



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

A multinational delegation from India's National Defense College, led by Major General Pawanpal Singh, visited Ethiopia on September 1, to strengthen strategic military ties and regional cooperation. Received by Ethiopian defense and foreign affairs officials, the delegation engaged in high-level discussions regarding bilateral trade, investment, and defense initiatives. This study tour underscores India's commitment to deepening security relationships and gaining broader insights into Ethiopia's crucial geopolitical role in Horn of Africa stability. This engagement demonstrates how Global South partners are expanding defense diplomacy to secure influence in the Horn of Africa. Furthermore, it reflects Ethiopia's strategic intent to diversify its international security partners beyond traditional alliances.

Complementing these defense engagements, Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos met with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Frank Garcia on September 4, to advance longstanding diplomatic relations. Their talks focused on expanding commercial trade, investment, and defense alignment. Building on their May 11, structured dialogue in Washington, D.C., both nations reaffirmed their shared commitment to maintaining security and economic prosperity throughout the broader region.

Expanding European diplomatic ties alongside Western security cooperation, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed warmly congratulated Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni on September 4, on her administration's milestone achievements. Emphasizing that her visionary leadership has fostered unprecedented stability in modern Italy, PM Abiy commended the strong, multifaceted partnership built on mutual respect. This gesture highlights Ethiopia's strategy of nurturing historic alliances to enhance political stability and strategic international cooperation.

Further reinforcing international ties, Ethiopia and the Netherlands convened their fourth political consultations in Addis Ababa on September 4, to deepen historical bilateral relations and mark a century of trade. Discussions led by Ambassador Meles Alem and Dutch Vice Minister Pascalle Grotenhuis focused on agricultural development, climate infrastructure, and global governance reform. The Netherlands welcomed ongoing economic reforms while committing continued support for regional peace, transitional justice, and disarmament initiatives. By anchoring discussions in agriculture and transitional justice, Ethiopia secures critical European backing for its domestic post-conflict recovery.

Transitioning from bilateral diplomacy to multilateral technical governance, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development convened a consultation workshop from September 4, urging member states to harness artificial intelligence for regional integration and economic advancement. Speaking at the consultation in Addis Ababa, Executive Secretary Workneh Gebeyehu highlighted AI's transformative potential in food security, climate modeling, and public healthcare. Representatives emphasized establishing robust data governance, regional regulation, and human capital investments through institutions like Ethiopia's specialized AI University.

This push toward digital and institutional modernization aligns directly with structural economic reforms aimed at private sector growth. On September 2, Ethiopian Finance Minister Ahmed Shide held consultations with International Finance Corporation Managing Director Makhtar Diop to scale up private investment across key sectors. The IFC highlighted its ongoing 500 million USD portfolio while committing additional resource mobilization for major national infrastructure projects, including public-private partnerships in transport, energy, and the Bishoftu International Airport expansion.

Concrete results of this economic partnership materialized on September 3, as Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed oversaw a major financial agreement between the National Bank of Ethiopia and the International Finance Corporation. The strategic framework establishes a dedicated Mortgage Refinance Company capitalized at 100 billion birr, backed by a minimum 200 million USD IFC investment. Designed to relieve banking liquidity constraints, this financial initiative aims to accelerate private sector participation and construct 1.5 million affordable homes nationwide.

2. Sudan

Sudan's war entered another increasingly regionalized phase during the week as the United Nations documented the growing role of foreign fighters, weapons networks, and external military support in sustaining the conflict, while fighting intensified in Blue Nile and South Kordofan. At the same time, international pressure for an inclusive political process increased, even as Khartoum continued to pursue its own dialogue framework. The cumulative picture was of a conflict becoming more deeply embedded in regional security networks while the space for a negotiated political settlement remained highly constrained.

Military developments remained concentrated around the country's southern and southeastern theatres. In Blue Nile, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) continued to reinforce positions around Ed Damazin following recent RSF and Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) advances toward the state capital. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan visited Ed Damazin on September 2 to inspect the army's 4th Infantry Division and review military readiness. The visit came after the SAF deployed additional forces, including an elite intelligence-linked brigade, to the area. On September 4, the army

claimed that it had repelled an RSF-SPLM-N attack on the Al-Baraka area of Kurmuk locality, inflicting losses and forcing fighters toward the Ethiopian border. The RSF had previously claimed control of several military positions south and southeast of Ed Damazin, underscoring the increasingly contested nature of the Blue Nile front.

The escalation in Blue Nile also continued to deepen the conflict's regional dimension. Sudanese authorities alleged that the RSF was operating training camps inside Ethiopia, including facilities near Asosa, and accused the camps of being used for training fighters, deploying drones, and facilitating logistical support. These allegations could not be independently verified, while Ethiopia has previously rejected Sudanese accusations that it facilitates military support to the RSF. Nevertheless, the claims emerged alongside continued reports of RSF-linked activity near the Ethiopian frontier and the SAF's repeated claims that hostile drones had crossed into Sudan from Ethiopia. The combination of battlefield escalation, competing accusations, and reported military activity around the frontier is making the Blue Nile increasingly important not only to Sudan's war but also to the security relationship between Khartoum and Addis Ababa.

The international dimension of the war became even more explicit following the release of a UN-backed fact-finding report on September 3. The investigation concluded that transnational networks involving several countries were providing weapons, military technology, logistics, and foreign personnel to the warring parties. The report documented the involvement of foreign fighters on the RSF side, including up to 2,000 Colombian military contractors, while witnesses also reported fighters from South Sudan, Chad, and Ethiopia. Investigators further found evidence that external actors had substantially enhanced the drone capabilities of both the RSF and SAF. The report said there were reasonable grounds to believe that SAF forces had also used foreign-supplied drones in operations that harmed civilians and civilian infrastructure.

The findings significantly broadened the understanding of Sudan's war from a domestic confrontation between the SAF and RSF into a conflict sustained by transnational military and financial networks. The investigation identified recruitment, training, weapons and logistics routes extending through countries including Chad, Libya, Somalia, Colombia and the United Arab Emirates. The UAE rejected allegations that it had provided military or logistical support to the RSF. The report nevertheless urged states to dismantle illicit supply networks and called for stronger enforcement of the UN arms embargo.

Meanwhile, fighting in South Kordofan demonstrated how the war is increasingly intersecting with localized communal and ethnic conflicts. On September 4 and 5, attacks attributed to the SPLM-N in the Nuba Mountains reportedly killed more than 20 people near Kauda and at least five others in Dilling, including a child. The attacks reportedly targeted the Otoro community amid longstanding disputes over land and territory. The violence illustrates the increasingly fragmented character of Sudan's conflict, in which

alliances between national armed actors and local groups are producing new layers of communal violence beyond the central SAF-RSF confrontation.

The humanitarian situation consequently continued to deteriorate. In Blue Nile, civilians displaced by fighting around Qaysan were reported to be living under trees without adequate food, shelter, or basic necessities. Around 150 families were reportedly sheltering in Khor al-Qana after fleeing the fighting. Across Sudan more broadly, the UN warned that insecurity and a worsening cholera outbreak were driving further displacement while severe funding shortages were limiting the humanitarian response. The UN's \$2.9 billion humanitarian appeal remained only 41 percent funded, while more than 2,600 cholera cases had been recorded by early August.

Khartoum, meanwhile, continued efforts to restore basic services and state institutions in areas under SAF control. The WHO reported that its representative had visited damaged referral hospitals in the capital as authorities prepared to restore critical health services. The efforts point toward a broader attempt by the government to demonstrate that areas recaptured from the RSF are moving from wartime administration toward reconstruction and institutional recovery.

Politically, international pressure continued to focus on the need for an inclusive settlement. The UN's Sudan envoy called for progress toward an inclusive political process involving Sudanese actors and warned against approaches that could deepen political fragmentation. This came as opposition from civilian and anti-war forces to Burhan's state-led dialogue initiative continued to grow. Critics argue that a dialogue organized primarily under the authority of the SAF-aligned government risks legitimizing the existing power structure rather than producing a genuinely inclusive national settlement. The disagreement therefore increasingly concerns not simply whether dialogue should occur, but who should control the political process and on what terms.

Taken together, developments during the week underscored three increasingly connected features of Sudan's war: the expansion of the southern and southeastern battlefields, the internationalization of military support, and the widening gap between competing visions for a political settlement. The escalation around Blue Nile is particularly significant because it places the conflict closer to Ethiopia while linking battlefield developments to allegations of cross-border military infrastructure and foreign support. At the same time, the UN investigation demonstrates that the war cannot be understood solely through the actions of the two principal belligerents. Foreign fighters, weapons networks, drones, and regional supply routes are increasingly shaping the battlefield. As these external dimensions deepen, the prospects for a political settlement will depend not only on the SAF and RSF but also on whether the networks sustaining the war can be constrained.

3. Egypt

Egypt's most consequential diplomatic development was President Xi Jinping's visit to Cairo, which demonstrated how rapidly Egypt's external balancing is evolving. The visit combined political coordination, economic cooperation, industrial investment, and regional security discussions, allowing Cairo to deepen its relationship with Beijing and is increasingly positioning itself between competing major-power centers.

Xi's call for a new Middle Eastern security framework reinforced that direction. Beijing's emphasis on regional ownership, opposition to external interference, and protection of maritime routes aligned closely with Cairo's preference for greater strategic autonomy. For Egypt, Chinese engagement offers diplomatic and economic leverage while potentially reducing reliance on Western (US) responses to regional crises.

The discussions between Xi and Abdel Fattah al-Sisi also linked Egypt's diplomacy directly to the wider regional security environment. Their emphasis on de-escalation, freedom of navigation, Gaza, and a political settlement reflected Cairo's effort to preserve influence across several connected theaters.

Economic cooperation with China added a practical foundation to the political relationship. Agreement on the next phase of the Egyptian-Chinese industrial zone around the Suez Canal Economic Zone could deepen Chinese manufacturing and infrastructure involvement in Egypt. Beyond investment, Cairo gains an opportunity to convert its geographic position into a broader economic-security platform linking Asian capital, Mediterranean markets, and Red Sea trade.

The relationship with Beijing nevertheless creates a balancing problem rather than a straightforward realignment. Egypt remains deeply connected to Washington through defense cooperation and substantial military assistance, while China is expanding its economic, technological, and strategic presence. Cairo therefore has an incentive to avoid choosing between the two powers, instead extracting investment, technology, diplomatic support, and security benefits from their competition.

