
57th Edition

PRESS REVIEW

Security & Defence



ASSOCIATION PANTHÉON- SORBONNE SÉCURITÉ- DÉFENSE

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1.1. End of an era in defence cooperation between Chad and France

On November 28, 2024, Chad officially announced the end of its defence cooperation agreements with France, marking a historic breaking point in an alliance that has shaped regional security for decades.

This move comes amid rising tensions between Paris and its African partners, further exacerbated by the forced withdrawals of French troops from Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger in recent years.



According to Chad's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abderaman Koulamallah, this decision reflects Chad's evolution and "maturity" as a sovereign state, although France is still considered a key partner. The terms of this break, which include the gradual departure of the approximately 1,000 French soldiers stationed in N'Djamena, will be discussed in line with the revised 2019 defence agreement. This decision carries dual significance: it was announced on the 66th anniversary of Chad's proclamation as a republic, and it fits into a regional dynamic of reaffirming national sovereignties.

Senegal, while in a less confrontational stance, is also reportedly reassessing its military cooperation with Paris, highlighting a broader disengagement of former colonial powers. In the meaning time, the end of these traditional partnerships raises questions about the future of French influence in Africa. As emerging powers like Turkey, Russia, and China move in to fill the void, the strategic priorities are being redefined in an increasingly sovereign and multipolar Africa.

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- RFI : "Le Tchad annonce rompre ses accords de coopération de défense avec la France", 29/11/2024.



1.2. Launch of Exercise Crocodile Lift 2024 between the Nigerian and French navies

The Crocodile Lift 2024 exercise, launched on November 22 at the naval base in Apapa, Lagos, marks a significant milestone in military cooperation between the Nigerian Navy and the French Navy. This strategic partnership aims to enhance amphibious warfare capabilities, crucial in countering maritime threats in the Gulf of Guinea. The three-day exercise simulates amphibious operations in collaboration with French forces, including the deployment of the helicopter carrier Dixmude, a Mistral-class ship, as well as helicopters and special forces.



Rear Admiral Shehu Gombe, head of the Naval Doctrine Command, emphasized that the exercise is part of a broader strategy to improve maritime security, especially in combating piracy and oil theft, which are major issues affecting the regional economy. In addition to simulating amphibious operations, the exercise aims to strengthen regional cooperation and promote an African solution to cross-border challenges. France's participation, through the provision of matériel and personnel, underscores the importance of international partnerships for regional stability.

This exercise follows the Grand African Nemo exercise, also organized in partnership with France, and highlights the Nigerian Navy's commitment to safeguarding a secure maritime environment and contributing to regional prosperity. In the future, these joint exercises could become a regular platform for enhancing Africa's maritime defense capabilities and extend cooperation to other countries in the region, creating a Pan-African maritime security network to address growing transnational threats.

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- Defense Web : "Exercice Crocodile Lift underway in Nigeria", 25/11/2024 ;
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2.1. Sino-Russian veto at the UN suspends the future of the Kenyan mission in Haiti

Russia and China recently vetoed a resolution aimed at transforming the Kenyan-led mission in Haiti into a United Nations peacekeeping operation. Proposed by the United States and Ecuador, the resolution sought to strengthen international responses to the growing gang violence in Haiti, where gangs now control over 80% of Port-au-Prince. Haiti is also facing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. The resolution aimed to secure stable, long-term funding for the mission, which has been under-resourced and financially unsupported.



The United States, the mission's primary donor, has already contributed \$300 million in humanitarian aid over the past three years and proposed an additional \$200 million, contingent on congressional approval. Washington argued that turning the mission into a UN peacekeeping operation would offer a coordinated, multilateral approach to the crisis.

China and Russia's vetoes stemmed from several concerns. Both nations contended that a UN peacekeeping mission would be inappropriate given Haiti's deep political instability and the government's inability to govern effectively. They also highlighted the need for the Kenyan-led mission to achieve full operational capacity before transitioning to a UN mandate. Moreover, skepticism over the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations in protracted crises, as well as the perceived failure of past interventions in Haiti, influenced their stance.

