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French intelligence in Africa: a series of failures



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Introduction

France has traditionally been considered one of the leading intelligence powers in the world. However, in recent years, French intelligence, in particular the General Directorate for External Security (DGSE), has suffered a series of serious failures that have led to a weakening of French influence in Africa.

Africa is a continent of strategic importance to France. The continent is home to a number of France's former colonies, and France has a long history of involvement in Africa. France also has a significant economic interest in Africa, with trade and investment ties that are worth billions of dollars.

French influence in Africa has traditionally centered on countries that were part of the French Empire. These countries include Algeria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Seychelles, Togo, Tunisia, and Uganda.

These countries share historical, cultural, and linguistic ties with France. French is the official language in most of these countries, and it is widely used in education, culture, and politics.

In recent years, French influence in Africa has spread to other countries that were not part of the French Empire - Ethiopia, Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa. This is because France is looking to expand its influence in the

region in response to the growing influence of China and Russia.

France continues to play an important role in many former colonies in Africa. France provides financial aid to these countries, military assistance, and support in international organizations.

The French intelligence agency DGSE has a significant presence in countries where France has influence in Africa. The DGSE is involved in intelligence gathering, counterintelligence, and undercover operations.

The DGSE has an extensive network of agents and operatives in countries that were part of the French Empire. These agents work to gather information on political processes, security, and economic opportunities. The DGSE also engages in counterintelligence to protect French interests from foreign threats.

In countries that were not part of the French Empire, the DGSE has a more limited presence. However, the DGSE also works in these countries to gather information on potential threats to French interests, such as terrorism and organized crime.

Since 2017, some of France's former colonies in Africa have experienced coups d'état or revolutions. These events have been a major setback for French influence in the region.

Failed operations in Mali, Chad and Nigeria

One of the most notable DGSE failures was the failed operation in Mali in 2021. France had been a major player in Mali for many years, helping the country's government fight Islamist insurgents. However, in 2021, Malian President Bah N'Daw was overthrown in a military coup. The new military government, led by Colonel Assimi Goïta, refused to cooperate with France and began to develop relations with Russia.

The DGSE was unable to predict the coup in Mali and was not prepared for its consequences. This allowed Russia to expand its influence in the country and undermine France's position.

Another DGSE failure was the failed operation in Chad in 2021. In that year, Chadian President Idriss Déby Itno was killed in an attack by Islamist insurgents. The new Chadian president, Idriss Déby Itno Jr., the son of the deceased president, called for the French army to leave the country.

The DGSE was unable to persuade Chad to remain an ally of France. This allowed Islamist insurgents to strengthen their position in Chad and undermine France's position in the region.

In recent years, the DGSE has also suffered a series of failures in Nigeria. In 2021, a French intelligence officer was arrested in Nigeria on suspicion of espionage. In 2022, the DGSE was unable to prevent the kidnapping of hostages from the French embassy in Nigeria.

The DGSE also failed to prevent military coups in other African countries in recent years, including Sudan (2019), Madagascar (2019), Central African Republic (2020), Guinea (2020), Burkina Faso (2021), Ethiopia (2022) and Guinea-Bissau (2022). In each case, the DGSE was aware of growing discontent among the population, but it failed to take effective measures to prevent the coups. They have emboldened other countries to challenge France's position in the region.

Coups in Niger and Gabon in 2023

In 2023, France suffered two more major defeats in Africa.

In July 2023, a military coup occurred in Niger, resulting in the overthrow of President Mohamed Bazoum. According to French media reports, the DGSE had information about the impending coup, but was unable to take effective measures to prevent it. This was due, in part, to the DGSE's inability to persuade President Bazoum of the need to take measures to strengthen the country's security.

As a result of the coup, Bazoum was overthrown, and power in Niger passed to the National Council for the Restoration of Democracy (CNRD). The CNRD stated that Bazoum's overthrow was caused by his inability to deal with Islamist insurgents.

In August 2023, a military coup occurred in Gabon, resulting in the overthrow of President Ali Bongo Ondimba. The coup was led by a group of military officers who were dissatisfied with the results of the recent presidential election. The coup leaders declared that they had ended the "corrupt regime" of Bongo Ondimba.

After all these coups in Sudan, Madagascar, Central African Republic, Mali, Chad, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Niger and Gabon, the Governments of those countries arrested some French nationals who were in those countries. The arrests were part of the new governments' investigations into suspected espionage. According to French media reports (we confirm this information), the detainees included DGSE agents working under diplomatic cover, French journalists and NGO workers.

