Hybrid War: Wreaking Havoc Across West Africa

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The first of the four main countries to be explored in the West Africa Hybrid War analysis is Chad, the sparsely populated state located at the trilateral crossroads between West-North-Central Africa. A cursory glance at the map reveals the geostrategic significance of this country, but it also misleadingly presents it as a desert-strewn state in the middle of nowhere.

While this might be partially true, it's an injustice to simplify Chad to such basic descriptions, as such blanket terms don't reveal the wealth of diversity and Hybrid War vulnerabilities within its borders. Moreover, dismissing Chad as a wasteland in the middle of Africa also doesn't explain why its military is one of the most ambitious and battle-hardened in the entire continent, nor why the country is of such importance to China's New Silk Road plans. Therefore, a comprehensive approach is urgently needed in order to better understand Chad's internal and external dynamics, which in turn can help observers and strategists alike identify the most likely destabilization scenarios that could afflict this highly important state.

The Chad analysis begins by discussing the country's geo-demographic situation before transitioning into how this relates to its history of northern and borderland militancy. After that, the research highlights the irreplaceable role that the military plays in acting as the 'superglue' that holds the whole state together, as well as its direct involvement in promoting Chad's regional leadership. After describing the country's position in African affairs, the article then moves along to explaining how it fits into China's New Silk Road designs, concluding with an investigation into the most likely Hybrid War scenarios that could sprout up or be externally manufactured against Chad.

Geo-Demographic Dynamics

The simplest way to describe Chad's geo-demographic situation is to highlight the division of the country between north and south, but even that dichotomy in and of itself isn't completely accurate. While most of the northern part of the country is populated by Muslims, so too is a lot of the southern region as well, though mostly in the southeast of Chad near the Sudanese border. The southwestern corner of Chad between the Cameroonian border and the Chari River is mostly inhabited by Christians. All in all, the CIA World Factbook states that Muslims account for around 58% of the population while Christians are 34%. Both, however, are equally impoverished and recognized by the World Bank as one of the poorest populations in the world, with Chad also ignominiously counting itself among the least developed and hunger-prone countries. These three facts plus the jaw-dropping illiteracy rate of 65% reasonably make Chad's citizens inherently restless and susceptible to anti-government sentiment.

Extrapolating further on a geo-demographic plane, most of the country's Muslims live along easily traversable desert or dry bushland terrain (Sahel), while the Christians inhabit the savanna, wetlands, and prairies. This is relevant because of the effect that it has on the internal military situation in the country, namely the ease with which northern Muslim rebels have been able to move throughout "their" part of Chad, which greatly contributed to the northern militancy that will be described in the next section. The Christians, however, have typically been sedentary people and have no recent history of moving their rebel forces all throughout the country. This has nothing to do with either group's religion, but is an interesting factor that should be commented on nonetheless in order to acquire a more solid conception of the country's geo-demographic dynamics. Digging deeper and peeling off the layers of difference that exist with both overly simplified categories of Chadian citizens, it should be remarked that Chad boasts an exceptionally diversified population that includes more than 200 ethno-linguistic groups. 44% of the population is under the age of 15, which indicates that a population boom can be expected in the near future, too. This could more than double Chad's current 14 million or so citizens to over 35 million by mid-century while nearly doubling it once more to 68 million by the turn of the next century.

Being a country landlocked with such mostly inhospitable terrain as Chad has, this can be taken to mean that the government will become even more dependent on external trade routes than it is today and that the newly added members of the population might predictably gather closer to the agriculturally productive regions of the country. To the latter point, this could see an influx of northern Muslims to the southern Christian lands, which aside from the 'civilizational' sectarianism that might erupt between them, could even lead to 'tribal' tension as well. These two layers of destabilization could combine in such a way that the government would have extraordinary difficulty maintaining peace and order, which could thus contribute to ethnic cleansing and genocide in the event that the authorities lose total control (even temporarily) during a related identity-driven conflict. The only preemptive solution to such a calamity is the strengthening of the state and its supportive military institution, a trend which has been steadily underway for decades already and shows no signs of abating. Should anything happen to weaken either of these two related pillars of stability (such as the [forced] introduction of Western style "democracy"), however, then it's almost certain that Chad's identity differences will inevitably tear it apart soon afterwards.

