



POLICY BRIEF

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Implications of the Chadian President's Death for Nigeria's Internal Security

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Executive Summary

This brief presents an assessment of the possible implications of the development in Chad, following the sudden death of President Idriss Deby, for Nigeria's internal security and the fight against terrorism. While the situation in Chad is still unfolding, the fact is that it is, and most likely will continue to be, precarious, endangering the peace, stability and security of not only Chad but also of countries bordering Chad, including Nigeria, unless something is done. The most likely and troubling implication of the turmoil currently ongoing in Chad is that it might be forced to withdraw its troops from its borders with other countries and from the MNJTF in order to protect its capital, N'Djamena, against rebel offensive, thereby undermining the sub-regional fight against terrorism. To this end, Nigeria needs to be proactive and active, deploying everything at its disposal, including diplomatic and military, to address the possible effects of the sudden and untimely death of President Deby on its own internal and sub-regional security, peace, stability and socio-economic development. It is suggested that Nigeria may consider the following:

- i. Partner/collaborate with France to broker peace and truce and find political solution to the crisis in Chad
- ii. Ensure that its borders are properly monitored through the deployment of more troops and use of sophisticated intelligence gathering mechanisms and weapons;
- iii. Work in concert with other countries in the sub-region and France to ensure that the military government in Chad does not hold on to power beyond the 18 months it has set for itself;
- iv. Explore alternative sources of procuring arms and ammunition for the military, including from China and Russia, as against its total reliance on western sources, in order to be able to effectively monitor the country's borders and successfully prosecute the war against insurgents and terrorists

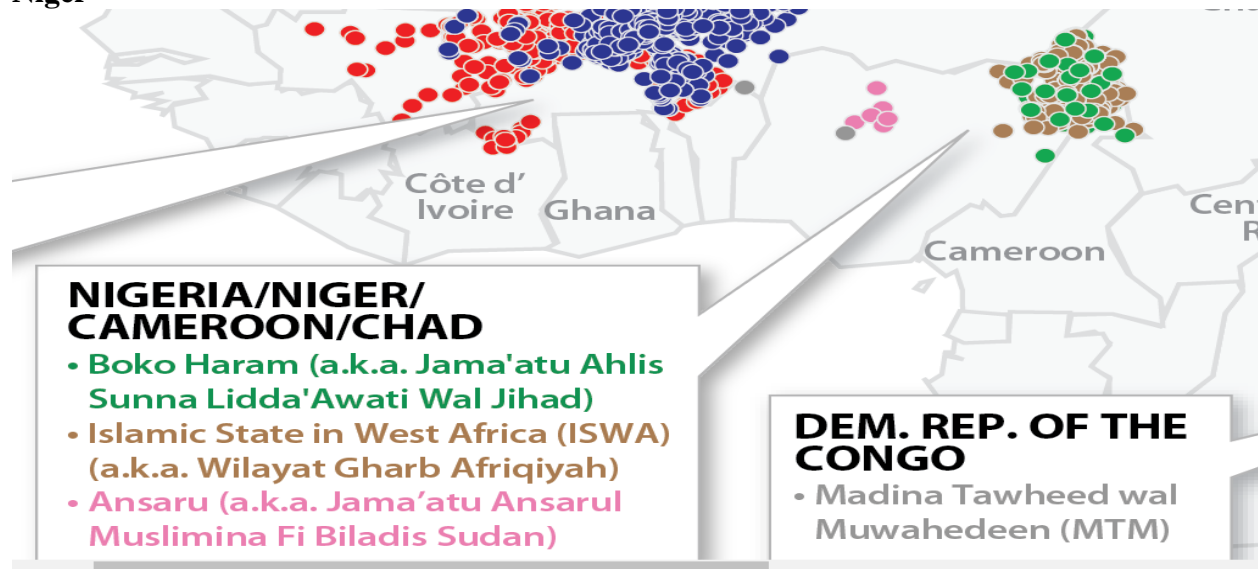


Introduction

The recent death of the Chadian President, Idriss Deby, has been seen as a major setback in the war against terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin. Many have acknowledged that Deby's death will open a new chapter in Chad-implicated terrorism across the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin and Central Africa.¹ Chad and the late President Idriss Deby were a major player in the Lake Chad Basin's war against terrorism and the operation of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). The MNJTF, as a combined multinational formation, comprising military units from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, is headquartered in N'Djamena (Chad's Capital) and has the mandate to bring an end to insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin.

But apart from being the headquarters of the MNJTF, Chad and late President Deby provided support to Nigeria, with troops, intelligence information, and in the financing of the MNJTF. SB Morgen Intelligence, in its 2020 report, noted that 'Nigeria and Chad are the only active combatants in MNJTF'². In fact, many a times, Deby led successful fights against terrorists in the region³.

Figure 1: Active Militant Islamist Groups in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Southeastern Niger



Source: Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2021.