Despite efforts to address these concerns by amending the resolution and removing direct references to a peacekeeping transition, consensus could not be reached. Nevertheless, Kenya has reaffirmed its commitment to the mission, despite facing both financial and political challenges.

This stalemate underscores the complexities of international responses to Haiti's crisis, with geopolitical divisions at the UN hindering progress as the country's humanitarian needs continue to worsen.

Sources:

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- Security Council report : "Haiti: Briefing and Consultations", 19/11/2024 ;
- Reuters : "UN mulls Haiti peacekeeping force as gangs ramp up warfare", 21/11/2024 ;
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2.2. Tensions rising in Haiti after the escape of the gang leader "Barbecue"

On Thursday, November 21, 2024, special units of the Haitian National Police (PNH) launched an assault on Bas Delmas, a neighborhood controlled by Jimmy "Barbecue" Chérizier, a notorious gang leader and former police officer. Despite an intense armed confrontation involving the SWAT, CIMO, and the PNH Intervention Group (GIPNH), Chérizier managed to escape capture. Among his lieutenants killed were "Ti Chinay" and "Ti Dyab," known for their criminal activities, including hijacking trucks and extortion.



This operation, though significant, highlights the structural limitations of the PNH, which is under-equipped to face increasingly well-armed and organized gangs. In response, there has been a growing rise in vigilance movements such as "Bwa Kale," which mobilize citizens to protect their neighborhoods. While these self-defense groups address the collapse of state institutions, their growing empowerment raises concerns about potential violent oversteps and the evolution into new criminal structures.

At the same time, the intensification of clashes between gangs, self-defense groups, and law enforcement only exacerbates the humanitarian crisis. Famine threatens nearly 50% of the population, while the UN has evacuated part of its staff due to escalating insecurity. Ultimately, the failure to capture "Barbecue" underscores a troubling dynamic: the inability to neutralize key figures in organized crime could further entrench criminal networks, making the country's stabilization even more uncertain. A comprehensive reform of the PNH's operational capabilities is urgently needed, alongside a legal framework to regulate self-defense groups.

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- Haïti Libre : "Haïti - FLASH : Importante opération policières au bas Delmas, «Barbecue» réussi à s'échapper", 23/11/2024 ;
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3.1. France takes command of NMI mission in Iraq

On September 27, 2024, Baghdad and Washington announced the conclusion of Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), a ten-year US-led international coalition effort to defeat the Islamic State's (Daesh) self-proclaimed caliphate across Iraq and Syria. The coalition, composed of approximately 30 countries, will continue to support Iraqi forces through bilateral security partnerships, following the example of the strategic treaty signed between Paris and Baghdad in January 2023.



The withdrawal of coalition forces from certain Iraqi bases is set to be completed by September 1, 2025. However, military operations in Syria will persist until September 1, 2026, to ensure Daesh does not regain strength.

Since 2018, NATO has been deploying a mission (NMI) in Iraq aimed at “strengthening Iraqi institutions and security forces,” enabling them to “prevent the return of Daesh and combat terrorism autonomously.” Command of this mission, currently held by the Netherlands, is set to be transferred to France, as announced by General Thierry Burkhard, the French Army Chief of Staff, on September 25 during a hearing at the French National Assembly.

He stated, “In Iraq, we are conducting Operation Chammal as part of Operation Inherent Resolve, a coalition operation led by the United States. The primary goal is to combat Daesh’s resurgence. OIR is ending at the request of the Iraqis, who wish to acknowledge the decisive step taken in the fight against the terrorist threat posed by Daesh.” He further added, “NATO’s mission in Iraq will continue, with France assuming command next year.”

This transition prompts questions about the capabilities France will deploy, in collaboration with NATO members who contribute several hundred military and civilian advisors, alongside support elements. The future of this mission will be crucial in maintaining stability and preventing the resurgence of Daesh in the region.

