
63rd Edition

PRESS REVIEW

Security & Defence



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1.1. Security Council condemns the M23 offensive in the DRC

Since January 2025, the security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has steadily deteriorated as the M23 rebel group intensifies its offensives across North and South Kivu. In response to this escalating crisis, the United Nations Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, unanimously adopted Resolution 2773 (2025) on 21 February.

This robust resolution condemns the M23 offensive and mandates that the group immediately cease hostilities, withdraw from all occupied territories, and dismantle the illegal parallel administrations it has established.

Furthermore, the resolution explicitly calls on the Rwandan Defence Forces to terminate their military support for M23 and to withdraw from Congolese territory without preconditions. This demand has sparked considerable debate, with several Council members emphasising that Rwanda's involvement is a principal factor in the region's destabilisation. Additionally, the text criticises the support provided by certain Congolese forces to armed groups—particularly the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR)—and insists on the urgent neutralisation of these entities to restore peace.

The Council further demanded that all parties facilitate immediate, unconditional humanitarian access to vulnerable populations and urged the reopening of temporary corridors in North and South Kivu. Drafted at the initiative of France, this resolution sends a clear message: there is no military solution to this conflict. In this context, regional mediation initiatives and the stabilisation efforts of MONUSCO remain crucial to bringing Kinshasa and Kigali back to the negotiating table, ultimately paving the way for a lasting resolution to the crisis.



By Amzina DAOUSSA DEBY

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1.2. In South Soudan, clashes are reigniting tensions in the north of the country

On February 14 and 15, violent clashes between the South Sudanese government army and armed youth groups hit Upper Nile State, in northern South Sudan.

These clashes, which claimed the lives of several civilians and injured a peacekeeper, illustrate the ongoing tensions that have plagued the country since its independence in 2011.



Amid deeply entrenched political and ethnic rivalries in the country, clashes erupted between the South Sudanese army (SSPDF) and groups of young fighters in Nasir County, a district of Upper Nile State where distrust of the government remains high. Furthermore, beyond this local confrontation, these clashes are part of a broader conflict between current President Salva Kiir and his long-time rival, Riek Machar, leader of the opposition Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLA/IO). According to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (Minuss), clashes have also occurred in other regions of the country, notably in Western Equatoria, between the national army and opposition forces still loyal to Vice President Riek Machar.

Thus, despite the 2018 peace agreement that ended the civil war (2013-2018) between the government army and Riek Machar's forces, as well as the power-sharing arrangement that placed them in the roles of President and Vice-President, tensions remain high. In Upper Nile, where the majority of the population belongs to the Nuer ethnic group, which is aligned with Machar, the recent deployment of government troops and allied militias has heightened fears of targeted repression.

The international community, for its part, urges all parties to prioritize dialogue and implement lasting solutions to prevent a new humanitarian crisis.

By Martha RAFFAELLI

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2.1. Dismissal of the US Chief of Staff

On Friday, February 21, 2025, US President Donald Trump announced the departure of General CQ Brown Jr., then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the US military. On the social network Truth, Trump thanked General Brown for his 40 years of service. General Dan Caine, should be called to replace him. If this appointment is confirmed by the Senate (in which the Republicans have a majority of 53 out of 100 senators), he would be the first US military officer to be recalled from retirement to obtain the post of chief of staff.



Defence Minister Pete Hegseth had announced his willingness to fight against any military leader “associated with any kind of politics that is woke [...], pro-diversity, equality and inclusion.” This new “purge” involved Admiral Lisa Franchetti, the first woman to lead the US Navy, and the number two of the U.S. Air Force, James Slife. They were appointed by former President Joe Biden; their replacements are the continuity of the Trump administration, where personal loyalty appears to take precedence over hierarchical logic.

The introduction of Pete Hegseth as Secretary of Defense had raised concerns; the vote of Vice President J.D. Vance had been required to break a tie in the Senate. The former Fox News presenter is criticized for his lack of experience. He is, however, one of the main interlocutors of European nations within NATO and affirmed lately that Ukraine could not recover its pre-conflict borders while rejecting the possibility of organizing a peacekeeping mission within NATO.

Since the inauguration of President Donald Trump, the new US administration has demonstrated a tendency to view economic and commercial matters through the prism of political imperatives, and the removal of the American Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff could be analyzed as part of this continuity.

By Bastien POULIQUEN

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2.2. The CPAC brought together far-right figures from around the world

From 19 to 22 February 2025, the CPAC (Conservative Political Action Conference) took place in Maryland, gathering members of the American Conservative Party.

The conference opened with a speech by Elon Musk, an emblematic figure of the pro-Trump MAGA (Make America Great Again) movement, followed by an address from Vice President J.D. Vance.



