



## DÉBY'S CHAD

POLITICAL MANIPULATION AT HOME,  
MILITARY INTERVENTION ABROAD, CHALLENGING TIMES AHEAD

Jérôme Tubiana and Marielle Debos



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## ABOUT THE REPORT

This report examines Chad's political system, which has kept President Idriss Déby in power for twenty-seven years, and recent foreign policy, which is most notable for a series of regional military interventions, to assess the impact of domestic politics on Chad's current and future regional role—and vice versa. Supported by the Middle East and Africa Center at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), the report is derived from several hundred interviews conducted in Chad, the Central African Republic, Niger, France, and other countries, between October 2015 and October 2017 as well as desk research. Unless otherwise cited, statements in this report are drawn from these interviews.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jérôme Tubiana is a researcher who specializes in Chad, Sudan, and South Sudan. He has conducted numerous field research missions in conflict areas for various organizations, most notably the Small Arms Survey and the International Crisis Group. His publications include two studies on Darfur for USIP, a book on the Darfur conflict (*Chroniques du Darfour*, 2010), and various articles in *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, the *London Review of Books*, and *Le Monde diplomatique*. Marielle Debos is an associate professor in political science at the University Paris Nanterre and a member of the Institute for Social Sciences of Politics. Before her appointment at Nanterre, she was a Marie Curie fellow at the University of California, Berkeley. She is the author of *Living by the Gun in Chad: Combatants, Impunity and State Formation* (2016).

Cover and TOC photo: Idriss Déby and traditional chiefs at a horse race in his stronghold of Am Djerès, northeastern Chad, January 2016. (Photo by Jérôme Tubiana, ©2016)

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### United States Institute of Peace

2301 Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20037

Phone: 202.457.1700

Fax: 202.429.6063

E-mail: [usip\\_requests@usip.org](mailto:usip_requests@usip.org)

Web: [www.usip.org](http://www.usip.org)

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[Chad's future is an uncertain one, given the risks of new attacks by Boko Haram, the impact of falling oil prices on a desperately poor and corrupt country, the uncertainty about who will succeed an aging and reportedly ill president, and how that successor will be chosen.]



## Summary

- In recent years, thanks to its military interventionism, Chad has acquired a new regional and international status. This new role gives President Idriss Déby Itno, who took power by force in 1990, global political capital and leads international partners to turn a blind eye to his country's weak democracy.
- Chad is still vulnerable to regional threats. Its military intervention against Boko Haram makes it a target for that extremist group, and although N'Djamena is sometimes seen as a bulwark of regional stability, its interference abroad, notably in the Central African Republic, has had a destabilizing impact.
- An oil-producing country, Chad has been hit hard by the drop in global oil prices. The severe economic problems facing Chad, however, have deeper roots. Meanwhile, austerity measures have triggered strikes and massive protests in a country where most citizens are desperately poor.
- The root causes of the various crises that have beset Chad have never been addressed. Déby has been able to retain his grip on the presidency thanks to an unpopular modification of the constitution in 2005 and subsequent rigged elections up to and including the contested 2016 vote.
- Although power remains concentrated within Déby's ethnic group, the regime has been able to co-opt elites from other regional and ethnic backgrounds.
- The country may be plunged into crisis if arrangements are not made in advance for a Déby successor. The question of how to transfer power is made more complex because the current regime's repressive tactics and divide-and-rule strategy have hindered the formation of a strong civilian opposition.



Map 1. Chad and Its Neighbors



Source: Shutterstock/Peter Hermes Furian.

## How Déby Came to Power

Since independence in 1960, Chad has evolved from a one-party state into a multiparty regime with rigged elections, endured successive rebellions, and become an interventionist regional actor.<sup>1</sup> Thanks to an oil boom and corruption, some segments of the Chadian elite have become very rich, but most Chadians are mired in poverty, and the country as a whole is near the bottom of global development rankings. Idriss Déby Itno's contribution to this unhappy history has been to resist both negotiated and violent regime change, build military muscle, and impose political continuity, but he has done so at the price of hopes for a democratic and inclusive society.

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**Two years after independence, Tombalbaye turned the country into a one-party state and became increasingly authoritarian.**

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Colonized by France for about sixty years, Chad elected its first president in 1960—François Tombalbaye, the leader of the Chadian Progressive Party. Two years after independence, Tombalbaye turned the country into a one-party state and became increasingly authoritarian, provoking great resentment with his insensitive policies toward the Muslim north. Rebellions broke out in 1965 and gained momentum at the end of the 1970s, when France and Libya (and, albeit to a lesser extent, other regional players) intervened.

In 1979, the rebels captured the capital, N'Djamena, and overthrew the southern-dominated regime. The rebel leaders then fought among themselves. The civil war lasted three years. One of those commanders, Hissène Habré, seized control of the country in 1982 and began eight years of tyrannical rule marked by conflict with Libya, support from France and the United States, and widespread atrocities and human rights abuses.<sup>2</sup>

In 1990, Habré was overthrown by his former chief military adviser, Idriss Déby Itno.<sup>3</sup> Déby had been accused in 1989 of plotting a coup against Habré and had fled to Sudan where he formed, with other opponents of Habré's regime, the Mouvement patriotique du salut (MPS, or Salvation Patriotic Movement). The MPS rebels—supported by France, Sudan, and Libya—started fighting Habré's army in late 1989, and a year later marched into the Chadian capital. Habré fled to Senegal. Déby assumed the presidency of Chad on December 5, 1990. His first words as president were "I bring you neither gold, nor money, but freedom." This would be only the first of many broken promises.

Twenty-seven years and five presidential elections later, Déby is still in power. From a distance, his presidential longevity might seem to be a sign of his capacity to maintain a kind of stability. In reality, however, Déby has held on to power by controlling the armed forces, fighting rebels backed by neighbors, supporting rebels from neighboring states, revising the constitution, rigging elections, and co-opting, intimidating, or repressing his unarmed opponents. His efforts to concentrate political, military, and economic powers within loyal sections of his ethnic group, the Beri, have provoked considerable dissent among civil society and opposition parties as well as several major rebellions.<sup>4</sup> The last politico-military crisis began in 2004–05 with the creation of a new rebel coalition backed by Sudan. Twice—in 2006 and 2008—rebel forces entered N'Djamena before being forced to withdraw. The rebellion was defeated in 2009. A year later the rapprochement between Chad and Sudan undermined what remained of the coalition, though rebel factions have been trying to survive in Sudan, the Central African Republic, and Libya.

One of the ways Déby has stayed in power is his use of foreign policy, wielding Chad's large and battle-hardened military forces to turn the country into a major regional power. He has been able to curry favor with powerful allies—chiefly France and to a lesser extent the United States—that can give him matériel, financial, and political backing. Déby's Chad has come to be seen by both Western and African states as a valuable ally in the fight against violent extremists, which not only are active in neighboring countries but also have begun to threaten Chad itself.

Chad's future is an uncertain one, given the risks of new attacks by Boko Haram, the impact of falling oil prices on a desperately poor and corrupt country, the uncertainty about who will succeed an aging and reportedly ill president, and how that successor will be chosen.

## **How Déby Stays in Power**

The Déby regime is the first in Chad's history to hold regular elections, both presidential and parliamentary, yet its electoral record is one of rigged votes and broken promises of peaceful political change.

The first elections were held in 1996. The results—contested by the opposition, civil society, and international NGOs—are widely believed to have been rigged with French support: both France and the United States are suspected of encouraging Déby to remain in power whatever the real results of the vote.<sup>5</sup> After Déby won a second and similarly contested victory in 2001, the constitution was changed, limiting the presidency to two terms. Déby recently and surprisingly claimed that he had made the change—and thus agreed to remain in power—under French pressure.<sup>6</sup> The change provoked intense criticism both inside and outside Chad, and a number of key political figures launched a rebellion to oust Déby. The revision, however, was approved in a referendum in 2005 (the opposition being divided between those who urged a no vote and those who favored a boycott). The following year Déby was again elected president in a vote that most of the opposition boycotted. This election took place shortly after the rebels' first attack on N'Djamena.

In August 2007, under the auspices of the European Union, the government and the civilian opposition reached an agreement intended to guarantee that the next elections would be fair. The document included measures designed to foster an appropriate environment for participatory politics and credible elections. One of the most ambitious and important provisions was the depoliticization and demilitarization of the public administration by moving toward an independent, meritocratic civil service. That provision, however, was ignored by the government and its European Union supporters. Despite the persistence of the rebellion and repression of unarmed opponents, Chad's Western partners pretended to believe that elections would be a significant step to resolve the Chadian crisis, neglecting the opportunity to launch an inclusive dialogue that might have brought together the government, the armed opposition, the civilian opposition, and civil society.

In February 2008, during the second rebel attack on N'Djamena, the most prominent opposition leader—Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh—was arrested. He has not been heard from since, and is widely considered to have been “disappeared” by the regime. Déby repeatedly promised justice but instead paid compensation money to two of Ibni Oumar's three sons, appointing one of them as head of the state cotton company Cotontchad.

In 2011, what remained of the opposition again boycotted the presidential race, leaving Déby facing a rival candidate from what is called in Chad the *presidential mouvance*—the circle of politicians and political parties that are not part of the ruling MPS but nonetheless support Déby.<sup>7</sup>

The most recent presidential election took place in April 2016. For the first time in the history of the country, biometric identification technology was used to register voters.<sup>8</sup> This expensive technology provided by a French company led to a more accurate electoral roll, but, as opponents warned, it did not prevent fraud.<sup>9</sup> Unlike in previous elections, the European Union sent no observers, and the only international observers were from the African Union (AU). Not unexpectedly, these observers concluded that the vote allowed the citizens to “freely choose their leaders... in a peaceful atmosphere.”<sup>10</sup>

No one was surprised when Déby won the election, garnering 62 percent of the votes in the first round. He faced thirteen candidates, all of them men and none of them with anything like the resources at the disposal of Déby's party, the MPS. The most alarming problem was the state's continued repression of any opposition voices. For example, at least twenty soldiers and policemen who were thought to have voted for the opposition disappeared; some of them have still not been heard from. Despite these serious concerns, French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian (together with Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, Mali's Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, and Central Africa's Faustin-Archange Touadéra) came to N'Djamena in August 2016 for the swearing-in ceremony.

