



# CLOSE-UPS

October 2024



*Close-ups* is a Med-Or monthly update. Gathering together the daily work of our situation room, *Close-ups* covers the main events of the Broader Mediterranean countries, offering to a wide audience, not only experts, a close and analytical look at the main issues that affect all the countries that Med-Or oversees on a daily basis. On our interactive map you can click on the single countries and their specific in-depth analyses.

# Indice

ALGERIA	1
MOROCCO	2
TUNISIA	3
LIBYA	4
EGYPT	5
GULF COUNTRIES	6
TURKIYE	7
SAHEL	8
HORN OF AFRICA	9
INDIA	10



# Algeria

Relations with France reached a new nadir as **Algeria reportedly excluded French wheat suppliers from its latest agricultural tender**. According to internal sources, Algerian buyers asked participants not to include French wheat in their proposals for a 50,000-ton shipment, while French companies – who feature in the ministerial list of approved suppliers – were not invited to take part in the tender. The exclusion of France, who ranks among Algeria’s traditional wheat suppliers, likely mirrors the breaking down of bilateral relations over the issue of Western Sahara. Last July, France officially expressed its support for Moroccan sovereignty over the region. This dealt a significant blow to Algeria, who is embroiled in a bitter rivalry with Morocco and supports the independentist guerrillas of the Polisario Front to thwart the kingdom’s control on the territory.

**Enmity between France and Algeria directly benefits Russia**, whose wheat exports to Algeria grew by 26% in the last five years. EU exports, meanwhile, suffered a 20% decrease. As the fifth global wheat importer and second agricultural market in Africa, Algeria seeks to diversify its suppliers and lessen supply shocks triggered by regional crises. Under this light, Algeria’s move is a direct blow to the French agricultural sector – already facing a historically poor harvest – and to EU exports to Algeria, of which France covers the lion’s share.

Algeria, however, also seeks to lessen its dependence on Russian military suppliers – accounting for 60% of overall military imports – by seeking new defence partnerships. To this end, **Algerian Chief of Staff Said Chengriha met in Rome with his Italian counterpart, Giuseppe Cavo Dragone, to discuss military cooperation**: the visit follows a 2023 meeting between Chengriha and Italian Defence minister Guido Crosetto. Back in Algiers, **Chengriha received delegates from Chinese electronics-cyber group ELINC**. Chengriha had already met the group’s representatives during his week-long visit to China in the summer of 2023, alongside delegates from CATIC (aeronautics), Poly Technologies (missiles and rocketry) and China Electronics Technology Group Corporation.

On the energy side, **Algeria and Niger agreed to cooperate in the exploration and development of their hydrocarbon sector**, as well as in refinement and trade of petroleum products. The deal is centred on the Kafra field in northern Niger, already a key dossier in the August meeting between Niger’s prime minister Ali Lamine Zeine and Algerian Energy minister Mohamed Arkab. The deal suggests a gradual thaw between Algeria and Niger, whose relations had plummeted following Abdourrahmane Tchiani’s overthrow of president Mohamed Bazoum in 2022. Points of contention include Niger’s public rebuff of Algeria’s mediation offer between Niamey and ECOWAS, the presence of Africa Corps operatives in the Sahel country and Tchiani’s decision to reopen Niger’s northern borders with Algeria, which had been closed by Bazoum in an effort to stem irregular migration. Niger has also grown visibly closer to Morocco, Algeria’s regional rival.



## Morocco

France and Morocco formalized their reconciliation on the backdrop of a **meeting in Rabat between king Mohamed VI and president Macron**. On the sidelines **the two leaders presided the signing of several agreements with a cumulative worth of over 10 billion dollars**: the deals (the full details of which have not yet been disclosed) feature the sale of 12 high-speed carriages to Morocco by French group Alstom, while energy champions Engie, EDF and TotalEnergies expanded their presence in the Moroccan renewables and hydrogen markets.