¹ Olaiya, T.T. and Daka, T. (2021). Deby's death deals huge blow to fighting insurgency, says Buhari. *The Guardian Newspaper*, Vol. 37, No. 15,455, p. 2.

² <https://www.sbmintel.com/2020/05/may-2020/>.

³ Ibid.



With the latest development, many stakeholders have raised concern about the anticipated porosity of the Lake Chad area that already housed three (3) major terrorist groups (see Figure 1) in addition to being presently embroiled in a major political crisis, as its military is busy dealing with securing the state capital, N'Djamena, from rebel offensives. Consequently, there are concerns that the death of President Deby would have serious implications for Nigeria's deteriorating internal security and the fight against terrorism. This brief therefore presents an assessment of the possible implications of the development in Chad following the death of President Deby for Nigeria's internal security.

Content Analysis

Nigeria's Internal Security, Casualties Caused by Terrorism in the Chad Basin and the Role of Chad in MNJTF

The internal security of Nigeria has been threatened for the past 12 years by the activities of Boko Haram and its offshoot, the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA). Boko Haram extremists, especially in northern Nigeria have killed tens of thousands of people, and displaced more than two million others⁴. According to Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2021), dreaded terrorism activities in Lake Chad Basin revolved around the Boko Haram (a.k.a. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wali Jihad), Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA, a.k.a. Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyah) and Ansaru (a.k.a. Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan).

The Lake Chad Basin (as shown in Figure 1) experienced roughly 60 percent increase in militant Islamist violence in 2020 (1,223 as against 766 in 2019). Attacks against civilians witnessed a 32 percent increase, accounting for 37 percent of violent activity linked to these groups⁵. With 4,801 reported fatalities, the Lake Chad Basin also had the highest death toll linked to militant Islamist groups in Africa during the period⁶.

However, Chad and late President Deby played a major role in fighting the terrorists in the Lake Chad Basin, including engaging in and personally directing offensives on Boko Haram and its

⁴ Boko Haram is particularly notorious for committing widespread atrocities especially kidnapping of women and girls as conjugal slaves; killing of men and farmers; kidnapping of 276 Chibok Secondary School, Borno State schoolgirls and recently 344 Kankara boys in Katsina. In fact, check the recent Aljazeera report (2021) "Children seized. Towns attacked. Can Nigeria fix security crises?" on <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/2/children-seized-towns-attacked-can-nigeria-fix-security-crises>.

⁵ Africa Center for Strategic Studies (January 29, 2021). Spike in Militant Islamist Violence in Africa Underscores Shifting Security Landscape. Available on <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/spike-militant-islamist-violence-africa-shifting-security-landscape/>. Accessed 22/4/21.

⁶ Ibid.



offshoots.⁷ This was in addition to Chad being the second highest troop contributor to the MNJTF after Nigeria. For the successes recorded so far against terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin, Deby's death does not portend a good omen for Nigeria and other countries in the region as the Chadian army has been the only effective check on Boko Haram and other groups. This is because the Chadian army may likely be recalled to safeguard N'Djamena, which has come under rebel threats. This suggests the need for Nigeria to act swiftly in order to ensure that the Lake Chad Basin does not turn totally into an area where terrorists and insurgents launch attacks on towns and military bases in Nigeria and other countries in the region. This is against the backdrop of revelations from SB Intelligence Reports (2021) that the security situation in Damasak and Dikwa, two Nigerian towns close to the Chadian border, have become untenable, forcing UN staff to suspend humanitarian operations⁸.

Highlights of major Developments in Chad and Borderlines as Result of President Deby's Death

The following developments are the highlights of security issues after the death of President Deby:

- Chad has been a key ally in the West's military strategy in the region on two fronts: against al-Qaeda and ISIL (ISIS) in the western portion of the Sahel, and against Boko Haram in the Chad Basin;
- Chad's geography, military force and friendly leadership have made it attractive to the Western powers and major blocks in West Africa such as Nigeria, Mali, and Niger;
- Like Nigeria, Chad is battling insurgency unleashed by the Boko Haram. The borders of both Nigeria and Chad are porous, making it easy for terrorists and other sundry elements to crisscross undetected;
- Violence had erupted in Chad following the conduct of presidential elections on April 11, 2021, with the incursion of into the country of rebel forces based in Libya, named Front for Change and Concord in Chad or FACT;
- The rebels were headed in the direction of Chad's capital, N'Djamena, confronted by the military for days and later led to the death of the President Deby as result of the injuries sustained from the battle;
- The military command in Chad had installed as interim president Deby's 37-year-old son Mahamat Idriss Deby, a four-star general who previously commanded the elite guard under the presidency and was also a deputy commander of the Chadian forces in Mali. This was in spite of the fact that, constitutionally, the leader of the national assembly should have assumed the role. The interim president is expected to lead Chad for 18 months;
- The government and parliament have been dissolved, against the provision of the constitution which stipulates that the Speaker of parliament should take over when a sitting president dies before organising elections. Meanwhile, the new government is running the country on a military decree;

⁷ SB Morgen (2021). Idriss Deby: The ring of instability closes. *Analysis, Reports, and Research*. Available on <https://www.sbmintel.com/2021/04/idriss-deby-the-ring-of-instability-closes/>. Accessed 22/4/2021.