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### *Co-opting Opponents, Dominating Politics*

The election precipitated a fresh wave of political and social tension. In July 2016, a month before Déby's inauguration, twenty-nine opposition parties created a coalition called the Front de l'opposition nouvelle pour l'alternance et le changement (FONAC). FONAC brings together the parties and the six presidential candidates that do not recognize Déby's election.

The civilian opposition, meanwhile, has long been trapped between co-optation and repression.<sup>11</sup> The Déby regime has managed to ensure the dominance of the MPS within a political system notable for the multiplicity and weakness of other parties. It has played a successful divide-and-rule strategy by co-opting individuals and groups along personal and tribal lines, rewarding them with positions and money.<sup>12</sup> Those it cannot co-opt have been regularly intimidated, arrested, or even assassinated or disappeared. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that the civilian opposition remains weak.

The MPS is a powerful crony network, the only political party with enough resources to be present in every region of the country. Its finances far outstrip those of a profoundly fragmented opposition. At least 150 political parties were registered in Chad between 1991, when the one-party system came to an end, and 2012. By 2016, the number reportedly reached two hundred.<sup>13</sup> Of those, only thirty-six have had representatives in one or more of the three National Assemblies elected in Chad since 1990 (in 1997, 2002, and 2011). The 2011 Assembly's 188 members hail from thirty parties, 117 from the ruling MPS, and the remaining seventy-one from twenty-nine other parties.

The opportunities for opposition parties to reduce the MPS's majority in the National Assembly have been significantly limited by disruptions to the schedule for parliamentary elections. Elections planned for 2015 have been postponed because of a lack of funds and delays in the process of biometric voter registration and because priority was given to the presidential election. The current National Assembly's mandate officially ended in 2014 but will be prolonged until the next vote takes place, which is unlikely before 2019. This is not the first such postponement. The National Assembly that was elected in 2002 and supposed to serve for just four years sat until 2011.<sup>14</sup>

Many parties are essentially servants of the regime. No fewer than ninety-six of them joined a presidential alliance supporting Déby's candidacy for the 2016 presidential election.<sup>15</sup> Of the seventy-one MPs not members of the MPS, only forty-six are registered as opposition parties; the others are allies of the regime.<sup>16</sup> Some opposition leaders believe that of the sixty parties considered to be part of the opposition, around thirty are splinters from the main opposition parties created either by the regime or by politicians looking for rewards from the regime. As one opposition leader put it, "The leaders are more important than the parties, and each [leader] wants to have his own party."

The two leading opposition figures today are Gali Ngothé Gatta, who chairs the opposition umbrella group known as the Coordination des partis politiques pour la défense de la constitution (Coalition of the Political Parties for the Defense of the Constitution, or CDPC), and Saleh Kebzabo, the president of the Union nationale pour la démocratie et le renouveau (National Union for Democracy and Revival). Kebzabo, whose party has the most (fourteen) MPs outside the dominant MPS, is considered the leader of the opposition in the National Assembly.<sup>17</sup> He is also the head of FONAC.

Because of its resources, which it uses in a patronage system to co-opt cadres across the country, the MPS appears the only truly national party. Others appear less diverse regionally and ethnically in their membership and their support, and their leaders often garner strong

support only in their region of origin. Many prominent opposition leaders are from southern Chad, whose political elite was in power from independence in 1960 until northern rebels took control in 1979. Yet the political field cannot be reduced to a north-south division. Kebzabo and other southern figures, such as former prime minister Joseph Djimrangar Dadnadji, are now able to find support among northern intellectuals, including members of the Beri and Teda-Daza ethnic groups disappointed by Déby.<sup>18</sup>

### *Tight Control of Civil Society*

Civil society appeared to blossom, as did the political opposition, after the early 1990s, when the Déby regime allowed freedom of association and the freedom to form political parties. The number of civil society organizations exploded, one opposition leader estimating that it had grown to more than six hundred by 2015. Many registered civil society organizations, however, are actually *gongos* (government NGOs), created by the regime to duplicate organizations that are seen as having the potential to threaten the regime in some way. The government's fears are not without some foundation, because many existing NGOs and more informal associations do not hide the fact that they see their role as one of countering the power of the regime.<sup>19</sup> In addition, they mostly recruit among southerners; few northerners participate in the civil society arena, except among the *gongos*. Activists in northern and eastern regions considered to be politically strategic by the regime are under considerable pressure and do not have the same room to maneuver as those based in the capital or in the south. Civil society is also divided about its relations with the opposition, some groups in favor of coordinating with the opposition and others determined to maintain their distance from opposition leaders they criticize for being hegemonic, easily co-opted, and concerned only for themselves.

Despite government efforts to muzzle civil society, social discontent has been growing in recent years and has encouraged the creation of several civil society coalitions: *Ça suffit* (Enough), *Trop c'est trop* (Too much is too much), and the youth movement *Iyina* (We are tired). These coalitions involve human rights organizations and more informal associations, as well as the powerful *Union des syndicats du Tchad* (Coalition of Trade Unions). They are inspired by the *Balai citoyen* in Burkina Faso, a political grassroots movement that successfully called for strikes and helped precipitate the departure of President Blaise Compaoré. In March 2016, four leaders of those three groups—Mahamat Nour Ibedou, Younous Mahadjir, Nadjo Kaina Palmer, and Céline Narmadji—were arrested as they were planning peaceful demonstrations to protest Déby's reelection bid. They were charged with “disturbing public order” and “disobeying a lawful order” and, after being held in custody for three weeks, received four-month suspended jail sentences ahead of the vote. Clearly, the regime was trying to send a clear and intimidating message to its political opponents a few weeks before the elections.

Social discontent has grown amid a particularly tense political context. When, in July 2015, Parliament passed a new counterterrorism law, members of the opposition expressed fears that political protests and other peaceful opposition activities could be seen as terrorist acts under the new law, which defines terrorism quite broadly. As if to confirm these fears, and empowered by the new hardened security context, officials increasingly warned that public criticism of the regime could be dealt with severely.

Private newspapers and radios in Chad are numerous, and often take critical stances toward the regime. They are also regular targets for government intimidation. In February 2017, for example, journalist Daniel Ngadjadoum from *Tribune Info* was detained for four days by the intelligence services after publishing an article criticizing Déby.<sup>20</sup> Social media have developed

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rapidly in the past few years and have begun to play a crucial role in organizing protests and mobilizing social discontent. Recognizing this, access to the internet and social media was repeatedly blocked before, during, and after the 2016 election, until December 2016—which carried a collateral cost for the Chadian economy estimated at about \$20 million.<sup>21</sup> Text messaging was also blocked for several days before and after the election because the regime was anxious to restrict the sharing of information, especially the results of the election. The blackout, however, did nothing to quieten the situation or dispel rumors.

### *Monitoring the Rebellion*

In 1966, northern opponents of Tombalbaye's rule formed the Front de libération nationale du Tchad (Chad National Liberation Front, or Frolinat) in Sudan's Darfur region. The movement soon fragmented along ethnic lines but remained the main reference point for dozens of successive rebel factions and (short-lived) coalitions. Between 1966 and 1990, the only Chadian opposition was armed or in exile, with an agenda focusing on violent regime change achieved through a swift assault on the capital city with the support of one or another neighboring country (Libya, Sudan, or Niger). The three last Chadian presidents, and many other Chadian politicians, were once rebel leaders who came to power thanks to armed insurgencies. It is also customary for disgraced politicians to join a rebellion, if only for as long as it takes to negotiate with the regime and arrange their return to power. As a result, few in Chad believe that gaining political influence is possible without first spending time in a rebel movement. Several generations have come to regard war and rebellion as a normal activity and often a source of income as well as a way of life.<sup>22</sup> Today, the armed opposition is like the official opposition: weak and divided along tribal lines and individual interests. The most recent rebel coalition was decapitated by the 2010 Chad-Sudan rapprochement, after which Khartoum not only stopped supporting the rebels but also disarmed and expelled most of them. Many combatants and leaders went back to Chad without conditions, but others preferred exile. A few Beri combatants from the Union des forces de la résistance (UFR, or Union of Resistance Forces) remained on the field in Darfur in western Sudan, but with the help of Sudanese Beri rebels rather than of Khartoum.<sup>23</sup> Others, from various rebel groups, took refuge in the tri-border region of Chad, Sudan, and the Central African Republic (CAR), where some of them, including members of the Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement (Union of Forces for Democracy and Development, or UFDD), UFDD-fondamentale (UFDD-F), UFR, Front populaire pour la renaissance nationale (Popular Front for National Rebirth) and the Mouvement national pour le salut du peuple (National Movement for the People's Salvation, or Mosanap), reportedly joined CAR's Seleka rebels.<sup>24</sup>

From 2015 onward, hundreds of Chadian current and former rebels and migrants, notably from the Dazagada ethnic group, have become mercenaries in Libya. Some have been hired by the so-called Libyan National Army led by General Khalifa Haftar in Tobruk; others are fighting for forces linked to the Misrata brigades, the Benghazi Defense Brigade, and the Government of National Accord in Tripoli. A group of several hundred Chadian fighters is reportedly based in the Jufra area of central Libya, and were initially hoping to obtain from their Misrati hosts the support they need to launch a new rebellion against Chad. These hopes were dented, however, when the group's political leaders, Mahamat Nouri and Mahamat Mahadi Ali "Goran," began to compete with one another for the leadership and disagreed on the benefits of linking with the Misrati forces. Fighting between their supporters erupted in late March 2016, and in early April, Mahadi announced that his faction was splitting from Nouri's UFDD. Mahadi's fighters formed the Front pour l'alternance et la concorde au Tchad (FACT,

or Front for Change and Concord in Chad), which reportedly became the main Chadian rebel movement, with one thousand combatants and two hundred cars.<sup>25</sup> In June, another split occurred as several hundred combatants led by Mahamat Hassani Bulmay, the former UFDD spokesperson, formed the Conseil de commandement militaire pour le salut de la république (Council of Military Command for the Salvation of the Republic). In June 2017, as Haftar's Libyan National Army took over the Jufra area from Misratan forces without encountering much resistance, the FACT troops found their bases suddenly under Haftar's control but managed to secure a tacit pact of non-aggression. However, in the contested area of Sebha, Bulmay's troops were attacked by Libyan National Army-affiliated forces.