**Macron also reiterated his intention to increase French investments in the Western Sahara**. Key to the expansion of Moroccan influence between Europe, western Africa and the Sahel, control over the region is disputed between Morocco and Algeria, who provides financial and logistical backing to the Sahrawi militias of the Polisario Front. Last July, Macron abandoned a multi-decadal tradition of French neutrality on the issue to announce his support for Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. While aimed at re-establishing Franco-Moroccan cooperation, Macron's choice also reflects the failure of his attempted rapprochement with Algeria, underscored by Algerian president Tebboune's noted reluctance to answer invitations to Paris. Tebboune's visit, which should have reciprocated Macron's 2022 trip to Algiers, was finally annulled following Macron's July announcement.

Besides, taking Morocco's side has already offered some reward. A few days after Macron broke French equidistance, **Morocco awarded French companies Egis and Sistra the management of the Kenitra-Marrakech railway project**, itself part of a wider plan to connect the port of Casablanca to the southern capital of Agadir. The rapprochement will also likely **relaunch French commitment to build a high-power line between Casablanca and Dakhla**, the regional capital of Western Sahara and a key development hub in king Mohamed's plans. Shortly before the energy deals were inked with Engie and Total, **the king has also announced that Western Sahara's renewable energy capacity is set to double by 2030**.

Under this backdrop, **French investment in Western Sahara may allow Paris to bolster its residual influence between North Africa and its erstwhile partners in the Sahel**. Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso all broke long-standing ties to France in the last two years but see Western Sahara as a potential pathway towards regional markets. All three countries, alongside Chad, joined the Atlantic Initiative launched last December by king Mohamed, which aims to link the land-locked Sahel states to West African markets through a West Saharan trade corridor.

As Paris and Rabat patch up their differences, relations between Morocco and the EU face renewed strain. In early October, the European Court of Justice struck down an appeal by the European Commission and **declared that the Morocco-EU fishery and agriculture agreements must not include Western Sahara**. The pronouncement seals a long-standing dispute on the validity of accords first inked in 1998 between the kingdom and the Union, which the Court had deemed invalid in 2016 and again in 2018. In 2019 the Commission had then negotiated a new agreement with Morocco, which included stakeholders from Western Sahara to justify extending the provisions to the contested territory. The October appeal confirms the invalidity of this later deal, which the Court had first declared in 2021 on the basis that it did not ensure consent by the native Sahrawis of Western Sahara. Further agreements must cease within a year. The 2019 accords, whose renewal had been frozen pending the Court's decision, had expired in July 2023.

**Morocco and the EU had already clashed more than once in the last two years**, as Morocco had been involved in an inquest on corruption within the European Parliament and shortly thereafter criticized by Strasbourg for not ensuring sufficient freedom of press. Relations had then improved after EU Commissioner Oliver Varhely announced the unlocking of 2,1 billion euros in investments in the kingdom. In that occasion, Morocco and the EU had also inked a 500-million-euro set of agreements on immigration, agriculture, finance, justice, and welfare. As relations tense once again, both the EU Commission and Spain – who is the first beneficiary of the 2019 agreements – have showed caution, remarking their “firm intention” to keep cultivating strategic ties with Morocco.



# Tunisia

On October 7<sup>th</sup>, the High Independent Commission overseeing the Tunisian election (ISIE) **reconfirmed Kais Saied as president with over 89,2% of votes cast**. The landslide victory follows a tightly-controlled competition, with over 17 presidential hopefuls excluded from the race in favour of three candidates only – incumbent Kais Saied, his long-time supporter Zouhair Zaghmaoui (3,9%) and Ayachi Zammel from the Azimoun party (6,9%). Zammel, kept under custody during the elections, was sentenced shortly afterwards to a twelve-year reclusion for electoral fraud.

Upon this backdrop, **participation rates plummeted to an all-time low**, with over 70% of voters abstaining from the ballot. By contrast, Saied's first presidential bid in 2019 had won him 72% of votes with a 55% participation rate. According to estimates, seven million Tunisians (over almost ten million registered voters) did not cast their vote. After five years of growing authoritarianism and at the start of his second term, Saied's consensus seems markedly weaker.

