



1.0 Introduction

This Issue analyzes key developments that shaped the Greater Eastern Africa region through a conflict and geopolitical foresight lens during the month of December 2025. The period was marked by intensifying geopolitical competition, escalating armed conflict, and significant shifts in governance dynamics across the region. Several states experienced heightened political tension, including electoral disputes, state-encroached digital control in Uganda and Kenya, and the contested legitimacy of domestic institutions. Concurrently, armed violence surged in both internal and cross-border contexts, with Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Madagascar witnessing severe militarization and civilian targeting. These developments unfolded alongside critical diplomatic realignments, as Israel recognized Somaliland and regional powers recalibrated alliances in response to persistent conflicts and emerging strategic interests. These dynamics were compounded by competing external actors seeking influence, creating a complex environment in which local conflicts, humanitarian pressures, and strategic economic interests intersect. Digital governance emerged as a new domain of contestation, reflecting the growing nexus between technology, state sovereignty, and political control. Simultaneously, infrastructure and resource disputes, most notably Ethiopia's management of the Grand Renaissance Dam vis-à-vis Egypt, underscored the potential for conflict escalation over essential resources and regional water security. The purpose of this monthly outlook is to provide a policy-relevant and security foresight assessment for stakeholders, including the African Union, regional economic communities, national governments, and international partners.

2.0 Key Themes

2.1 Political Governance, Legitimacy & State Power

December 2025 witnessed intensified contestation over governance and state authority across the Greater Eastern Africa. In Tanzania, the opposition party CHADEMA, called for a transitional government following the disputed October 2025 elections, amid nationwide protests, internet blackouts, and reports of extrajudicial killings (The OWP, 2025). Uganda implemented military clearance requirements for all Starlink imports, raising concerns over digital control and the securitization of information flows (Dawan Africa, 2025) ahead of the January 2026 national elections. In Kenya, a court suspended the \$2.5 billion US health aid deal due to data privacy concerns, reflecting tensions between foreign assistance and national data sovereignty (BBC, 2025). Eritrea's withdrawal from IGAD on 12 December 2025, intensified regional uncertainty, particularly regarding Ethiopia's strategic ambitions and potential destabilization of multilateral conflict-resolution frameworks (BBC, 2025). Collectively, these developments indicate a regional pattern of centralized authority, shrinking civic space, and the strategic use of state institutions to manage political competition and information control.

Foresight Recommendations

- **Enhance electoral transparency:** Tanzanian authorities, supported by AU and UN technical teams, must allow verified international observers and ensure the timely publication of electoral data before the October 2025 elections to reduce political uncertainty and prevent escalation. This should be done in early 2026.

- **Strengthen digital governance oversight:** Uganda and Kenya should establish independent regulatory bodies for data management and internet governance, monitored by AU or regional technical experts, to prevent misuse of digital infrastructure for political control.
- **Institutional resilience:** Eritrea and neighbouring states should engage in IGAD-facilitated dialogues to reinforce multilateral frameworks, mitigating risks of unilateral action that could destabilize regional security.
- **Civic space protection:** Governments of Kenya, Tanzania, Eritrea and Uganda must commit to respecting basic human rights, including freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, while the AU and UN provide monitoring and mediation support.

Forward-looking scenario planning: Coordinated implementation of recommended electoral, digital, institutional, and civic measures may reinforce governance legitimacy, safeguard civic freedoms, and enhance regional cooperation. Failure to act risks entrenched authoritarian control, digital suppression, and spillover of political instability across the Greater Eastern Africa.