This event has now far surpassed the national borders of the United States, aiming to create a transatlantic network of far-right and populist political figures, seeking to coordinate and strategise actions among identity-based right-wing movements worldwide. As a result, numerous representatives of European national-populist right-wing parties made appearances at the conference.

Many high-profile European officials attended the three-day event. Among them were Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, along with Slovakian and Macedonian Prime Ministers Robert Fico and Hristijan Mickoski. Although Viktor Orbán was absent, his camp was well represented. British politicians Nigel Farage and Liz Truss also made appearances. Other notable figures from South America included Argentine President Javier Milei and Eduardo Bolsonaro, son of former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro.

The gathering drew attention for certain moments, particularly Javier Milei's gift to Elon Musk—a "bureaucracy chainsaw" symbolising the ongoing cuts within the US federal administration. However, the most controversial speech came from Steve Bannon, who ended his address with what resembled a Nazi salute while chanting Donald Trump's campaign slogan, "Fight, fight, fight." This gesture sparked criticism even among attendees, leading Jordan Bardella, leader of France's far-right Rassemblement National, to cancel his planned speech.

By Elina RIBEIRO DA COSTA

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3.1. A new partnership between the Cook Islands and China displeases New Zealand

On Saturday, 16 February 2025, the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, Mark Brown, announced the signing of a "strategic partnership" with China.

He spent five days in China to meet Premier Li Qiang in Harbin, located in Heilongjiang province in the north of the country.



This partnership between the Cook Islands and China focuses particularly on trade, investment, oceanography, infrastructure, and transport. However, the specific details are expected to be clarified in the future. China continues to expand its diplomatic, economic, and military influence in the Pacific Ocean, a crucial region for its mineral resources and the opportunities it provides for international trade. This partnership with the Cook Islands complements a series of agreements with other nations, including the Solomon Islands and Kiribati. The archipelago has authorised three companies to explore the seabed for minerals such as cobalt and nickel but has insisted that it will wait for an environmental assessment before approving any extraction. Meanwhile, New Zealand has stated that it is considering withdrawing its support for an international ban on deep-sea mining, seeing it as a potential financial windfall.

The Cook Islands are seeking to broaden and diversify their partnerships with other countries in an effort to reduce New Zealand's influence. Since 1965, the archipelago has had a "free association" agreement with New Zealand, which provides budgetary support and assistance with foreign affairs and defence. As a result, Cook Islanders hold New Zealand passports and benefit from its social security and education systems while maintaining a degree of autonomy. However, in December 2024, the Cook Islands floated the idea of introducing their own passport for residents, a proposal rejected by New Zealand, highlighting the challenges the small archipelago faces in its pursuit of greater independence.

By Elina RIBEIRO DA COSTA

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3.2. Aircraft carrier: China would aim for parity with the United States by 2049

Concerns are growing in the United States about the capabilities of the Chinese navy, which is engaged in a rapid production of warships (one cruiser, three destroyers, three frigates, and two submarines in 2024), at a pace far surpassing that of American shipyards (which produced two destroyers and one frigate the same year).



China seems determined to catch up with its rival, especially in the highly strategic area of aircraft carriers. President Xi Jinping has stated his goal to have at least twelve such ships by 2049, aiming for parity with the United States. The production of these vessels could accelerate with the opening of a second shipyard dedicated to their construction, with one at Dalian for conventional carriers and another at Jiangnan for nuclear-powered ones. This expansion aligns with Xi Jinping's plans to produce five new carriers per decade starting in 2025.

This development raises more concern for the United States, as even at numerical parity, China's concentrated forces in the South China Sea and Pacific would pose a strategic advantage, whereas the U.S. Navy is more dispersed. The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has only had aircraft carriers since 2013, with the commissioning of the Liaoning, based on a Ukrainian Kuznetsov-class hull. Currently, China has two active aircraft carriers (CV-16 Liaoning and CV-17 Shandong), a third in trials (CV-18 Fujian with electromagnetic catapults), and a fourth under construction.

By Melwan ELAKAD

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4.1. Ukraine: The US turnaround breaks up the Western bloc

When he ran for presidency, Donald Trump made the promise that he would find a solution in “24 hours” for the Ukrainian conflict. However, difficulty through negotiation and disagreements reveals the subject complexity.

The United States, main Ukraine’s support with 64 billion dollars military support and 50 billion for the country’s reconstruction, changed their strategy under the Second Trump Administration.



During the Munich Conference the 14th of February, Vice-President James David Vance surprised US’s allies when he designated the abandonment of democratic values from Europe as the greatest threat rather than China and Russia. The next day, Keith Kellogg, US Special Envoy for Ukraine and Russia, declared that Europe will not take part in the peace negotiation, despite its 70 billion dollars for military support and 62 billion for reconstruction of Ukraine.