As he takes the helm a second time around, Saied must face the task of narrowing Tunisia's gaping deficit while simultaneously containing strong inflationary pressures. As deteriorating economic conditions make it ever harder to secure foreign financing – and as the long-running negotiations over an IMF loan seem to have reached a final dead end – Saied is turning to domestic contributors to prop up Tunisia's fiscal balance. Tellingly, **the 2025 draft budget law features tax hikes for enterprises and private contributors, while domestic debt doubled to almost 8 billion dollars against 2 billion in foreign debt**.

Meanwhile, **the Tunisian Parliament is debating a law proposal that would limit Central Bank control over exchange and interest rates**. If approved, the law would allow the Tunisian Central Bank (CBT) to only set interest rates after consulting the government. The move has been backed by Saied, according to whom the Bank should not act as "a state within a state". The president, who already amended legislation to secure direct funding from the Bank, likely aims to force the CBT to lower interest rates and attract financing to plug Tunisia's 38-billion-dollar deficit. The CBT, however, had so far kept rates stable at 8% to keep inflation in check.

Energy cooperation between Tunisia and Italy continues apace. The Tunisian secretary of State, Ouail Chouchene, announced on the sidelines of the Cairo Sustainable Energy Week that **work on the Elmed undersea cable will begin in 2025, to be concluded by 2028**. Developed through partnership between Italian and Tunisian utilities Terna and Steg, the 600-MW, 200-km cable will connect Tunisia to Sicily and favour energy integration between Europe and North Africa. The 850-million-euro project is also financed by loans from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and from the World Bank.



# Libya

**Libya's latest institutional crisis seems to have subsided.** The House of Representatives, which acts as the de facto Parliament of eastern-based the Government of National Stability (GNS), has given its approval to the newly formed Board of Directors of the Libyan Central Bank. The board has been selected by the Bank's new governor, Naji Issa, whose appointment was jointly agreed by the House of Representatives, the Presidential Council (which acts as the head of state of both Libyan governments) and the High Council of State, currently serving as a parliament for the western-based Government of National Unity (GNU). **Issa's appointment**, which came at the tail end of a turbulent September, **brought the country's economic and financial apparatus back into function after more than a month of political deadlock.**

By endorsing the new board, **the House of Representatives also seems to relinquish its insistence over maintaining a controversial 20% tax on the exchange rate**, which House speaker Aguila Saleh had put into force (with the support of the Bank's previous governor, Sadiq al-Kabir) and which Issa had subsequently repealed after pressures by the GNU. Both Libyan governments have agreed that the new Central Bank governor should keep himself "away from politics". Issa's tenure therefore begins with a markedly cautious approach to fiscal and monetary policy.

Meanwhile, Italy and Libya strengthen their relations. **The two countries signed eight deals on the sidelines of the Italy-Libya Business Forum**, held in Tripoli and attended by prime ministers Meloni and Dabaiba (GNU). The deals include the resumption of Ita Airways flights to Libya and a new agreement for the construction of the Musaid-Ras Ajdir coastal road. The National Oil Corporation, Libya's energy champion, also announced **the resumption of onshore drilling by Eni** after civil war put a ten-year stop to the Italian's group activities in the country.

As Italy aims to consolidate economic cooperation, Türkiye's influence in Libya waxes. Chief supporter of the western GNU during the last civil conflict, Ankara is now emerging as a key negotiator in the cautious rapprochement between Tripoli and the eastern GNS. Upon this backdrop, **Saddam Haftar** – son of military chief and de facto GNS leader Khalifa Haftar, as well as prospective heir to the GNS-affiliated Libyan National Army – **met in Istanbul with Turkish minister of Defence Yasar Guler** to discuss military cooperation. On the sidelines of the Istanbul SAHA defence salon, moreover, **Saddam met with GNU minister of the Interior Imad Trabelsi**, who ranks as one of the most influential leaders in the western government.