France protested the arrests of its nationals. The French authorities demanded that the Governments release the detainees and provide them with consular assistance. As a result of negotiations between the authorities of France

and those countries, the detained French nationals were released but deported.

The arrests of French citizens in Gabon are yet another sign of the weakening of French influence in Africa.

The failures of the DGSE in Africa have had a number of negative implications for France. They have led to a weakening of French influence in the region, as other countries, such as Russia, have stepped in to fill the vacuum left by France. The failures have also damaged

the reputation of the DGSE and raised questions about its effectiveness.

Let's summarize:

The DGSE's failures in Africa are a serious concern for France. They have led to a weakening of French influence in the region and have damaged the reputation of the DGSE. France needs to address these failures if it wants to maintain its position as a major power in Africa.

French interest in Africa

France had significant political influence in Sudan, Madagascar, the Central African Republic, Mali, Chad, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Niger, and Gabon. These countries are former French colonies, and France played a major role in their politics.

France used its political influence in these countries to promote its economic interests and to protect its strategic interests in the region. For example, France advocated for the continuation of the military operation in Mali, despite criticism from some African countries.

French political influence in these countries took several forms. First, France provided financial assistance to these countries. Second, France supported these countries in international organizations, such as the United Nations. Third, France trained personnel for these countries.

As a result of this influence, these countries often voted in the United Nations in France's interests. For example, in 2019, Mali, Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria voted for a resolution condemning Russia's actions in Syria.

However, it is important to note that France's influence in these countries is gradually waning. This is due to a number of factors, including the growing economic and political influence of China and other countries in Africa,

as well as growing dissatisfaction among the populations of these countries with French presence.

France has significant economic interests in Sudan, Madagascar, the Central African Republic, Mali, Chad, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Niger, and Gabon. France is the largest investor in Africa, and French companies own assets worth over €1 trillion.

Trade: France is the largest (or one of the largest) trading partner of Sudan, Madagascar, the Central African Republic, Mali, Chad, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Niger, and Gabon. The volume of trade between France and these countries is around €12.5 billion per year. France exports goods worth around €9 billion to these countries, and imports goods worth around €5.4 billion from them.

Investment: France has significant economic interests in these nine African countries. France is the largest trading partner of these countries (or one of the largest), and French companies have invested around €195 billion in them. These investments are concentrated in the mining, agriculture, and energy sectors.

Here are some specific examples of France's economic interests in these countries:

Mining: French companies own large gold, uranium, oil, and gas deposits in these countries.

Agriculture: French companies own large agricultural land and agricultural enterprises in these countries.

Energy: French companies own large energy assets, such as power plants and networks, in these countries.

France uses its economic interests in these countries to promote its political and strategic interests. France seeks to maintain stability and security in these countries, as well as promote its values of democracy and human rights.

The headquarters of the world's largest mining company, Societe Generale, is located in France. This company owns large gold and uranium deposits in Mali, Chad, and Niger.

The French company TotalEnergies is the largest producer of oil and gas in Niger and Gabon.

The French company Bouygues is the largest construction company in Mali, Chad, and Niger.

The French company Air France-KLM is the largest airline in Mali, Chad, and Niger.

Let's summarize:

France's political and economic interests in Africa are important to its national security and prosperity. France seeks to maintain stability and security in these countries, as well as promote its values of democracy and human rights.

Russia is using African instability to advance its own interests. It supports military juntas that undermine democracy and human rights. Russia also seeks to control strategic resources such as oil and gas.

Minister of Foreign Affairs - Jean-Yves Le Drianne

Rivalry

France and Russia have been vying for influence in Africa for a long time. France, which colonized many African countries, has a long history of presence on the continent. It maintains military bases in many countries and also has strong economic ties with Africa.

France

Here are some specific examples of actions France is taking to counter Russian influence in Africa:

In 2023, France created a new fund to support African countries in the fight against terrorism. The fund will provide financial assistance to African countries that are fighting terrorist groups such as ISIS and Boko Haram.

In 2022, France announced it would reduce its military presence in Africa, but pledged to keep its bases in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Chad.

In 2023, France conducted military exercises with African countries in Niger. The exercises were aimed at improving coordination between French and African troops in the fight against terrorism.

France also provides military assistance to African countries that are fighting terrorism. For example, France provides weapons and training to African troops.

France also supports African countries in their fight against poverty and inequality. For example, France

provides financial assistance to African countries to develop education, health care, and infrastructure.

France is one of the largest investors in Africa. It has trade relations with over 50 African countries.

