# Africa's evolving landscape: military innovation, conflict, and economic cooperation



Africa is witnessing significant shifts across several sectors, from military developments and security dynamics to economic cooperation and social challenges, reflecting the continent's evolving landscape.

A recent report from the Africa Center for Strategic Studies highlights the growing use and proliferation of military drones across the continent. Key trends identified include the rapid acquisition and deployment of drones by African states, with an accent on middle powers such as Türkiye expanding their influence by supplying these technologies. African nations are increasingly investing in domestic production capabilities, notably through modifications of small commercial drones for tactical operations. Moreover, nonstate armed groups have escalated their use of drones, complicating conflict environments. The report underscores the necessity for African governments to refine their military doctrines, recognising that drone capabilities alone cannot replace the need for effective ground forces. “African governments that use drones must still deploy effective ground forces as drones cannot occupy or govern territory,” the Centre stated.

In Sudan, escalating violence continues to impact civilians, particularly in the western Darfur region. On Sunday, paramilitary forces shelled El-Fasher, North Darfur’s capital, killing over 30 civilians and injuring many more, according to a local resistance committee coordinating aid efforts. The shelling targeted residential areas amid ongoing offensives by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which recently intensified attacks on El-Fasher and nearby displacement camps Zamzam and Abu Shouk. More than 400 casualties and some 400,000 displaced persons have been reported in these recent clashes, as per United Nations estimates. UNICEF has described the conditions faced by over 825,000 children in and around El-Fasher as “hell on earth.” (Le Monde, AFP)

Meanwhile, Sudan's leader, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, engaged in talks with Turkey’s ambassador Fatih Yildiz on April 22 in Port Sudan. Discussions encompassed Turkish development projects, humanitarian aid deliveries, and plans for resuming Sudan Airways flights from Port Sudan by early June. According to Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Hussein al-Amin, the talks aimed to strengthen bilateral relations and logistical support for conflict-affected regions in central and western Sudan. These meetings follow previous engagements between Burhan and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. (Sudan Tribune)

Turkey's military presence in Africa is expanding as well, with a deployment of approximately 500 troops to Somalia this week at Mogadishu’s Aden Adde International Airport. These forces have been stationed at the Turk-Som base, Turkey’s largest in Africa, which specialises in training Somalia’s elite Gorgor forces. Established in 2017, the camp currently hosts over 300 Turkish personnel and has trained nearly 5,000 Somali soldiers to date. The deployment, authorised by the Turkish Parliament in July 2024, is part of a broader strategy to support Somalia’s fight against the al-Shabab extremist group. Details on whether these forces will engage directly in combat remain undisclosed. Turkey has maintained close ties with Somalia since 2011, focusing on infrastructure and security sector enhancement. (Garowe Online)

In Tunisia, heightened governmental action against legal defenders involved in politically sensitive cases emerged this week. Ahmed Sawab, a lawyer and former administrative court judge serving on the defence team for ex-ministers accused in a “conspiracy against state security” case, was arrested and taken to national security headquarters in Tunis. His arrest followed a home raid, and authorities have prohibited lawyer visits for 48 hours under anti-terrorism statutes, as reported by defence lawyer Sami Ben Ghazi. A specialised criminal chamber previously sentenced 40 defendants in the case to prison terms ranging from four to 66 years, a ruling contested by the defendants' legal team. (Middle East Monitor)

In the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), civilians affected by recent clashes have sought mental health support at the Saint Vincent de Paul neuropsychiatric hospital in Goma. Since the end of March, the hospital has offered free consultations to individuals suffering from conflict-related psychological trauma, including anxiety, depression, and insomnia. Psychiatrist Dr Neema Kahatwa noted a marked increase in mental health cases following clashes earlier in the year. Over 300 local residents have accessed these services, though patients incur costs for additional tests and treatment. (The Guardian)

Tanzania’s political landscape is also experiencing turbulence, with opposition figure Tundu Lissu reportedly transferred to a different prison. Lissu faces treason charges related to a speech calling for rebellion ahead of the country’s forthcoming elections. The opposition party CHADEMA risks disqualification due to its refusal to sign an electoral code of conduct. Although President Samia Suluhu Hassan’s administration initially earned praise for easing political repression, recent arrests and reports of opponents being targeted have sparked criticism among human rights observers. (Reuters)

In West Africa, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is convening a two-day summit in Ghana to address the withdrawal of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso from the bloc. The meeting, scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday, will deliberate on withdrawal procedures and the impact on ECOWAS institutions operating within the departing states. Notably, the three countries, now part of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), have imposed a 0.5 per cent import duty on goods from ECOWAS nations, excluding humanitarian aid. The AES asserts that the levy supports funding alliance activities, countering ECOWAS’s aspirations for free trade within the region. (Premium Times)

Economic cooperation within Africa is advancing through bilateral agreements such as the Memorandum of Understanding signed between Nigeria and South Africa. The pact, concluded in Abuja by Nigeria’s Minister of Solid Minerals Development Dele Alake and South Africa’s Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy Gwede Mantashe, aims to deepen mining sector collaboration. Areas of focus include geological mapping using drones, sharing mineral data, and joint exploration efforts targeting agriculture-related and energy minerals. Nigeria, possessing over 23 commercially viable mineral resources, has historically underdeveloped mining contributions to GDP, whereas mining has been pivotal to South Africa’s economy. Alake highlighted the agreement’s potential to stimulate industrialisation and economic growth continent-wide. (Business Insider Africa)