Smaller remnants of the UFR also traveled from Darfur to Libya. They were reported to have seized \$11 million during a skirmish with narcotraffickers in 2015, but were attacked in early 2016 by local Arab militias, which may be linked to the traffickers but also appear to be supported by Haftar. They were also reportedly bombed by Haftar's aviation in the oil crescent north of Jufra. In 2017, they reportedly established relations with the Benghazi Defense Brigade, supported by Qatar, allegedly thanks to Qatari intermediary and financial support (the group's leader, Timan Erdimi, has been based in Doha since he was expelled from Sudan in 2010).

Déby's regime is carefully monitoring the situation in southern Libya, concerned about the possibility of a new front opening on Chad's northern border. In August 2017, Bulmay claimed to have attacked the Chadian national army (Armée nationale tchadienne, or ANT) in Tekro, 150 kilometers south of the border—the first rebel incursion into Chadian territory since 2010. For now, however, as the Chadian rebels themselves acknowledge, the chaos in Libya does not make it the best rear base from which to organize a new rebellion. In October 2017, Bulmay, who had crossed to Niger, was arrested by that country's authorities, whereupon reports circulated that he should be handed over to Chad.<sup>26</sup>

### *Protests Against Impunity*

In February 2016, a new type of civil society, including coalitions of otherwise fragmented organizations and more spontaneous youth movements, seemed to emerge in reaction to the rape of a seventeen-year-old student known as Zouhouira.<sup>27</sup> Among the alleged rapists were the sons of two army generals and of the then minister of foreign affairs, who has since been named the AU Commission chair.<sup>28</sup> The gang rape triggered massive protests, involving hundreds of high school students, in the streets of N'Djamena and other cities, including Faya in the extreme north. One protester was killed by security forces in Faya and another in N'Djamena.<sup>29</sup>

Although sexual violence has long been taboo, the issues of violence at school, in particular violence committed by the sons of regime dignitaries, and of these culprits' impunity (hence their nickname, the untouchables) have been discussed within the Chadian media and civil society for years. Such discussions, however, have had little consequence—until now.<sup>30</sup> This time, people were shocked when the culprits posted a video of them with their victim on social media. The same social networks erupted in protest, prompting the regime to block access to those networks.

In the meantime, Déby quickly condemned the crime. The suspects were arrested—a clear sign that such an incident, and the reactions it provoked, were unwelcome ahead of elections. The father of Zouhouira, Mamahat Yesko Brahim, initially a presidential candidate from a small opposition party, stood down at the last minute in favor of the president, and rumors circulated that he had received a lot of money from the regime. By late June, seven young men were found guilty and condemned to ten years in jail by the Criminal Court in N'Djamena.<sup>31</sup>

The perpetrators are all Beri, and Beri leaders have expressed fear that this and other crimes are fueling deep resentment against the community. Some Chadians believe that the regime played on Beri fears and concern for protection from hostile ethnic groups to mobilize the Beri on Déby's side ahead of the elections. Even beyond Chad's borders, some leaders of the Khartoum-backed Arab Janjawid militias in Darfur (themselves involved in massive rape campaigns against targeted non-Arab communities) have accused Chadian Beri dignitaries of raping Arab girls—a reference, it seems, to reports of a Chadian Arab official's daughter having been raped by a close relative of the president. Many members of Arab militias in Darfur are originally from Chad, so such reports may have a negative impact on the historically good relations between Arab and Beri communities in Chad.

### *Manipulating Ethnic Ties and Rivalries*

What the Chadian public as a whole think of the Beri is important to Déby's hold on power, because not only is he a Beri himself but also (much like his predecessor, Habré) he has concentrated political, military, and economic power within sections of his ethnic group.<sup>32</sup>

The Beri, who straddle the border between Chad and Sudan, consist of three main subgroups, the Bideyat, the Kobe Zaghawa, and the Wogi Zaghawa. Since coming to power, Déby has placed some Beri in key positions in the security forces and allowed others to take control of state and privatized companies as well as to develop private companies.

Despite this patronage, Déby has not enjoyed consistent support from all members of the Beri. In fact, he has faced opposition since the early 1990s, in particular from the Kobe Zaghawa, historically much more powerful than his own Bideyat subgroup, whom he tended to favor.

Since 2004, he has also faced unexpected opposition from Bideyat political and military leaders who once constituted the core of his regime. In particular, the twin brothers Tom and Timan Erdimi, his cousins from the Urala clan, joined the rebellion against him. In reaction, he concentrated power more around his own clan, the Kolyala, and within his own family, including his cousins, brothers, sons, daughters, and, more recently, sons-in-law.<sup>33</sup> In 2009 and 2010, his policy of rapprochement with Sudan alienated him from some members of his family, who had been supporters of the Darfur rebellion since 2003, initially against the president's advice, and who were not keen to sever ties. Chief among them is Idriss Déby's half-brother, Timan Déby, who had been made sultan of the Bilia Bideyat subgroup by the president and was then dismissed from the position and replaced by the president.<sup>34</sup>

A master at playing ethnic politics and stoking rivalries, Déby also enlarged his ethnic basis to the Borogat Bideyat, a confederation with both Beri and Teda-Daza origins. The Borogat Bideyat have opportunistically played on this double identity, being considered Goran under Habré (Goran is one of the two Teda-Daza subgroups; the other is Tubu) and Beri under Déby.<sup>35</sup> Such adaptability has earned them the nickname *clef à molettes* (adjustable wrench). As for the Goran subgroup, despite having constituted Habré's main base and, in part, having rebelled against Déby in both the 1990s and the 2000s, Déby cautiously avoided antagonizing the group as a whole and consistently co-opted key individuals and subgroups in both his government and the armed forces.

More generally, the president has always co-opted individuals from various ethnic groups, not the least from southern Chad. His governments have invariably displayed a careful balance between regions and ethnicities—an exercise known in Chad as geopolitics. In the Chadian government, each minister is supposed to be a representative of his or her region and ethnic group, though very often co-opted individuals have weak legitimacy in their region.

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They are also seldom within the most powerful of political circles, being isolated both locally and nationally.

In recent years, a new family or clan has appeared within the Chadian regime: the clan of Hinda Déby, once the president's secretary, whom he married in 2005. Unlike Déby's former spouses, the educated Hinda, daughter of a diplomat from the Wadday region, has not presented herself merely as the mother of some of the president's children but has become known as the *Première Dame* (First Lady). She has been said to play a key role in her husband's decision making at times, notably regarding the economy and the appointment and dismissal of government officials. Hinda's brother Ahmat Khazali Acyl is currently the minister of education, and members of her extended family (in particular, her aunts' and sisters' husbands and sons) are said to play an increasingly important role, especially in the oil sector.<sup>36</sup> As a consequence, Hinda and her relatives have become rivals to the Déby family, who are said to be very hostile to the first lady.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, while power in Chad has remained concentrated around the president, it is not confined to one clan; instead, power shifts within and among rival clans, with the president sometimes playing on the rivalries to reassert his authority. Indeed, although the president is the cornerstone of the political system, many within the power circles have regularly challenged his authority and taken decisions (including on regional politics and the economy) that run counter to his preferences. Power in Chad is often to be measured less in terms of the ability to win the president's favor and more in terms of the ability to act without his consent.

### *Controlling Security Forces*

For twenty-seven years, the armed forces have been the mainstay of the regime's power.<sup>38</sup> Few figures on the size of the armed forces are reliable: estimates range from twenty thousand to fifty thousand. Half of the troops are part of the ground forces of the ANT. Others are part of the *Direction générale des services de sécurité des institutions de l'Etat* (DGSSIE, or General Direction of the Security Services of State Institutions), which was known as the *Garde républicaine* (Republican Guard) until 2005 and whose budget comes directly from the presidency. Both a presidential guard and an elite force constituting the core of Chadian forces deployed abroad, the DGSSIE numbered between six thousand and ten thousand men by 2015, but may have been recruiting (French officials quote figures of fifteen thousand or so). Although less important, the three-thousand- to four-thousand-man *Garde nationale et nomade du Tchad* (National Nomadic Guard), is another seasoned force that took part in operations abroad. Both forces are said to be better paid, trained, and equipped than ANT soldiers. Finally Chad has also a five-thousand-strong gendarmerie, which, on the French model, plays a police role in rural areas, and a police force of possibly more than ten thousand men.<sup>39</sup>

Many members of Chad's armed forces joined directly from the rebel MPS forces that brought Déby to power. The MPS was dominated by Déby's Beri kinsmen, but the rebel force also included fighters who can be considered as Chadian-Sudanese binationals, though many Chadians would consider them as Sudanese.