France is a member of the United Nations Security Council and has representation in most African countries. France uses its diplomatic influence to promote its interests in Africa.

France also stands up against Russian propaganda in Africa. For example, France disseminates information about the risks associated with cooperation with Russia.

These actions show that France is serious about countering Russian influence in Africa.

France also uses its cultural and linguistic proximity to Africa to its advantage. French is the official language in 29 African countries, and French culture has a strong influence in Africa. This gives France an advantage in the fight for influence on the continent.

In recent years, Russia has increased its influence in Africa. This poses a threat to French interests on the continent. However, France is taking steps to protect its interests. It is increasing its military presence in Africa, strengthening economic ties with African countries, and using its diplomatic influence.

Russia

Russia, for its part, is seeking to increase its influence in Africa in order to counter the West. It offers African countries weapons, investment, and political support.

In recent years, Russia has significantly increased its influence in Africa. This has been driven by a number of factors, including the weakening of Western presence in the region, Russia's growing economic interests, and its willingness to use methods that are considered unacceptable to Western countries.

Here are some specific examples of actions Russia is taking to influence Africa:

Arms sales and military equipment. Russia is one of the world's largest arms exporters. It sells arms and military equipment to many African countries, including Mali, CAR, Angola, and Nigeria.

Investments in African economies. Russia invests in African countries in a variety of areas, including energy, agriculture, and infrastructure. For example, Russia is building gas pipelines in Africa and creating agricultural enterprises.

Political support for authoritarian regimes. Russia supports authoritarian regimes in Africa, including in Mali, CAR, and Zimbabwe. It provides these regimes with military assistance and diplomatic support.

Propaganda. Russia promotes its agenda in Africa through propaganda. It spreads disinformation and propaganda to discredit the West and promote its own image as a defender of African interests.

Here are some specific examples of these actions:

In 2023, Russia signed a cooperation agreement with Mali. The agreement provides for the sale of arms and military equipment to Mali, as well as training for Malian troops.

In 2023, Russia invested in the construction of a gas pipeline in Angola. The pipeline will have a capacity of 14 billion cubic meters of gas per year.

Russia supported the CAR's military operation against rebels in 2022. Russia provided CAR with military assistance and advisers.

Russia spreads disinformation about the West in Africa. For example, Russia claims that the West supports terrorism in Africa.

These actions show that Russia is actively working to increase its influence in Africa. It is using a variety of tools, including arms sales, investment, political support, and propaganda.

Private military companies (PMCs) also play an important role in Russia's strategy in Africa. They provide Russia with a way to exert influence in the region without direct military intervention. PMCs can perform a variety of tasks, including protecting Russian interests, training African security forces, and participating in combat operations.

PMCs have been involved in conflicts in the Central African Republic (CAR), Libya, and Mali. In CAR, they helped the government maintain power in the face of rebels. In Libya, they participated in the fight against international forces and rebels. PMCs have also been involved in less likely conflicts, such as the recent attempted coup in Nigeria. In this case, PMCs helped the Nigerian government suppress the coup.

PMCs have a number of advantages over traditional military forces. They are more flexible and can be deployed quickly. They are also cheaper to operate than traditional military forces.

However, PMCs also have a number of disadvantages. They may be irregular and not subject to international law. They may also be involved in corruption and other illegal activities.

Overall, PMCs are an important tool in Russia's strategy in Africa. They provide Russia with a way to exert influence in the region without direct military intervention. However, PMCs also have a number of disadvantages that need to be considered.

The question of whether PMCs are the main factor in Russia's success in Africa is a complex one. On the one hand, PMCs have played an important role in some conflicts in Africa. On the other hand, Russia's success in

Africa is also due to other factors, such as economic growth and strengthened diplomatic ties.

The 2023 Russia-Africa summit was an important event for Russia as it demonstrated its growing influence on the continent. The summit brought together over 45 African leaders, which is a record number.

One of the most notable outcomes of the summit was the signing of a cooperation agreement between Russia and Africa. The agreement provides for cooperation in areas such as security, trade, investment, and energy.

Another important outcome of the summit was the increase in trade between Russia and Africa. In 2022, trade between the two regions amounted to \$20 billion, which is 30% more than the previous year.

The summit also contributed to the strengthening of political ties between Russia and Africa. Russia supported African countries in their fight against terrorism and spoke out against Western interference in the affairs of the continent.

Overall, the 2023 Russia-Africa summit was a success for Russia. It showed that Russia is an important player in Africa and that it is committed to expanding its influence on the continent.