2.2 Conflict Escalation, Armed Violence & Security Fragmentation

The month witnessed intensified armed conflicts across multiple fronts in the Greater Eastern Africa. In Sudan, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) conducted large-scale drone strikes and massacres targeting civilians in Gezira and South Kordofan, killing hundreds, including children, and further destabilizing an already fragile humanitarian situation (UN News, 2025). South Sudan faces renewed stress on fragile security structures due to cross-border displacement and localized internal rivalries. In eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the M23 rebel group advanced toward the strategic town of Uvira, with mounting evidence of continued Rwandan backing despite the Washington peace accords signed on December 4th (Al Jazeera, 2025; Xinhua, 2025). Eritrea's withdrawal from IGAD exacerbates regional coordination challenges, reducing mediation capacity and heightening the risk of interstate tension with Ethiopia. Meanwhile, Russia delivered military equipment to Madagascar following the October coup, reinforcing militarization in politically unstable states (The Moscow Times, 2025). Collectively, these developments indicate a sharp increase in regional conflict spillover risks, weakening of peace architectures, and a growing humanitarian-security nexus that threatens stability across Greater Eastern Africa.

Foresight Recommendations

- **Enhance regional monitoring:** IGAD, AU, and UN regional offices should deploy rapid response teams and strengthen early-warning systems in Sudan, South Sudan, and eastern DRC to track conflict escalation and cross-border displacement.

- **Strengthen civilian protection:** Sudanese authorities, with UN and AU technical support, must establish protected humanitarian corridors, enforce no-fly zones over civilian areas, and investigate RSF atrocities to prevent further human rights violations.
- **Address proxy conflicts:** The AU and UN should engage Rwanda and DRC through high-level diplomatic channels to curb external support to M23 and enforce compliance with the Washington peace accords.
- **Mitigate militarization in fragile states:** Madagascar's transitional government should be encouraged, with international oversight, to adopt strict arms accountability measures, while Russia and other external suppliers are urged to ensure military transfers do not exacerbate internal instability.
- **Regional coordination and risk containment:** Countries across the greater Eastern Africa region, including Uganda and Kenya, must coordinate border security, intelligence sharing, and humanitarian relief operations to limit spillover and stabilize critical population centres.

Forward-looking scenario planning: Timely deployment of early-warning systems, civilian protection measures, proxy conflict management, and regional coordination mechanisms may contain conflict escalation, protect civilians, and preserve fragile security architectures. Failure to act risks entrenched proxy warfare, regional conflict spillovers, and deepening humanitarian crises across Greater Eastern Africa.

2.3 Digital Sovereignty, Technology Control & Information Power

The month witnessed an intensifying strategic contest over digital infrastructure and information control in the Greater Eastern Africa. Uganda's enforcement of military clearance for Starlink satellite imports demonstrates the securitization of internet access ahead of the national elections, raising concerns over restrictions on independent information flows and the potential for preemptive censorship of political dissent (Dawan Africa, 2025). In Kenya, the suspension of the \$2.5 billion US health aid agreement over data privacy concerns underscores the tensions between foreign assistance and national data sovereignty, as sensitive health data could be exposed to foreign actors without adequate legal safeguards (BBC, 2025; US State Department, 2025). These measures reflect a regional pattern in which states increasingly leverage digital and technological governance as tools of political control and strategic leverage. They also signal growing vulnerabilities to external influence, cyber-enabled coercion, and erosion of civic digital rights. The implications extend to election integrity, cross-border information flows, and the operational independence of regional technological systems, reinforcing the need for coordinated policy foresight to mitigate both domestic and interstate risks.

Foresight Recommendations

- **Strengthen regulatory oversight:** Uganda and Kenya should establish independent, multi-stakeholder agencies for digital and data governance, with technical support from the AU and regional cybersecurity experts, to prevent the politicization of technology.

- **Safeguard citizen access to communications:** Governments must ensure that satellite internet and digital services remain operational for civil, educational, and commercial purposes, avoiding information monopolization that could compromise political fairness.
- **Enhance cross-border digital cooperation:** IGAD and AU should create harmonized standards for data protection, satellite service regulation, and cybersecurity across member states to reduce unilateral control and potential conflicts over technological infrastructure.
- **Monitor foreign technological influence:** Susceptible countries across the greater Eastern Africa region should assess and transparently report on the role of external tech providers in domestic digital systems to prevent covert influence over critical information networks.

Forward-looking scenario planning: Timely adoption of robust digital governance, protection of citizen communication, regional data cooperation, and oversight of foreign technology may secure digital sovereignty, uphold civic rights, and preserve technology interoperability. Failure to act could entrench digital authoritarianism, enable electoral manipulation, and heighten geopolitical tensions in the region.