To be sure, from the beginning of the regime, Chadian forces also incorporated members of other ethnic groups, including MPS veterans as well as Dazagada (Goran) and other elements from Habré's army. Non-Beri have been also represented at higher echelons, including the chief of staff position; the current ANT chief of general staff, General Brahim Seïd "Bacha," for instance, is from the Wadday region. The position of defense minister has also been regularly held by non-Beri, including since 2016 by an Arab, Bichara Issa Jadalla. Yet the armed

forces, in particular the DGSSIE, do not seem to respond as readily to orders from the chief of staff or the defense minister as they do to orders from the president himself.

Most of the DGSSIE men—50 to 60 percent of them—are Beri. Key officers, such as ANT Deputy Chief of Staff Saleh Toma, Ground Forces Commander Ismaïl Hur, the head of the Gendarmerie Taher Erda, and various zonal commanders, are Bideyat, sometimes of Sudanese origin, and appear to report directly to the president. The president's relatives, including his sons, have gradually taken more important positions. The DGSSIE is commanded by the president's son, Mahamat "Kaka," who was formerly the deputy commander of the Chadian forces in Mali; the National Nomadic Guard is commanded by Déby's cousin, Mahamat Saleh Brahim; another cousin, Ahmat Yusuf, heads the Renseignement militaire (Military Intelligence); yet another, Bokhit Digin, heads the joint Chad-Sudan border force; and Déby's brother, Omar, directs the strategic reserve (armaments and other supplies). At lower levels, non-Beri officers often seem to have Beri deputies, who appear to wield the real power.

Déby does not, however, have complete faith in the loyalty of his Beri officers. Particularly since 2004, a number of key Beri have joined the rebellion led by Tom and Timan Erdimi, and others, such as the late Mahamat Ali Abdallah, who is rumored to have been poisoned by the regime, have been seen as possible rivals of or successors to the president. This has led the president to empower not only family members but also non-Beri officers who remained loyal to the regime even when their kinsmen were joining the rebellion. As former MPS rebels retire from the Chadian armed forces, some of their places may be taken by officers from other ethnicities, who have slowly made the army a more nationally representative and professional force. The professionalization of the Chadian armed forces may also be spurred by a gradual inflow of younger Beri soldiers, who are better trained and educated than the retiring MPS veterans they are replacing.

The large size of the armed forces puts a heavy burden on the state's budget. Foreign donors, most notably the European Union (Chad's largest donor at about \$47 million a year), have repeatedly pressed the regime to slim the army down, but without much success. Finally, in November 2011, the regime checked the armed forces' entire payroll and identified and dismissed a large number of *ghost soldiers* (inactive or nonexistent soldiers), including many former rebels who had been integrated into the army as a way of suppressing rebellions, such as the hundreds of Tubu members of the Mouvement pour la démocratie et la justice au Tchad (Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad) who were made part of the ANT. This demobilization process was known as the *contrôle de Moussoro*, the garrison town north of N'Djamena that serves as a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration center. The operation was also seen as an opportunity to withdraw from the ANT elements from ethnic groups believed to be disloyal to the regime. Some fourteen thousand troops were reportedly demobilized from an official payroll of fifty thousand. An additional five thousand were demobilized between October 2011 and December 2012.<sup>40</sup>

The Moussoro downsizing took place shortly after the rapprochement with Sudan had brought back to Chad several thousand rebels who had been disarmed by Sudan and who were hoping for integration or reintegration into the armed forces; many of the ten thousand former rebels who were supposed to benefit from a 2011–13 National Program of Demobilization and Reinsertion waited for months in Moussoro before being sent back to civilian life.<sup>41</sup>

But though the regime is keen to get rid of potentially disloyal troops and to eliminate ghost soldiers from its payroll, it is also determined to expand the size of the armed forces overall. The rebel raid on N'Djamena in 2008 convinced the regime that it needed to recruit soldiers loyal

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**The large size of the armed forces puts a heavy burden on the state's budget.**

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enough to defeat any new attack. Since 2011, the armed forces have expanded from around thirty thousand to between forty and fifty thousand men (excluding the police force).

Yet well-informed sources say that real combatants number no more than twenty-five to thirty thousand, because inactive or fictitious soldiers were recruited again. In 2015, the recruitment of eight thousand more troops was announced.<sup>42</sup>

Oil revenue has made the addition of new recruits, as well as the purchase of sophisticated weaponry, possible. Since 2006, Chad's purchases have included a dozen fighter jets (Su-25 and MiG 29), four Mi-24 attack helicopters, and two transport aircraft (C-27J Spartan), as well as several hundred armored vehicles.<sup>43</sup> Between 2004 and 2013, Chad reportedly imported conventional military hardware from fourteen different countries at a cost of approximately \$194 million.<sup>44</sup> Part of these new acquisitions are now used for the interventions outside Chad—interventions that in recent years have been endorsed, encouraged, or even requested by Western players, not least by France. As such encouragement has grown, international pressures on Chad to reduce its military have dissipated.

Like the armed forces, the intelligence service—known as the Agence nationale de sécurité (ANS, or National Security Agency)—is dominated by Beri kinsmen. Its main mission used to be to watch and intimidate the civilian opposition and civil society members, as well as to prevent and dismantle rebellions. Unlike the armed forces, it has rarely been praised as particularly competent, but it did play an important role during the proxy war with Sudan from 2005 to 2010.

From 2004, the ANS was led by Mahamat Ismaïl Chaïbo, a Beri with influential connections in Sudan—he is a cousin of Hassan Mohammed Abdallah Borgo, once a key official in Sudan's ruling National Congress Party, and of Jibril Abdelkarim “Tek,” one of the early chiefs of staff of the Darfurian rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM).<sup>45</sup> In 2011, he was removed to become presidential adviser in charge of security, a position he held until 2015, when he was replaced by former interior and security minister Abderahman Moussa, who was felt to be more competent to face the Boko Haram threat. Another security veteran, Ahmat Mahamat Bachir, was appointed as security minister. Between 2012 and 2016, the ANS was led by Jiddi Saleh, a Kreda (a Dazagada subgroup) close to former president and former rebel leader Goukouni Weddey. Saleh's appointment also likely reflected a shift in priorities from the proxy war with Sudan to the struggle against terrorist groups, in particular Boko Haram, but also to the situation in Libya, a country Saleh knows well, having been exiled there with Goukouni.<sup>46</sup> The civilian opposition and civil society initially responded favorably to Saleh's appointment, but the new chief's popularity has decreased as a result of the continued harassment of the opposition, civil society, and media by the intelligence service. Saleh was replaced in 2016 by Ismat Acheikh, then in 2017 by Ahmat Kogri, both army generals—an unusually rapid succession at the head of the ANS.

Chad's security forces may be slowly transforming from a militia-style collection of former rebel combatants into a professional army able to operate abroad and raise Chad's international profile. The cohesiveness of the armed forces, however, is still threatened by ethnic differences and inequalities between elite forces and others who, even when deployed abroad, appear to be poorly paid, equipped, and motivated. This slow transformation already seems strained by the need to perform two roles—conducting missions abroad and protecting the regime at home—within a context of economic crisis and uncertainty surrounding the regime's future. Whoever succeeds Déby, whether democratically or otherwise, will need to ensure as a priority not only the security forces' loyalty but also their capacity to intervene in difficult theaters and their accelerated transformation into a truly national, professional army.

## How Foreign Policy Serves Déby's Regime

Chad's foreign policy is controlled by Déby, who uses it to bolster his regime and advance his ambitions to be seen as a major international player by courting Western and Middle Eastern support, denying his domestic foes foreign sanctuary, enhancing the capacity and reputation of Chad's military, and bolstering the country's status as an active, interventionist regional power.

Policy is reportedly decided mostly by Déby, in consultation with his foreign affairs minister (Moussa Faki Mahamat until 2017) and a few confidants from his innermost circle. Other foreign affairs, military, and security officials have only limited input.

Although Chadian diplomacy has grown more active and influential in recent years, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a weaker institution than it appears, and until recently its performance rested heavily on the shoulders of Moussa Faki. Faki served as prime minister between 2003 and 2005, then as foreign minister from 2008 until early 2017—an unusually long tenure in a country where governments often last less than a year. An ethnic Beri with an Arab mother, he grew up in an Arab environment, a double identity that may have been an asset to him in handling relations with countries as ethnically divided as Sudan and Libya. By the same token, however, that Faki is not wholly Beri restricts his influence on internal affairs and prevents him from being seen a possible challenger of the regime—a limitation that also helps account for his longevity in office. In March 2017, Faki became chairperson of the AU Commission and was replaced at the ministry by Hissein Brahim Taha, until then Chad's ambassador to France.

This lack of an institutionalized foreign policy-making process makes it even easier for the regime's interests to shape Chad's foreign policy goals. Those goals are both defensive and offensive. Foremost among the defensive goals—indeed, among all goals—is and always has been to establish good relations with neighboring states, particularly to cut support to armed Chadian opponents of the regime. Pursuing this goal has sometimes led Chad to interfere in the affairs of its weaker neighbors (notably, CAR) to help more friendly regimes take power. According to a key foreign affairs official,

The first of our fundamentals is to have peace not only inside Chad but, above all, all around the country. Chad is landlocked and depends on its external relations. The president's first international gesture [in the early 1990s] was to reconcile with Libya, the country from which all our past misfortunes came.

Until Déby came to power, Chad had a long history of conflict with Libya, Sudan, and Nigeria, each neighbor supporting Chadian rebels at one time or another, and Chad often responding in kind.<sup>47</sup> This antagonistic approach changed with the advent of Déby, whose takeover was supported more by Tripoli and Khartoum than by Paris. Although relations with Khartoum soured over the Darfur issue between 2005 and 2010, the Chad-Sudan rapprochement since 2010 has reinforced Chad's appetite for good neighborly relations.

