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71st Edition

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# PRESS REVIEW

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## Security & Defence

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# ASSOCIATION PANTHÉON- SORBONNE SÉCURITÉ- DÉFENSE

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# Security & Defence

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## 1.1. Standardisation of the use of drones armed by the TAGs in the Sahel

The use of drones by terrorist armed groups (TAGs) in the Sahel is expanding rapidly, signalling a troubling shift in their doctrine of employment within asymmetric warfare. Once limited to intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) or propaganda (via aerial footage), these unmanned aerial systems (UAS) are now being deployed offensively – for dropping improvised explosive devices (IEDs), conducting kamikaze attacks using improvised FPV drones, and executing targeted psychological operations. Financially and technically accessible, these systems allow TAGs to partially offset their aerial inferiority compared to state forces.



A clear pattern of trans-regional technological diffusion has emerged: drones used by Sahelian TAGs show striking similarities to those seen in Syria or Yemen, reflecting a dynamic transfer of know-how among jihadist affiliates and state sponsors. In the Sahel, groups such as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) or Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) deploy drones in multiple operational contexts – targeted strikes, convoy surveillance, or influence campaigns.

On the cognitive battlefield, drones have become powerful tools of psychological warfare. Their presence on social media reshapes jihadist narratives by speaking directly to younger audiences in a modernised visual language. This new form of staging aims to portray technological superiority and operational professionalism, reinforcing the perception of power and potential recruitment appeal.

In response, Sahelian states are struggling to keep pace. A lack of capacity in electronic warfare, signal jamming, and doctrinal adaptation to drone threats exposes defence and security forces to serious vulnerabilities. The emergence of specialised drone units within TAGs suggests a lasting tactical shift, where control over low-altitude airspace – and, especially, the cognitive domain – will become central to the hybrid conflicts of the 21st century.

By Julien DEBIDOUR LAZZARINI

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## 1.2. Senegal : Evolution of the national security policy

In November 2024, the President of Senegal, Bassirou Diomaye Faye, elected in 2024, announced in an interview with AFP the end of the French military presence.

This decision came after France left Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger and before France left Chad in January 2025.



President Faye justifies this decision with the ambition to diversify security partners and to place France on an equal footing as the other security partners. The Senegalese authorities also want to reassure, as the Chadian authorities were: the handover of the existing French military bases does not mean the end of the cooperation between France and Senegal within the security and intelligence services issues. A seminar is planned for the month of June to define the evolution of the cooperation between both countries, and some members of the French government will take part in it.

Alongside it, Senegal tries to diversify its partners regarding security issues. Despite that, the United States is still a reliable partner for Senegal, which regularly provides financial support via the United States Foreign Military Financing programme and also because of the holding of the African Lion and Obangame Express exercises in May 2025, respectively, to improve the interoperability of armed forces and to fight against piracy and illegal fishing. fragile budgetary situation and the freezing of a financial aid of 1.8 billion dollars in October 2024 from the IMF, Senegal entered into an arms purchase contract with Turkey in November 2024 for 317 million euros, which includes 30 light armoured vehicles, Otokar Cobra, two transport aircraft and a maintenance service for the Bayraktar TB2 drones, which Senegal already has.

By Sami Sudici BELHADJ-SALAH

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## 2.1. G7 Summit in Kananaskis : Sectoral advances, Fragmented unity

From the 15th to the 17th of June 2025, the meeting between the heads of state happened in the context of the G7 summit, an annual summit which gathers France, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Germany, Italy and Japan.

When the 2025 year has been affected by a deterioration of the international geopolitical landscape, G7 country members missed an opportunity to show their unity.



The G7 summit of Kananaskis could first come to a successful conclusion with several joint declarations on the fight against transnational repression, migrant traffic and also about the use of AI. An action plan regarding critical minerals has been announced. It aims to reinforce the chain of values with production diversification and incoming investments, particularly in the context of the Compact with Africa initiative, started by the G20 in 2017, which aims to make African countries more attractive to private investors, international organisations and countries in exchange for reforms.