Northern And Borderland Militancy

First Chadian Civil War:

Chad is no stranger to civil conflict, though, having been embroiled in some sort of insurgency for most of the time that it's been independent. The First Chadian Civil War was launched by the Muslim Northerners against the country's immediate post-independence leader François Tombalbaye, a Christian Southerner. This was the only time in Chad's history that it was led by someone from that region and with that confession, which essentially amounted to the rule of the minority over the majority. This explains the fervency with which the Muslim Northerners fought, since they believed that Tombalbayne's policies were discriminatory towards them and were unfairly elevating the role of Christian Southerners at their expense. After years of fighting and political miscalculations in ostracizing his own powerbase and the military, the President was overthrown in a 1975 coup and executed, after which the military briefly ruled the country during a short

transitional period.

Second Chadian Civil War And The French-Libyan Proxy Conflict:

The Second Chadian Civil War broke out in the 1980s among disgruntled northerners that wanted to topple their fellow Muslim Northerner who took Tombalbaye's place. The fight against President Hissène Habré quickly became internationalized as Libya started sponsoring the rebels and the French forces already stationed in Chad threw their weight behind N'Djamena. There was even a period of time where Libyan forces formally entered Chad in support of both their proxies and Tripoli's claims to the uranium-rich Aozou Strip, which in turn prompted a more substantial French intervention after Libya and its surrogates undertook a desert blitzkrieg towards the capital. The Chadian-Libyan War came to be a major Cold War flashpoint in Africa between the West and Libya, with Tripoli aiming to create a friendly buffer state to its south while the West wanted to use their traditional client state as a proxy base for destabilizing southern Libya. The conflict ended when Libyan forces were expelled from the country in the late 1980s, though it was ultimately a pyrrhic victory for Habré because he was later overthrown by current President Idriss Deby in 1990.

Third Chadian Civil War And The Darfur Overspill:

Deby aimed to solidify this rule all throughout the next decade but wasn't successful in completely purging the country of rebel groups. The problem was that some of them were being supported this time by Sudan, and the conflict in Darfur began spilling over the border and evolving into a larger Chadian-Sudanese proxy war in one of the most barren wastelands on the planet, one which was also being waged between two of the world's most impoverished and already internally destabilized states. This triggered what could be referred to as the Third Chadian Civil War, which raged from 2005-2010 before N'Djamena and Khartoum signed a peace agreement with one another in which they agreed to jointly patrol their mutual border and normalize their political relations. The restoration of positive ties between these Saharan neighbors went a long way towards stabilizing both of their internal situations, with the war in Darfur quickly abating soon thereafter and Chad progressively becoming more peaceful as well. The landmark 2010 agreement also paved the way for joint projects between both sides, the most ambitious of which is the Chinese-proposed railroad which regrettably has yet to be built but still holds infinite potential for the betterment of the region.

Boko Haram:

On the western side of the Chadian borderlands, a new conflict was brewing precisely around the time that the eastern one near Darfur was cooling down. Boko Haram started gaining ground in northeastern Nigeria and aggressively expanding its territory, which saw it launching cross-border raids against all of the countries in the Lake Chad basin a few years later. Chad is highly sensitive to the terrorist group because its capital of N'Djamena is within very close proximity to Boko Haram's northeast Nigerian homeland, and if the city were to be substantially destabilized by the militants, then it would shake the balance of power within Chad itself and create space for its own insurgents to rise up, a Color Revolution to happen, or even a military coup to be carried out by disgruntled and rebellious generals. Therefore, President Deby dedicated the Chadian Armed Forces to being the vanguard actor in the regional anti-Boko Haram coalition, knowing that if Chad's military – the strongest in the area – didn't take the lead, then the terrorists would continue to expand at a bristling pace and eventually become a fully unmanageable and existential threat

against the state itself.

Summary:

The prevailing trend is that northern rebels are usually the main culprits when it comes to Chad's internal militarized destabilization, but problems in the eastern and western borderland regions have lately come to dominate the country's security concerns. Be it the overflow of the Darfur conflict into Chad's borders or the spread of Boko Haram, N'Djamena is cognizant that external threats could have a very real impact on catalyzing internal conflicts, with the worst-case scenario being that a blend of international and domestic factors is unleashed in such a way that the military is overwhelmed from all angles. This doesn't appear to be likely anytime soon, so long of course that the military remains successful in snuffing out all categories of threats as they emerge. This pressing imperative explains why the military is the most important institution in preserving Chadian unity as well as why it played such an active role abroad in intervening in several conflicts over the past couple of years.

