



Chad: A Regional Stabilizing Force Under Pressure

Chad is widely viewed as a regional stabilizing actor, but internal economic and security vulnerabilities may jeopardize its valuable capacity, and have a larger domino effect on counterterrorism in the Lake Chad Basin and wider region.

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Chad's worsening economic and security crisis may soon reach a tipping point, as security threats from southern-Libya continue to increase pressure on the northern regions of the country. In just two months, rebels have increased the intensity and rate of attacks, and have exploited chaos in Libya to build a stronghold in Borkou. In mid-August, factions of the Chadian army were attacked a short distance from the Libyan border by unidentified assailants, furthering concerns of a larger rebellion growing on the border.

For several months, military forces have reinforced the system in the extreme north and eastern Chad, which borders Sudan and Libya. Chad's Director of Intelligence, Ahmed Korgi, has stressed that the situation is a pivotal issue for the country's future stability. The proliferation of "mercenaries," working on behalf of various Libyan warring parties, is a familiar threat that Chad staved off just ten years earlier.

These growing threats could have a much larger domino effect due to the key role Chad plays in stabilizing large swaths of the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin. Chad's military took moves this past month to withdraw its troops from Niger,¹ and its military is reportedly reassessing the capacity to which it can contribute to regional support. At its peak in 2016, Chad had over 2,000 troops in Niger to help counter Boko Haram.² If Chad continues down this path and reallocates additional resources to domestic concerns, it may lead to the proliferation of extremist militias filling the security vacuum.

History of Rebellion:

The rebel threat is familiar for Chad's President Déby. In 2006, rebels nearly took control of the Chadian capital of N'Djamena after more than 1,200 rebels stormed the city. While the offensive ultimately failed due to heavy support from the French military, it left hundreds of soldiers, civilians, and rebels killed. The rebels were armed by Sudanese security forces seeking to overthrow the President, partly in order to stop his support to Darfur, and led to the severance of bi-lateral relations between the two countries.

In February 2008, rebels briefly took control of the capital after fierce fighting with government forces. Over 2,000 rebels in 300 pick-up trucks armored with machine guns and canons stormed the capital, surrounding the Presidential Palace after a day of fierce clashes³. The offensive took place after three rebel leaders joined forces in mid-December, following the breakdown of a peace deal with President Déby. The offensive resulted in evacuations on the part of the French and American Embassies, as well as the UNHCR. While relations with Sudan were restored in 2010, the attacks left a lasting impression on the country's military forces, which have been steadily growing over the past decade.

This week Chadian President dismissed and replaced several senior political and military officials in the north of the country, including the governor and commander of a Borkou military zone.⁴ The major shake-up, combined with large-scale military movements towards the northern regions, suggest that Chad might be preparing operations to address the rebel threat by the Libyan border. The President's actions are seen by some as a campaign to warn regional leaders in order to reduce potential defections to the rebellion.

Geopolitical Force for Regional Stability:

With its soldiers deployed throughout the Central African Republic, Mali, and the Lake Chad region, Chad is widely viewed as a stabilizing force in the region. This is largely due to President Déby's dismantling of the Oil Governance Law in 2006, rolling back all control mechanisms to mandate the spending of oil revenues on social services and public spending. Consequently, military spending skyrocketed from \$67 million in 2005, to \$247

¹ Reuters. Chad Withdraws Troops from Fight Against Boko Haram in Niger. 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-niger-security-chad/chad-withdraws-troops-from-fight-against-boko-haram-in-niger-idUSKBN1CH2T0>

² Defense Web. Chad Troops in Niger Withdraw. 2017. http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=49585

³ Reuters. Rebels Surround President's Palace in Chad Capital. 2008. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-chad-rebels-1/rebels-surround-presidents-palace-in-chad-capital-idUSKUA24370620080203>

⁴ Jeune Afrique. Tchad: Idriss Déby Itno limoge de hauts responsables politiques et militaires dans le nord. 2017. <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/480770/politique/tchad-idriss-deby-itno-limoge-de-hauts-responsables-politiques-et-militaires-dans-le-nord/>

million in 2006, and \$670 million in 2009.⁵ This dramatically increased financing allowed Chad to intervene throughout the region, and even allowed its government to offer military support to the Saudi Arabian-led coalition to fight Houthis in Yemen.