That balancing challenge became particularly visible through the emerging competition over artificial intelligence infrastructure. Chinese firms reportedly sought a major role in Egyptian government data centers and advanced computing systems, while American companies considered competing offers. The issue extends beyond commercial technology because control over advanced digital infrastructure can create long-term dependencies involving surveillance, military applications, data governance, and strategic autonomy.

The Chinese position on the Nile was therefore especially significant for Egypt. Beijing's recognition of the Nile's importance to Egyptian water and food security provided Cairo with diplomatic reinforcement on an issue it considers strategically fundamental. Even

without directly confronting Ethiopia, the language strengthens Egypt's argument that upstream development should not undermine downstream states even though it does not and Egypt is doing anything but try to communicate and cooperate with the upstream states.

At the regional level, Egypt continued presenting itself as an intermediary capable of managing competing interests around Gaza, Iran, and the wider Middle East crisis. This mediation role also serves concrete national interests. Prolonged regional instability threatens Suez Canal revenues, energy flows, border security, tourism, and investment, giving Cairo strong incentives to contain conflicts diplomatically even where it cannot determine their outcomes.

Egypt's relationship with the Gulf also remained economically important amid the wider regional turbulence. Potential major Emirati investment on the North Coast illustrates how Cairo continues using Gulf capital as a source of economic resilience. For Egypt, these relationships are not merely financial; they reinforce a broader network of Arab partnerships that can support political stability while offsetting pressures created by regional competition.

The emerging Egyptian-Libyan oil pipeline proposal similarly reflects Cairo's effort to convert geographic proximity into strategic leverage. A potential connection between Alexandria and Tobruk would deepen Egypt's economic relationship with eastern Libya while expanding its role in the Mediterranean energy network. The project also demonstrates how Egypt increasingly uses infrastructure and commercial connectivity as instruments of regional influence.

Overall, Egypt's strategic posture is becoming more multidimensional. The Nile dispute remains central, but Cairo is increasingly linking water security with Red Sea access, Horn partnerships, Gulf investment, Chinese engagement, Western relations, and Mediterranean connectivity. The underlying objective is not simply to block individual threats, but to construct a regional environment in which Egypt retains strategic relevance and greater freedom of maneuver.

4. Eritrea

SAF chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan arrived in Asmara on September 4 for talks with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki, marking his second visit to Eritrea in less than two months after a previous meeting on July 17. The visit comes amid heightened tensions between Sudan and Ethiopia, including a reported SAF military buildup in Sudan's Blue Nile region. On September 2, Burhan visited SAF troops deployed in the area to inspect their readiness. Separately, the SAF has in recent weeks claimed to have intercepted or shot down drones that it said originated from Ethiopian territory.

The latest meeting follows these developments in Sudan's relations with Ethiopia and

comes as Asmara and Khartoum maintain close political and security ties. Eritrea and the SAF, alongside Egypt, are aligned in their opposition to Ethiopia's federal government, while their broader regional relationships include ties with Ethiopian political and armed groups opposed to Addis Ababa. Burhan's return to Asmara less than two months after his previous visit represents continued high-level engagement between the SAF and Eritrean leadership. The visit therefore adds to the pattern of sustained coordination between the two sides amid rising tensions involving Ethiopia.

Ayin Network reported on September 1 that former Sudanese Security Service chief Salah Mohamed Abdallah, better known as Salah Gosh, had relocated from Cairo to Asmara. The publication cited three sources familiar with the matter who said Gosh was now based in the Eritrean capital, after previously residing in Cairo. One source linked the move to a legal case in the UAE concerning alleged links between Gosh and weapons shipments destined for the SAF, while another said his presence in Cairo had become problematic given Egypt's close relationship with the UAE. Ayin also reported that Burhan may have met Gosh during his most recent visit to Eritrea, although this was not independently confirmed.

Gosh's reported relocation is significant against the backdrop of Eritrea's increasingly close relationship with the SAF and Asmara's broader engagement with Sudanese political and security networks. In cultivating the Sudanese military camp, Eritrea appears to have set aside some of its longstanding opposition to political Islam, including by accommodating figures and networks associated with Sudan's Islamist establishment. This is particularly notable given the role of Iran-linked networks in supporting the SAF: Iranian supplies to SAF-aligned forces have moved through Eritrean territory, including via Massawa, making Eritrea a logistical component of the wider external support structure around the SAF. Eritrea's ties with Iran therefore intersect with its growing alignment with the SAF on the ground, within a broader regional configuration that also encompasses Iran's relationship with the Houthis in Yemen.

At the African Union's 21st Extraordinary Session in Luanda on August 30, Eritrea called for greater African ownership of conflict prevention and resolution and criticized external political, financial and military involvement in African conflicts. The Eritrean delegation also emphasized national sovereignty, territorial integrity, self-reliance and the need to reduce the AU's dependence on external funding. These positions are consistent with the PFDJ's longstanding diplomatic emphasis on self-reliance and resistance to external interference. The statement is therefore significant less for introducing a new policy position than for reaffirming a central theme of Eritrean official diplomacy.

The statement is controversial, however, because its emphasis on sovereignty and non-interference contrasts with Eritrea's conduct in the Horn since it seceded from Ethiopia in 1993. Eritrea has subsequently been involved in repeated conflicts with neighbouring

states and has supported armed and political actors beyond its borders, including in Sudan, where Eritrean territory has served as a conduit for weapons supplies to SAF-aligned forces. Asmara has similarly used relationships with regional actors as instruments of security and political influence, while presenting its external activities through the language of sovereignty and regional stability. The discrepancy is part of a broader pattern in PFDJ diplomacy in which claims of self-reliance and sovereign independence coexist with persistent international isolation, severe constraints on domestic economic development, and continuing criticism over the country's human rights record.

A September 4 letter by Eritrean human-rights organisations in the Netherlands and Switzerland urged members of the UN Human Rights Council to appoint a new Special Rapporteur on Eritrea with substantive expertise on the country. The appeal followed the Council's July 6 decision to renew the Special Rapporteur's mandate for another year, with the election of a new mandate holder scheduled during the Council's 63rd session from September 7 to October 7. The organisations argued that continued monitoring remains necessary because of restrictions on access to Eritrea and what they describe as persistent violations including arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, restrictions on fundamental freedoms and indefinite national service. They also highlighted alleged transnational repression affecting Eritrean refugees, diaspora communities and human-rights defenders outside the country.

The letter comes as Eritrea is simultaneously experiencing greater accommodation within the international system, including through renewed diplomatic engagement and its election to ECOSOC for 2027–2029, despite the persistence of the human-rights concerns that have underpinned international scrutiny. The renewal of the Special Rapporteur's mandate nevertheless demonstrates that efforts to maintain accountability have not disappeared, pointing to competing tendencies within international engagement with Asmara: greater diplomatic accommodation on one side and continued institutional pressure over human rights on the other. The appeal also illustrates that Eritrean diaspora organisations remain an important counterweight to the PFDJ's diplomatic efforts, particularly in maintaining international attention on conditions inside Eritrea and pressing governments and multilateral institutions to preserve existing accountability mechanisms.

U.S. Chargé d'Affaires in Asmara Christine Meyer marked September 1, the anniversary of the beginning of Eritrea's armed struggle in 1961, with a personal message highlighting her experience in Asmara and stating that she would tell Americans that Eritrea had achieved independence more than 35 years ago and that its sovereignty and agreed borders should be respected. The message followed an embassy statement commemorating the 65th anniversary of the start of the armed struggle and comes after Meyer also participated in Eritrea's May 24 Independence Day observances, where senior

PFDJ figures including Foreign Minister Osman Saleh were present. Meyer's public engagement with Eritrea's national narrative represents a notably accommodating diplomatic posture, particularly given the longstanding difficulty of previous U.S. efforts to establish a functional relationship with the PFDJ regime.

What distinguishes the current engagement is that Washington is now pursuing rapprochement with Asmara as part of a broader reassessment of its position in the Horn and Red Sea. The administration moved in May toward lifting U.S. sanctions imposed on Eritrea's ruling party and military, while Trump's Senior Adviser for Arab and African Affairs, Massad Fares Boulos, has held talks with Osman Saleh twice, first in New York on September 25, 2025 and again in Cairo on July 19, 2026. The shift does not amount to a demonstrated resolution of the longstanding disagreements between Washington and the PFDJ regime, but it represents a substantive change from the more conditional approach that characterized earlier U.S. policy. Meyer's public framing of Eritrea's independence and sovereignty therefore forms part of a wider diplomatic effort to establish a working relationship with Asmara, despite the regime's domestic record and regional conduct.

5. Djibouti

Djibouti's Great Horn Investment Holdings (GHIH) has been converted from a simplified joint-stock company (SAS) into a public limited company (SA), following an extraordinary general meeting on August 24, according to a notice issued by the Djibouti Ports and Free Zones Authority (DPFZA) and reported by *Ethiopian Business View*. The restructuring leaves the ownership unchanged, with DPFZA retaining 60 percent and the Sovereign Fund of Djibouti holding 40 percent, while preserving GHIH's existing assets, liabilities and contractual obligations. Nasro Habib Ibrahim has been appointed chairperson of the board and Omar Aden Obsieh director-general, alongside representatives from DPFZA, the Economic Development Fund and the Ministry of Budget. The change therefore appears primarily institutional rather than a transfer or expansion of ownership.

GHIH has become the principal state investment vehicle for Djibouti's strategic infrastructure, with holdings spanning ports, logistics, free zones, aviation and energy-related projects, including assets at Doraleh, Tadjourah, Ghoubet and Damerjog. Formalizing the company as a public limited company could provide a more conventional corporate structure for managing this increasingly extensive portfolio and potentially facilitate future investment or financing arrangements, although the available announcement does not indicate any immediate change in strategy. The concentration of these assets under GHIH also underscores the extent to which Djibouti's economic model remains tied to state management of its logistics infrastructure and its position as Ethiopia's principal maritime outlet. The restructuring is consequently significant less for

any immediate operational change than for strengthening the institutional vehicle through which Djibouti manages and potentially develops its strategic infrastructure portfolio.

Yemen's internationally recognised government and Djibouti discussed bilateral cooperation and maritime security during a September 3 meeting between Yemeni Foreign Minister Afrah al-Zouba and Djibouti's Foreign Minister Abdoulkader Omar, according to Yemen's state news agency SABA. The ministers agreed to pursue existing consultation mechanisms and discussed cooperation in ports, transport, maritime connectivity and logistics, while also addressing security in the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandab and the Gulf of Aden. Al-Zouba called for greater information-sharing to counter arms and drug trafficking and other cross-border threats, while Djibouti reiterated its support for Yemen's unity and territorial integrity. The meeting follows a telephone call between the two ministers in August, indicating sustained diplomatic engagement rather than an isolated exchange.