Chad As The Regional Champion

Chad has positioned itself as the go-to actor for resolving regional military problems, interestingly having a much stronger and more direct role in West-Central African affairs than the presumed hegemon Nigeria does. This can be attributed to a confluence of two mutually enabling factors, the first being the military-strategic imperatives explained above vis-à-vis the existential security of the Chadian state (bolstered by French support), and the second being the catastrophic corruption and myriad domestic challenges that have plagued Nigeria for decades and held it back from assuming what would ordinarily be its rightful place as the transregional leader. As a perfect example in illustrating just how ambitious and effective the Chadian Armed Forces are in comparison to their Nigerian counterparts, one need only to look at N'Djamena's interventions in the Central African Republic (2012-2014), Mali (2013), and even sporadically in Northeast Nigeria itself against Boko Haram (2015-present).

Chad's failed involvement in its southern neighbor was to support the government in the face of a rebel onslaught but later morphed into a peacekeeping mission aimed at ending violence between Christians and Muslims, while its cross-Sahel operation was to aid French troops as they liberated northern Mali from Ansar Dine, an AQIM terrorist affiliate that seized control of 2/3 of the country amidst the Tuareg's astoundingly successful post-Gaddafi offensive there. As for Nigeria, it was already explained in the previous section why Chad is so interested in putting a stop to Boko Haram's cross-border terrorism. Altogether, N'Djamena's moves point to its leadership's ambition to carve out a regional sphere of influence and position their country as the champion in attempting to settle all military disputes.

Central African Republic:

Chad shares an extremely porous border with its southern neighbor, a state of affairs which has remained constant ever since independence but finally presented an urgent security threat during the Central African Republic's (CAR) meltdown in late-2012. There was a moment when a Darfur-like overspill was frighteningly real, which is why N'Djamena heeded Bangui's request to intervene in helping the government stave off the rebel advance. This was somewhat ironic from the frame of identity politics but perfectly understandable from

the realistic pragmatic one, since the Muslim-led Chadian authorities were trying to fight back Muslim rebels that were intent on toppling the Christian government, but the authorities were on pretty good standing with Chad at that time so it would have been disadvantageous for N'Djamena to have them successfully ousted. Of course, the Muslim-Christian angle is a major oversimplification of the situation and the author doesn't believe that such superficial descriptions could satisfactorily account for the depth of what was actually happening at that moment, but the reason why this understanding is being mentioned in the first is because of the future threat of a "Clash of Civilizations" going out of control in the Central African Republic and spreading to southern Chad, with gullible populations in both states falling for the narrow-minded "us versus them" approach to Christian-Muslim conflict.

Chad also seems to have been aware of just how easily this could happen when it decided to contribute troops to the peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic, though it later withdrew them in 2014 after coming under heavy criticism for allegedly staging an unprovoked attack against civilians in one of the capital's main markets. As Al Jazeera noted at the time, there were prior accusations that Chadian forces were favorable towards the Muslims, which to remind the reader, comprised most of the eastern-residing Séléka rebels who overthrew President Bozize in 2013. CAR, like it was pointed out in the relevant chapter about the Failed State Belt, has many Muslims living in the sparsely populated eastern savannahs of the country, while most of the population is Christian and lives in the jungled western interior. The "Clash of Civilizations" that sprung up in the country after Séléka's victory was due in part to the mostly Christian antibalaka vigilantes carrying out reprisal killings against the Muslims, which quickly turned into a brief but very intense period of identity-driven civil warfare.

From Chad's perspective, this presented a serious quandary, because its Muslim-led government felt obliged to protect its fellow co-confessionals despite their rebel leaders having been responsible for the fall of the government and inadvertently subsequent ethnic cleansing in the first place. Additionally, there are inherent fears that a mass influx of refugees into southern Chad could greatly upset the fragile balance in the country, particularly if the CAR's fleeing Christian and Muslim communities end up on the 'wrong side' of the border, meaning that Christians find themselves in the mostly Muslim Chadian southeast and Muslims end up in the mostly Christian southwest. This could lead to domestic communal conflict within the state and demonstrate an instance of "Weapons of Mass Migration". Chad presently has the Southern Christian population under control and doesn't want to endanger the stability that set over the region, which is why it's so sensitive to a 'Clash of Civilizations' in CAR leading to a domino effect that emboldens this demographic to rise up against the state. Having lost its influence over the entirety of its neighbor's southern territory following its collapse into a total failed state status, Chad still has the potential to cultivate soft power and – if need be – selectivity intervene in the eastern part of the CAR to protect the indigenous Muslim population there, thus flexing its influence along part of its southern periphery.