However, Chad's stability has been thrown into question by the severe economic downturn brought about by the sharp drop in oil prices last year. Since 2015, Chad has repeatedly delayed payments for outstanding loans of over \$2 billion to Swiss-based Glencore, and in July 2017, the government agreed to a \$312 million International Monetary Fund loan.⁶ The government accordingly implemented widespread budget cuts throughout the country, leading to widespread protests. Many in the civil society sector are upset that the proportion of revenues going to the military has remained constant, despite cuts made to other public spending.

This instability has also called into question Chad's financial capacity to contribute to the new G5 Joint Force (FS-G5S), which seeks to fight counterterrorism. Initial estimates found that the initiative needs roughly \$450 million to begin operations, although to date, only \$50 million has been pledged by the European Union, and \$10 million from each of the G5 countries. At the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, Chad reportedly said that it might not be able to contribute its \$10 million allotment, and repeatedly requested that external funding should be made without conditionalities on governance or human rights reforms.

Chad has also looked to external partners in the private sector for additional support, putting the health of its business environment at risk. In October 2016, Chad attempted to order Exxon to pay a sum of \$74 billion in unpaid royalties to resolve the dispute, which reportedly resulted in the multinational company agreeing to pay \$200 million.⁷ If Chad's situation continues to become more desperate, a deteriorating climate for business and private sector investment will inevitably worsen the economic situation.

Conclusion:

The Chadian government should take immediate measures to restore democratic and security governance by reallocating military spending to relieve the austerity measures fueling widespread discontent. The government should invest in a full auditing of all military expenditures to identify and cut out waste and corruption, and continue to support the capacity building of the FS-G5S where possible. At the beginning of November 2017, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso sent 650 men from each country for a military operation at the crossing of the three national borders, and Chad should show its support by sending⁸ an equal or larger military contingent.

⁵ Crisis Group. In Backing Chad, the West Faces Moral Hazards. 2017. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/chad/backing-chad-west-faces-moral-hazards>

⁶ Reuters. IMF Approves \$312 million 3 year credit for Chad. <http://af.reuters.com/article/idAFL8N1JS07U>

⁷ IPI Global Observatory. As Chad Leads in Regional Security, Its President Seeks More Western Support. 2017. <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/07/chad-leads-in-regional-security-president-seeks-more-western-support/>; See also: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-eco/2017/06/11/97002-20170611FILWWW00082-petrole-accord-tchadsocietes-etrangeres.php>

⁸ Le Monde. A Niamey, la force conjointe du G5 Sahel en pleine construction. 2017. http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2017/10/05/a-niamey-la-force-conjointe-du-g5-sahel-en-pleine-construction_5196617_3212.html?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_campaign=Echobox&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter

Recommendations:

- The Chadian government should work to restore civil liberties, including freedom of expression, to reverse the current trend towards authoritarianism. Peaceful protests and political dissent should not be criminalized or punished.
- The Chadian government should take immediate measures to restore democratic and security governance by improving the management of domestic resources and fighting corruption. The government should invest in a full auditing of all military expenditures to identify and cut out waste.
- The EU should use political dialogues to prioritize improvements in service delivery and essential public services. Additional financing, in the form of loans or budget support, should include stipulations to ensure that funds are not directed towards military activities.
- All stakeholders involved with the FC-G5S should coordinate efforts to ensure that all military actions respect rule of law and human rights. As the regions strongest military actor, Chad should continue to support the implementation of the FC-G5S wherever possible.
- The FC-G5S should work to quickly fill security vacuums, and proactively address the withdrawal of Chadian troops from the Lake Chad Basin.