However, the summit has been marked twice by the United States. First, the issue of the price ceiling of the Russian oil barrel has been tackled. Currently, the price is at 60 dollars. This ceiling has been applied since December 2022 by the G7 and defines a price limit that companies have to apply if they want to conduct their economic activities within G7 country members. During the summit, the United States used their veto against the decrease of this ceiling, pushing it up to 45 dollars.

Then, President Trump stood out, leaving the summit at the end of the first day. He left the Mexican President Claudia Scheinbaum and President Zelenski without a dialogue, respectively on trade policy with the US and new sanctions against Russia.

By Sami Sudici BELHADJ-SALAH

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- Le Monde : "Donald Trump quitte précipitamment un G7 percuté par les conflits au Proche-Orient et en Ukraine, et s'en prend à Emmanuel Macron", 17/06/2025 ;
- Les Echos : "Trump torpille le sommet du G7 et attaque le multilatéralisme", 17/06/2025 ;
- Le Temps : "Le G7, un club qui sombre dans l'insignifiance", 22/06/2025.





## 2.2. American Strikes in Iran

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On June 20, 2025, the United States launched a series of targeted airstrikes on three major Iranian nuclear sites: Fordow, Natanz, and Esfahan. This operation, coordinated with Israel but unilaterally executed by Washington, marks a turning point in U.S. strategy toward nuclear deterrence in the Middle East. According to the Pentagon, the strikes destroyed or damaged nearly 60% of Iran's known uranium enrichment capacity, delaying its nuclear program by an estimated 2 to 3 years.



The operation employed AGM-183A ARRW hypersonic missiles and RQ-180 stealth drones. The objective was to prevent Tehran from reaching the critical threshold of 90% uranium enrichment, although no public evidence has confirmed that this threshold was imminent. The U.S. State Department justified the attack by citing an increasing threat to Israel and regional stability, as Iran was expanding its military presence in Lebanon and Syria.

In retaliation, Iran launched several cyberattacks on U.S. energy infrastructure in Texas and targeted the Al-Udeid base in Qatar, injuring six American soldiers. Meanwhile, Russia and China condemned the strikes at the United Nations Security Council, labeling them a violation of international law, a unilateral escalation, and a "dangerous precedent."

Domestically, the move bolstered President Trump's image of strength just months before the midterm elections, but it also drew criticism from Congress for lacking legislative authorization. The European Union, through France and Germany, voiced deep concern over the risk of a full-scale regional war.

These strikes redefine the American red lines and position the U.S. as a unilateral actor in managing nuclear threats. However, they also trigger a new cycle of instability in the Middle East, with long-term strategic consequences for energy security, regional alliances, and international law.

By Elina RIBEIRO DA COSTA

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-*Courrier International* : "Les États-Unis entrent en guerre contre l'Iran", 22/06/2025 ;

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## 3.1. Operation Sindoor: A Tactical Victory, an Informational Defeat Impacting France

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The growing potential for manipulating information now offers the means to offset—or even reverse—a military defeat. The fog of war has always allowed for disinformation or deception operations, with the mere belief in defeat sometimes being enough to cause it.



The Russians, for instance, regarded Austerlitz as a defeat despite 14% losses, and Eylau as inconclusive with 32% losses. From the Tet Offensive in Vietnam—a military victory for the United States exploited by North Vietnam—to the first battle of Grozny or the battle of Kyiv, where the Chechens and then the Ukrainians quickly gained informational superiority.

India, during its Sindoor operation against Pakistan, sometimes seems to forget this—something not without consequences for France. Although its enemy had been warned of the strikes, the Indian military, notably using Rafales, managed to hit all its targets in a single wave out of the three planned. Some targets were even “overkill” (hit multiple times), with 4 or 5 aircraft lost out of the 60 engaged, compared to 10 out of 40 on the Pakistani side. Despite this clear success, an informational offensive conducted by both Pakistan and China (with Chinese fighter jets used on the Pakistani side), blending official statements and troll accounts on social media, managed to spread the narrative of a Pakistani army having outperformed the Rafale, thwarting it and even managing to destroy some.