This is not to say that Chad neglects opportunities to become a more powerful actor in its neighborhood. In the past decade, it has strengthened its military capabilities compared with its neighbors, which have been suffering from internal armed conflicts (Sudan, Libya, and CAR) or terrorism (Nigeria, Cameroon, and Niger) and have relatively weak armies. Recognizing this, N'Djamena has sought to seize the opportunity to boost its regional influence through military interventions abroad. Indeed, a key instrument of its foreign policy has become—to cite the phrase used by one key official—armed diplomacy. “We have used our military interventions to assert ourselves internationally,” the official explained.

Déby's first interventions abroad were similarly discreet, intended to support one side or the other, and often undertaken with the backing of allies such as France, Libya, and Sudan.<sup>48</sup> In 1997, Chadian troops reportedly intervened in the Republic of Congo to support Denis Sassou-Nguesso's retake of power (although relations have been uneven since). In 1998, they fought in the Democratic Republic of Congo on President Laurent-Désiré Kabila's side against rebels supported by Rwanda and Uganda.<sup>49</sup> In 2003, they supported François Bozizé's takeover in CAR. The same year, they first entered Sudan, alongside the Sudanese army, to fight against Darfur rebels. Gradually, Chadian interventions became official and part of international peacekeeping forces or coalitions against terrorism. The first interventions were often unofficially supported by France. More recent ones have been more widely and publicly backed by international powers.

### *A Valuable but Problematic Ally*

This offensive dimension of Chad's foreign policy not only was aimed at securing a regional leadership role, but also allowed N'Djamena to reinforce its alliance with Paris. Chad's close relationship with its former colonizer has been a defining and enduring feature of the country's foreign policy since independence. The relationship, however, has not always been smooth.<sup>50</sup> In 2012, in particular, French-Chad relations began to sour because of the return to power in France of the Socialist Party, whose leaders, including French President François Hollande, kept blaming Déby for the 2008 forced disappearance of Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh, a member of the Socialist International. However, relations soon warmed again when violent extremist groups, some of them coming from Libya, took power in northern Mali, prompting France to intervene and to look for regional allies with military capabilities. Chad was ready to help. The deal was reportedly sealed during Déby's visit to Paris in December 2012.

In January 2013, nearly a year after Mali came under attacks by Tuareg rebels and violent extremist groups, Chad sent its military to support Operation Serval, a French-led campaign to reclaim the territorial integrity of Mali. Some 2,400 troops, reportedly mostly from the DGSSIE, were deployed and played an instrumental role in the defeat of the armed groups in northern Mali. Chad suffered casualties (between fifty and 150 of its troops were killed), but the Chadian contingent showed itself to be a well-structured military force capable of projecting Chadian interests beyond national borders.<sup>51</sup>

Initially, Chad's intervention in Mali was estimated at \$150 million. Not until late 2014 did the United Nations begin to finance the deployment, yet all Chadian officials acknowledged the "diplomatic benefit."<sup>52</sup> When, in late 2015, Chad decided to reduce its forces in Mali to 1,400 troops to focus on "more important needs" near home, French officials privately described the redeployment as "truly bad news for us."

Chad is now considered to be a key ally of France and the United States in the fight against violent extremist groups, and French and US support for Déby's regime has been reinforced in the past few years.<sup>53</sup> In 2014, Chad's new status of France's best ally in the Sahel was consolidated by the decision to base the headquarters of the new French regional three-thousand-man-strong operation Barkhane in N'Djamena, absorbing both older Serval and Epervier operations (the latter began in 1986).<sup>54</sup> Chad has also gained a central place in the US military strategy in the Sahel, which is implemented by the US military's Africa command, and serves as a base for US support to Nigeria in combating Boko Haram.<sup>55</sup>

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**Paris and Washington have to ignore calls from international NGOs to hold the regime accountable for its human rights abuses and undemocratic practices.**

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French and US support for Déby does present some problems. To allow Chad to continue to play the role of a regional policeman, Paris and Washington have to ignore calls from international NGOs to hold the regime accountable for its human rights abuses and undemocratic practices.<sup>56</sup> Even so, French support for Déby shows no signs of wavering. In early 2017, as François Hollande was about to leave the presidency, the French government sent Déby further signs of enduring friendship. On January 18, the *Journal officiel* published a decree ordering a freeze of the financial assets of Chadian armed opposition leaders Mahamat Nouri and Mahamat Mahadi, officially accusing them of activities designed to “incite and facilitate terrorist acts.”<sup>57</sup> This assertion was nowhere to be found in an intelligence note requesting those sanctions, suggesting that Paris was ready to use the fight against terrorism as an excuse to support Déby against his armed opponents. Three days before, another *Journal officiel* decree conferred French citizenship on First Lady Hinda Déby and her children.<sup>58</sup>

In May 2017, Hollande’s newly elected successor, Emmanuel Macron, appointed Jean-Yves Le Drian, reputed to be a close friend of Déby’s, as the new minister of foreign affairs—an indication that Macron is likely to continue to support Déby, prioritizing regional security over longer-term governance concerns. The honeymoon, however, was lightly grazed by AU’s Moussa Faki, who, in September 2017 called for an AU solution to the Libyan crisis, criticizing international, and implicitly French, interventions.<sup>59</sup>

US-Chad relations have become more uncertain since, in September 2017, the Trump administration unexpectedly added Chad to the list of countries banned from visas to the United States. “Chad does not adequately share public-safety and terrorism-related information,” the statement read, contradicting Trump’s praise in the same statement of Chad as “an important and valuable counterterrorism partner.”<sup>60</sup> The American decision may also hamper US-French partnership on counterterrorism in the Sahel.

### ***A More Prominent Role in International Institutions***

Since dispatching its troops to Mali and showing its value as an ally to France, Chad has been able to count on French support as it has pushed for more Chadian representation within international organizations. This effort has had success.

Within the AU, Chad’s role was initially limited due to its outstanding \$3 million debt to the organization. In addition, Chad’s close ties to France and to rogue states such as Gadhafi’s Libya and Eritrea earned N’Djamena the distrust of such key member states as Ethiopia and South Africa, as well as other non-francophone countries. In January 2016, Déby took over the presidency of the African Union. And, as noted, in March 2017, Faki became chairperson of the AU Commission.<sup>61</sup>

Chad then ostensibly distanced itself from France and France’s other African allies. First, beginning in 2010, Chad increasingly took a position against the International Criminal Court, in line with N’Djamena’s rapprochement with Khartoum. Second, Chad joined ranks with South Africa and eight other AU members to support the formation of an African Standby Force. Third, in the 2012 election to become chair of the AU Commission, Chad supported the election of South Africa’s Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, who was running against francophone (and France-backed) candidate Jean Ping from Gabon. Although this stance was also motivated by the fact N’Djamena considered Ping biased toward Khartoum at the time of the Chad-Sudan proxy war, support to Zuma allowed Chad to obtain in 2012 the appointment of Fatima Haram Acyl as AU commissioner for trade and industry.

Among other signs of growing diplomatic influence, in 2014 and 2015, Chad obtained, with the support of France and China, a nonpermanent seat in the UN Security Council. Chad was also chosen to represent the Central Africa Region in the enlarged mediation on the South Sudanese crisis led by the Horn of Africa regional organization known as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. In the Horn as well, the former Chadian minister of foreign affairs from 1997 to 2003—Mahamat Saleh Annadif—held the portfolio of AU representative to Somalia and head of the AU Mission to Somalia from 2012 to 2014, before being appointed (with French support), in January 2016, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali and head of the UN Mission to Mali.<sup>62</sup>

Since 2016, for the first time, Chadians have also been leading regional institutions. The secretary-general of the Economic Community of Central African States is Ahmad Allam-Mi, former Chadian foreign affairs minister and ambassador to the United Nations; since January 2017, the governor of the Bank of Central African States has been Abbas Mahamat Tolli, Chad's former finance minister and the former chair of the Development Bank of Central African States.<sup>63</sup>

Despite these accomplishments, Chad's pursuit of its diplomatic and military ambitions has hit several speedbumps. On the diplomatic front, the economic crisis spurred by the decline in oil prices compelled Chad to abandon some of its ambitions; also, and most disappointingly for Déby, Chad had to give up its plans to host the June 2015 AU summit because it could not afford to complete construction of required infrastructure in N'Djamena.<sup>64</sup>

On the military front, although Chadian troops have generally shown themselves to be an able, even formidable fighting force, their morale has been dented by losses suffered on the battlefield and by smaller-than-expected increases in their salaries and delayed payments. Dissatisfaction among the Chadian soldiers in Mali, notably over unpaid salaries, led to defections, mutinies, and clashes within the ranks of the Chadian contingent; the decision to bring half the force home was driven at least in part by concern over such signs of discontent.<sup>65</sup> Chad's troops are now said to be reluctant to be deployed in possible future interventions, including in Libya and in Yemen, where rumors circulate that Chad is considering contributing several thousand troops to the Saudi-led Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism. Chadian officials denied having deployed troops but confirmed that N'Djamena is a member of the coalition, which was announced in December 2015.<sup>66</sup>

Yet if N'Djamena manages to redistribute to its troops a larger amount of the international funds now available for its interventions abroad, Chad's armed forces may further bolster their reputation as one of the best African forces. And this will not only continue to win N'Djamena the support of Western actors such as France and the United States, which are looking for ground troops to battle violent extremist groups, but also help N'Djamena in its relations with African states and in conducting its own, growing struggle with groups such as the Islamic State and its affiliates, including Boko Haram.