The continued contact comes as Djibouti faces a more acute maritime-security environment linked to the escalation between the internationally recognised Yemeni government's regional backers and the Houthis. For Djibouti, whose economy and strategic position depend heavily on secure navigation through the Bab al-Mandab and surrounding waters, developments in Yemen create direct security and commercial concerns even without Djibouti becoming a party to the conflict. The engagement with Yemen's internationally recognised government therefore appears aimed in part at improving coordination over maritime threats and cross-border activity while reinforcing Djibouti's diplomatic position on Yemen's territorial integrity. The discussions on ports and logistics also provide a bilateral economic dimension, although the immediate significance of the engagement is more likely to lie in security coordination as Houthi-Saudi confrontation intensifies.

Djibouti's President Ismail Omar Guelleh warned against foreign interference in the country's internal affairs during a three-day meeting of the ruling People's Rally for Progress (RPP) in Ali Sabieh, according to Dawan Africa. Guelleh said Djibouti's sovereignty and independent decision-making were non-negotiable, while identifying domestic security and social cohesion as priorities amid intensifying competition in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea. He also emphasized investment in education and skills as part of efforts to strengthen the country's capacity for independent decision-making. The remarks were delivered in a domestic political setting, and the statement did not identify any particular foreign actor as the target of his warning.

6. South Sudan

South Sudan's political transition came under renewed pressure this week as the government moved to remove a major legal obstacle to the December elections, while the security and political environment remained far from conducive to a credible vote.

President Salva Kiir's assent to constitutional amendments has formally cleared a path toward the 22 December elections, but renewed violence, unresolved implementation of the peace agreement, opposition concerns, and growing international scrutiny continue to raise questions about whether the electoral process can become a vehicle for political stabilization rather than another source of confrontation.

The most significant political development was Kiir's signing of Constitutional Amendment No. 13 on September 2. The amendment separates the conduct of national elections from the completion of the permanent constitution-making process and the national population and housing census, removing two major legal conditions that had complicated preparations for the December polls. The move provides a clearer legal basis for proceeding with the elections, but it does not resolve the broader political and institutional problems surrounding them. The UN has continued to warn that political trust remains weak, civic and political space is constrained, and key provisions of the Revitalized Peace Agreement remain incomplete.

That gap between legal readiness and political readiness was particularly evident in the continuing debate over the role of opposition actors. An opinion published this week in Radio Tamazuj argued that elections cannot produce democratic legitimacy if political opponents are excluded, detained or prevented from competing freely, pointing specifically to the continued detention and trial of First Vice President Riek Machar. While the piece represents a political opinion rather than an independent assessment, it reflects a broader concern surrounding the electoral process: whether the December vote will constitute genuine political competition or merely formalize an already constrained political environment.

International scrutiny intensified accordingly. The UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan began its fourteenth country visit on September 7, with commissioners scheduled to meet government officials, political and security actors, civil society, victims, humanitarian organizations and other stakeholders. The mission is examining renewed hostilities, displacement, human rights conditions and the erosion of the peace agreement, while also assessing whether the conditions exist for a peaceful, inclusive and credible political transition. Its findings will be particularly significant as the election timetable moves closer.

The security environment remained volatile. Localized violence continued to demonstrate how insecurity is not confined to the country's principal political and military actors. In Warrap, armed youths reportedly attacked a security barracks in Acong-cong, resulting in significant casualties among soldiers, police and civilians. The incident prompted the state authorities to declare an emergency, highlighting the continuing ability of localized armed violence to undermine wider stabilization efforts as the country approaches elections. At the same time, cross-border tensions with Uganda demonstrated another layer of

insecurity. Following a cattle raid in which armed youths from Uganda's Moyo District reportedly crossed into Kajo-Keji and seized more than 300 cattle, Ugandan and South Sudanese authorities agreed to identify, arrest and prosecute those responsible. The recovery of 171 cattle and the establishment of joint security efforts offered a limited example of localized cooperation, but the episode also underscored the fragility of border communities where livestock, farmland and communal identities overlap.

The regional dimension was also visible in the unresolved Ilemi Triangle dispute with Kenya. South Sudan's Vice-President Taban Deng Gai reiterated Juba's claim to the territory, arguing that it should be treated as South Sudanese land and its status resolved through dialogue. The dispute has practical consequences beyond territorial politics: an 11-kilometre section of the Nadapal-Juba highway remains incomplete, disrupting a transport corridor intended to connect South Sudan more efficiently with Kenya and the port of Mombasa. Although Gai's remarks do not alter the internationally recognized boundary, the continuing dispute demonstrates how unresolved territorial questions can intersect with regional trade, infrastructure and security.

External diplomatic pressure also increased. U.S. Representative Rich McCormick called on Secretary of State Marco Rubio to take a more active role in resolving South Sudan's political and security crisis, urging Washington to use its diplomatic leverage to bring Kiir, Machar and other political actors toward a binding political settlement. His intervention reflects continuing concern in Washington over the scale of U.S. assistance to South Sudan and the limited progress toward durable peace.

Taken together, the week highlighted a widening contradiction at the centre of South Sudan's transition. The institutional machinery for elections is moving forward, but the political and security conditions required for those elections to consolidate peace remain unsettled. The constitutional amendment removes an important procedural obstacle, but it cannot by itself resolve political exclusion, the unfinished peace agreement, insecurity, or the contested status of opposition participation. With the UN human rights mission now assessing conditions on the ground and regional disputes continuing to expose the fragility of state authority beyond Juba, the coming months will determine whether December's elections become a genuine transition out of prolonged interim rule—or another stage in South Sudan's cycle of postponed political settlement.

7. Somalia and Somaliland

Somalia

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has agreed to hold elections within seven months and accepted several opposition demands following international mediation. The President softened his earlier position that constitutional changes had extended his term by one year. Key language changes were made with international partners now called facilitators

rather than mediators and observers rather than guarantors. A full technical agreement on taskforce size and timeline has not been finalized. Opposition representatives from the Nabad iyo Nolol party confirmed they are close to signing a political agreement to establish a Democratic Transition Task Force. However they expressed concern that recent security incidents could derail the process.

Heavy fighting erupted again in Baidoa on September 3 when forces loyal to ousted Southwest State President Abdiasis Laftagaren attacked Somali army positions. The city which hosts over half a million displaced people experienced widespread violence with residents fleeing gunfire and explosions. This marks an escalation in the ongoing political-security dispute between the federal government which backs the current Southwest administration under Sheikh Aden Mohamed Nur Madobe and Laftagaren's forces. The situation risks further inter clan violence and political fragmentation as Somalia approaches elections.

A major crisis emerged in Jubaland following a reported drone strike on September 4 targeting the residence of General Mahad Abdirahman Aden, former custodial corps chief in Doolow. General Shub survived with minor injuries but four civilians including his wife were wounded. Thousands protested in Kismayo, Afmadow, Garbahaarrey, and Doolow, burning Turkish flags and carrying images of President Erdoğan with blood on his hands. Protesters chanted slogans against Türkiye, stating they no longer support Turkish involvement. Jubaland Information Minister Abdifatah Mohamed Mukhtar accused the federal government of attempting to invade the state using foreign aircraft. The federal government denies any drone strike claiming explosives were handled inside the house and announced a fact finding committee. Türkiye has not commented.

Former intelligence chief Fahad Yasin publicly accused Speaker of the House Abdulkadir Mohamed Nur (Jama) of involvement in the Doolow drone strike. Meanwhile, pro government cleric Sheikh Ali Wajis told a gathering of senior officials including the defense minister that people who criticize the government should be killed. This statement has raised concerns about free speech and political dissent as Somalia enters a contentious electoral period.

In Puntland, security forces reported that an ISIS-Somalia affiliated foreign fighter detonated explosives on himself after being wounded while attempting to plant a roadside bomb between Sheebaab and Dhaadaar areas in the Cal Miskaad mountains. The incident is part of Puntland's ongoing large-scale offensive against militant hideouts.

Somali forces and international partners killed several senior Al-Shabaab leaders in recent joint operations. Abdullahi Hashi Hirsi (Ikhlas) head of Al-Shabaab's intelligence wing since approximately 2013 was killed on August 23 in a NISA operation with international partners in Jilib district. Other killed leaders include Said Huriya extortion leader in eastern Hiiraan, Hamza Bakool, Osman, Abdihafid (explosives unit), Taliman (rescue

operations), Omar Hussein, and Ahmed Ali Jamaale (Jowhar leader). Mustafa Cato was wounded. Ongoing operations continued along riverbanks in Middle and Lower Shabelle with claims of at least ten more militants killed.

Turkish F-16s operating from Mogadishu conducted airstrikes on August 31 targeting Al-Shabaab positions near Basra amid ongoing ground fighting. Local sources reported casualties, but no official confirmation of numbers was provided. The Somali Defence Ministry referenced a major operation neutralizing militants near Basra.

Danab special forces conducted an operation in Buula Fulay, Bay region, on September 3, killing fourteen Al-Shabaab fighters. Bases and hideouts were destroyed, and weapons were recovered. Those killed included commanders such as Bishar Mohamed Mukhtar (Sheikh Bishar). Al-Shabaab has not commented.

National Security Adviser Aways Haji Yusuf confirmed for the first time that Somali National Army soldiers crossed into Ethiopia's Somali Region after completing Saudi funded training in Galmudug. Ethiopia's security agencies are interrogating dozens of these soldiers. The Adviser explained the crossing was authorized leave to visit families as Al-Shabaab controlled routes prevented safe ground travel. The soldiers were taken toward Jigjiga for questioning.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud attended the 65th Non Aligned Movement summit in Belgrade, Serbia which opened September 1. He addressed global challenges including conflicts, terrorism, geopolitical tensions, and climate change. He highlighted Somalia's progress on stability and development, thanked international partners, and reaffirmed commitment to Non-Aligned principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and peaceful dispute resolution.

MP Sadiq Abdullahi Abdi represented Somalia at the 12th IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, from September 4 to 6. Discussions focused on human rights, sustainable development, peace, and youth economic opportunities.

Kenya and Somalia advanced plans to extend the Isiolo Mandera road corridor into Somalia under the World Bank funded Horn of Africa Gateway Development Project. Following talks between Ambassador Jabril Abdulle and Kenya's Roads Permanent Secretary both sides agreed to form a Joint Technical Committee and convene a high level meeting. The extension will boost cross border trade, fiber optic connectivity and economic opportunities.

