

Summary

On November 28, Chad ended its defense cooperation agreement with France following a regional trend of African countries distancing themselves from Western powers in favor of Russian support. This shift undermines France's influence, particularly in the Sahel, and raises concerns about security in the region, especially regarding terrorist threats and the conflict in bordering Sudan. Additionally, the growing anti-Western sentiment in Chad will likely lead to increased protests and violence against Western entities.

Recent events and developments

On November 28, Chad officially announced the termination of its defense cooperation agreement with France, citing a desire to affirm its complete sovereignty. This marks a significant milestone in Chad's ongoing shift away from its traditional Western allies. Earlier in May, the withdrawal of US troops from the country was also ordered. Chad's decision will require French troops to leave the country, as seen before in other West African countries like Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. However, Chadian officials insisted that this does not represent a complete breakaway from France, as was the case in the abovementioned examples, and that France remains an essential partner. Earlier on November 28, Senegal's President Bassirou Diomaye Faye also issued a statement saying that France's military presence in the country is inappropriate and incompatible with Senegal's national sovereignty. This development reflects growing anti-French sentiments within the country, especially among the young, urban population. In May, hundreds of protesters took to N'Djamena and other prominent towns, burning French flags and vandalizing gas stations operated by a French energy company. On the other hand, Chad has been cultivating closer ties with Russia, with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov visiting N'Djamena in June and President Déby having met with Vladimir Putin in Moscow back in January. However, in September, relations briefly took a turn as a Russian political figure and sociologist was detained and expelled from the country.

Impact assessment

Chad's decision to abruptly end the defense cooperation agreement represent a blow to France's influence in the region, especially as Chad was the only country in the area to still have its security agreements with France in place. Chad served a crucial role as the aircraft carrier and logistical hub for the French military and housing 1,000 French troops. Without Chad, France's ability to sustain other military operations will be significantly undermined. This comes in contrast with Russia's growing presence in the region, however its ability to take advantage of the situation is somewhat downplayed by the fact that Russia and Chad support opposing factions in Sudan's war. Turkey and the United Arab Emirates are other players for whom Chad's shift may present an opportunity. Chad now faces two major security challenges, spillover effects from the Sudan conflict and cross border Islamic terrorist activity. The bordering area with Nigeria and northern Cameroon has experienced significant activity by Boko Haram militants and other armed groups, making it a hotspot for attacks and kidnappings. On October 27 Chad experienced the deadliest Boko Haram attack since March 2020, leading to President Déby threatening to abandon the Lake Chad Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) on November 4. Chad's potential withdrawal from the MNJTF could strengthen Boko Haram, resulting in more attacks. Recent developments are likely to amplify already existing anti-Western sentiments increasing the probability of protests or localized acts of vandalism targeting Western embassies, NGOs, and businesses.

Advice from Forth Global

- Ensure that all employees travelling to Chad receive a three-day HEAT training prior to deployment.
- Avoid travel to border areas between Chad and Nigeria, Cameroon, and Sudan.
- Avoid crowds and demonstrations and refrain from expressing politically charged opinions.
- Monitor media and local sources for updates on the political and security situation.
- Keep a low profile to avoid potential backlash motivated by anti-Western sentiments.

Customized advice

Please contact us for specific advice:

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