N'Djamena, of course, possesses other foreign policy tools than its readiness to deploy its military. As shown in the following brief analyses of Chad's evolving approaches to Sudan, Libya, CAR, and Boko Haram, another characteristic of N'Djamena's foreign policy is its adaptability and opportunistic nature—its *realpolitik* readiness to shift its support from one actor to another when needed to secure the regime's objectives or when external developments present an opportunity to do so.

### *Sudan: Sustained Rapprochement at the Cost of Darfur*

Chad still hosts more than three hundred thousand Sudanese refugees from Darfur who are unable and unwilling to return to Darfur because of insecurity there and, often, occupation by Khartoum-backed Arab militias. Funding from donors preoccupied by newer emergencies has shrunk—World Food Program daily rations were cut by more than half in 2017—and emergency relief has not been replaced by development activities. As a result, tensions between the refugees and the host communities are rising in a region that offers few livelihood opportunities.<sup>67</sup>

Like other Chadian diplomats, Mahamat Saleh Annadif considers that Chad has become internationally “audible” thanks to the Darfur crisis, and “a key player within the AU and UN” since its rapprochement with Sudan in 2010, which N’Djamena sees as a main foreign policy achievement. Thanks to that unexpected rapprochement, Chad managed to effectively end the rebellion by the Chadian forces based in the Sudan (in exchange for a reciprocal end to the Chadian support for the Darfur rebellion), allowing Chad to use its oil royalties to address other interests and threats abroad.

Beginning in 2003, Chadian officials often described N’Djamena as a mediator of the Darfur conflict, though it has not been recognized as such after 2005, when ethnic links between the Chadian army and the Darfur rebellion, both largely composed of Beri combatants, provoked a five-year proxy war with Sudan. Sudan began to host and give substantial support in the form of arms, money, and recruits to various Chadian rebel groups. Coalitions of these groups twice (in 2006 and 2008) came close to toppling Déby.<sup>68</sup> It was also from the Sudan border that Habré’s coup in 1982 and Déby’s coup in 1990 were launched.

The failure of those attacks and of a raid on Khartoum in 2008 by JEM—then the main Darfur rebel movement, hosted and supported by Chad—helped prompt the rapprochement. Pragmatic politicians on both sides, most notably Chad’s Moussa Faki and Sudan’s Ghazi Salaheddin, who was in charge of the Darfur file in Khartoum, managed to convince their respective presidents that the proxy war between themselves was doomed to fail and was too expensive, both diplomatically and financially. As soon as political will on both sides was apparent, the rapprochement was sealed with reciprocal presidential visits and a two-and-a-half-page bilateral deal agreed upon without any international mediation.<sup>69</sup>

Since 2010, N’Djamena’s main contribution to the situation in Darfur has been to split the three main rebel groups and then send the splinters to sign the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. Sudan and Qatar consider the Doha Document to be the only basis for peace in Darfur, as opposed to the approach favored by the African Union and the United Nations, which seek to solve the Darfur conflict jointly with the conflicts in other peripheral regions of Sudan—South Kordofan and Blue Nile.<sup>70</sup> Whether Chad’s Moussa Faki, now heading the AU Commission, will pursue the pro-Khartoum Chadian approach or the AU holistic approach remains to be seen.

In October 2015, Déby flew to Khartoum rebel leaders who had splintered from the main groups for the launch of Sudan’s so-called national dialogue, from which the main rebel groups were conspicuously absent. The only two rebels present in the opening ceremony were dissidents who had broken away from the main groups thanks to N’Djamena.<sup>71</sup> Chad has contributed to the Sudan government’s divide-and-rule strategy in Darfur by creating new factions within the existing Darfur groups, splinters who are willing to sign agreements and participate in processes sponsored by the government of Sudan, such as the purported national dialogue.

Clearly, Chad has calculated that sustaining its rapprochement with Khartoum means that Chad cannot take a neutral position on Sudan’s crisis. To the contrary, the Chadian regime has relinquished any ethnic or moral solidarity with the Darfur insurgency.

N'Djamena has also sought to consolidate its relations with Khartoum by systematically marginalizing and opposing the main Darfur rebel groups both politically and militarily. A key tool of the rapprochement was the setting up of the joint Chad-Sudan border force, numbering seven hundred to more than a thousand men. This force, as well as other purely Chadian forces, was reportedly authorized to enter Sudan's territory to fight Darfur rebels on several occasions, in particular in 2013, after the JEM had murdered, on the very border, some members of its own splinter groups that were being backed by Chad.<sup>72</sup>

In 2013 and 2014, Déby organized an unofficial Darfur peace process, consisting of two conferences in his hometown of Am Djerès, in the Ennedi-Est (East-Ennedi) region of Chad, bordering Sudan. The rebels, however, were not invited: the aim was mostly to push Sudanese Beri, as well as Arab Janjawid militia leader Musa Hilal (Déby's father-in-law since 2012), to support Khartoum rather than the rebels. A second aim of Chad's activism on Darfur is to regularly demonstrate to Khartoum that Chad is on its side, and thus help avoid a renewal of Sudanese support to Chadian rebels.

Khartoum reciprocated. In mid-2017, UFR rebels traveling from Libya to Darfur were repeatedly attacked by Khartoum's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Their leader, Mohammed Hamdan Dagolo ("Hemmeti"), accused the UFR of fighting alongside Darfur rebels who also entered Darfur at the time, possibly through Chadian territory.<sup>73</sup> Both Darfur and Chadian rebels denied this, however. Having fought each other at the time of the Chad-Sudan proxy war, since 2010 they appear to have engaged into a rapprochement symmetric to that of the governments they are fighting. According to a Sudanese official, UFR gradually managed to convince JEM not only to cooperate in Libya, but also that both groups could eventually ally against Déby to turn on Sudan.

Because the entente between N'Djamena and Khartoum rests largely on the goodwill of the Chadian and Sudanese presidents and a few officials on both sides, and is not fully supported by the Chadian's regime Beri core or by the security apparatus in Khartoum, it could quickly erode if the leadership of either country changes. In particular, the emergence of a power vacuum in Chad would likely lead Darfur rebels to try to reestablish rear bases in Chad's northeast, which Khartoum would likely try to counter by supporting a takeover in N'Djamena by possible allies, such as Chadian Arab politicians.

A major risk for the stability of the region is the presence in Darfur of thousands of well-armed Janjawid Arab combatants, including many with origins and ethnic links in Chad. Their two main leaders and rivals, Musa Hilal and Hemmeti, both have Chadian origins. Hemmeti leads the RSF, which has been Khartoum's most-trusted paramilitary tool since 2013.<sup>74</sup> Since 2014, Chadian Arab youths have resumed crossing the border to be recruited into the RSF, and those militias have occasionally made incursions into Chadian territory.<sup>75</sup> In early 2017, Darfur Arab militias, including from the RSF, reportedly attacked Chadian troops on the border, kidnapped a French national within Chadian territory, and entered CAR, where they fought local rebel forces.<sup>76</sup> A Chadian Arab rebel estimates that around one thousand RSF troops, including commanders, are former Chadian Arab rebels, many of them former UFDD-F fighters. The August 2017 Chadian rebel incursion from Libya on Tekro, though claimed by Bulmay, was reportedly led by Bachir Fayiq, a Chadian Arab rebel leader who had been a member of Khartoum-backed Arab militias in Darfur before traveling to Libya with the UFR.

Hemmeti reportedly told fellow Darfur Arab leaders that he would be ready to cross the border to support an Arab takeover in Chad, with or without Khartoum's backing. Chad's current defense minister, Bichara Issa Jadalla, is Hemmeti's cousin. Jadalla was first appointed

defense minister in 2006; thanks to his cross-border links, he played a key role in N'Djamena's attempts to neutralize Darfur Janjawid leaders, including Hemmeti. Jadalla is rumored to have been reappointed partly to play a similar role.<sup>77</sup> Possibly under this influence, in 2017, Hemmeti reportedly fought UFR rebels, who then took refuge with his rival Musa Hilal: despite his ties to his father-in-law Déby, Hilal also has kinship connections with some UFR Bideyat rebels, whom he already supported at the time of the Chad-Sudan proxy war, playing a double game with Déby.<sup>78</sup> Other growing threats to the Chad-Sudan entente arise from the unstable international positions regarding both countries. At the same time that the United States imposed the travel ban on Chad, in September 2017, it lifted the ban on Sudan imposed in May as well as, in October, twenty-year-old economic sanctions—praising Khartoum, unlike Chad, for its cooperation on counterterrorism.<sup>79</sup> N'Djaména and some of its allies worried that Washington was blind to Sudanese interferences abroad, notably in Libya, and feared that the apparent inconsistency of those concomitant decisions could destabilize the fragile balance of forces on which the Chad-Sudan entente rests. The entente may also be harmed by both countries' increasingly diverging international alliances. During the 2017 political crisis in the Gulf, Chad broke relations with Qatar and strengthened its ties with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt; Sudan, meanwhile, tried to maintain good relations with both sides.<sup>80</sup> The divergence appears to have already materialized in Libya, where Chad and Sudan, the latter allied with Qatar, have supported opposing sides since 2011. And Libyan forces backed by Sudan and Satar, and possibly Qatar directly, supported Chadian rebels in Libya.

### *Libya: Risks and Opportunities*

If the Chad-Sudan rapprochement could be threatened anywhere, it is in Libya. In 2011, Déby warned against the collateral consequences of NATO's regime change agenda that was targeting Muammar Gadhafi even as Sudan, alongside its Qatari allies, openly supported the Libyan insurgency.<sup>81</sup> Since 2015, Chadian officials seem to consider the possibility that continuous chaos in Libya could lead them into renewed tensions with Sudan. As Libya divided into two rival governments and numerous armed groups, Khartoum—alongside Qatar and Turkey—indicated its preference for the Tripoli-based General National Congress, which includes Islamists, and N'Djaména—alongside Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, and France—openly favored the Tobruk-based House of Representatives and its main military backer, General Khalifa Haftar's self-proclaimed Libyan National Army. Chad was skeptical of UN-led international efforts in 2015 to merge the two rival parliaments into a unity government. When the international recognition shifted from the House of Representatives to the Government of National Accord led by Fayez Seraj in Tripoli, Chad maintained its preference for Tobruk's military strongman. The 2017 Gulf crisis can only reinforce Chad's bias.

