with Burundi National Defense Force troops. Col. Sibomana received briefings on security developments and ongoing operations, urging troops to remain vigilant and maintain operational readiness while calling for increased joint patrols and closer coordination with Somali Security Forces. Meanwhile, the formal transfer of the Buurhakaba Forward Operating Base in Bay region to the Somali National Army's 60th Division a base manned by Ethiopian forces since 2014 has renewed debate over Somalia's ability to assume full security responsibility as international troops gradually withdraw. Military observers warn the town, strategically located along the Mogadishu Baidoa supply route, is now surrounded on all sides by Al-Shabaab, raising concerns that Somali forces may not be adequately prepared to hold the position. On August 13, AUSSOM Special Representative Amb. El Hadji Ibrahima Diene met Türkiye's Ambassador to Somalia Alper Aktaş in Mogadishu to discuss strengthening security cooperation, with both sides emphasizing the importance of continued international coordination during this critical phase of Somalia's security transition.

The African Union Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and IGAD successfully concluded national inception workshops in Kenya (July 22), Uganda (August 6) and Somalia (August 12), marking the operational start of a three year UN-funded project titled Accelerating Food Systems Transformation for Resilience to Climate Change in Africa, running from 2026 to 2028. The workshops brought together government officials, development partners, pastoralist communities and researchers to review inception reports covering livestock value chains, climate index-based livestock insurance, land tenure security and climate land information systems for evidence-based decision making. In Kenya livestock sector, contributing roughly 12% of national GDP was identified as a key lever for agri-food transformation, with initial focus on beef and camel milk value chains. Uganda's workshop drew ministerial-level engagement, with the dairy sector producing an estimated 5.3 billion liters of milk and generating around USD 280 million in exports in 2024/25 anchoring value chain work in Kiboga and Kayunga, while beef production will be examined in Karamoja and Teso. In Somalia, the meeting convened at least five Directors General and was led by the Special Economic Advisor to the President's Office, underscoring strong government endorsement for an initiative that targets a livestock sector contributing nearly half of national GDP. Discussions in Mogadishu highlighted the need to move from repeatedly responding to climate shocks to systematically managing risk before those shocks become disasters, as IGAD's Head of Mission to

Somalia noted. Momentum has been carried directly into implementation with country teams now moving into field assessments toward validated national reports and reform packages by the project's conclusion in the first quarter of 2028. The initiative is implemented by ECA in partnership with AU-IBAR, IGAD, and the Governments of Kenya, Uganda, and Somalia.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

On August 10, IGAD Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu met with the Chair of the IGAD Council of Ministers and Djibouti's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdoukader Houssein, to discuss regional peace and institutional priorities. During the meeting, Dr. Workneh briefed the Chair on his recent mission to Sudan, where he had officially reopened IGAD's mission office in Khartoum on August 3 a significant milestone following Sudan's reinstatement as an IGAD member earlier this year after a period of suspension. The Executive Secretary reaffirmed IGAD's commitment to supporting a Sudanese led path toward lasting peace, stability and recovery, emphasizing that Sudan's stability is inseparable from the future of the region. The two leaders also exchanged views on key regional priorities and continued institutional support for IGAD, recognizing Djibouti's steadfast leadership and commitment to the shared regional agenda, which includes strengthening coordination among member states on peace, security and sustainable development initiatives.

On August 10, IGAD Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu received a delegation from the East African Healthcare Federation (EAHF) at the organization's headquarters in Djibouti, led by its President Dr. Markos Feleke Haile. The discussions focused on strengthening regional partnerships to advance health security and IGAD's engagement at the upcoming 13th East African Healthcare Federation Conference, scheduled for August 21–23 in Addis Ababa under the theme Resilience Building the East African Health Economy. The conference is expected to bring together over 2,000 healthcare leaders, policymakers, investors and private sector representatives from 14 East African countries, with side discussions focusing on strengthening domestic production, advancing technology and innovation in the health sector and building more resilient healthcare systems across the region. The meeting comes as IGAD continues to bolster its health security agenda, having previously allocated approximately \$8.5 million to support Ebola preparedness across member states and advance regional coordination on public health emergencies.



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