⁸ Ibid.



- FACT members have rejected Mahamat Deby’s appointment on the ground that “Chad is no monarchy”, and have threatened to continue their offensive towards N’Djamena. Some political opposition parties have called the formation of the military council an “institutional coup”, while others said the dynastic overtones of the succession could be enough to stoke stronger calls for a change in leadership and set in motion a period of instability and violence;
- Chad government is presently facing three major issues of citizen’s insurrection against inheritance government, rebels and terrorism;
- A report from Aljazeera on Thursday, April 24th, 2021 indicated that Chadian troops with “pick-ups, tanks and personnel carriers” had been spotted leaving the Burkinabe section of the tri-border region (a border zone between Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso), apparently to return to Chad. This buttresses our initial point of preempting a withdrawal of troops from MNJTF operation to help defend Chad’s capital, N’Djamena, from the rebels, terrorists and other insurrections;
- As it was that Chad (as a major contributor of troops) is withdrawing its troops, Niger and Nigeria may face serious heat as there is only a small strip of land between volatile Northern Mali and Nigeria via Niger. As Niger gets more unstable, and Northern Nigeria follows, the influx of Sahelian jihadist from this axis into the affected spaces in North West and North Central Nigeria is bound to increase.
- Experts have noted that if major blocks in Africa do not intervene, and if the present government in Chad loses control, fragmentation of the country will have ramifications for Niger, Central African Republic, Darfur and Nigeria.

Implications of the Chadian President’s Death for Nigeria’s Internal Security

The death of President Idriss Deby of Chad would most likely lead to political and security upheavals in Chad and, by extension, Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria. For Nigeria, which has been suffering from the southward flow of jihadists and Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) since the death of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, the upheaval in Chad is much closer than the case of Libya and thus potentially much more significant. The following are some of the implications of the situation in Chad for Nigeria’s internal security:

- i. There is the possibility of full or partial withdrawal of troops by the Chadian authorities from Chad’s borders with Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon to protect the capital, N’Djamena, from rebel offensives.
- ii. Withdrawal of troops from borderline may cause:
 - large influx of rebels/insurgents from Chad to Nigeria and vice versa as re result of the relaxed border;
 - orchestrate the launching of major attacks on Nigerian military bases and local communities by Boko Haram and other terrorists



- iii. Nigeria will have more Boko Haram insurgents, internally displaced persons from Chad, and free movement of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) to contend with if the crisis in Chad persists;
- iv. Chad's involvement in the MNJTF and the entire regional counterterrorism initiatives may be reduced or stopped by its leadership should the internal turmoil worsen, thereby increasing the vulnerability of Nigeria to increased terrorists threats and attacks.

Recommendations

In the light of the above, the National Assembly Committees on National Security and Intelligence, Army, Navy, Air Force, and Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs; and the Office of the National Security Adviser may wish to engage the situation as discussed above with the following recommendations:

- i. Nigeria needs to monitor closely the situation in Chad and ensure that the country's borders are properly monitored through the deployment of more troops and use of sophisticated intelligence gathering mechanisms and weapons;
- ii. Nigeria may consider partnering with France to broker peace and find political solution to the crisis in Chad. The combination of the platforms/frameworks provided by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union may be used to achieve this;
- iii. Nigeria must work with other countries in the sub-region and France to ensure that the military government in Chad does not hold on to power beyond the 18 months it has set. The constitution and the disputed elections that brought the late Deby to power has to be revisited to identify major issues of difference, causing crises;
- iv. Nigeria should lead the countries in the sub-region to continuously assess the situation in Chad in the light of new circumstances and developments as they unfold;
- v. The Nigerian government and its military need to remain alert so as to be able to respond swiftly to the possible consequences of the Chadian crisis, particularly if the crisis degenerates. To this end, Nigeria may consider exploring alternative sources of procuring arms and ammunition for its military, particularly from the Chinese and the Russians, as against its total reliance on western sources. This would ensure that modern and sophisticated arms and ammunition are readily available to the Nigerian military and other security agencies to tackle insecurity in the country;
- vi. The Nigerian military should ensure adequate supply of weapons, and other important materials to the troops fighting Boko Haram insurgents and other criminal elements in the country. This would no doubt enhance their motivation and morale.

Conclusion

If necessary precautions are not taking as explained above, the growing instability in Chad may spill over into and/or engulf Nigeria, particularly as it could lead to the reversal of the progress so far made in the fight against Boko Haram. It is therefore advisable that the Nigerian government,



through its military and intelligence agencies, pay very close attention to the situation in Chad and do the needful as suggested above. The National Assembly on its part should be ready and prepared at the slightest notice to provide adequate support as may be requested by the government and its security agencies.

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