On the security front, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) released a report exposing the global expansion of Asian-based cybercrime syndicates centred in China and Southeast Asia. These groups generate tens of billions of dollars annually through diverse cybercriminal activities, including investment scams and cryptocurrency fraud. The syndicates have established operations in several African countries such as Zambia, Angola, and Namibia. The report details sophisticated methods, like encrypted communications and digital ecosystems utilising cryptocurrencies, which complicate law enforcement efforts. UNODC emphasised the urgent need for international cooperation to dismantle these networks. (Al Jazeera)

Labour conditions within the tech industry have also been scrutinised in recent research conducted by the African Content Moderators Union (ACMU) alongside Swiss nonprofit Personaldata.io. Their findings, visualised in global data flow maps, reveal extensive involvement of African workers in outsourced roles such as content moderation and AI data annotation. African labour is routed predominantly through subcontractors in the UAE, North America, and Europe before reaching major clients including Meta, OpenAI, and Samsung. Jessica Pidoux of Personaldata.io remarked to Rest of World that outsourcing firms capitalise on regulatory gaps in African jurisdictions to reduce operational costs. (Rest of World)

In law enforcement developments, four foreign nationals convicted in Guinea-Bissau last year for trafficking over 2.6 metric tons of cocaine have been transferred to the United States to face additional charges. The detainees include dual U.S.-Mexican citizen Ramon Manriquez Castillo, Mexican Edgar Rodriguez Ruano, Ecuadorian Fernando Javier Escobar Tito, and Colombian Anderson Jair Gamboa Nieto. They appeared in a Florida court and face charges involving drug distribution networks employing U.S. registered aircraft. The transfer was approved through mutual agreements between Guinea-Bissau and U.S. authorities. West Africa is known as a key transit point for cocaine shipments from South America to Europe. (Reuters)

Lastly, in regional financial development, Mauritania and Morocco have signed a historic agreement to establish Mauritania’s first stock exchange in Nouakchott. The Central Bank of Mauritania and Morocco’s Casablanca Stock Exchange formalized the deal aimed at fostering financial modernisation and regional integration. The Casablanca Stock Exchange will provide technical assistance in market architecture, regulatory frameworks, and capacity building. Mauritania, rich in natural resources such as iron ore and natural gas, seeks to diversify its economy through this initiative, expected to mobilise savings, support local enterprises, and attract foreign investment. The agreement was signed in the presence of the Moroccan Ambassador Hamid Chabar, following high-level bilateral meetings in December 2023. (Middle East Monitor)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/drone-proliferation-africa-destabilizing/> - This source from the Africa Center for Strategic Studies corroborates the claim about the growing use and proliferation of military drones in Africa, describing key trends such as increased acquisition by African states, involvement of middle powers like Türkiye, and the escalation of drone use by nonstate armed groups.
2. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-sudan-children-darfur-hell-earth-war> - UNICEF's reporting supports the article's assertion about the humanitarian crisis in Sudan’s Darfur region, highlighting the shelling of El-Fasher, the high civilian casualties, widespread displacement, and the dire conditions faced by over 825,000 children.
3. <https://sudantribune.com/article276641/> - This Sudan Tribune article confirms the details of talks held between Sudanese leader General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Turkey’s ambassador regarding development projects, humanitarian aid, and plans to resume Sudan Airways flights, reflecting ongoing bilateral relations.
4. <https://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/turkey-deploys-500-troops-to-somalia-to-support-fight-against-al-shabab> - Garowe Online verifies Turkey's expanding military presence in Africa, detailing the deployment of 500 troops to Somalia’s Turk-Som base to train elite forces and support counterterrorism efforts against al-Shabab.
5. <https://www.momonitor.co/2025/04/22/tunisian-lawyers-arrested-in-political-case/> - Middle East Monitor reports on Tunisia’s governmental crackdown on legal defenders in politically sensitive cases, including the arrest of lawyer Ahmed Sawab, corroborating the article's information on suppression under anti-terror laws.
6. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/guinea-bissau-drug-traffickers-transferred-us-2025-04-20/> - Reuters details the transfer of foreign nationals convicted for large-scale cocaine trafficking in Guinea-Bissau to the US for further prosecution, supporting the article’s mention of law enforcement cooperation and the region’s role as a transit point for South American cocaine shipments.
7. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiigFBVV95cUxNV2ZBYUYtZHlsY1dQN1FMT0ZUZUdxbW9pbDAxNXNOZzM3bjRKeFdpdHFvZEFaQ1gzMEFabHJfVnZHc0NIMVV6NFlxOGNqZXkyVlFYRDA4ME92cUh2ZFh4VUV4a21rNWVuc0NMRV9Wc3pJc3EyZ3B0SjV6cExXVjdvVl9tZ0FCc3NvTkE?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data