Ankara consolidates – in parallel – its economic expansion in Libya. Saddam's Turkish visit was followed by the signing of new construction agreements between the Turkish Silahtaroglu Construction Company and Belqasim Haftar, to whom his father Khalifa entrusted the (unofficial) control of the eastern government's finances through the management of a Libyan Fund for reconstruction. In recent months, Ankara had already signed agreements for the infrastructure recovery of Derna, while, on the industrial side, the Turkish steel giant Tosyalı had signed – in July – an agreement with the Libya United Steel Company (SULB) for the construction in Benghazi of a direct reduction steel production plant, powered by green hydrogen and with an annual capacity of 8.1 million tons. In this context – a few days after the conclusion of the Italian-Libyan business forum – the GNU Ministry of Transport announced the reassignment of the contract for the reconstruction of Tripoli airport to a Turkish-Egyptian consortium. Until last September, the management of the works had been entrusted to the Italian joint venture Aeneas.



# Egypt

The conflict in Gaza has now spiraled to a point where regional diplomacy is unable to reverse it. Consequently, Egypt is focusing on partnerships outside the Middle East, driven by Al-Sisi's pragmatic vision and an improved economic situation compared to the previous year. Cairo seeks to leverage these new alliances to bolster its position on the international stage, fully aware of both the challenges and benefits involved.

During the BRICS meeting in New York, held alongside the 79th United Nations General Assembly, Egypt declined to sign the joint document addressing issues such as the Middle East conflict, the expansion of the bloc, and proposals for a common currency. Conceived as a show of unity among BRICS members in preparation for the Kazan summit, this meeting instead highlighted the divergences among members, especially between Egypt and Ethiopia. The decision of these two countries not to sign the document reflects tensions over Nile water management and certain opposition to the positions of Brazil, India, and South Africa, which seek support from new members for their aspirations to join the Security Council. In contrast, Egypt is aiming to represent Africa within the UN, and this discord led Brazilian Foreign Minister Vieira, who presided over the meeting, to postpone it.

While Egypt's partnership with BRICS still shows limitations in fulfilling Cairo's aspirations, its relationship with the United Arab Emirates appears increasingly solid. The recent visit of UAE President Mohammed Bin Zayed to Cairo highlights Egypt's appreciation for Emirati support in managing the currency crisis affecting the country. Together with Al-Sisi, the Emirati leader attended the inauguration of the Ras El Hekma construction site, where a luxury resort funded by Abu Dhabi is set to be built, under a 30-year concession worth \$35 billion. Despite the official photo opportunities, no statement was released following the meeting between Al-Sisi and Bin Zayed, signaling the sensitive nature of the topics discussed, including the crisis in Sudan, where Egypt supports Al-Burhan's army, while the UAE is accused of backing the RSF.

With the escalation of tensions in the Middle East and the confrontation between Tel Aviv and Tehran, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi visited Cairo. Following the meeting, Al-Sisi's office stated that the two leaders discussed the "need to halt regional escalation" and the intensification of efforts for a ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon. Relations between Egypt and Iran have seen a slow improvement in recent years, but Iran's hopes for a détente with Egypt, or the Arab world more broadly remain unfulfilled. Al-Sisi continues to view Iran's maneuvers in the Levant with suspicion, perceiving them as destabilizing as the Israeli offensive. Additionally, investments by Gulf countries in the Egyptian economy establish clear priorities for Cairo's diplomatic relations, suggesting that a rapprochement with Iran might be sacrificed in favor of ties with the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Lastly, the month concludes with rising tensions between Egypt and Russia due to delays in grain supplies. Following the BRICS summit in Kazan, Al-Sisi had to acknowledge a new delay in the record delivery of 430,000 tons of grain agreed upon last spring. The Russian Ministry of Agriculture did not comment on the delay, while the Russian Farmers Union attributed it to bureaucratic inefficiencies and misunderstandings with partners. This second delay within a year underscores Egypt's need to diversify its grain suppliers. Options under consideration include purchasing from Kazakhstan, with Emirati financial backing, or partially restoring supplies from Ukraine, whose Foreign Minister Sybiha visited Egypt just as news of the latest delays emerged.