This narrative thrived in the silence of India, which, by only responding the next day, failed to make itself heard—allowing the Rafale to fall into disrepute. This harm to France was further amplified by Turkey, whose Greek adversary uses the French jet.

By Melwan ELAKAD

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–Opex 360 : “Pour la force aérienne indienne, le Rafale a pleinement tenu ses promesses lors de l’opération Sindoor”, 26/06/2025 ;

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## 3.2. The second China-Central Asia Summit was held in Astana

On June 17, 2025, the second China-Central Asia Summit was held in Astana, bringing together the presidents of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. This event marked a significant step in strengthening political, economic, and security ties. The discussions resulted in the signing of the Astana Declaration and a treaty of "eternal good neighborliness, friendship, and cooperation." These agreements emphasize the participants' commitment to mutual sovereignty and the promotion of peaceful, beneficial cooperation.



Economically, trade between China and Central Asia saw notable growth, exceeding \$100 billion in 2024. The summit highlighted initiatives such as creating a "Digital Corridor" through fiber-optic lines, developing industrial and logistics clusters, and promoting green mining. China also announced \$208 million in aid to support these projects.

Security issues were also addressed, with a shared commitment to combating terrorism, separatism, extremism, transnational crime, and cybercrime. The countries agreed to strengthen information exchange and security cooperation mechanisms. Finally, the summit led to the creation of three China-Central Asia cooperation centers focusing on poverty reduction, educational exchanges, and desertification prevention. These initiatives aim to deepen human and cultural ties across the region.

In conclusion, the summit solidified China-Central Asia relations, establishing a roadmap for enhanced cooperation across various fields while affirming a shared commitment to a multipolar world order based on mutual respect.

By Elina RIBEIRO DA COSTA

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## 4.1. Strategic recalibration of NATO Defence posture at the Hague

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The 2025 NATO Summit held in The Hague constituted a watershed moment in Euro-Atlantic security architecture. For the first time, member states adopted a binding target of allocating 5% of their GDP to defence by 2035. This figure, divided into 3.5% for kinetic and technological capabilities and 1.5% for resilience, cyber defence, logistics, and strategic infrastructure, reflects a dramatic elevation of collective ambition.



Indeed, the increase is not merely quantitative—it is doctrinal. It signals a shift from deterrence-by-punishment to deterrence-by-denial, particularly as hybrid threats, cyber intrusions, and grey zone warfare grow in complexity. Therefore, NATO's posture must be simultaneously proactive, distributed, and interoperable across domains. Furthermore, this strategy aligns with the “total defence mindset” promoted by Secretary-General Mark Rutte, encouraging dual-use innovations and enhanced C4ISR (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance) networks across allies. President Trump's return, while polarising, catalysed this recalibration. His endorsement of the Iranian strikes and push for equitable burden-sharing reasserted American primacy. Yet, several member states, notably Spain, voiced concerns over fiscal constraints and public opinion backlash. Thus, while political alignment appears strong on paper, strategic cohesion may face resistance at the national implementation level. Moreover, Ukraine's presence—though not translating into membership—was institutionally significant. The country secured deeper integration in NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence, expanded training programmes, and logistical support to match NATO standards. Discussions also advanced regarding defence-industrial coordination, stockpile rotation, and digital sovereignty to ensure readiness in multi-domain theatres.

However, challenges remain. The success of this summit depends not only on declarations but also on sustained defence investments, synchronised procurement cycles, threat-informed innovation, and clear accountability mechanisms. Consequently, the Hague Summit must be understood not as a culmination but as a strategic departure point toward a more integrated, credible, and resilient NATO in a contested world.

By Amzina DAOUSSA DEBY

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- Guardian* : “Without dignity, leaders fell at Trump's feet”, 2025 ;
- Reuters* : “Europe placates Trump with NATO pledges it can ill afford”, 2025 ;
- Time Magazine* : “Key takeaways from the NATO 2025 summit”, 2025.