The Doolow drone strike has created diplomatic tension between Somalia and Türkiye. While Türkiye has not commented, Jubaland officials accuse the federal government of using Turkish aircraft against Somali citizens. The federal government denies the strike and announced a fact finding committee. Senior opposition figures linked the incident to

efforts to derail the political agreement and called for an end to violence against political opponents.

An emerging Al-Shabaab Houthi alliance poses a new threat to the United States and its allies. The alliance could enable sharing of expertise, resources and operational planning, potentially facilitating movement of fighters and weapons across the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea. Senior Al Shabaab commander Jibril "One Armed" Yahya Ali was reportedly seen on a honeymoon drive along the beach highlighting the group's continued operational capability despite ongoing counterterrorism operations.

Somaliland

The Minister of Defense, Mohamed Yusuf Ali, accompanied by the Commander of the National Armed Forces, Brigadier General Nim'an Yusuf Gaxnug also referred to as Noman Yusuf Gahnug conducted a visit to frontline military positions on 31 August. During this visit, the Minister announced that a scheduled salary increase for members of the Somaliland Armed Forces would take effect in January 2027. This measure is intended to improve troop welfare and boost the morale of the armed forces. The leadership urged personnel to maintain strict discipline, unity, professionalism, and respect for the chain of command, and stated that grievances must be raised only through official institutional channels.

On 3 September President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi Irro departed Hargeisa for his first official working visit to the United States since assuming office in 2024. The President made a short stopover in the United Arab Emirates en route to the United States. An official statement from the Presidency via Spokesman Hussein Adan Egge Deyr described the trip as historic and aimed at strengthening the partnership between Somaliland and the United States. The agenda focuses on cooperation in the areas of security, economic cooperation, investment attraction and advancing diplomatic efforts toward securing broader international recognition for Somaliland. During his stay, the President is expected to hold high level meetings with top U.S. officials and other stakeholders to present Somaliland's interests, priorities, strategic role near the Bab el Mandeb Strait and Gulf of Aden shipping lanes and long term aspirations.

Israel's National Security Council issued a new warning regarding a security threat facing Israelis and Jews outside Israel, specifically citing Somaliland as an area of concern. The warning noted that Houthi militias in Yemen intend to target Israelis traveling to Somaliland. The National Security Council highlighted that terrorist groups have stepped up their efforts in targeting Israeli nationals and Jews, as the threat exists in various countries and regions across the world according to a report published by i24News. The Council has added Somaliland, Jordan, Qatar, and Egypt, including the Sinai Peninsula to the list of countries with a Level 4 travel warning advising Israeli citizens to completely avoid these countries and locations. The report also emphasized that groups including

Hezbollah, Hamas, ISIS, and Al-Qaeda continue to issue threats and calls against Israelis and Jews. The Council further added that Houthis have also called for attacks on Israelis in Somaliland and other parts of Africa, citing Israeli presence as the reason. This warning comes as Israel's National Security Council reports a global rise in attacks carried out by lone actors targeting Israelis and Jews.

8. Yemen

The week of 31 August–6 September marked a significant escalation in Yemen, with relatively limited exchanges giving way on 3 September to a major Houthi offensive across western Taiz and southern Hodeidah. The Houthis employed ground forces alongside ballistic missiles, drones and artillery, with the reported objective of cutting the Taiz–Mokha road and increasing pressure on the government-held port of Mokha and the approaches to Bab al-Mandab. Government-aligned forces counterattacked and subsequently reported recovering several positions, including areas around Jabal Habashi and the Hays district, while government and reportedly Saudi aircraft conducted strikes against Houthi positions. The fighting continued through 6 September and was among the most intense since the 2022 truce, although precise casualty and territorial claims remain difficult to independently verify.

The escalation has particular significance because of its concentration along the Mokha–Bab al-Mandab axis, where control of the road network and coastal positions could affect the government's ability to sustain forces around the Red Sea coast. The Houthis reportedly succeeded in temporarily cutting the Taiz–Mokha road, while government forces claimed advances around Hays and al-Jarahi, leaving the immediate balance on the western front unsettled. The fighting has also increasingly involved long-range weapons, with the Houthis firing ballistic missiles toward Taiz and government forces making greater use of airpower, suggesting a conflict moving beyond the limited positional exchanges that characterised much of the post-2022 period. The geographical concentration of the offensive, together with renewed Houthi activity around the southern Red Sea, indicates that control of western Yemen and access to the Bab al-Mandab approaches is becoming a central component of the renewed conflict.

The escalation also produced a substantial humanitarian impact, with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reporting the displacement of approximately 1,790 households from Maqbanah and Jabal Habashi amid the fighting. Further civilian casualties were reported from missile strikes, including an attack on a bus travelling between Taiz and Aden and another strike on a civilian gathering south of Taiz, although responsibility for these incidents was attributed by Yemeni authorities and could not be independently established. By 6 September, AFP reported that more than 300 combatants had been killed since the offensive began, based on figures supplied by government and Houthi sources, illustrating the scale of the escalation while also highlighting the

difficulty of establishing a definitive casualty count. The displacement and civilian impact are likely to increase if fighting continues around the main population and transport corridors west and south of Taiz.

Separately, Yemeni and Saudi-led coalition forces killed Islamic State spokesman Abu Hudhayfah al-Ansari during a joint counterterrorism operation in Seiyun, Hadramout, on 1 September. Yemen's Central State Security Agency said the operation was conducted with Saudi-led coalition special forces and Yemen's Counterterrorism Force 22, after al-Ansari resisted an attempt to capture him; an associate was wounded and detained. Earlier reports suggesting U.S. involvement were not corroborated by the Yemeni authorities or subsequent reporting, making the operation distinct from the principal Houthi-government confrontation. Its occurrence alongside the renewed fighting nevertheless illustrates that the internationally recognised government and its external partners continue to conduct counterterrorism operations in areas outside the main Houthi front lines, even as military resources and attention increasingly concentrate on the western theatre.

9. Kenya

Kenya's week from August 31 to September 6, 2026 was marked by a series of developments that forced the government to respond directly to questions of foreign investment, regional integration, infrastructure, food security, and political credibility.

One of the most important issues was President William Ruto's order targeting foreign nationals operating small retail businesses without the required authorization. The directive was presented as a way to protect Kenyan traders, but it immediately raised concerns because Kenya is part of the East African Community, which promotes regional movement and economic integration. By September 6, Foreign Affairs Principal Secretary Korir Sing'Oei clarified that foreigners with valid permits and licenses could continue operating legally. The episode showed the tension between protecting local economic interests and preserving Kenya's image as an open regional economy.

Ruto also took a tougher position toward foreign investment when he ordered Tata Chemicals to end its operations at Magadi. The government argued that Kenya should receive greater industrial benefits from its natural resources, including local manufacturing and employment rather than simply exporting raw materials. The decision reflects a broader push toward economic nationalism, although it also raises concerns about how foreign investors may view Kenya's regulatory environment.

Kenya also strengthened its external diplomacy through talks with Qatar. Officials discussed investment, labor agreements, agriculture, and regional security issues, including Sudan and the Middle East. Nairobi supported Qatar's mediation efforts while Qatar recognized Kenya's role in Horn of Africa diplomacy. The engagement reflects

Kenya's effort to deepen relations with Gulf states while positioning itself as a regional diplomatic actor.

Domestically, the government had to intervene after an aviation workers' strike disrupted operations at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. Senior government officials participated in negotiations, and the strike was called off on September 1. The response was important because JKIA is a major regional aviation hub, meaning prolonged disruption would have affected trade, tourism, and air travel across East Africa.

The government also reacted to the abduction of Standard Group editor Alex Kiprotich. Police leadership ordered the Anti Abduction Unit to investigate the incident after concerns were raised about journalist safety and possible abuses by security actors. The case is politically significant because Kenya continues to face criticism over disappearances involving activists and government critics.

Another government response came after drought conditions reduced milk production. Authorities began considering maize imports and animal feed interventions to stabilize supply. The issue demonstrated how climate pressures can quickly become economic and political problems, particularly when food prices are already rising.

Overall, the week showed Kenya attempting to balance economic nationalism with regional integration, foreign investment with domestic pressure, and regional leadership with internal institutional challenges. The most important trend was the government's increasingly active effort to protect Kenyan economic interests while maintaining the country's role as a regional commercial and diplomatic hub.

10. The Gulf Countries

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's first-week September trajectory centered on institutionalizing its new trilateral defense architecture with Türkiye and Pakistan while carefully managing the risks generated by escalating regional tensions. The first meeting of the Strategic Political and Defense Committee under the Makkah Joint Defense Agreement advanced plans for a permanent General Secretariat headquartered in Saudi Arabia, indicating that the pact is moving beyond a political declaration toward a more structured security mechanism. At the same time, Riyadh emphasized its sovereign neutrality by informing regional and international actors that its airspace would not be used for offensive operations against Iran. This cautious posture was reinforced by heightened security concerns reflected in a U.S. security alert advising American personnel to limit non-essential travel to military installations. Alongside these developments, the Ministry of Interior hosted the Security and History Dialogue 2026 in Riyadh, bringing together more than 160 international experts to examine the relationship between security, development, and historical change.

United Arab Emirates

The UAE's trajectory during the first week of September combined fiscal expansion and economic stimulus with continued efforts to manage the consequences of regional military escalation. The Cabinet approved the country's largest federal budget for 2026 at AED 92.4 billion, while Dubai introduced a \$408 million stimulus package designed to revive tourism and business activity through temporary tax measures. Infrastructure development also continued through Etihad Rail's planned expansion into Dubai, while preparations for the 15th AIM Investment Summit reflected Abu Dhabi and Dubai's continued emphasis on attracting international investment. These economic measures unfolded against renewed disruptions to energy and maritime flows caused by escalating U.S.-Iran hostilities, which pushed Brent crude toward \$91 per barrel amid threats to Strait of Hormuz shipping. At the strategic level, the UAE maintained its institutional separation from Iran while strengthening integrated national air-defense preparedness and advocating broader Gulf collective security.