“Our analysis differs from the international community's,” a key Chadian official explained. “We don't believe in a diplomatic solution. A force needs to dominate the others and a strong military regime, led by a second Gadhafi, emerge.” Various Chadian officials indicate that the “best horse” in the race to become such a leader would be Haftar, who—despite the limited enthusiasm he generates within Libya and among Western players except France—may be able to “bring back order like el-Sisi in Egypt.”

In October 2015, President Déby received Haftar in N'Djaména and reportedly promised the Libyan general some kind of support while warning him against arming Chadian rebels. Reports have circulated that Chadian migrants, rebels, and former rebels in Libya have hired themselves as mercenaries for all sides, including Haftar, in return for vehicles, ammunition,

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***If the Chad-Sudan rapprochement could be threatened anywhere, it is in Libya.***

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and the promise of future backing against Chad.<sup>82</sup> Given Chad's pro-Tobruk stance, Chadian rebels seem more likely to obtain support from anti-Haftar factions such as the Misrati and Benghazi Defense Brigades—and from their Qatari backers. However, the Chadian rebels may be wary of the anti-Haftar camp's Islamist affinities, which could prove embarrassing for the Chadian armed opposition's quest for legitimacy in the West—even more embarrassing than their former Sudanese backing.

In addition to worrying about rebels roaming across Libya's border with Chad, N'Djamena is concerned about Islamic State's presence in Libya and the possibility that it might gain control of territory in southern Libya and establish links with Boko Haram across the Sahara. Jihadists in southern Libya are alleged to have supported Boko Haram's attacks in N'Djamena in February 2015. Evidence is also said to indicate that weapons of likely Libyan origin are in the Nigerian terrorist group's hands but not any direct supply line between jihadists in Libya and Boko Haram. In December 2014, at the Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa initiated by the French Ministry of Defense, Déby proposed that the “fundamentalists” and “jihadists” in southern Libya should be addressed by a new international military intervention. The French minister of defense, Jean-Yves Le Drian, seemed to indicate a readiness to consider the option. Niger was reportedly supportive as well, although Algeria was more skeptical. The idea was eventually put aside in favor of an intervention directed against Boko Haram, which posed a more urgent threat, but the proposal may yet be picked up again.<sup>83</sup>

In October 2015, the General National Congress accused Chadian troops of crossing into Libya; most Chadian officials denied the accusation, though one did mention an operation against a possible rebel base in southern Libya.<sup>84</sup> In late 2015, in early 2016, and October 2016, reports again circulated of Chadian troops deployed close to the Libyan border to fight against Chadian rebels, but whether those troops actually crossed the border is not confirmed.<sup>85</sup> In December 2016, Chadian troops reportedly penetrated within Libya in the cross-border goldfield of Kouri Bougoudi, north of Tibesti, where Chadian rebels or former rebels were present, digging gold for their personal benefit. The ANT reportedly disarmed many miners as well as a small Libya Teda unit controlling a local market.

N'Djamena is also alleged to have attempted to intervene within Libya, albeit indirectly. Since 2011, Chad has reportedly financed Libyan or Chadian-Libyan Teda militias in southern Libya, though it does not seem that these militias fought against Chadian rebels—at least, they appear to have refrained from supporting the rebels. In February 2016, Chadian rebels in southern Libya were attacked by Libyan Arab militias, but no evidence suggests that N'Djamena was behind the attack. The militias may just have been competing with the rebels for control of trans-Saharan routes on which all kinds of goods (from food to drugs) as well as migrants are smuggled across borders. In December 2016, the FACT claimed that one of its Libyan rear bases had been targeted by aerial bombings (which N'Djamena confirmed), and accused Haftar of ordering the bombing in response to a demand from Chad.<sup>86</sup>

In January 2016, Chad announced that it had closed its border with Libya in reaction to “a potential, serious threat of terrorist infiltration.” Observers noted that the statement failed to acknowledge the presence of the Chadian rebels near the border, including within cross-border goldfields. The statement may have been intended in part to send a message to the Teda, who largely depend on trade and smuggling between Chad and Libya, that hosting Chadian rebels could make their cross-border activities more difficult.<sup>87</sup>

### *Central African Republic: Interfering and Changing Sides*

Chad (alongside France) has a long history of interfering in the CAR.<sup>88</sup> In a region where borders are porous, Chadian rebels repeatedly found asylum in CAR, though rear bases there have never been as useful to the rebels as those in Libya and Sudan. Chad-CAR relations are shaped by more than security interests, however. A large community of Chadians (both Christians and Muslims) as well as Central Africans who have kin in Chad (also from both faiths) live in CAR, where Muslims of Chadian origin make up a large proportion of the trading community. In addition, Muslim pastoralists of both Pula and Arab ethnicities cross the border from Chad to CAR with their livestock during the dry season.

In 2003, General François Bozizé overthrew President Ange-Félix Patassé with significant support from Chad and with the tacit blessing of France. Among the “liberators” were a large number of Chadian fighters as well as Central Africans with Chadian origins (in particular Muslims). Until 2012, Chadian elite soldiers (many of them ethnic Beri), deployed under the Chadian flag and in Chadian uniform, formed a significant part of Bozizé’s personal security guard.<sup>89</sup> They were highly unpopular because of their violent practices and the impunity they were granted.

Relations between Déby and Bozizé gradually deteriorated as the CAR president increasingly sought independence from his original backer, getting closer to rival continental powers, including South Africa and Uganda. N’Djamena, like Khartoum, notably feared the joint deployment of Ugandan and US forces chasing the Ugandan rebels of the Lord’s Resistance Army was an excuse for a possible military intervention against Sudan, which, since its 2010 rapprochement with Chad, might endanger N’Djamena’s regional policy. After a coalition of Central African armed groups—the Seleka (alliance)—emerged in 2012 and was allegedly formed in N’Djamena and Sudan with the encouragement of both governments, Chad was accused of plotting another violent regime change in Bangui. Both Chadian soldiers and Chadian rebels were reportedly present within the Seleka: according to a Seleka officer with Chadian origins, their number was between two hundred and three hundred.<sup>90</sup> The presence of Chadian soldiers (out of uniform) is still a controversial issue.<sup>91</sup> N’Djamena denied their involvement in the Seleka and admitted the presence of only a few Chadian army defectors. Although Chad clearly minimized the numbers, it indeed appears that various ANT defectors joined the Seleka. As for Chadian rebels, factions expelled from Darfur had indeed found refuge in CAR’s isolated northeast and established links with the Seleka at the CAR-Chad-Sudan border. They joined the Seleka for various reasons: some shared the Seleka’s anti-Bozizé agenda; others were promised either material rewards or support from CAR’s next masters against Déby. N’Djaména had also sent envoys to Seleka camps in Sudan to make sure the movement’s agenda would remain focused on CAR rather than Chad. Further, among Chadian fighters in the Seleka were also a number of former “liberators” disillusioned with Bozizé, including some who had left him shortly after he took power to form the first rebellion against him. These included a group of at least fifty men under Adoum Rakhis, a Central African with Chadian origins, who then went to Sudan in the hope of getting support but were forced by Khartoum to join the Chadian rebellion. Captured during the 2006 rebel raid on N’Djamena Adoum Rakhis and some of his men were released and joined the Seleka.<sup>92</sup> Rakhis became CAR’s police director for the short period that the Seleka controlled Bangui, before returning to Chad and being arrested again. The complex trajectories of combatants with fluid loyalties who drift from one armed group to another is all too common across the Chad-CAR border, and indeed throughout the region.<sup>93</sup>

The Seleka, led by Michel Djotodia, succeeded in taking control of Bangui and ousting Bozizé in March 2013, Chadian and AU forces doing nothing to stop the progress of the rebels. Chad was influential in the subsequent transition process. Unable to control the forces that brought him to power and establish stability, Djotodia was forced to resign in January 2014 amid pressure from France and regional leaders, at the end of the Economic Community of Central African States summit, when Déby summoned CAR's entire transitional government to N'Djamena. Relations between Chad and CAR have warmed again since the election of Faustin-Archange Touadéra in February 2016 as Déby reportedly distanced himself from some of the leaders of the now-fragmented Seleka, notably FPRC (Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique, or Popular Front for CAR's Rebirth) leader Nouredin Adam, in particular since the latter advocated for the secession of northeastern CAR. Nouredin, however, reportedly maintained relations with Chad's ANS. N'Djamena's main objective is still to ensure that the Seleka fighters do not join or form a rebellion against Chad. In 2015, Nouredin Adam reportedly handed over to N'Djamena Chadian rebels from within the Seleka; allegedly, some were executed and others imprisoned. During another and similar operation, Nouredin presented some FPRC Chadian fighters he handed over to N'Djamena as members of Ali Darassa's rival UPC (Union pour la paix en Centrafrique, or Union for peace in CAR), describing the movement—to secure N'Djamena's support against them—as an essentially Chadian rebellion. It is unclear whether, while factions of the fragmented Seleka fought each other in 2017, N'Djamena supported, as it was alleged (including possibly with the deployment of ununiformed troops), the FPRC against the UPC. The UPC is composed largely of Mbororo Pula originally from Chad, and N'Djamena has continuously sought to prevent them from using CAR as a rear base for a rebellion in Chad. Another rival rebel movement, the MPC (Mouvement patriotique centrafricain, or Central-African Patriotic Movement), mostly composed of Arabs from Chad or with Chadian origins, and led by Mahamat al-Khatim, a Central-African Salamat Arab with Chadian origins, is reportedly controlling a section of the CAR-Chad border in coordination with N'Djamena.