Sources:

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- France Info : “La coalition internationale contre l’Etat islamique en Irak prendra fin en 2025”, 28/09/2024.



3.2. Taiwan seeks to strengthen its international defence partnerships

On Monday, 25th November 2024, Taiwan reported the detection of a Chinese balloon in its Air Defence Identification Zone, accompanied by twelve fighter jets and seven warships. This incident was repeated on 28th November. With the threat from China escalating since October 2024, the new Chinese president has sought to reaffirm his country's international defence alliances.



In response, Taiwan has deployed fighter jets, ships, and missile defence systems for military exercises. On 30th November, President Lai Ching-te will embark on his first international tour since his election. He has announced plans to visit the Marshall Islands, Palau, and Tuvalu—three Pacific microstates. This tour will enable Taiwan's president to reinforce Taiwan's alliances and demonstrate his commitment to bolstering defence partnerships, securing territorial waters, and safeguarding airspace. Taiwan's Foreign Minister, Lin Chia-lung, had previously visited the European Union on 20th November 2024 to secure support from its member states.

The United States play a crucial role in this renewal of partnerships. As part of his tour, the Taiwanese president will visit Hawaii and Guam. Furthermore, two days ago, a U.S. surveillance aircraft flew over the Taiwan Strait, underscoring the United States' strong support for Taiwan, its primary defence partner. Additionally, in a meeting with Joe Biden on 16th November, Xi Jinping urged the U.S. not to “cross the red line” and to scale back its support for Taiwan.

Consequently, China's actions and the movements of the United States underline President Lai's policy to reinforce Taiwan's defence alliances amid the rising tensions in the South China Sea and the ongoing challenges surrounding its sovereignty.

Sources:

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- Le Figaro : “Taïwan : Xi Jinping appelle les États-Unis à ne pas franchir la « ligne rouge »”, 17/11/2024 ;
- Le Monde : “Taïwan dit avoir détecté un ballon chinois dans sa zone de défense aérienne”, 28/11/2024 ;
- RFI : “Un avion de surveillance américain survole le détroit de Taïwan, Pékin déploie des forces militaires”, 26/11/2024 ;
- RFI : “Lin Chia-lung, le chef de la diplomatie de Taïwan passe par le Parlement européen”, 20/11/2024.



4.1. Support for Ukraine at the heart of the German parliamentary election debates

Ahead of the legislative elections on 23 February 2025, the SPD (Social Democratic Party) faces internal divisions in selecting a candidate. Many party members have called for Chancellor Olaf Scholz's immediate replacement, favouring the current Defence Minister and the most popular political figure in Germany, Boris Pistorius. However, Scholz was confirmed as the SPD's candidate on 25 November.



Beyond the electoral race, this debate has highlighted the SPD's stance on German support for Ukraine. Boris Pistorius, known for his strong commitment to Ukraine, finds himself isolated within a party where Scholz has led with a "prudent" approach to the conflict.

On 29 November, former Polish Chief of Staff, Rajmund Andrzejczak, expressed scepticism about Germany's position in an interview with Le Figaro: "I find it difficult to understand [...] that a country like Germany could consider giving long-range German systems to Ukraine as a direct danger to Berlin." Meanwhile, Friedrich Merz, the CDU (Christian Democratic Union of Germany) candidate, criticised Scholz for failing to deliver on the promised "Zeitenwende" (change of era) in a column for Le Monde, though he reaffirmed his support for Kyiv.

The German Greens, members of the former "tricolour" coalition, also claim compatibility with traditional right-wing views on the issue. In the event of a disappointing performance by the SPD (which is currently only 3 points ahead of their ecologist rivals), the Ukrainian question could play a pivotal role in shaping the new coalition government. This division within Germany's major political parties underscores the ongoing debate over the country's foreign policy priorities and its role in the Ukraine conflict.