Qatar

Qatar's engagement with the Horn of Africa during the first week of September focused on deepening security cooperation with Somalia and maintaining defense-level engagement with Sudan. Somali Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre described relations with Doha as having entered a new strategic phase encompassing political, economic, investment, security, and defense cooperation, with a newly established defense agreement presented as an important mechanism for strengthening Somalia's national security institutions. Qatar simultaneously pursued military diplomacy with Sudan through high-level bilateral meetings between its Minister of State for Defense Affairs and Sudanese defense leadership, focusing on defense consultations and military cooperation amid regional instability. These engagements illustrate Doha's growing tendency to connect Gulf and Horn security dynamics, particularly as maritime instability around the Strait of Hormuz increases the strategic importance of the wider Red Sea and adjacent African shipping corridors.

11. Africa and The Sahel Region

Mali

Mali combined a notable financial development with continued political centralization and persistent insecurity during the week. On September 2, the Malian Treasury successfully raised 60.5 billion CFA francs, approximately \$107 million, through a regional public securities issuance, exceeding its initial target of 55 billion CFA francs. Investor bids reached 67.99 billion CFA francs, representing a 123.61 percent coverage rate, demonstrating continued demand for Malian government securities within the regional financial market.

Domestic and regional Malian investors dominated the purchases, with three-year bonds accounting for 40.23 billion CFA francs at a 7.69 percent yield. The successful issuance provided the military administration with additional financial resources despite the country's continuing political and security difficulties. At the political level, General Assimi Goïta's military administration remained in firm control under the extended transition framework, while political party activities remained suspended.

Security pressures, however, continued to constrain the broader environment. Northern and central Mali remained affected by attacks and instability involving jihadist coalitions, particularly JNIM, as well as separatist factions. The continuing insecurity has also restricted humanitarian access, leaving the country facing the combined challenge of sustaining political control and financial mobilization while managing persistent violence across large parts of its territory.

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic remained under continued political and security monitoring during the week, with the African Union reviewing the country's post-electoral environment while humanitarian operations continued to face logistical difficulties caused by seasonal weather conditions. The African Union Peace and Security Council held an in-person ministerial and ambassadorial briefing on September 1 to assess the country's political and security situation following its transition and consolidation process. The briefing included contributions from the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security and regional representatives, reflecting continued continental attention to the country's political trajectory.

The country also continued preparations for its upcoming football commitments. On September 4, the Confederation of African Football confirmed that the Central African Republic national team will host Burkina Faso in a second-round qualification fixture scheduled for September 28. Meanwhile, heavy seasonal rains continued to disrupt humanitarian logistics, with supply trucks becoming stranded in mud near remote regional hubs such as Birao. These conditions complicated the movement of humanitarian supplies and assistance to vulnerable communities outside the capital.

International security cooperation also remained active toward the end of the week. On September 6–7, UN missions emphasized continuing efforts by peacekeepers to manage cross-border criminal networks and secure vulnerable areas outside Bangui. The focus on cross-border criminality and peripheral security demonstrates that stabilization efforts in the Central African Republic continue to extend beyond the capital, particularly in areas where limited infrastructure and difficult logistical conditions constrain the reach of state and international security institutions.

Niger

Niger's political and security environment during the week remained dominated by the aftermath of the failed August 29 mutiny in Niamey. The junta maintained a heightened security posture following attacks on strategic sites, while the episode generated diplomatic reactions from neighboring states, the African Union, and France. The crisis also highlighted the growing importance of Russian security support to the military government as it seeks to consolidate its control.

Forces loyal to General Abdourahmane Tiani remained on high alert following the suppression of the mutiny and attacks targeting strategic installations, including Diori Hamani International Airport and Air Base 101 in Niamey. Assessments that Russian support was critical to the junta's efforts to defeat the attempted coup further demonstrated Moscow's entrenched security role in Niger. The episode therefore reinforced the military government's dependence on external security assistance while also exposing continued vulnerabilities within the country's political and security structures.

The attempted coup also produced regional diplomatic repercussions. On September 3, Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly rejected allegations circulating on social media that Nigeria or ECOWAS had supported the failed coup attempt, stressing that stability in Niger remains important to regional security. On September 1, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission expressed deep concern over the armed clashes and casualties associated with the August 28–29 violence in Niamey. At the same time, tensions between Niger and Western governments remained unresolved, with French officials reiterating that Paris would protect its interests and diplomats as friction with the military authorities continued.

Politically, General Tiani's regime continued to exercise extensive legislative and executive control through the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland. No clear or formal timetable for a return to civilian constitutional rule was announced during the reporting period. The suppression of the mutiny consequently provided the junta with an opportunity to reinforce its immediate political and security control while leaving the longer-term transition question unresolved.

DRC

The security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained volatile during the week as pro-government forces continued offensive operations against M23-allied fighters in South Kivu while fighting persisted in North Kivu. In South Kivu, government-aligned forces attacked Twirwaneho fighters in the highlands and conducted operations along the RN2 highway in Mwenga district. Meanwhile, clashes continued in southern Masisi as M23 expanded its territorial control.

Beyond the battlefield, M23 continued strengthening its influence through the creation of parallel economic structures. The group implemented parallel banking initiatives across Rutshuru and Masisi districts in North Kivu, indicating that its territorial influence increasingly extends beyond military control toward alternative economic and administrative arrangements in areas under its authority.

Diplomatic engagement continued at the regional and international levels. The head of MONUSCO and the UN Great Lakes special envoy completed a joint diplomatic tour involving Burundi, Uganda, and Rwanda, reflecting continued efforts to address the regional dimensions of the conflict. The UN Security Council also reviewed strategic updates and forecasts concerning the stability situation in the DRC as the expiration of existing mission frameworks approaches. The combination of continued fighting, expanding M23 territorial influence, and uncertainty surrounding future international engagement leaves the security situation highly unsettled.

Chad

Chad experienced a significant deterioration in its security environment during the week, driven by the continuing spillover from Sudan's civil war along its eastern border and a renewed wave of insurgent violence around Lake Chad. The country remained on maximum military alert following the late-August cross-border drone and air strikes in Ennedi-Est, while N'Djamena simultaneously faced growing diplomatic pressure over allegations concerning the use of Chadian territory for RSF military resupply. At the same time, the worsening Boko Haram insurgency generated a major internal displacement crisis in Lake Province.

The UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan submitted its report, *Fuelling Sudan's Conflict: Weapons, Fighters and External Support Networks*, to the UN Human Rights Council on September 1. The report identified Chadian nationals, alongside Ethiopian and South Sudanese nationals, among foreign fighters serving with the RSF in Sudan. It also documented transnational supply networks connecting individuals and entities across Chad, the United Arab Emirates, Libya, and Somalia that were involved in transferring arms and military materiel to the RSF. The findings add further complexity to Chad's position in the Sudanese conflict, particularly as the war increasingly operates through cross-border networks involving fighters, logistical routes, and external support.

Along the eastern border, Chad maintained its military alert at the maximum level following the late-August strikes in Ennedi-Est. The Chadian military also intensified security sweeps in border settlements and refugee camps, detaining individuals suspected of activities that could further destabilize the frontier. Diplomatic tensions with Sudan remained particularly serious, as Khartoum continued to deny responsibility for launching strikes inside Chad while accusing N'Djamena of permitting its territory and airports to be

used as conduits for RSF military resupply. The competing accusations have consequently deepened the sovereignty dispute between the two governments and increased the pressure on Chad to secure its territory while managing the regional consequences of Sudan's conflict.

Chad also faced a separate and severe security crisis in Lake Province. On September 4, the International Organization for Migration reported that more than 75,000 civilians had been internally displaced in the province following a sharp increase in attacks by Boko Haram and its splinter factions. Communities living on vulnerable island settlements were forced to flee toward the mainland, demonstrating that Chad's security challenges extend beyond the Sudanese border and include a renewed insurgency and humanitarian emergency in the Lake Chad basin.

12. North Africa

Libya

The UN-backed 4+4 agreement represented the most significant attempt to break Libya's institutional deadlock by bringing representatives of the eastern and western camps around a common electoral roadmap. Its proposed transition toward presidential and legislative elections under unified institutions addresses the central political obstacle, but the agreement's significance will ultimately depend on whether competing power centers accept the mechanisms required to implement it.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres welcomed the agreement as progress toward elections and institutional reunification. The international response matters because Libya's rival institutions have repeatedly benefited from external recognition and competing diplomatic channels. International endorsement can create pressure for implementation, but it cannot resolve the underlying distribution of political, military, and economic power that has repeatedly frustrated previous transitional arrangements.

Washington also pressed for rapid implementation, with Senior Adviser Massad Boulos linking the political process to broader American efforts to encourage institutional unification. US engagement reflects more than electoral concerns. Libya's energy sector, fragmented security environment, migration pressures, and competing foreign military relationships all provide Washington with incentives to support a settlement capable of creating a more predictable political and economic order.

Khalifa Haftar's support for the 4+4 outcomes gave the process additional weight because the eastern military establishment remains one of the principal centers of power outside the western political structure. His acceptance, however, does not necessarily indicate a willingness to surrender influence. The crucial question is whether eastern authorities

view elections as a mechanism for political competition or as a route to consolidating existing leverage.

That uncertainty became visible almost immediately after the agreement when Presidential Council head Mohamed al-Menfi reappointed the existing head of the High National Elections Commission despite the 4+4 recommendation for new leadership. The dispute exposed a familiar weakness in Libya's political process: agreements can establish broad frameworks while individual institutions remain subject to competing claims over appointments, authority, and procedural control.

The disagreement over the elections commission is particularly important because control over electoral administration can shape the legitimacy of any future political transition. Rival factions have repeatedly challenged the rules and institutions governing elections, meaning that procedural disputes can become substantive struggles over political survival. Unless institutional authority is clarified before voting begins, the electoral process risks reproducing the same fragmentation it is intended to resolve.

The continuing US warning against travel to Libya also highlights the gap between diplomatic progress and the realities on the ground. Persistent insecurity remains a structural constraint on political normalization, particularly outside the principal urban centers. International actors can facilitate negotiations, but the continued fragmentation of armed power means that political agreements remain vulnerable to coercive actors operating beyond formal institutional control.

Egypt and Tunisia meanwhile reiterated support for a Libyan-led political settlement preserving national unity and sovereignty. Their involvement reflects the particular interests of Libya's immediate neighbors, which are directly affected by border insecurity, migration, illicit trafficking, and political fragmentation. Both states therefore have incentives to support stabilization while also seeking to ensure that any emerging political order does not threaten their respective regional interests.

US-Turkish coordination adds another external layer to the political process. Washington and Ankara share an interest in preventing prolonged institutional fragmentation, but their wider Libyan interests are not identical. Turkey's military presence, maritime agreements, and economic relationships give Ankara stakes in the eventual balance of power, while the unresolved competition between eastern and western actors continues to complicate any genuinely unified settlement.

