

CHAD: THE DEATH OF A PRESIDENT, WHAT LESSONS?

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President Idriss Déby succumbed to his injuries during his engagement on the frontlines.

This has been yesterday's breaking news and the official narrative of Chad's military council. A careful narrative that does not share any specific details about the extent of the injuries nor on the specific circumstances of the President's death. As things are unfolding, a few points can already be made:

1. Who should be in power?

The military council has announced that it will run the transition of power until new elections are held. The military have nominated Mahamat Idriss Déby, the former president's son as the interim president, eroding steadily the difference between a presidential system and a monarchy in the country.

During this 18-month period, the military will seize the total power, suspending the constitution, the parliament and the government, and imposing a nationwide curfew. This is not the normal course of the matter. It is normally the president of the legislative assembly that should legitimately takes over power during this transitional period until the election of a new president.



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In these dynamics, two possible repercussions must be taken into account: first, the decision by the military council sheds a discredit on the importance of elections when power goes to the military instead of the president of the national assembly. This means Chadians will perceive the upcoming elections as a matter of logistics only rather than an effective democratic measure that can resolve the conflicts in the country.



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Second, it is essential to look into whether people in Chad would accept this transition with a size of power by the military and a kind of "inheritance" of power by the former president's son, or if they would consider it as an "inside job" or a "coup" in itself. Chad is a country that has a history of military coups that were supported externally. France has initially showed no concern about how the transition in Chad was announced, and shifted thereafter their position to be more of a timid reaction, so was the reaction of the African Union. No official remarks from other countries regarding the announced transition have been made so far.

2. Regional versus internal security:

Chad, a member of the G5 has notorious military deployment chiefly in Nigeria, Northern Mali where the country has recently deployed 1200 troops as part The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and in Central African Republic.

These Chadian military deployments are within the framework of the fight against violent extremist groups, namely Boko Haram in Nigeria and ISIL in West Africa. With the death of the Chadian President, it is expected that Chad focuses on internal security and decreases its involvement in the regional fight against violent extremist groups. However, the MINUSMA and other key states will likely force Chad military to stay in Nigeria, Mali and CAR in exchange that the military takes over power in the country, with Déby Jr. (instead of the president of the legislative assembly).

3. Changing dynamics of the fight against violent extremism in West Africa:

Chad is a notorious force against violent extremist groups in West Africa, especially against Boko Haram..



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and the Islamic State in West Africa. However, the death of the president declared to be on the frontlines could be perceived as an infamous loss against violent extremist groups.

The French Minister of Defense has recently declared that Chad's role in the fight against violent extremists will continue but she does not know to what extent. The statement loomed as a declaration of deception rather than an announcement of strength. While waiting for more details to unfold, the "marriage of convenience" between violent extremist groups and local insurgencies seems to be the new modus operandi of extremist groups in Africa. This marriage is based on linking mutual interests of both local insurgents using political and socio-economic micro-grievances and violent extremist groups using a narrative of opportunity of the "rise of locals"

against the injustice of their governments. Violent extremist groups might be advancing in West Africa and to the capital N'Djamena, shifting the dynamics of Chad's fight against violent extremists from a regional approach to becoming predominantly in-country.

We know now that radicalization to extremist violence is built at the base of societies, and as one immediate reaction to the micro-aggressions that individuals and communities may have to face. By addressing locals' perceived micro-aggressions, there is a concrete opportunity to prevent the "marriage of convenience" between local insurgencies and violent extremist groups, and constructively transform radicalization. This requires work on a daily basis, an everyday peacebuilding, and not wait until extremist violence kills a president.

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