## Gulf Countries

On 9 October, the Iranian authorities warned Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries that they had closed their airspace, stating that any violation would be considered unacceptable and would be met with a firm response from Iran. The Iranian warning came in the wake of the 1 October attack, in which Tehran fired some 200 ballistic missiles at Israel in response to the assassinations of Ismail Haniyeh and Hassan Nasrallah. The message is clear, and the priority is one: regional unity against Israel and maintaining regional stability. It is clear that any form of Gulf support for Tel Aviv against Tehran, be it the use of airspace or military bases, would be considered a hostile act and would receive an appropriate response,' an Iranian government source told The Time of Israel. The Iranian warning follows a GCC meeting in Qatar on 2 October, where Israeli operations in Lebanon were reviewed. It coincided with the 19th Asian Cooperation Dialogue, an intergovernmental forum that brings together several Asian countries to coordinate various international organizations. The meetings were also attended by Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, who, on his return from the General Assembly, warned that any further Israeli action aimed at directly hitting Tehran would be met with a harsh response.

On 22 October, the Saudi Minister of Defence, Prince Khalid Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz, visited Rome where he met his Italian counterpart, Guido Crosetto. In the presence of two large delegations, the ministers discussed the latest developments in the war in the Middle East and cooperation between their respective armed forces. The potential prospects for security and industrial cooperation between the two countries were highlighted, especially after the lifting of the ban on arms exports to Riyadh in June 2023. In this context, the Saudi Minister then met with the top management of the Italian defence industry, with whom he explored the possibilities of cooperation between the two countries. The Italian industry was represented by General Enzo Vecciarelli, adviser to the Ministry of Defence on industrial policy, Stefano Pontecorvo, president of Leonardo, Biagio Mazzotta, president of Fincantieri, and Enzo Benigni, president of the ELT Group.

Finally, it is reported that Saudi Arabia is preparing to abandon its informal target of USD 100 per barrel as a benchmark oil price. The move appears to signal Riyadh's resignation to a period of relatively low prices. According to the Financial Times, this would allow the kingdom to rebalance its recent oil policy and gain new market share that, when added to non-oil growth, could strengthen economic growth. The impact of the production cuts agreed by OPEC+ over the past two years has been mitigated by increased production from non-cartel members (US, Brazil, Canada).





# Turkiye

On 20 October 2024, the Turkish preacher Fetullah Gulen, first an ally and then a rival of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, died in exile in the United States. Gulen, whose health had been deteriorating for several years, was the founder and leader of the Gulenist movement, or FETÖ, which the Turkish government considers a terrorist organization. Ankara accused the movement of organizing the 2016 coup, which was followed by thousands of arrests of people linked to FETÖ.

Shortly after the organization was founded in the 1970s, Gülen transformed it into a political movement whose followers began to occupy prominent positions in the Turkish judicial and military apparatus. In the early stages, the movement's policies were in line with those of Türkiye's conservative forces, which welcomed FETÖ's activities. When Erdoğan became prime minister in 2003, he managed to establish a cooperative relationship with Gülen, which helped reduce the army's influence in the country's political-institutional system. Since then, however, several episodes have undermined the relationship between Erdoğan's party (AKP) and FETÖ: the case of the Mavi Marmara boat, which Gülen criticized as a risky manoeuvre, and the Gezi Park episode, in which Gülen took a neutral stance, are significant.