The central problem for the 4+4 process is therefore not reaching an agreement but translating it into institutional behavior. Libya's political factions, military actors, and foreign partners have repeatedly accepted transitional frameworks while preserving parallel structures of influence. Unless the electoral roadmap addresses control over

security institutions, public resources, and political appointments alongside voting procedures, institutional reunification is likely to remain incomplete.

Algeria

Algeria used the anniversary of the Non-Aligned Movement to reaffirm non-alignment as a contemporary foreign-policy instrument rather than simply a historical doctrine. The emphasis on sovereignty and consistent application of international law reflects Algiers' preference for maintaining autonomy from major-power blocs. It also provides a diplomatic framework for opposing selective international pressure, particularly on conflicts involving Palestine and Africa.

Algeria's renewed outreach toward Mali and Niger is more consequential than the non-alignment rhetoric because it addresses a deterioration in Algiers' strategic environment. Relations with Sahel governments have been strained by disagreements over security cooperation, territorial sovereignty, and Algeria's regional role. Rebuilding ties therefore serves a practical objective: restoring influence along Algeria's southern frontier where instability directly affects national security.

The outreach also reflects Algeria's response to a changing Sahel balance in which military governments have become less receptive to traditional European and regional intermediaries. By rebuilding relationships with Mali and Niger, Algiers can attempt to recover diplomatic relevance without accepting an externally imposed security architecture. The strategy is therefore both defensive and competitive, aimed at preventing rival powers from filling Algeria's traditional regional space.

Algeria's role in the African Union Peace and Security Council reinforces this effort. Its rotating leadership provides an institutional platform through which Algiers can shape discussions concerning the Sahel, Sudan, South Sudan, and wider continental conflicts. This gives Algeria influence beyond its bilateral relationships and strengthens its ability to present itself as a central African diplomatic actor rather than a purely North African power.

That continental role is particularly useful as Algeria seeks to manage tensions between its security interests and its preference for non-intervention. The Sahel exposes the contradiction clearly: instability across Algeria's southern border requires active diplomacy, yet excessive involvement risks entanglement in conflicts where local governments increasingly resist external influence. Algiers is therefore attempting to preserve influence without assuming the costs of direct regional responsibility.

Relations with the United Arab Emirates present a different challenge. Disagreements surrounding Libya, Western Sahara, and alleged support for separatist actors have widened the political distance between Abu Dhabi and Algiers. The rivalry reflects more than bilateral disagreement, as both states increasingly pursue independent regional

strategies. Their competing relationships across North Africa and the Sahel create the potential for deeper geopolitical polarization.

The Algeria-UAE friction is especially significant because Libya and the Sahel connect directly to Algeria's wider security environment. Emirati involvement in regional conflicts can strengthen actors whose priorities diverge from Algiers, while Algerian resistance can encourage a more competitive diplomatic posture. The dispute therefore represents part of a larger struggle over influence across North Africa rather than a narrowly bilateral disagreement.

The appointment of Khalida Boufedech as the first woman to lead Algeria's parliament also carried domestic political significance. Her elevation expands female representation at the highest levels of Algeria's constitutional institutions, but its broader importance depends on the actual distribution of parliamentary authority. Symbolic institutional changes do not necessarily alter the underlying political structures through which executive power is exercised.

Taken together, Algeria's position this week combined external activism with a strong emphasis on sovereignty. The Sahel outreach, African Union role, and confrontation with competing regional actors all point toward an attempt to recover strategic influence in Algeria's immediate neighborhood. Non-alignment provides the diplomatic language for that strategy, while regional engagement supplies the practical instruments through which Algiers seeks to sustain its autonomy.

Morocco

The fallout from the Ceuta migration crisis continued to dominate Morocco's relationship with Spain, but Madrid's rejection of claims that Rabat deliberately orchestrated the migrant surge reduced one potential source of escalation. Sánchez instead attributed the episode to criminal networks and disinformation. The dispute nevertheless exposed the fragility of Spain-Morocco cooperation when migration becomes intertwined with domestic political pressure.

The migration issue has broader importance because Morocco occupies a pivotal position in Europe's southern border-management system. Rabat's cooperation affects migration flows, security coordination, and Spain's ability to manage Ceuta and the surrounding frontier. This creates considerable leverage for Morocco, but it also creates dependence on European cooperation, making migration an instrument of influence that carries costs for both sides.

The crisis unfolded as Morocco's governing coalition entered an increasingly contentious pre-election period. Public accusations between the RNI and PAM exposed tensions among parties that had previously shared government responsibilities. The political significance lies in the timing: disputes within the coalition now intersect with the

competition for electoral advantage, potentially turning disagreements over governance into broader questions about who can credibly manage Morocco's domestic and foreign-policy interests.

A leaked recording involving senior political figures further intensified those tensions. Such episodes can become politically consequential because they expose internal disagreements that parties would normally manage privately. With the electoral campaign approaching, coalition partners have incentives to distance themselves from one another rather than defend a common record, increasing the likelihood that domestic political competition will affect the cohesion of the governing bloc.

The continuing migration dispute also interacts with European uncertainty over how far to support Spain. Morocco benefits from this ambiguity because Madrid has strong incentives to preserve operational cooperation with Rabat. At the same time, Brussels' reluctance to become directly absorbed into bilateral disputes leaves Spain carrying much of the political burden, giving Morocco greater room to negotiate directly with individual European governments.

Morocco's confidence in handling the dispute is strengthened by its relationships with Washington and Israel. US recognition of Morocco's position on Western Sahara and increasingly close Israeli ties provide Rabat with important diplomatic and security backing. These relationships do not eliminate European leverage, but they reduce Morocco's dependence on any single Western partner and strengthen its position when negotiating with Spain.

The Western Sahara issue remains central to this wider diplomatic architecture. Morocco's autonomy proposal has gained significant international momentum, while Algeria and the Polisario Front continue to reject Rabat's preferred settlement. The dispute therefore remains embedded in a broader regional rivalry between Rabat and Algiers, with diplomatic recognition, foreign partnerships, and international institutional positions increasingly becoming part of the competition.

Morocco's expanding ties with the United States and Israel also have a regional dimension beyond Western Sahara. Cooperation in security and defense strengthens Rabat's strategic capabilities while connecting Morocco to wider Middle Eastern and Mediterranean networks. For Algeria, this can appear as a growing strategic imbalance along its western frontier, reinforcing the competitive relationship between the two North African states.

The combination of electoral competition and external confidence creates an important political dynamic for Morocco. The ruling parties are entering an election period while the state maintains strong diplomatic relationships with major external partners. Internal competition could therefore become sharper precisely because foreign-policy

achievements, migration management, and Western Sahara diplomacy can all be presented domestically as measures of governmental competence.

The week ultimately showed Morocco operating from a position of considerable diplomatic leverage, but not unlimited freedom. Its relationships with Washington, Israel, and European governments provide multiple channels of support, while migration and Western Sahara give Rabat important bargaining instruments. Yet dependence on European markets and cooperation means that Morocco still has to manage these relationships carefully, particularly with Spain, where domestic politics can rapidly reshape bilateral tensions.

13. Middle East

Iran-Israel Conflict

The most consequential diplomatic development was the emerging U.S.-Iran understanding, which sought to convert battlefield exhaustion into a structured pause. For Tehran, the arrangement offered economic breathing room without requiring an immediate settlement of every nuclear question. For Washington, it reduced escalation risks and protected wider regional interests, but left Israel confronting a framework it did not fully control.

The agreement widened an existing strategic gap between Washington and Jerusalem. U.S. diplomacy prioritized de-escalation and a managed settlement, while Israeli decision-makers continued to emphasize freedom of military action against threats linked to Iran and Hezbollah. The divergence matters because any arrangement that constrains Israeli operations without resolving Israeli security concerns risks producing compliance on paper but resistance in practice.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decision to seek another term added a domestic political dimension to the conflict's strategic calculations. With the government under pressure over wartime performance, the hostage crisis, and public confidence, continued military activism could serve both security and political purposes. The result is a leadership environment in which diplomatic compromise carries unusually high domestic political costs.

The U.S.-Iran understanding consequently exposed Netanyahu to criticism from across Israel's political spectrum. Opponents portrayed the arrangement as evidence that Israel had failed to secure its preferred outcome, while supporters questioned whether Washington adequately reflected Israeli threat perceptions. The unusual breadth of dissatisfaction suggested that the agreement had become a test of Netanyahu's strategic credibility, not merely another diplomatic disagreement.

Netanyahu nevertheless rejected the idea that diplomacy should impose a ceiling on Israeli action against Iran. His position rested on a broader security doctrine in which the possibility of an Iranian nuclear capability remains an overriding concern. Strategically, this preserves Israeli autonomy, but it also creates a structural contradiction with any U.S.-brokered settlement that assumes Israeli restraint.

That contradiction became clearest in southern Lebanon, where Israel published an expanded military control map after the broader understanding emerged. The move indicated that Israel was treating the Lebanon theater as a separate security problem rather than automatically accepting the diplomatic logic applied to Iran. It also suggested that territorial control and military depth remain central to Israeli deterrence calculations.

Negotiations with Washington focused on how long Israeli forces could remain inside a proposed security zone extending roughly ten kilometers into southern Lebanon. The issue was not simply withdrawal timing. It concerned whether Israel could preserve operational depth against Hezbollah while simultaneously participating in a regional de-escalation framework. That unresolved question became one of the agreement's principal implementation risks.

Israel also avoided committing itself to a strict geographic ceiling on military operations. Officials indicated that strikes beyond the mapped security area could remain possible when threats were identified. This preserved ambiguity, which can strengthen deterrence by complicating adversary planning, but it also weakens the credibility of ceasefire arrangements by leaving the boundary between restraint and escalation deliberately undefined.

A ceasefire with Hezbollah therefore represented progress only at the diplomatic level. The arrangement sought to reduce the Lebanon front as part of a broader effort to contain the conflict, yet both sides retained military capabilities and competing interpretations of permitted action. The challenge became whether the truce could create operational confidence to prevent routine incidents from reopening the war.

The ceasefire's fragility was demonstrated almost immediately by Israeli strikes in Lebanon that reportedly killed at least twenty people. Israel attributed its actions to preceding Hezbollah fire, while Hezbollah accused Israel of violating the truce. The competing narratives matter less than the operational pattern: each side retained a standing justification for force, leaving the ceasefire exposed to rapid escalation.