The US diplomatic offensive was followed by the resumption of diplomatic relations with Russia during a meeting in Riyadh the 18th February. Alongside it, Emmanuel Macron called in several European leaders in order to show the EU unity against the US and Russia. Yet, the informal summit of the 17th at the Elysée, which gathered France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain along with NATO and EU did not enable to find a consensus, especially about troops deployment in Ukraine after a potential cease-fire.

Finally, divided, western countries, which seem to be numerous against an isolated enemy, do not successfully find a consensus about an end. At the end of the Cold War, a comparison between the triumph of western powers and this of the Roman empire was possible. Nowadays, the Westerners are still Romans but trapped in the Battle of Cannae : being numerous, which was at the time an asset, weakens the western bloc without Russia having to demand concessions from it.

By Sami Sudici BELHADJ-SALAH

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4.2 Operation Steadfast Dart 2025: NATO's successful exercise

From February 10 to 21, 2025, NATO conducted Steadfast Dart 2025 exercise, the Alliance's largest military training exercise of the year, designed to test the effectiveness of the Allied Reaction Force (ARF).

The exercise involved almost 10,000 soldiers from nine Allied countries, deployed in Romania, Bulgaria and Greece.



The aim of the exercise was to test the rapid deployment of the ARF, designed to intervene within 10 days after a threat. Forces had to respond to a simulated invasion, involving live fire and trench warfare exercises. The deployment also underlined the importance of cooperation between allies to ensure effective common defense.

The UK played a central role, leading the operation and sending 2,600 troops and 730 vehicles. Spain also made a significant contribution, with almost 3,000 troops. At the same time, Greece played a key role in logistical testing, in particular by making available its port of Alexandroupolis. This strategic port facilitated the rapid deployment of troops and equipment to areas of operation, demonstrating the importance of logistics infrastructures in crisis management. In addition to land operations, the exercise included air and sea deployments, testing interoperability between different types of military forces and the logistical capacity to support such operations.

The results of the exercise were largely positive, highlighting the high responsiveness of the troops and effective coordination between the various participating countries. The tests also validated the integration of new technologies, such as cyber defense and advanced communications systems. The rapid deployment of troops and the smooth running of logistical exercises showed that NATO is ready to respond to a threat on its eastern flank.

By Lucie SCARNIERE

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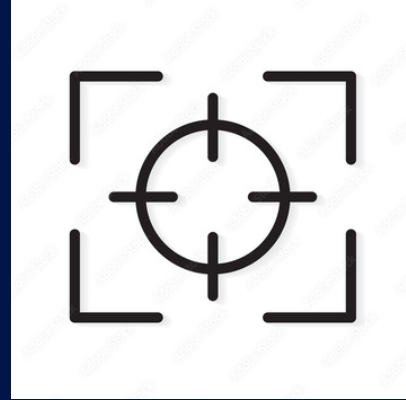
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5.1. French military counterintelligence warns about interference on the defense industry

The French defense industry, already weakened by current geopolitical tensions, is facing an increasing number of threats aimed at destabilizing it. The military counter-intelligence agency (DRSD - Direction of Intelligence and Security of Defense) has recently warned about the evolution of foreign interference strategies, particularly in the context of France's support for Ukraine. Three main forms of threats have been highlighted : physical (kinetic) attacks, cyberattacks, and informational interference.



First, physical intrusions into companies within the Defense Industrial and Technological Base (BITD) have intensified. These acts, including burglaries and attempted approaches, seem to be linked to foreign actors. Sébastien Lecornu, the Minister of the Armed Forces, emphasised their specific aim : obtaining sensitive information. Next, cyberattacks represent another growing threat. They particularly target small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within the BITD, which are less prepared and more vulnerable to malicious actors seeking to penetrate defense systems.

Finally, the DRSD has also highlighted the increasing use of informational interference. Campaigns are using media, advertising, and social networks to spread hostile narratives about the French BITD, particularly those involved in supporting Ukraine. « Ecosystems of disinformation » are deployed - fueled by biased articles amplified by influencers and media (notably Russian) such as Sputnik Africa and Pravda - aiming to tarnish the reputation of defense companies.

However, this is not all. A complementary phenomenon has also been observed: manipulation by trade unions. The DRSD mentions the existence of union leaflets distributing anti-capitalist and anti-war messages, intended to mobilise employees against their employers. These actions can disrupt production, incite strikes, or damage the companies' reputation, while benefiting strategic competitors. It is also noteworthy that acts of kinetic sabotage - such as Molotov cocktail throws or drone flyovers - further amplify this destabilisation threat.

By Julien DEBIDOUR LAZZARINI

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