Finally, the 2016 coup d'état, an episode that was followed by tens of thousands of arrests of public sector workers and for which Gulen himself was accused. His presence in the United States had thus become a source of friction between Ankara and Washington, which had always refused to extradite him. Gulen's death could be a reason for an improvement in US-Turkish relations, although they are already on the upswing, especially after Erdoğan's recent reappointment as the country's leader. Finally, it is worth mentioning the disagreements over the leadership of the Gülenist organisation, which, according to Turkish media, controls assets worth \$150-200 billion. The main contenders for the organization's summit would be Cevdet Turkeyolu, the leader of the group in Pennsylvania, and Abdullah Aymaz, who heads FETÖ in Europe.

On 23 October 2024, three people broke into the headquarters of the Turkish Aerospace Industries (TUSAS) in northern Ankara, killing five people and injuring 22. The attackers were killed by police, who later released images of the attack.

The Turkish interior minister, Ali Yerlikaya, claimed it was a well-planned terrorist attack. Two days later, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) claimed responsibility for the attack, calling it 'an act of sacrifice carried out by a team from the Immortal Battalion'. However, the Turkish government had already blamed the Kurdish military wing for the attack before claiming responsibility. The attack came a day after Erdoğan's ally and leader of the ultra-nationalist MHP party, Devlet Bahçeli, made a surprise appeal to PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan to give up armed struggle.

## Sahel

Revolutionary fervor and rhetoric are not enough to solve the financial problems AES member countries are facing in the Sahel. For this reason, the transitional governments of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso are exploring alternative sources of financing. Mali and Burkina Faso, in particular, are gauging the possibility of joining the BRICS and have signaled this intention to Russia. Malian Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop expressed Bamako's interest in joining the bloc of emerging economies in an interview with the Russian agency "Novosti," though he noted that no formal application has been submitted. Later, Burkina Faso's Prime Minister, Kyelem de Tambela, expressed a similar intent to the Russian ambassador to Ouagadougou, Igor Martynov, stating that joining BRICS could help "counter the dominance of the dollar and euro" and promote "fairer international trade." However, these declarations appear more as expressions of hope, or perhaps excessive optimism, regarding BRICS, primarily driven by AES countries' desire for increased international prestige and strengthened cooperation, particularly in financing, a goal that may remain unmet.

At the same time, AES countries are adopting alternative financing strategies, such as exerting pressure on mining companies. A case in point is the temporary detention of some employees of the Canadian mining company Barrick Gold. Malian authorities did not publicly disclose reasons for the detention, which was resolved through confidential negotiations between the government and the company. Barrick Gold had previously criticized the new mining code introduced by the transitional government, allowing the state to claim up to 30% of the revenues from mining projects. Barrick Gold holds 80% of the companies that operate the Loulo-Gounkoto mining complex, near the Senegalese border, and had already reported divergences with the government. The Barrick Gold case illustrates Mali's need to secure liquidity, a need shared by the governments of Niger and Burkina Faso, which are also dealing with debts incurred by Bamako to fund basic services and pay for the Africa Corps (formerly the Wagner Group) services.

Chad, on the other hand, has taken a smoother path toward stabilizing public debt with the support of the UAE. The government of N'Djamena secured a loan of 300 billion CFA francs (about \$500 million) from the Abu Dhabi Development Fund. Chadian President Mahamat Déby announced the deal after a trip to the UAE, where he met President Mohammed bin Zayed. This loan, one of the largest in Chad's history, represents 15% of the national budget for 2024 and comes with particularly favorable terms, including a 1% interest rate and a 14-year duration. This financing underscores Chad's strategic importance to the UAE and rewards the debt-reduction strategy pursued by Déby's government, centered on joining the G20's Common Framework, which has already led to a significant reduction in N'Djamena's public debt. It remains to be seen how effectively the Chadian government will utilize this loan. N'Djamena's plan is ambitious, with key infrastructure development and improvements to basic services, but the risks of corruption and administrative inefficiencies could undermine long-term success.