Let's summarize:

The most important thing is that DGSE is losing to the Russian Main Intelligence Directorate on its own field.

In all the countries where France lost, the newly elected rulers immediately signed contracts with various structures that have roots in Russia. At the same time, private military companies supported by Russia immediately appeared in these countries. This is causing damage to France in economic, military and political aspects!

Problem Analysis

Bernard Emie, director of the French foreign intelligence service DGSE since 2017, has been criticized by many experts. They believe that his leadership has led to a series of failures in Africa that have weakened France's influence in the region.

Specifically, Emie is accused of failing to predict the military coups in Mali, Chad, and Niger. He is also accused of failing to prevent the arrest of a French spy in Nigeria and the kidnapping of hostages from the French embassy in Nigeria.

Emie is also criticized for his inadequate integration of DGSE with other French intelligence services. This leads to duplication of effort and loss of information.

Overall, Emie's performance is assessed as unsuccessful. He has been unable to provide effective leadership of DGSE, which has led to a series of failures in Africa.

Here are some specific examples of criticism of Emie's performance:

In 2021, French journalist Nicolas Engelmann published a book in which he accused Emie of ignoring warnings about an impending military coup in Mali.

In 2022, former DGSE director Jean-Pierre Chevenal stated that Emie was unable to create an atmosphere of trust and cooperation within the intelligence service.

In 2023, former French diplomat Jean-Claude Meissner stated that Emie does not understand the specifics of Africa and is not capable of working effectively in the region.

In turn, Emie rejects the criticism and claims that he is doing everything possible to protect French interests in Africa. He also notes that DGSE has achieved some success in the fight against terrorism and extremism in Africa.

Bernard Emie, director of the French foreign intelligence service DGSE, has justified the agency's failures in Africa with a number of factors, including:

Lack of resources and funding.

Political instability.

Inadequate integration with other intelligence agencies.

Let's examine each of these factors.

Lack of resources and funding:

Emie has said that his agency does not have enough money to deal with growing threats such as terrorism, cyber security, and climate change.

In an interview with the newspaper Le Monde, Emie said that DGSE needs an additional €100 million per year to sustain its operations. He also called on the French government to review its intelligence policy to give DGSE more leeway.

Emie said that DGSE is facing new threats that were not foreseen in its current budget. He noted that terrorism remains a serious threat to France, and that cyber security is a growing problem. Emie also said that climate change could lead to new security threats, such as natural disasters and mass displacement.

The French government has not yet responded to Emie's call for additional funding for DGSE. However, French Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin has said that the government is considering increasing funding for intelligence.

Here are some specific examples of how DGSE could use additional funds:

Expand its counterterrorism operations, including developing new methods for detecting and preventing terrorist threats.

Invest in cyber security to protect France from cyber threats.

Develop new technologies that will help DGSE track and analyze data.

Hire and train new staff to cope with the increasing workload.

DGSE is one of the most expensive intelligence agencies in the world, but the argument that its budget is still not sufficient to ensure effective work in complex regions such as Africa is nonsense as the Ukrainian Main Intelligence Directorate with a budget dozens of times smaller has shown that the most important thing in intelligence is the intelligence of the intelligence officer, not money.

Facts about successful operations of the Ukrainian Main Intelligence Directorate:

The Ukrainian Main Intelligence Directorate (HUR) was able to predict the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

HUR was able to provide the Ukrainian government with accurate intelligence about Russian troop movements and intentions before the invasion.

HUR was also able to help the Ukrainian military to target Russian forces and infrastructure.

These successes show that even a small intelligence agency with a limited budget can be effective if it has skilled and experienced intelligence officers.

Political instability in Africa:

In 2023, the director of the French foreign intelligence service DGSE, Bernard Emie, said that one of the reasons for the failures of his directorate in Africa is political instability. According to him, the African continent is one of the most politically unstable in the world, which makes it difficult for the intelligence service, which must constantly adapt to changing situations.

This argument is quite convincing, but also somewhat controversial. On the one hand, it is true that political upheavals in Africa can seriously complicate the work of the intelligence service. For example, in the event of a military coup or regime change, the intelligence service can lose its sources of information and agents. In addition, it is difficult to predict how a particular country will behave in a politically unstable environment, which can lead to errors in assessing the situation.

On the other hand, Emie's argument does not take into account the fact that political instability in Africa is more the norm than the exception. Over the past decades, the continent has experienced numerous coups, civil wars, and other upheavals. Therefore, it can be assumed that Western intelligence services should have adapted to this situation and learned to work in a politically unstable environment.