Sources:

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- Le Monde : "Allemagne : Olaf Scholz lance sa campagne en défendant sa voie « prudente » sur l'Ukraine", 25/11/2024 ;
- Le Figaro : "L'ancien chef d'État-major de l'armée polonaise au Figaro: «Si les États-Unis échouent à défendre l'Ukraine, les Chinois attaqueront Taïwan»", 29/11/2024.



4.2 The British Army begins its restructuring with the demobilisation of two ships

Keir Starmer, elected Prime Minister on 5 July 2024, announced plans for a comprehensive overhaul of the British Army, which he claims the Conservatives have left in a "sorry state." However, this will be no easy task for him.



The British Army faces several pressing issues. First, its equipment is aging. For instance, Defence Secretary John Healey ordered the demobilisation of transport ships HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark, along with the early decommissioning of WatchKeeper drones, Puma, and Chinook helicopters. Replacing these assets will be a significant challenge.

Secondly, a £17 billion funding shortfall has been identified by the National Audit Office (NAO) for military equipment purchases through 2030. This gap is compounded by the government's ongoing budgetary difficulties, including a public deficit of 5.1% of GDP. At the same time, the army must allocate substantial funds to pay and bonuses in a bid to address the severe loyalty issues it faces—losing almost 300 soldiers each month.

The new Prime Minister's challenge, therefore, is to secure the necessary funding to maintain the British Army's capabilities, particularly in a tense geopolitical climate. Starmer has set a target to increase the share of GDP allocated to defence from 2.2% to 2.5%. While this is a step in the right direction, the country's economic struggles may hinder his ability to meet this goal. The situation is complex, and time is of the essence.

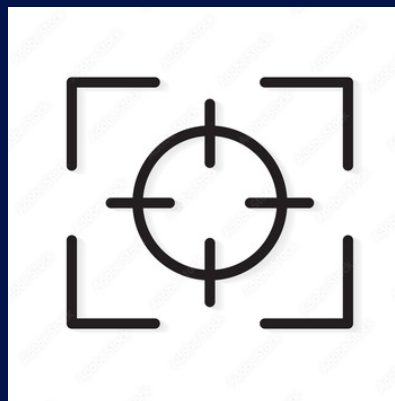
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5.1. Espionage, sabotage, and cyberattacks in Russia's operations beyond Ukraine

Since 2014, Russia has escalated its covert operations in Western countries, deploying a range of hybrid strategies that had been quietly developed over the years. These actions are part of a broader effort to destabilise states that oppose Russia's strategic interests, all while avoiding direct military conflict. The complexity and asymmetry of these operations highlight Moscow's geopolitical ambitions and its ability to adapt to various sanctions—economic, financial, and legal. At the same time, these operations aim to circumvent the West's attempts to isolate Russia on the global stage.



Russia's extensive intelligence services—such as the FSB (internal security), SVR (foreign intelligence), and GRU (military intelligence)—have been instrumental in exploiting vulnerabilities within Western democracies. Espionage tactics, such as the use of kompromat, have been revived to ensnare foreign officials. Many of these infiltrations, particularly in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, have involved agents working under diplomatic cover or assumed identities. Alongside traditional espionage, Russia has also run influence campaigns on social media, exacerbating social-political divisions and undermining trust in national institutions.

Another key aspect of Russia's hybrid warfare strategy is the sabotage of critical infrastructure. Incidents such as the Nord Stream pipeline attack, disruptions of underwater cables, and joint Sino-Russian manoeuvres in the Baltic Sea highlight Russia's—and China's—efforts to weaken European energy security.

In the cyber realm, Russia continues to target critical sectors, including energy, finance, and defence systems. Its objectives are clear: to disrupt operations, steal sensitive data, and deploy malware.

These actions, which are often hard to directly attribute, encompass both kinetic and non-kinetic methods. They aim to sow doubt, polarise public opinion, and test the resolve of Western allies.

Sources:

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- RTL : "Cyberattaque, sabotage, ingérence... La guerre hybride de la Russie dans les pays d'Europe de l'Est et en Afrique", 29/11/2024 ;
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