Mali:

Chad's support mission in Mali, to which it sent a few thousand troops, was very influential in gaining positive media coverage for the country and boosting its global prestige, despite its dismal domestic economic situation and widespread "human rights" criticisms. Furthermore, N'Djamena reinforced its strategic relations with Paris and reminded its former

imperial master and one-time kingmaker in its affairs of why the present leadership is useful in promoting shared "Françafrique" interests. This could thus be interpreted as a proactive move on Deby's part to preempt any future regime change schemes that France might be tempted into hatching, whether on its own prerogative or pressured to do so as part of the US-French trans-African alliance that's been active over the past several years.

From a more self-interested standpoint, Chad was able to resolutely demonstrate its commitment to effectively fighting terrorism and also showcased the breadth and scope of its military reach. Being able to transport around 2,000 troops on short notice through the Nigerien Sahel to eastern Mali's borders was an impressive feat, made even more striking by the fact that Nigeria has yet to demonstrate this capability. Moreover, from a grand strategic perspective, Chad showed that it has very close relations with Niger and Mali in order to do this in the first place, thus bearing proof that N'Djamena's influence is confidently expanding past its borders and all along Nigeria's northern frontier. It doesn't mean that Chad is doing any of this with explicit anti-Nigerian intentions in mind, but it can't be excluded that Abuja might interpret it in a zero-sum way to mean that its neighbor is 'getting the best of it' in its own ECOWAS sphere.

Anti-Boko Haram Coalition:

Through the mechanism of multilateral coordination against the shared threat of Boko Haram, Chad has been able to somewhat formalize its role as the regional hegemon of the Lake Chad basin. This doesn't mean that it exerts full control over each of the countries that it's allied with, but that it definitely holds the upper hand when it comes to military prowess in their related borderland regions. N'Djamena doesn't isn't set to abuse this, however, since it doesn't want to isolate its Nigerien ally nor its Cameroonian one on which it depends for most of its international trade. Rather, Chad wants to establish a sort of buffer region in Northeastern Nigeria that would proactively prevent a rejuvenated Nigeria from ever becoming too self-confident in the borderland region. To remind the reader, the reason why Chad is so particularly sensitive to this is because its capital lies within very close distance to Nigeria itself, separated only by a very thin corridor of Cameroon's Far North Region. Being the strong military power that it's progressively evolved into being, Chad has the capabilities and the willpower to enforce its regional vision on its much more populous and wealthy Nigerian neighbor, despite the peculiar optics of such a small and absolutely impoverished country like Chad being able to strategically strong arm its much larger and oil-rich rival.

Going even further, there might be some very forward-looking logic to what Chad is trying to do. Many observers agree that Nigeria is deeply divided between its Muslim North and Christian South, with each region being far from homogenous and afflicted by its own local conflicts (such as Boko Haram against fellow Muslims in the North or MEND/"Avengers" against their Southern Christian counterparts). Although Nigeria is now divided up into dozens of states and this North-South dichotomy is no longer as clear cut nor administratively formalized like it was in the years right after independence, it's unmistakable that this sense of oppositional identity has never gone away and could provocatively be said to have even strengthened in the past couple of years with Boko Haram and MEND/"Avengers". Therefore, Chad's active involvement in beating back Boko Haram and saving regular Muslims from its terror, a responsibility which would ordinarily fall on the Nigerian national government had it not been for the authorities' absolute

dysfunction in most regards, has considerable influence in warming up this northern population towards N'Djamena's soft power advances, something which could be very useful for its foreign policy in the event that the North-South Nigerian split becomes more pronounced and results in the emergence of quasi-independent states (or statelets) in the future.

A Chadian-Angolan Tag Team?:

Chad's rise as a regional heavyweight in the Lake Chad basin and surrounding territories occurs at the same time as Angola becomes more prominent in African affairs as well. Like it was explained in the appropriate chapter about that country, Angola and Nigeria appear to be on a strategic collision course in becoming undeclared rivals with one another, as Abuja fears Luanda's creeping influence in the Gulf of Guinea and along Nigeria's coastal energy deposits. From a mainland perspective in the opposite cardinal direction, Chad is also competing with Nigeria and seems to be on the winning side for now. If one takes for granted the supposition that smaller states typically bandwagon together in balancing against stronger ones (whether that said country is presently strong or has the potential to be so in the future), then it would make sense for Angola and Chad to coordinate their complementary actions in strategically 'containing' Nigeria.

