

Déby: The Last Victim of Libya Crisis

Chad president Idriss Déby died a short time ago and left behind one of the poorest nations of the world. Déby's legacy in Chad is not very bright, unfortunately. He left his nation with widespread poverty, underdevelopment, and an undemocratic state system. Despite being an oil and cotton-producing country, Chad is usually ranked with a high poverty rate. According to the World Bank (WB), data half of Chad's population live in the poverty line.[\[i\]](#)

For a long time, the Chad army under the command of Idriss Déby had been playing critical roles for France's military operations in the field, which used to be known as Francophone Africa. Moreover, Chad has been hosting a French military base. The sudden death of Sahel's strongman confused France since Déby was one of France's strongest allies in the Sahel region. French Defense Minister Florence Parly explained that France lost "an essential ally in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel".[\[ii\]](#)

French President Emmanuel Macron visited N'Djamena for Déby's funeral and met Déby's son Mahamat Idriss Déby, known as Mahamat Kaka, who now becomes the *de facto* new leader of Chad, chairing the Transitional Military Council (TCM). While Chad's parliament and constitution were dissolved by TCM, the council would be in charge for 18 months until the next election. However, there are some indications that the transition would not be as smooth as presented. Opposition groups and armed rebels reject this decision. French magazine *Le Monde* described the transition process in Chad as carrying high risks.[\[iii\]](#)

Chad was a punishment post for French officials during the colonial era, but nowadays, it seems that Chad's strategic value for France has become more important, especially during the Déby era. From Mali to Sudan and from Libya to Central Africa, Chad's location occupies a very central point in an area in which new powers like China, Russia and Turkey have initiated their appearance recently. This new atmosphere in the Sahel brings the idea that there might be some connection between Déby's sudden death and big powers rivalry. France has to compete with new powers in Francophone Africa. In Libya, for instance, Russia and France support Khalifa Haftar's LNA (Libyan National Arab Army) while in the Central African Republic (CAR) Russia and France follow a different agenda.

There are some facts that remained unexplained until today. First, why would a president, in the aftermath of his election victory, visit a conflict zone threatened by FACT (Front pour l'alternance et la Concorde au Tchad) rebels. Second, how could a splinter group FACT with only 1500 combatants become very strong and influential in Chad after 2016. According to open sources, FACT is a rebel group operating in Libya in collaboration with Khalifa Haftar to fight against "ISIS". The same FACT is also combatting against Idriss Déby who was France's strong ally in counter-terrorism operations in the Sahel. Haftar has been a close ally to France and Russia at the same time. It seems that even Chad and Libya experts couldn't explain this strange formula. On top of that, there is more oddness. According to *Liberation's* article, FACT leader Mahamat Mahadi Ali has a socialist connection in France and once held a refugee status there.[\[iv\]](#)

Idriss Déby's relation with France had become more strategic in the last decade. Chadian troops took part in Mali, Central Africa Republic, and the Chad Lake region as the protector of France's regional interests. It was clear that France had been shielded by Deby and his military circles. This is because whenever there was a French military operation, Idriss Déby was also there. Even his son Mahamat Kaka who was trained in France was in command of the Chadian Intervention in Northern Mali (FATIM). Frankly, what made Déby more strategic for France was the military ambitions of the latter. France was never really interested in Chad's development, poverty reduction, or democratization. French leaders have blindly supported a ruler although Chad's human rights record has been too weak and Déby had ruled Chad with an iron fist for three decades.

The Libyan crisis continues to create new victims. It is a commonly accepted fact that the current turbulence in Mali's north provinces started following Qaddafi's death in Libya. It is widely believed that money and weaponry spilled over the Sahel and ethnic and religious armed groups once allied with Qaddafi have become more effective in their territorial control. Al-Qaida, ISIS, and some other ethnic armed rebel groups have all used Libya's instability for their own sake. Armed groups such as FACT have been using Libya to generate more power for their personal benefit. Increasing the number of arms in Libya has definitely created an unsafe atmosphere for Sahelian countries and Idriss Déby was the last victim of the Libya crisis.

[i] "The World Bank in Chad", *WB*, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/chad/overview>

[ii] "France says Chad's Deby was 'essential' ally in fight against terrorism", *RFI*, 20.04.2021, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20210420-france-says-chad-s-deby-was-essential-ally-in-fight-against-terrorism>

[iii] "Tchad: une transition à hauts risques", *Le Monde*, 22.04.2021, https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2021/04/21/tchad-une-transition-a-hauts-risques_6077529_3232.html

[iv] Célian Macé, "Portrait: Mahamat Mahadi Ali, la rose et la glaive", *Liberation*, 29.05.2017, https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2017/05/29/mahamat-mahadi-ali-la-rose-et-le-glaive_1573102/