On the front of armed insurgency, this month saw an interview with Hamadoun Kouffa, one of the leaders of JNIM and head of the Macina katiba, a brigade of the al-Qaeda-linked group mainly composed of Peul members. Kouffa's remarks highlight significant shifts in insurgency dynamics over the past year. First, the crackdown by the transitional government and the Wagner Group has driven parts of the population to support JNIM, particularly in central and northern Mali. Kouffa also indicated that JNIM is expanding its actions towards West African coastal countries, notably Ghana, Togo, and Benin. Kouffa stated that JNIM is open to negotiations with Sahel governments and "anyone who wishes," clarifying, however, that the application of Sharia remains a fundamental requirement for the group. His statements reflect the worsening of the insurgency, now unfolding on two fronts: in the center, where jihadist groups are fighting the Bamako government and Russian mercenaries, and in the north, where Tuareg armed groups have already repelled two government offensives.

## Horn of Africa

Kenya continues to face political instability exacerbated by the public debt crisis. Economically, the government seems close to finalizing an agreement with the United Arab Emirates for a \$1.5 billion loan, with an expected interest rate of around 8.2%, lower than the current yields on Kenyan sovereign bonds. However, the agreement's details may change as negotiations progress, and both parties have remained silent on the specifics. Nairobi's decision to seek support from the UAE is also linked to delays from the International Monetary Fund, which has yet to release around \$600 million in aid. The IMF postponed this funding, expressing doubts about recent government measures amid fears of further public protests. This situation is part of a complex financial landscape in which Kenya struggles to access funding, especially after its sovereign bonds were downgraded to "junk" by major rating agencies. An IMF spokesperson stated, "Discussions are ongoing regarding the policies and reforms the Kenyan authorities are considering to address the current economic and fiscal challenges," without commenting on Kenya's negotiations with specific bilateral creditors.

Meanwhile, Kenya's political scene was shaken by the impeachment case of Vice President Rigathi Gachagua. After Gachagua's removal by Parliament, a Kenyan court nullified the decree appointing his successor, Interior Secretary Kithure Kindiki, following an appeal against the removal. Gachagua also claimed to have survived two poisoning attempts: one on August 30, when undercover agents allegedly tried to taint his food, and another on September 3, in an incident that involved the Kikuyu council of elders. He further lamented the withdrawal of his personal security and the security detail at his residences, accusing President William Ruto of ordering the removal. Gachagua emphasized the political nature of the charges against him (corruption and serious constitutional violations), claiming that the impeachment was executed right after the assassination attempts. President Ruto has not commented on these allegations, likely to avoid compromising sensitive ongoing negotiations with the opposition regarding a possible cabinet reshuffle.

On a regional level, significant developments in the security sector have emerged. In South Sudan, President Salva Kiir replaced the head of the intelligence services, General Akol Koor Kuc, a prominent and controversial figure within his circle. Kuc, who led the National Security Service (NSS) since the country's independence in 2011, has been appointed governor of Warrap State, one of South Sudan's most unstable areas and Kiir's birthplace. The leadership of the NSS has been transferred to General Akec Tong Aleu, previously serving in the Ministry of Defense. The sudden removal of Kuc has sparked speculation about the reasons behind it: some believe it may be due to internal power struggles, while others suggest Kuc may be preparing to succeed the 73-year-old Kiir, whose health has been the subject of considerable speculation.

Meanwhile, Ethiopia and the United Kingdom's intelligence agencies announced plans to strengthen their cooperation on security matters, with a focus on regional stability and counter-terrorism efforts. The statement was issued by Ethiopia's National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) following a visit to Addis Ababa by Richard Peter Moore, director of MI6, leading a high-level delegation. Discussions focused on regional and international issues, including Red Sea security, terrorism threats, and human trafficking. NISS Deputy Director Sisay Tola condemned destabilizing propaganda attempts related to Ethiopia's initiative for Red Sea access and emphasized that the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) should serve as a catalyst for cooperation rather than fueling conflict. Moore's visit aligns with London's plan to reassert its influence in the region: the Labour government aims to strengthen navigation security in the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, in response to Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, through active cooperation with African coastal states.