Angola already competes with Nigeria in the energy sphere and has growing influence in the maritime and coastal reaches that Abuja believes constitute its exclusive sphere of influence, while Chad has proven that it is much more militarily capable than Nigeria and has heavier sway in the neighboring Francophone countries than the Anglophone state will ever have. Luanda and N'Djamena thus have corresponding advantageous that could harmoniously interlock with one another in keeping Nigeria in check. The author isn't espousing this idea, but merely drawing attention to it and raising awareness about its obvious existence. Angola and Chad certainly have a shared interest in keeping Nigeria in its presently weakened state, yet neither of these potential strategic partners is physically close enough to the other to let their rivalry ever interfere with their respective interests. Angola is chiefly concerned about energy and potential maritime affairs vis-à-vis its insular and coastal partners, while Chad's focus is on the Lake Chad basin and the Muslim communities in the region. If the two countries partner up, whether officially or informally, in 'countering' Nigeria and conspiring to perpetually keep it on the strategic defensive, then it could evolve into a real asymmetrical threat for Abuja which might even be exploited one day by unipolar powers such as France and the US.

New Silk Road Connectivity

Chad has somewhat surprisingly become the regional focus of China's New Silk Road plans, though for the convoluted geopolitical reasons explained in the previous introductory chapter. Up until recently, China's only interest in the country was oil, of which Chad has plenty in its Southern Christian region. There's also substantial oil located in the Lake Chad basin, but it's the reserves in the south which have garnered international attention. Exxon Mobil partnered up with Chevon and Petronas to build the [Chad-Cameroon Pipeline](#) in 2003 which connected the oil fields in Doba with the Atlantic port of Kribi, the latter of which is Central Africa's only deep-sea port and is [financed](#) by China's Export-Import Bank. China eventually gained extraction rights to several nearby fields but ran into trouble with the authorities over environmental regulations in 2012-2013, which resulted in the government [cancelling](#) five of its permits in 2014. It's likely that there was more to this scandal than initially met the eye and that Chad's French and/or American allies might have

put pressure on N'Djamena to make the business environment very difficult for Chinese energy companies, but the spat appears to have been resolved a year later with the Chadian government and its CNPC partners renegotiating a profit-sharing deal in 2015.

While energy ties are indeed the anchor of the Chadian-Chinese relationship, mutual ties between both partners have slowly begun to take on a more comprehensive form. "The Globalist" writes that "China created an African power" in Chad by purchasing so much of its oil that it helped fuel the state's military expansion, which interestingly also worked out to the benefit of France when it came to 'contracting' N'Djamena's forces for participation in Mali and the Central African Republic. The Chinese also envision Chad functioning as a crucial transit state for Nigerien oil and cross-continental trade in general, with the former being due to the plans for a prospective Niger-Chad pipeline through the country to connect with the Chad-Cameroon one, while the latter is epitomized by the CCS (Cameroon-Chad-Sudan) Silk Road to the Cameroonian port of Douala. Chad consistently ranks near the top of the list when evaluating the world's poorest and most destitute countries, so even a comparably minimal expansion of real-sector trade through its territory could have the effect of immensely bettering its citizens' standard of living and having visibly tangible effects on the country.

Another intriguing observation is that the more interconnected that Chad becomes to the outside world, especially through the framework of the New Silk Road, the more inadvertently dependent it becomes on Cameroon, which is its gateway to wider trade. Specifically, Chadian national security no longer ends at the country's borders or its near environs (like Darfur, Northeastern Nigeria, or the Northern CAR), but now extends as far as the Cameroonian Atlantic ports of Douala and Kribi. This means that the country now has a very real stake in everything that happens with its southwestern neighbor, which has become elevated to the point of being its most strategic partner. It's partially for this reason as well as self-interested ones of directly securing N'Djamena that Chad directly intervened in Cameroon's Far North Region and helped Yaoundé expel Boko Haram from its territory. The effect that this had was highly beneficial in strengthening the Cameroonian-Chadian Strategic Partnership and showing the former that it can depend on its much militarily stronger counterpart so long as it continues to provide the latter with unrestricted access to the seas by means of its port facilities.