2.4 Humanitarian Stress, Civilian Protection & Climate-Linked Vulnerabilities

The month saw deepening humanitarian crises across the Greater Eastern Africa region, closely linked to escalating armed conflicts and state fragility. The drone strikes and massacres in Gezira and South Kordofan carried out by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan, killing over 100 civilians in targeted attacks on schools and hospitals, aggravated famine risks and undermined the already limited humanitarian access (UN News, 2025). The Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) experienced the rapid displacement of over 200,000 people as M23 rebels advanced toward Uvira, despite the Washington peace accords (Al Jazeera, 2025; Xinhua, 2025). South Sudan continues to grapple with fragile security structures, compounding cross-border population pressures and overstretching local relief mechanisms. These crises illustrate that armed conflict, governance breakdown, and climate-linked vulnerabilities are increasingly interwoven, creating a humanitarian-security nexus where population displacement, resource scarcity, and infrastructure disruption heighten regional instability. The provision of Russian arms to Madagascar post-coup adds a further layer of militarized risk, potentially destabilizing local relief operations and complicating the protection of civilians (The Moscow Times, 2025). Collectively, these developments underscore the urgent need for integrated, proactive regional interventions that address both immediate protection and structural vulnerability.

Foresight Recommendations

- **Rapid humanitarian mobilization:** UN OCHA, in coordination with AU and IGAD, should deploy emergency response teams to Sudan, South Sudan, and eastern DRC within 30 days to ensure civilian access to food, water, and shelter.

- **Protection of civilians:** National authorities, supported by UN and AU human rights monitors, must enforce secure zones around hospitals, schools, and IDP camps in Sudan, with strict adherence to international humanitarian law.
- **Cross-border displacement management:** Countries across the greater Eastern Africa region, should activate joint border monitoring and temporary shelter facilities, coordinated via IGAD and UNHCR, to mitigate spillover risks and prevent secondary crises.
- **Conflict-linked vulnerability mitigation:** UN and AU agencies should provide technical and financial support for early-warning systems that track climate and conflict-induced shocks affecting vulnerable populations, integrating satellite, drone, and ground reporting.
- **Arms control and militarization oversight:** International partners should press Madagascar's transitional government and external suppliers (e.g., Russia) to implement strict monitoring of military stockpiles, preventing escalation of armed violence that undermines humanitarian operations.

Forward-looking scenario planning: Adept coordination of humanitarian response, civilian protection measures, cross-border displacement management, and conflict-linked vulnerability mitigation may reduce civilian suffering, preserve relief access, and enhance regional resilience. Failure to act could deepen humanitarian crises, exacerbate displacement, and escalate instability across the region.

2.5 Diplomatic Realignments, Recognition Politics & Great-Power Positioning

The month witnessed intensified diplomatic maneuvering and recognition politics across Greater Eastern Africa, with strategic implications for regional stability and power dynamics. Israel's formal recognition of Somaliland as an independent sovereign state marked a historic shift, granting Israel a foothold on the Red Sea and signaling potential reconfigurations of maritime security and trade routes (Al Jazeera, 2025; Softpower, 2025). Somalia's strong condemnation of the action, supported by AU and EAC statements reaffirming territorial integrity, underscores the risk of contested sovereignty sparking broader interstate tension. Simultaneously, Burundi hosted the Fourth Continental Dialogue on Youth, Peace, and Security, reinforcing soft power diplomacy while highlighting the role of youth engagement in mitigating regional conflict risks (Xinhua, 2025). Seychelles deepened bilateral cooperation with Egypt, focusing on trade, tourism, and infrastructure, reflecting an emerging pattern of small-state partnerships as vehicles for economic resilience and strategic leverage (Seychelles MFA, 2025). Russia's establishment of a diplomatic mission in Comoros exemplifies the expansion of external influence in Indian Ocean geopolitics, potentially affecting maritime security, regional intelligence dynamics, and local governance (Business Insider Africa, 2025).