# India

On the international front, October began with a meeting in Washington between Indian Foreign Minister Jaishankar and US Secretary of State Blinken, that, ten days after the QUAD meeting, reaffirmed the commitment of the US and India to deepen bilateral relations, to coordinate closely on regional and global challenges (Ukraine, Middle East, Indo-Pacific), and to advance cooperation on critical and emerging technologies, including strategic technology sectors, space, semiconductors and clean energy.

And it was again Jaishankar who attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's summit in Islamabad on 15 October, nine years after the last visit of a foreign secretary to Pakistan. India has declared its intention to remain an active member of the SCO and to participate in the activities and initiatives promoted by the organization. Again, this is an expression of the 'multipolarity' of Delhi's foreign policy. From this perspective, Jaishankar's presence in Islamabad should not be interpreted as evidence of détente with its neighbors, but rather as India's interest in maintaining a strong position within the SCO to counter Chinese dominance in the forum. No bilateral meetings were held between Jaishankar and his Pakistani counterpart, Ishaq Dar, but the minister attended the welcome reception hosted by Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and held official talks with Chinese Premier Li Qiang.

At the end of the month, Prime Minister Modi addressed the 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan, the first meeting of the group after the inclusion of the UAE, Iran, Egypt, and Ethiopia. On the eve of the summit, Modi held bilateral meetings with the Russian leader and the Iranian President. With Putin, Modi reaffirmed India's desire to see peace in Ukraine, and Delhi's readiness to help bring about a truce with Kiev. With Pezeshkian he called for de-escalation of tensions and protection of civilians in the Middle East. Of interest was the first official meeting between Modi and Xi Jinping since 2019, which marked the resumption of high-level ties between the two Asian giants. The two sides announced an agreement on the modalities of patrolling along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh between India and China, an important step towards disengagement of deployed troops and resolution of issues that arose in 2020. India's position within the BRICS takes on a peculiar aspect, given its positioning in recent years as a bridge-power between the West and the Global South, critical of the legacy of colonialism on a rhetorical level but in practice unaligned in favour of US adversaries. It is within the BRICS that India is most strongly competing with China for the leadership role of the Global South.

In recent weeks, the diplomatic crisis between India and Canada has escalated, culminating in the expulsion of six Indian diplomats following accusations against India. These accusations stem from the assassination, in front of a Sikh temple in British Columbia, of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian separatist, and alleged intimidation campaigns targeting the Sikh community in Canada. During mid-October testimony in a public inquiry, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau accused Delhi of non-cooperation and exacerbating tensions that led to the mutual expulsion of senior diplomats. India has dismissed these accusations as "ridiculous." According to India's Ministry of External Affairs, Canadian authorities failed to present any evidence supporting the serious allegations against India and its diplomats, and their behavior was deemed "condescending," which is expected to have significant repercussions on bilateral relations.

Two bilateral visits to Delhi by two European heads of state took place at the end of October: German Chancellor Olaf Scholtz, who participated with Modi in the 7th Intergovernmental Consultations and the 18th Asia Pacific Conference of German Business, and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, who with the Indian leader inaugurated the final assembly line of the C295 transport aircraft in Gujarat, the flagship of the 'Make in India' program born from the collaboration between Airbus-CASA and Tata Advanced Systems.

Domestically, on October 8, the results of the elections held in Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana were announced. The case of Jammu and Kashmir is particularly complex: formerly the only Muslim-majority state in the Indian federation, it was stripped of its autonomy, separated from Ladakh, and downgraded to the status of a federal territory in 2019. After redrawing electoral boundaries and increasing the influence of Hindu-majority areas, the Modi government hoped to secure a victory for the BJP in this unstable and contested border region, which had last voted to elect local representatives in 2014. However, the alliance between the National Conference and Congress emerged victorious. In the state of Haryana, on the other hand, predictions of a significant electoral shift in favor of Congress were proven wrong by Narendra Modi's BJP, which was re-elected for a third consecutive term to govern the state.