In the future and if everything goes according to plan with the CCS Silk Road, then Chad will diversify is dependency on Cameroon by expanding its commercial linkages with Sudan. It doesn't seem at all feasible that Chad will ever come to rely on Libya as a northern vector of trade owing both to the complete dearth of trade-facilitating infrastructure between the two countries and the perpetually insecure situation in the former Jamahiriya. From the Western angle, it wouldn't make much sense for Chad to detour as far as Benin's Cotonou like Niger does, nor does N'Djamena have the money to invest in proper roads to make this happen. While the theoretical solution would be to use Nigeria as its premier access route to the global market, for strategic and security considerations, this isn't something that's viable or attractive to Chad's leaders. Becoming reliant on Nigeria would totally reverse Chad's erstwhile strategy of asserting itself as an independent actor vis-à-vis the expected (but not actual) regional heavyweight, and even if such a determination was eventually made to be in the country's best interests, the fragile security situation in Nigeria makes it irresponsible for Chadian decision makers to place too much hope in safe transit through its territory.

Consequently, the Cameroonian-Chadian Strategic Partnership is the most dependable option that N'Djamena has for achieving New Silk Road connectivity, though it would be

much better balanced if it made physical progress in its portion of the CCS Silk Road and began integrating its economy more closely with Sudan's like China has been encouraging.

Hybrid War In The North-Central African Heartland

It's now time to explore the handful of Hybrid War scenarios that could realistically occur in Chad. All of the following possibilities are connected and build upon the observations and conclusions previously made in the research. The salience to this part of the study is in identifying the driving forces that could contribute to Chad backsliding into the totally failed state that it was at the beginning of the 1980s, when warlords abounded and foreign powers had a free-for-all in intervening in its affairs. The implosion of Chad into a black hole of chaos would complete the process of trans-Saharan destruction initiated by Libya's Western-inflicted collapse, making it nearly impossible for any dependable multipolar transnational connective infrastructure projects to traverse through their territories. This in effect would prevent the supra-equatorial east-west integration of the continent and make it all the more difficult for grander transregional integration projects to succeed in Africa. Other than the inherent civilizational risk that violent 'tribalism' could develop among the country's over 200 separate ethnic groups (though only in any case through a prior deterioration of the military and state's control), the most likely Hybrid War scenarios facing Chad are as follows:

Color Revolution:

The traditional method of asymmetrical regime change that was first rolled out in the former communist bloc and then perfected in the "Arab Spring" is also very applicable to Chad, especially since [65.1%](#) of the population is 25 years or younger and thus very susceptible to partaking in these events. There are two contexts through which a Color Revolution could occur in the country, and they can be divided into whether Deby is still alive and ruling the country or if he passes away. To begin by addressing the first, this could likely occur if an incipient Hybrid War situation develops in coastal Cameroon which ends up disrupting the routes that Chad depends on for most of its trade. It was earlier remarked that this could lead to a sudden surge in prices concurrent with product shortages, which together would exacerbate the already existing anti-government feelings among some parts of the country and might even push the Southern Christians over the edge, especially if the government's response is plausibly interpreted as favoring Northern Muslims at their expense. A variation of this scenario would be if an 'Islamic uprising' is able to take hold in the country, whether independently occurring of any aggravated economic crisis or consequently related to it. The government has done an excellent job in preventing this from happening, even going as far as to [ban the burka](#) for security reasons, but it can't be discounted that Islamic fundamentalist terror cells might already be embedded in the country and waiting for the right time to spring into action.

As for the second context in which a Color Revolution could occur, this would be in the immediate aftermath of Deby's passing, which could prove to be a trigger event for initiating this sort of destabilization. The government would have to make sure that the uncertainty surrounding his successor is resolved as soon as possible, such as how the case was with Turkmenistan and recently Uzbekistan, since the longer that elite infighting goes on for, the more vulnerable the state as a whole becomes to non-state-actor destabilizations, be they Color Revolutionaries, terrorists, or their combined manifestation as Hybrid Warriors. On a related note, the military is indisputably the most powerful institution in the country, so it would end up having the final say over who succeeds Deby. If

it's sidelined in any way, or an irreconcilable split emerges or is brought to light by the president's passing, then it could be possible that a military coup might be attempted by the dissatisfied segments of this bloc. For the moment, however, this is just analytical speculation about theoretical scenarios, since it's extremely hard to get any information out of the country about the state of the military and its unity, but it's important for observers to at least be made aware of this unlikely possibility so that it doesn't take them off guard in the event that it indeed happens.