## 4.2. Russia : Projects for the Arctic

From March 26th to the 27th 2025, the 6th International Arctic Forum took place in Murmansk, a city located near the Barents Sea. The event brought together 1,300 guests, including company delegates and political representatives.



During this event, Vladimir Putin delivered a speech and emphasised the historical ties that bind Russia and the Arctic, the sovereignty of Russia in the Arctic, and the importance of development objectives, particularly the necessity to modernise the Arctic coastline and improve connectivity with the hinterland with railways. Regarding military affairs, Russia expressed concerns about NATO's artillery live-fire exercises held in November 2024 in the Arctic, with the participation of Finland and Sweden.

Regarding sea transport, Vladimir Putin insisted on the fact that the Northern Sea Route can be considered to be a trustworthy alternative compared to the traditional routes passing through Malacca to connect Europe to the Far East. He also noted that the maritime freight volumes went from 4 million tonnes in 2014 to 38 million tonnes in 2024. Thus, to ensure the passage of merchant ships through the Arctic, Russia aims to expand its icebreaker fleet, whose most recent series is from 2020 with the 22220 Project, a series of seven new icebreakers of the Arktika class, which are constructed between 2020 and 2030. In this respect, Russia considerably outpaces the other countries with its fleet of around 50 icebreakers in addition to four nuclear-powered Project 22220 icebreakers, a unique situation in the world.

Finally, alongside these announcements, Russia also plans to establish a fund, which will be dedicated to investments in the Arctic, and is seeking alternative partners to those in the Arctic Council, an intergovernmental organisation paralysed since 2022.

By Sami Sudici BELHADJ-SALAH

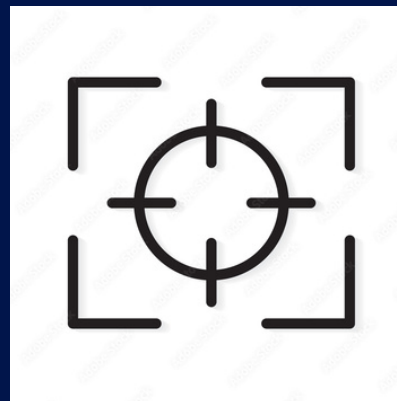
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## 5.1. Russian information offensive: mutation of narratives and anchoring in the field of perceptions

Since 2022, Russia has been conducting a multidimensional offensive in the information domain, running parallel to its kinetic military operations in Ukraine. This strategy is rooted in a broader framework of so-called «hybrid warfare», aimed at shaping perceptions, undermining the internal cohesion of targeted societies – primarily Western and especially European – and advancing narratives that legitimise Russian actions.



This influence campaign relies on a decentralised, fluid, and constantly evolving apparatus that mobilises both technological tools and human networks. On the European front, the objective is to erode public support for Ukraine, fracture Western unity, and discredit democratic institutions. Influence operations such as Doppelgänger and Matriochka rely on media cloning, manipulation of social imagery, and the deployment of fake avatars to inject pro-Russian content into the European informational ecosystem. This intentional blurring of truth and falsehood fosters confusion, ideological polarisation, reduced attention spans, and the «cognitive weakness» of public opinion. In Africa, Russia's strategy is based on a hybrid model combining decolonial narratives (especially anti-French sentiment), local associative networks, and digital information mechanisms. The African Initiative agency epitomises this shift toward rooted influence. By promoting anti-Western narratives, valorising Russo-African partnerships, and adapting media content to local formats, it contributes to shaping a political imaginary in which an autonomous Global South stands in opposition to an imperialist West. The use of AI-generated content, combined with search engine optimisation tactics, signals a move toward an automated and mimetic influence apparatus.

Overall, this strategy does not seek mass persuasion but rather diffuse destabilisation: to disorient, fragment, and amplify dissensus. It operates less by imposing a singular truth than by gradually eroding the collective ability to produce and recognise shared meaning and knowledge. It is, above all, a war of perceptions rather than a war of opinion.

By Julien DEBIDOUR LAZZARINI

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- Ministère des Armées : "African Initiative : au cœur de la stratégie d'influence russe en Afrique", 27/06/2025 ;
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