Israel said Hezbollah had launched more than fifty projectiles against its forces in southern Lebanon before the retaliatory strikes. Whether or not that explanation settles responsibility, it demonstrates the central problem of the ceasefire: deterrence remains reciprocal and unresolved. Each side can portray escalation as a defensive response,

allowing localized exchanges to accumulate without either actor formally abandoning the truce.

Hezbollah subsequently accused Israel of hundreds of ceasefire violations and warned that further breaches would trigger a response. The warning restored deterrence logic to the center of the post-ceasefire environment. Rather than converting military competition into political bargaining, the truce risked becoming another arena for testing thresholds, credibility, and freedom of movement along a highly militarized frontier.

Defense Minister Israel Katz further narrowed the practical meaning of the ceasefire by stating that Israeli troops remained free to act against perceived threats. The position suggests Israel regards military initiative as indispensable to preventing renewed attacks. At the same time, it risks transforming a temporary security arrangement into a permissive framework in which enforcement depends largely on Israeli threat assessments.

Katz also indicated that Israel intended to retain its positions in the security zone and preserve battlefield gains. Strategically, this points toward a preference for durable forward defense rather than rapid restoration of the prewar status quo. Hezbollah, however, has little incentive to accept such an outcome, making the security zone a potential source of prolonged friction even under formal de-escalation.

Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem responded by warning that the group would answer Israeli violations. That response preserved Hezbollah's role as an independent deterrent actor despite the wider U.S.-Iran diplomacy. It also demonstrated why an agreement centered on Washington and Tehran cannot by itself stabilize every theater where Iranian partners, Israeli forces, and local military calculations intersect.

Israel additionally signaled that it did not regard the U.S.-Iran understanding as legally binding on its own military posture, particularly regarding Lebanon. This limits the agreement's reach beyond the direct U.S.-Iran channel. It also illustrates a broader diplomatic problem: regional arrangements can only become durable when the actors controlling battlefield escalation accept both the substance and enforcement mechanisms.

The economic dimension of the agreement was equally important. A proposed waiver on Iranian oil sales could provide Tehran with additional revenue while easing pressure on global energy markets. For Iran, sanctions relief offers resources for economic stabilization; for the United States and other stakeholders, restoring supply reduces the risk that prolonged conflict will generate wider inflation and energy insecurity.

The reopening of the Strait of Hormuz was therefore treated as a strategic component of de-escalation rather than a peripheral issue. The waterway is a critical energy route, so restoring predictable shipping would reduce the conflict's global economic footprint.

Conversely, Iran's ability to disrupt or reopen the passage demonstrates that maritime access remains an important source of leverage in negotiations.

That leverage was underscored when Tehran moved to restrict traffic through Hormuz after renewed Israeli action in Lebanon. The episode showed that Iran could still translate battlefield developments into pressure on international commerce. Shipping disruptions therefore functioned as both economic consequences and diplomatic signals, reminding external actors that the conflict extends beyond territorial battlefields into globally connected strategic infrastructure.

The immediate shipping impact was visible through reduced traffic and uncertainty over new passage permissions. This mattered because even temporary disruption can raise insurance, freight, and energy costs before physical supply shortages emerge. Hormuz consequently became a mechanism through which regional military decisions could impose costs on distant economies, increasing international pressure for a durable rather than purely tactical settlement.

The proposed agreement remained incomplete, with uncertainty over its precise provisions and unresolved questions surrounding Iran's nuclear program. That ambiguity creates space for competing interpretations over obligations, sequencing, and verification. Diplomatically, the framework may be sufficient to pause escalation, but without clear enforcement and nuclear benchmarks, it is unlikely to eliminate the strategic competition that produced the confrontation.

Iran's leadership also faced a domestic dilemma after the conflict. Economic damage, public frustration, and high expectations for relief increased pressure to convert diplomatic gains into tangible improvements. At the same time, elements within the security establishment could argue that renewed military investment is necessary to avoid vulnerability. The agreement therefore opened a contest between reconstruction and rearmament priorities.

Reports that restored Iranian resources could strengthen Hezbollah financing add strategic complexity. Economic normalization in Tehran may improve the resilience of regional partners, potentially offsetting some of the military pressure produced during the conflict. For Israel, this creates a paradox in which de-escalation with Iran could improve the capabilities of an adversary operating directly on its northern frontier.

Washington also faced institutional and political constraints in sustaining the agreement. Trump indicated an openness to congressional involvement, while lawmakers questioned how fully they had been briefed and how detailed the arrangement actually was. This uncertainty matters because an executive-led understanding may remain vulnerable to domestic political shifts, especially if opponents portray concessions to Tehran as insufficiently protected or verified.

The broader diplomatic process culminated in a tentative framework involving a time-limited roadmap, mechanisms addressing the Lebanon fighting, and communications intended to protect Hormuz. Its importance lies less in resolving the conflict than in creating procedures for managing it. The central strategic question now is whether these mechanisms can survive competing military incentives, domestic political pressures, and unresolved nuclear disputes.

Turkey

Turkey's engagement with Russia remained an important element of Ankara's wider foreign-policy balancing. Erdoğan's meeting with Vladimir Putin focused on bilateral relations and the Akkuyu nuclear project, with discussions also extending toward additional Russian-built reactors. The talks underscored how energy cooperation continues to anchor the relationship even as Turkey remains formally embedded within NATO.

That energy relationship sits alongside Ankara's effort to expand its diplomatic room through the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Erdoğan stressed that Turkey's interest in deeper SCO engagement should not be interpreted as abandoning the West, instead presenting it as part of a "360-degree" foreign policy. The message was aimed at preserving flexibility rather than choosing between rival geopolitical camps.

The same balancing approach was visible in Turkey's position on the Russia-Ukraine war. Erdoğan reiterated support for ending the conflict while emphasizing the protection of civilian shipping and commercial activity in the Black Sea. For Ankara, maritime stability has direct economic importance, particularly because disruption of grain and shipping routes can affect Turkey while amplifying food-security pressures across Africa.

Turkey's willingness to continue mediation over Ukraine reinforces its attempt to retain a role between Moscow and Western capitals. Ankara's position is unusual because it remains a NATO member while maintaining working channels with Russia. That combination gives Turkey diplomatic access that many Western governments lack, while allowing Ankara to use mediation as an additional source of regional influence.

Turkey's entry into the Artemis Accords added another layer to its external balancing. Joining the US-led framework on peaceful space exploration strengthened Ankara's institutional relationship with Washington at the same time that it was expanding engagement with non-Western organisations. The development therefore complemented rather than contradicted Turkey's broader effort to maintain multiple strategic partnerships simultaneously.

The unresolved F-35 issue remained another indicator of that complicated relationship with the United States. Erdoğan said discussions over Turkey's possible return to the programme were continuing while Ankara pursued indigenous alternatives, including the

KAAN fighter. The combination suggests Turkey is seeking Western technology where it remains advantageous while simultaneously reducing dependence on foreign suppliers over the longer term.

Defense cooperation with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan added a separate regional dimension. Erdoğan's comments on the Mecca Defence Alliance presented the trilateral arrangement as a mechanism for strengthening security cooperation among the three countries. For Turkey, the partnership expands its defense relationships beyond NATO and gives Ankara another platform through which to build influence across the Middle East.

At the same time, US sanctions on Turkey-based Golden Global Bank highlighted the difficulties created by Ankara's balancing strategy. Washington accused the institution of facilitating transactions connected to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The episode demonstrated that Turkey's economic and political engagement with Iran can generate direct exposure to American sanctions, particularly where financial networks intersect with security-related activity.

The Kurdish issue also moved from political discussion toward implementation. Turkish authorities established working groups to address verification of PKK disarmament under the legal framework created for dissolution and reintegration. The significance lies in the transition from negotiations to practical mechanisms. Ankara is now confronting the more difficult question of whether political commitments can produce verifiable changes in the security environment.

That process has wider regional implications because the PKK issue extends beyond Turkey's borders. Developments involving Kurdish armed actors in northern Iraq and Syria remain connected to Ankara's security calculations. A successful disarmament process could reduce pressure on Turkey's military posture, while failure could reinforce arguments within the security establishment for maintaining or expanding cross-border operations.

Turkey's relations with Greece also remained active through an unusual channel as the two countries' intelligence chiefs held talks amid continuing tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean. The dialogue suggests that Ankara and Athens continue to preserve direct communication despite disagreements over maritime claims, military deployments, and regional alignments. Intelligence-level engagement provides a mechanism for managing competition without resolving its underlying causes.

The strategic environment became more complicated following the major Israeli-Greek air-defense agreement. The deal strengthens Greece's defensive capabilities and adds another layer to the increasingly interconnected security relationships involving Greece and Israel. From Ankara's perspective, the concern is less the individual transaction than

the broader accumulation of military partnerships developing around the Eastern Mediterranean.

Domestic politics added another source of pressure as prosecutors opened an investigation into former prime minister Ahmet Davutoğlu over earlier comments concerning Erdoğan. The case brought renewed attention to the political space available to senior former officials and opposition figures. Although distinct from Turkey's external challenges, such developments remain relevant because domestic political constraints shape Ankara's ability to sustain controversial foreign-policy initiatives.

Economic policy remained closely connected to this wider strategic picture. Turkey's new medium-term programme projects a substantial decline in inflation while maintaining economic growth. The government's ability to stabilize prices and strengthen national income matters beyond domestic economics because prolonged financial pressure could restrict defense spending, foreign-policy activism, and the resources required to sustain Turkey's expanding regional commitments.

Erdoğan's engagement with Italy further illustrated Ankara's effort to maintain relationships across Europe despite broader political disagreements. His outreach to Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni emphasized continued bilateral cooperation. Italy matters to Turkey not only as a European partner but also because of its interests in the Mediterranean, Libya, migration, energy, and NATO, making Rome an important channel for Ankara's regional diplomacy.

Turkey's established position in Somalia continued to form part of this broader regional posture. The Turkish military training facility, defense cooperation, maritime engagement, and earlier mediation efforts between Somalia and Ethiopia give Ankara a durable presence along a strategically important corridor. Although no major new Horn crisis emerged during the period, Somalia remains an important instrument of Turkey's wider Red Sea and Indian Ocean engagement.

That Horn presence also places Turkey within a competitive environment involving Ethiopia, Egypt, the UAE, and other regional actors. Ankara's approach has generally relied on bilateral partnerships rather than direct confrontation with competing states. Somalia therefore provides Turkey with a relatively low-cost avenue for sustaining strategic influence, particularly in maritime security and defense, while keeping its wider regional ambitions connected to a local partnership.