Foresight Recommendations

- **Mitigate sovereignty disputes:** Somalia, supported by AU and EAC diplomatic missions, should convene a high-level consultative meeting with Israel and Somaliland to clarify legal and operational boundaries, reducing the risk of interstate confrontation.

- **Strengthen multilateral oversight:** AU, in coordination with UN offices in the Horn of Africa, should initiate quarterly strategic reviews of external influence in the region, focusing on recognition disputes, military partnerships, and maritime access.
- **Promote strategic transparency:** Comoros and Seychelles should publicly disclose bilateral agreements with external powers (Russia, Egypt) to enhance predictability and reduce suspicions of proxy competition among neighboring states.
- **Enhance regional crisis response capacity:** IGAD and AU technical teams should develop scenario-based simulations for maritime and diplomatic flashpoints, ensuring rapid coordination to prevent escalation stemming from recognition or external influence disputes.

Forward-looking scenario planning: Prompt operationalization of sovereignty management, multilateral oversight, strategic transparency, and regional crisis response may stabilize recognition politics, safeguard maritime and trade corridors, and reduce the likelihood of proxy competition. Failure to act could trigger interstate friction, contested sovereignty crises, and increased external influence over small states' strategic decisions.

2.6 Economic, Trade & Infrastructure Security

The month saw strategic economic and infrastructure developments with security implications across the Greater Eastern Africa. The ongoing GERD dispute saw Egypt issue a stern warning to Ethiopia over unilateral dam operations, framing the situation as an existential threat to Nile water security and raising the risk of interstate tensions (The National News, 2025). In Seychelles, the government unveiled a new Cruise Ship Strategy alongside recognition as the Indian Ocean's Best Cruise Destination, reflecting efforts to strengthen economic resilience and diversify tourism infrastructure (Tourism.gov.sc, 2025). Collectively, these developments highlight that infrastructure, trade flows, and strategic resources are increasingly embedded in regional security calculations, with the potential for both opportunity and conflict depending on governance, regulatory transparency, and regional coordination.

Foresight Recommendations

- **Water infrastructure diplomacy:** Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan should engage in an AU-facilitated technical and legal mediation process to ensure equitable GERD operations, prevent water scarcity conflicts, and maintain Nile Basin stability.

- **Tourism sector resilience:** Seychelles, supported by AU and UNDP experts, should implement risk-informed infrastructure planning, integrating climate resilience and maritime security to protect economic gains.
- **Regional infrastructure coordination:** IGAD and the AU should convene periodic regional forums to monitor strategic infrastructure projects (energy, transport, water) and assess cross-border security implications.

Forward-looking scenario planning: Timely implementation of water infrastructure diplomacy, tourism sector resilience, aid governance oversight, and regional infrastructure coordination may safeguard strategic resources, strengthen regional economic stability, and mitigate conflict over critical infrastructure. Failure to act could escalate resource disputes, compromise economic investments, and heighten cross-border tensions.

3.0 Conclusion

December 2025 marks a critical inflexion point for Greater Eastern Africa, where governance fragility, escalating conflict, technological securitization, humanitarian distress, and shifting diplomatic alignments have converged into a deeply interconnected regional risk environment. Across political, security, digital, and economic domains, instability is no longer episodic but structural, driven by eroding state legitimacy, contested authority, and intensifying geopolitical competition that increasingly transcend national borders. The convergence of armed violence, shrinking civic and digital space, humanitarian emergencies, and strategic realignments underscore the weakening of traditional conflict-management mechanisms and heightens exposure to both internal fragmentation and external influence. Yet this moment also presents a narrow but consequential opportunity for recalibration. Strengthened multilateral engagement anchored in the AU, IGAD, and credible international partnerships remains essential to restoring institutional trust, safeguarding civilian and digital protections, and managing strategic competition through coordinated, rules-based approaches. Without timely and collective action, the region risks entrenching cycles of instability, authoritarian consolidation, and geopolitical fragmentation. With foresight-driven cooperation, principled diplomacy, and sustained investment in resilience, the Greater Eastern Africa region can still pivot toward stability, strategic autonomy, and durable peace in 2026 and beyond.

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