Breaching The Borderland:

The next related scenario that could transpire to upset Chad's internal stability would be if border conflicts resume along its periphery and end up spilling over into its territory. The problem with Boko Haram is the most pressing for the moment, and it doesn't seem as though it'll go away anytime soon, which is why the Chadian military regularly remains on standby for sporadic cross-border raids into Niger, Nigeria, and Cameroon. Chad cannot at all afford for Boko Haram to make any progress on its territory because of the geographically vulnerable position of its capital right near the front lines of the war, which would lead to a regional catastrophe and most likely a global crisis if it ever fell. This probably won't happen because of the battle-hardened nature of the Chadian Armed Forces as compared to the much lesser experienced Boko Haram militants, but the problem might be if the terrorists breach the border in unconventional asymmetrical ways such as through their ideological appeal among the population. While Chad could easily defend itself from a conventional cross-border invasion by the group, it would have much more difficulty countering its ideological aggression, which might lay the seeds for many sleeper cells all through the country. The state would have a hard time responding to the coordinated uprising of multiple terrorist networks all throughout the country, especially if this occurred in the context of an uncertain leadership transition after Deby's passing, for example, and if the military is caught off guard by this in any serious way, then it might creating an opening for rebel groups to advance on the capital like they did in 2008.

The other peripheral conflict that could easily spill over into Chad would be if there was a resumption of fighting in Darfur, though so long as N'Djamena has nothing to do with it, then it's not expected that Khartoum would respond as it did in the mid-2000s by supporting its proxy equivalents in Chad. Actually, Chad and Sudan might be able to work together in the spirit of their recently renewed good neighborliness in jointly squashing any external attempts to foment violence in their shared borderland region, which could then end up making the two partners even closer than they've ever been before. However, if an atmosphere of distrust once more returns to the bilateral relationship (whether 'organically' or through the interference of a third-party actor such as the US or France), then the chances for a renewed round of crisis in Darfur would phenomenally rise, with the first metaphorical victim being the CCS Silk Road. Compared to an outbreak of cross-border conflict with Boko Haram, though, a continuation conflict in Darfur wouldn't be as instantly destabilizing for Chad because of how far away it would occur from the country's center of gravity along the western-southern periphery. The consequences could thus be more easily contained with refugee to deal with "Weapons of Mass Migration" and armed checkpoints to guard against insurgent infiltration.

In giving a comprehensive overview of all of the borderland threats which could affect Chad, it's necessary to offer a few words on those emanating from Libya and the Central African Republic. The North African state is a dysfunctional mess and its Mediterranean coast is controlled by an ever-changing mix of terrorist and rebel groups. The southern Fezzan

region abutting Chad is noticeably less destabilized, though that's only in comparative terms. Tens of thousands of economic immigrants cross the Chadian-Libyan border en route to the northern coast on their eventual way to the EU, but for now at least, there isn't any significant flow going the other way (though there was in the immediate aftermath of the NATO War on Libya). This is mostly due to the fact that the terrorists don't have any control over this part of the country because they're more concerned with achieving operational proximity to Europe, controlling the oil terminals, and administering populated and economically active areas from which they could procure 'taxes' (protection money). Also, just like with Chad's eastern border with Sudan's Darfur, the northern one with Libya is mostly deserted and easy to manage, meaning that any threatening cross-border activity such as the conventional spread of Daesh could be quickly dealt with. Thus, in all actuality, Libya doesn't pose much of a danger to Chad's national security right now, though the authorities would of course rest easier if their neighbor hadn't turned into such a terrorist nest, despite these forces mostly being concentrated on the extreme northern side of the country.

<u>"Weapons Of Mass Migration"</u>:

Out of all of Chad's neighbors, it might end up being the Central African Republic (CAR) that poses the most dangerous overspill scenarios of all of them. It was already explained how CAR is divided between Christians and Muslims, and how a low-scale "Clash of Civilizations" genocidally played out on its territory and prompted a French and African Union intervention. The country's citizens have mostly stayed within their borders and haven't engaged in any large-scale refugee outflows to their neighbors, but a return to violence there in the wake of Chad's 2014 withdrawal and France's <u>future one</u> at the end of 2016 could be catastrophic and lead to this eventuality, in which case and depending upon the specific conflict scenario and unfolding dynamics, could lead to western-based Christians going to Cameroon and northern Muslims fleeing to Chad. The reason why this is being discussed as part of the Hybrid War possibilities against Chad is because the prospective host country already has a very delicate internal balance between its 200+ ethnicities and the North-South rivalry between Muslims and Christians. Moreover, the southern part of the country is where most of the foreign-exported oil is located, which gives it an even more heightened strategic role for the state.