Taken together, the week showed Turkey continuing along several tracks at once rather than moving toward a single geopolitical camp. Engagement with Russia deepened through energy, ties with Washington remained active despite disputes, regional defense partnerships expanded, the Kurdish process entered implementation, and Turkey

maintained its Horn presence. The pattern is one of sustained strategic flexibility under increasingly complex regional pressures.

14. Global Powers

The week began with renewed U.S.–Iran military exchanges after Washington launched another wave of strikes against Iranian targets on September 1. President Donald Trump subsequently said the renewed campaign would not continue for long, while emphasizing that U.S. forces had degraded Iranian radar and missile systems and destroyed infrastructure associated with Iran's efforts to threaten shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.

The maritime confrontation then intensified. On September 1, two supertankers carrying Saudi crude were struck by projectiles near Khasab, Oman, while transiting the Strait of Hormuz. Neither vessel suffered casualties, but the incidents demonstrated that the conflict was beginning to impose risks beyond direct U.S.–Iranian military targets and threatened one of the world's most important energy corridors.

On September 5, U.S. forces struck three Iranian oil tankers after Iran launched ballistic missiles at U.S. Navy vessels. CENTCOM characterized the tanker strikes as retaliation designed to impose greater economic costs on Tehran. The episode marked an important shift because Washington was combining military retaliation with direct pressure on Iran's oil-export infrastructure.

By September 7, Tehran had announced plans for a new restricted maritime zone in the Gulf and new shipping corridors through Hormuz. Iran said vessels entering the zone would face sanctions. Oil prices moved above \$97 per barrel as concerns over the security of the waterway intensified.

Trump repeatedly sought to frame the confrontation as limited rather than an open-ended war. On September 4, he described it as "small potatoes" and backed Vice President JD Vance's characterization that it did not constitute a conventional war. Trump pointed to the absence of U.S. ground combat and comparatively low American casualties while arguing that Washington had severely weakened Iran's military and nuclear capabilities.

On September 4, the Treasury Department sanctioned Türkiye-based Golden Global Yatirim Bank and associated entities, accusing the bank of facilitating financial transactions for Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps–Quds Force and providing Tehran with access to international correspondent banking. The measure was explicitly presented as part of Operation Economic Outcast, the administration's campaign to cut Iran's remaining financial lifelines.

On September 3, the Treasury Department imposed additional sanctions on Cuba, targeting Fidel Castro's grandson Fidel Ernesto Castro Díaz-Balart as well as several

Cuban state-linked entities, including Banco Exterior de Cuba and companies associated with petroleum and nickel.

On September 2, the White House announced what it described as a major Venezuelan oil agreement that would give the United States extensive economic and governance rights over a new Venezuelan oil enterprise and access to more than 65 billion barrels of proven reserves.

On September 3, Trump said European countries should reimburse Washington for previous U.S. military assistance and ammunition provided to Ukraine. He argued that the United States should prioritize replenishing its own weapons inventories, particularly as the Iran conflict places additional pressure on U.S. munitions stocks.

Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner conducted a high-profile dual visit: talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on September 5 (several hours, described as constructive by the Kremlin), followed by their first official trip to Kyiv on September 6 to meet President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. A temporary, limited pause on long-range strikes against Kyiv and Moscow cities was observed to facilitate the travel (Russia ordered a three-day halt on Kyiv strikes; Ukraine reciprocated on Moscow).

Frank Garcia, the newly appointed U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, is undertaking his second African tour since taking office. His September 3–10 itinerary covers Zambia, Ethiopia and Kenya, with the Ethiopia leg placing Addis Ababa directly within Washington's renewed Africa engagement.

In Addis Ababa, Garcia met Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos to discuss U.S.–Ethiopia bilateral relations, trade and investment, and security cooperation in the Horn of Africa. The discussions followed the U.S.–Ethiopia Bilateral Structured Dialogue held in Washington in May.

More significantly, Garcia's Ethiopia visit appears to have had a strong commercial-strategic component. U.S. interest reportedly extends to greater American participation in Ethiopia's planned Bishoftu International Airport, as well as opportunities connected to Ethiopia's critical-mineral sector.

Garcia also met African Union Commission Chair Mahmoud Ali Youssouf in Addis Ababa. Their discussions reportedly covered Red Sea maritime security, peace and security in the Horn, regional stability, and African economic integration.

President Xi Jinping's state visit to Egypt began in September 1. The visit came as the Middle East was being reshaped by the U.S.–Iran confrontation and coincided with the 70th anniversary of China–Egypt diplomatic relations. Xi and President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi discussed bilateral cooperation and broader regional issues.

Before traveling to Egypt, Xi attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. In his September 1 speech, Xi emphasized cooperation among SCO members and China's vision of a more multipolar international system.

The summit also reinforced China's strategic alignment with Russia and other non-Western powers. Xi's message was particularly significant given the continuing U.S.–Iran conflict and broader confrontation between Washington and Beijing.

Beijing continued military and political pressure around Taiwan during the week. Taiwan reported continued Chinese naval and military activity around the island, while recent Chinese exercises have increasingly emphasized capabilities associated with blockade and potentially amphibious operations.

Besides the meeting of U.S. envoys, Moscow deepened its alignment with Tehran: during the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit, Putin met Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, who thanked Russia for its support, while reports indicated that Russia has been assisting Iran's development of advanced supersonic cruise-missile technology. Russia also used the week's Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok to promote economic cooperation with Asian partners, reinforcing Moscow's broader pivot toward non-Western markets.

15. European Countries

British Prime Minister Andy Burnham and French President Emmanuel Macron met in London on September 3 for talks centered on Ukraine, migration, trade and strengthening European cooperation, marking Macron's first meeting with Burnham since the latter became prime minister. The two leaders emphasized closer UK–European coordination at a time when the United States is increasingly focused on Iran and attempting to advance a Ukraine settlement. The talks also highlighted border security and the need for stronger European defense cooperation. For London, the engagement reinforces its effort to retain a central role in European security after Brexit, while the Iran crisis and renewed U.S.–Russia diplomacy are creating pressure on European governments to assume greater responsibility for regional security.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz faced a major domestic setback on September 6 after the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) won the state election in Saxony-Anhalt with about 44% of the vote, producing its strongest state-level result and intensifying pressure on Merz's government. Merz ruled out cooperation with the AfD and described the result as a serious warning for Germany's political establishment, while reaffirming his commitment to supporting Ukraine despite growing public frustration over the economic and security costs of the conflict. The result could complicate Berlin's ability to sustain its current foreign-policy posture, particularly as Germany faces pressure over defence

spending, the Ukraine war and the economic consequences of instability in the Middle East.

Austria, Greece, Denmark and the Netherlands agreed to pursue arrangements with non-EU countries to establish external migrant return hubs for people without legal residency. The initiative reflects a broader European shift toward externalizing migration management and strengthening deportation mechanisms, with the five countries aiming to develop concrete arrangements during the coming months.

Spain remained involved in the broader EU debate over reforming foreign-policy decision-making, joining ten other member states in calling for ways to overcome the use of national vetoes that can obstruct common EU positions. Madrid's participation is significant because the initiative seeks to move some foreign-policy decisions away from unanimity toward qualified-majority voting, potentially giving the EU greater capacity to respond collectively to crises such as Ukraine and the Middle East.

16. International and Regional Organizations

United Nation

During September 1–4, the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan released its report titled “Fuelling Sudan’s Conflict Weapons, Fighters and External Support Networks” to the Human Rights Council.

The report found that external support networks, including weapons, fighters, training, logistics and drones continue to sustain the conflict and expand the military capabilities of the warring parties. These activities have had serious consequences for civilians.

The Mission documented transnational networks allegedly supplying the Rapid Support Forces through routes involving entities linked to the UAE, Chad, Libya and Puntland in Somalia. It also reported the involvement of Colombian contractors in drone systems and foreign fighters, including nationals from Ethiopia, South Sudan and Chad.

Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan and Somalia were listed among states that did not provide substantive responses to the Mission’s requests for information. The report noted that Ethiopia had received an inquiry on June 11, 2026.

The findings highlighted the growing role of drone warfare in civilian deaths and damage to critical infrastructure and called for greater accountability and international engagement to address illicit activities linked to the conflict.

During September, the UN Security Council was expected to address the renewal of the Sudan sanctions regime, which was set to expire on September 12. Discussions took place against the background of continued fighting, displacement and increasing civilian harm caused by drone attacks.

The Quintet, consisting of the AU, IGAD, the EU, the League of Arab States and the UN, continued to serve as an important coordination framework for political consultations on Sudan. However, divisions and participation challenges from previous consultation rounds remained.

Africa Union

The African Union Peace and Security Council publicly released its communiqué from the 1364th meeting held on August 26. The Council noted South Sudan's commitment to hold elections on December 22, 2026 and welcomed initial preparations including the registration of political parties.

However, the Council expressed serious concern over the worsening political situation the failure of inter-party dialogue and continued armed clashes in Jonglei, Upper Nile and other areas. It stressed the need for political consensus, inclusivity, open civic space, security and the participation of women, youth and displaced persons.

The Council called on the parties to resume direct political dialogue without preconditions with support from the AU, IGAD and other partners. It also urged the completion of the unification and deployment of the Necessary Unified Forces, security-sector reform, DDR and the establishment of the Hybrid Court and the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing. The PSC further called for the release of political detainees and an end to hostilities and inflammatory rhetoric. It decided to hold a special meeting on election preparedness in October 2026 and requested a coordinated political strategy involving the AU, IGAD, C5, R-JMEC and the UN. The Council also reiterated its condolences following the August 24 ambush in Jonglei that killed two Ethiopian UN peacekeepers.

In early September, the AU Commission leadership and AU Chairperson, Burundi's President Évariste Ndayishimiye, continued engagement with Sudanese authorities regarding the Sudanese-Sudanese dialogue initiative. President Ndayishimiye held a phone conversation with Transitional Sovereignty Council Chair Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. He welcomed the dialogue initiative as a possible path toward comprehensive peace and praised efforts to create a more conducive political environment including the review of judicial measures against political opponents.

The AU reaffirmed its support for peace in Sudan and the country's eventual full return to AU activities. It described the dialogue process as complementary to the Quintet Mechanism and emphasized the importance of including civil, political and societal actors in efforts to build a united Sudan under legitimate civilian institutions. However, the initiative also faced criticism from some civilian coalitions and political parties who argued that the process was premature or not sufficiently inclusive.



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