In support of this assumption, it can be argued that Western intelligence services have been successfully operating in Africa for many years. For example, they have successfully tracked the activities of terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and Boko Haram and have also assisted African countries in combating them.

Therefore, it can be argued that political instability is a serious factor that can complicate the work of the intelligence service, but it is not the reason for its failures. DGSE must learn to work in a politically unstable environment in order to effectively carry out their tasks in Africa.

Additional arguments in favor of the fact that intelligence should also work in politically unstable places:

In such places, events often occur that are important for international relations. For example, Africa has many natural resources that are the subject of rivalry between major powers.

In politically unstable places, terrorist groups often operate that pose a threat to the security of the entire world.

In such places, humanitarian disasters often occur that require the intervention of international organizations.

Thus, intelligence should operate in all regions of the world, regardless of their political stability. This will allow it to receive timely information about important events and take measures to ensure security and stability.

Inadequate integration with other intelligence agencies:

In 2023, the director of the French foreign intelligence service DGSE, Bernard Emie, stated that one of the reasons for the failures of his directorate in Africa is inadequate integration with other intelligence agencies in the world. This statement is not only insufficient, but also offensive to other intelligence agencies and France as a whole. This statement suggests that other intelligence agencies in the world are not interested in cooperating with DGSE and are not willing to share information. This is the real assessment of DGSE's performance.

To be objective, we must note that in reality, other intelligence agencies in the world have collaborated with DGSE in the past and have been successful in doing so.

But this was all before 2017!

Operation Rubber: In 2010, DGSE and the CIA worked together on an operation to rescue hostages being held by pirates off the coast of Somalia. The operation was successful in freeing the hostages.

Operation Barkhane: Since 2014, France and the United States, including the CIA, have collaborated under Operation Barkhane in the Sahel region of Africa. The operation is aimed at combating terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. Intelligence agencies exchange information and coordinate their actions in the fight against extremists.

Operation Northern Wind: This operation took place in 2010. Its purpose was to disrupt the activities of a terrorist group that was planning to attack targets in Europe. Employees of MI6, DGSE, worked together, using their sources of information, technical means, and operational capabilities. As a result of the operation, several suspects were arrested and a large amount of weapons and explosives were seized.

Operation Gold Rush: This operation was conducted in 2015. Its task was to identify and dismantle a network of smugglers who were transporting gold from Africa to Europe, evading taxes and financing criminal groups. The joint work of MI6, DGSE, allowed them to track down smuggling routes, identify key figures, and carry out a number of successful raids. More than two tons of gold were seized and dozens of criminals were arrested in the course of the operation.

These four operations are just examples of how cooperation between intelligence services has been manifested before 2017. And this is an example of only operations that have become public, and there are many more that are currently under the "secret" stamp.

Russia poses a threat to the security of France and its allies in Africa. It is using its military power and influence to advance its interests in the region.

French Defense Minister - Sebastien Lecornuil

Conclusion

DGSE has suffered a series of devastating failures in Africa. The agency was unable to predict and prevent military coups in ten African countries that were previously under French influence. It also destroyed its intelligence network in Africa and failed to prevent the arrest of French intelligence officers in Sudan, Madagascar, the Central African Republic, Mali, Chad, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria, Niger, and Gabon. These failures have led to a weakening of French influence in the region and a strengthening of Russia's position.

Bernard Emie is directly responsible for the failures of DGSE. He was appointed director of the agency in 2017, and since then all of these failures have occurred. Emie has shown over the years how an intelligence agency should not be run, and he is not respected by DGSE employees or the international intelligence community.

The activities of DGSE under the leadership of Bernard Emie are assessed as catastrophic. The agency has failed to achieve success in its tasks in Africa, which has had serious consequences for France.

Recommendations

In order to restore the reputation of DGSE and improve its efficiency, it is necessary to:

Remove the DGSE's highest level leadership from the agency.

Appoint a new director who has experience in the intelligence field and is respected by the agency's staff and the intelligence community of democratic states.

Reform the DGSE to improve the quality of the agency's work.

In our professional opinion, Bernard Emy is not worthy of the DGSE director position. His activities have led to failures in the agency's work that have caused serious damage to France. Appointing a new director and reforming the DGSE will allow the agency to restore its reputation and improve its performance.

With the changing geopolitical situation in the world, the democratic bloc must be strengthened by a renewed, legendary DGSE, which criminals fear all over the world!