In such an important yet fragile region, the large-scale influx of religiously separate refugees would undoubtedly create a security problem for the state. Many of the individuals that would arrive in Chad would have been fleeing because they were targeted due to their identity, thus making them self-conscious and on guard when around locals of the 'rival' religion (as they'd interpret it after having just fled from marauding mobs of the opposition confession). The obvious tension that this would create in and of itself, multiplied by the social and economic stresses that would soon unfold after their arrival, could be enough to push the Southern Christians past the edge and into open rebellion, whether against the refugees, the government, or both. This demographic is aware of the strength of the Chadian Army which has managed to keep their otherwise restive sentiments under control for the past decades, but in a desperate situation where they're already angry about not receiving what they feel is their fair share of natural resource revenue from under "their" soil, faced with sudden socio-economic challenges such as food shortages and inflation due to the refugee influx's resultant spike in consumption, and confronted with what may be hostile and somewhat terroristic elements within their mix, it would be understandable why the Southern Christians might reckon that enough is enough and resort to agitational means

(Color Revolution, Unconventional War) to resolve their plight.

‘Clash Of Civilizations’:

Finally, the most debilitating Hybrid War event that could occur within Chad would be Central African Republic-like ‘Clash of Civilizations’ between the Northern Muslims and the Southern Christians. The author would like to emphasize at this point that he would hate to see this happen and that all Chadian citizens should ideally identify themselves by their inclusive, composite nationality and not by exclusive, separatist ethnic, tribal, or religious labels, but that it’s a fact of life that many people – especially the impoverished and uneducated, of which Chad unfortunately has a statistical plethora – are often prone to these sorts of simplistic and divisive self-identifications, thereby making them prime targets for provocative rabble-rousers intent on causing trouble. Having clarified that, the Southern Christians seem to be the super-demographic most at risk of turning against the government en mass, given that they could be corralled into believing that they share the same collective grievances despite their tribal differences. As was mentioned in the previous scenario and earlier in the text, these are animosity over what they might be led to believe is the unfair dispersal of the resource revenue gained from under “their” soil and the perception that the Muslim-led government mostly supports Muslim and Northern interests in general.

The mighty military, the only real (coercive) integrational force within the country, has thus far kept the region and its population in check and prevented any real uprising from occurring, but if the people are forced into desperation through “Weapons of Mass Migration” and/or the military is destabilized in any way due to an unexpectedly fierce border breach (let alone multiple simultaneously occurring ones from opposite directions) or an uncertain leadership transition fraught with elite infighting, then the space might open up for this to happen. Again, it’s not to predict that this *will* happen, but simply to identify the facts that would have to be in place for it to occur, thus giving observers certain indicators to monitor in tracking the progression of this scenario. Even though it’s of low certainty, it’s definitely a high-risk eventuality, which is why it must be seriously discussed and assessed by experts and relevant decision makers alike. This conflict template is so disruptive because of the speed with which it could generate international media coverage and prompt outside intervention, whether of the overt type that could potentially be carried out by France and its in-country military forces (possibly as “peacekeepers” in joint coordination with the African Union) or the covert one of Salafist terrorists and hostile/supportive state actors such as Sudan (depending on the circumstances of the bilateral relationship at that time).

A Southern Christian revolt against the Northern Muslims could quickly turn into a civil war that might then rapidly grow into an international one if “genocide” (whether real, imagined, or exaggerated) occurs and/or state failure follows. The eruption of another front in the ‘Clash of Civilizations’ (itself just a blueprint for how the US plans to divide and rule the Eastern Hemisphere in the post-Cold War era) could have the demonstration effect of encouraging similar sorts of conflicts in Chad’s neighborhood or emboldening the ones that are already occurring, potentially leading to a transnational zone of destabilization and an expansion of the Failed State Belt into the Sahel-Sahara region.

To be continued...

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views expressed are his own. He is the author of the monograph "[Hybrid Wars: The Indirect Adaptive Approach To Regime Change](#)" (2015). This text will be included into his forthcoming book on the theory of Hybrid Warfare.

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