In April 2014, Chad withdrew its 850 troops serving with the Mission internationale de soutien à la Centrafrique sous conduite africaine (African-led International Support Mission to CAR) in response to criticism that Chad was displaying political bias and that the Chadian contingent had used violence against civilians; Chadian peacekeepers had opened fire on civilians, killing at least twenty-eight people.<sup>94</sup> The issue is still a sensitive one for President Déby, who vehemently criticized a recent UN report blaming Chadian forces for repeated abuses, going back to the time they were supporting Bozizé.<sup>95</sup>

Several Chadian officials, as well as French officials, regretted the hasty withdrawal of the Chadian forces. In 2016, when CAR's newly elected President Touadéra visited Chad, Déby reportedly asked him to request the Chadian troops' return—a demand Touadéra reportedly felt unable to do. In 2017, Chadian officials again suggested the ANT's readiness to redeploy in CAR.

In addition to prompting security concerns in Chad, the continuing crisis in CAR is generating concern about the situation of Chadian returnees and about the impact of the crisis on Chad's economic interests. More than half a million Chadian nationals were said to live in CAR before the crisis erupted in 2012, which resulted in a sharp reduction of remittances for Chad. Cross-border trade in livestock and in goods has also been disrupted. By September 2017, Chad was hosting some seventy-five thousand refugees from CAR.<sup>96</sup>

As one civil society actor put it, among its various interventions abroad, Chad's role in CAR has probably been the most controversial. In Mali and in the fight against Boko Haram, Chad seems, on the contrary, to have gained respect for its military capacity.

### ***Boko Haram: Battling Violent Extremism***

Chad's military role in Mali may well have influenced Déby's decision to take on a challenge closer to home: the threat posed by the Nigerian jihadist group Boko Haram. For years, Boko Haram was not perceived as a direct threat to Chad and Cameroon because the group seemed to focus its attacks exclusively on Nigeria. Indeed, Nigeria saw both Chad and Cameroon as giving tacit support to Boko Haram; even after Cameroon was directly attacked by Boko Haram, Nigerian accusations against Chad continued. Even if—as seems to be the case—rumors of the Déby regime supplying weapons to Boko Haram were baseless, when the group first expanded its presence in north Cameroon, it carefully avoided launching attacks in Chad, likely to avoid facing another and possibly more dangerous enemy.

Chad attempted to play a mediating role between Nigeria and Boko Haram in October 2014. However, when these efforts seemed unlikely to yield any ceasefire agreement, and as Boko Haram fighters in Cameroon moved to within striking distance of N'Djamena, Chad began to worry that it might itself become a target for the terrorists. Authorities in Chad were also concerned that Boko Haram had developed a regional network to sustain itself around Lake Chad and that dormant cells were becoming operational within Chadian territory, including in N'Djamena. In addition, Chad feared an economic downturn if Boko Haram continued to impede the movement of goods between Chad and the Cameroon coast, as well as between Chad and northern Nigeria, two vital routes for Chad's economy. Trade between Chad and Nigeria, including 90 percent of Chadian livestock exports (170,000 head of livestock a year, Chad's largest source of income except for oil) decreased by at least 75 percent between 2014 and 2015, leaving the trade with Cameroon to follow new, costlier routes.<sup>97</sup>

In January 2015, Chadian forces took the lead in inflicting serious losses on Boko Haram forces in Cameroon, Nigeria, and Niger. Up to five thousand Chadian troops retook most of the cities occupied by Boko Haram around Lake Chad. Significantly weakened, Boko Haram's fighters have since been largely confined to the Sambisa Forest in northeastern Nigeria and to Lake Chad's swamps. Hundreds of alleged Boko Haram followers have been arrested and numerous cells have been reportedly dismantled. Chadian losses have not been insignificant: 113 soldiers had been killed by late 2015.

Shortly after its troops began battling Boko Haram outside Chad, in February 2015, retaliatory attacks were launched within Chad, including a series of suicide bombings in the Lake Chad area and within N'Djamena itself. Members of the Chadian security forces admitted privately that the country was less prepared to fight a terrorist group than to tackle a traditional armed insurgency.<sup>98</sup>

Chad plays a leading role in the Multinational Joint Taskforce (MNJTF), created under the Lake Chad Basin Commission in 2014. The force comprises 8,700 troops from Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Bénin, and includes three thousand Chadians. N'Djamena was chosen to host the MNJTF headquarters. The regional intervention still faces financial and logistics problems. The cost of Chad's participation in the fight against Boko Haram is estimated at \$10 million to \$16.5 million per month, and Chadian officials have expressed disappointment at international partners that have failed to honor pledges to help shoulder the financial burden.<sup>99</sup>

Despite criticism (notably from the AU) over the force's effectiveness, diplomatic sources in N'Djamena believe that coordination between the various components of the MNJTF (which is not an integrated force) is functional. The force also represents a revival for the Lake Chad Basin Commission, which was initially formed to respond to drought-induced crises, and is now mutating into a subregional security agency, similar to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in the Horn of Africa. Chad's role in the MNJTF also eased its relations with

Cameroon (which had blamed N'Djamena for supporting the Seleka in CAR) and, after Muhammadu Buhari replaced Goodluck Jonathan as president, with Nigeria. Buhari's presidency has seen a significant improvement in cooperation between Nigeria and Chad.

## Challenging Times Ahead

Déby's firm grip on power and Chad's growing reputation as a militarily able and diplomatically active regional actor might suggest that Chad's future is one of continuing stability at home and increasing stature abroad. In reality, however, the future is far from certain. Foremost among the factors creating this uncertainty are questions over who might succeed Déby, the evolving threat posed by Boko Haram within Chad's borders, and economic and environmental woes.

### *Déby's Succession*

Few Chadian actors dared to hope Déby would not be reelected in 2016, but more hope that his new mandate, which runs until 2021, will be the last one. Some believe that this final presidential term should see the establishment of mechanisms to ensure a smooth transition (and ideally a democratic transition) from Déby to his successor, but most doubt that the president will ever be prepared to contemplate such a process.

Rumors of Déby being unwell have circulated from time to time since the 1990s, but in late 2015 and early 2016 it seemed that he really might be seriously ill; even his relatives were reported to be preparing for the possibility of his sudden death in light of his frequent trips to France for not only political but also medical reasons. In a recent, spectacular interview with French media, the president himself admitted his rule was largely a one-man show: "I'm not an adventurer, I'm not a warrior, I'm a lonely man."<sup>100</sup> Déby has concentrated so much power in himself that his sudden death could create a power vacuum, which in turn would unleash ethnic, political, and personal rivalries and provoke chaos throughout the country, and in particular in border areas.<sup>101</sup>

Until now, neither the president nor his international backers have appeared to worry much about the succession. Among Déby's regular visitors (both Chadian and international), some maintain that he seems unconcerned about the chaos his death might unleash and does not consider seriously the possibility of founding a dynasty or having another Beri strongman succeed him. The issue has been described as taboo within his family. Others, including international actors, claim that they were able to discuss the issue with the president and that he may be worrying about who will succeed him.<sup>102</sup>

Scenarios discussed in N'Djamena for the transition of power include holding an inclusive dialogue, creating a dynasty, the Erdimi brothers returning, and appointing a southern president.

### Dialogue

Most of the opposition, a large part of civil society, and some discreet players within the regime favor dialogue leading to a wider consensus on the path toward a peaceful and inclusive transition. The constitution mandates that in the event of the president's death, the president of the National Assembly would serve as interim president until elections could be held—but this scenario, albeit constitutional, would likely be marred by significant violence. Not only would the innermost power circle and loyal armed forces be likely to attempt to distort any transitional process that would threaten their privileges, but the opposition would also need time to prepare for a truly transparent election that would ideally take place after the peaceful return of exiled opponents and rebels. Proponents of a dialogue believe that it should emulate, to some

extent, the 1993 Sovereign National Conference—when participants from government, the opposition, and civil society set principles for a democratic transition (those principles were not translated into practice)—allowing players of all political and ethnic backgrounds to discuss how to set the stage for a true democratic transition. Ideally, representatives of the regime, the civilian opposition, and civil society, and possibly armed and exiled opposition groups, would be included in the dialogue, and the process would lead to a similarly inclusive transitional government of unity. The dialogue could take place in Chad (should rebels feel safe enough to travel there) or abroad (where international players would provide moral and financial support, guaranteeing safety, observing—but not necessarily mediating—the discussions, and insisting through preventive diplomacy on the primary need to avoid violence).<sup>103</sup>

### Dynasty

Another scenario widely considered plausible is that Déby would prepare one of his sons to replace him, effectively establishing a dynasty. The names of Zakaria, his father's deputy cabinet director, and Mahamat Kaka, are regularly quoted even if, according to Déby's relatives, none has really been groomed to assume the presidency and none would have unanimous support among the Beri. In a related scenario, while his father is still in power, Zakaria would be installed as vice president or as the secretary-general of the MPS so that he would be readier to take over from his father.<sup>104</sup> Amid recent concern about the president's health, some Beri reportedly planned to support as a successor Déby's most influential brother, Daosa, who has long been active in both regional politics (including Darfur and Libya) and business. This seems unlikely given that Daosa resigned from his position of minister of posts and new technologies of information (one of the sectors he has long invested in as a businessman) in early 2016, after a disagreement with the president and the first lady over the marriage of Daosa's daughter.

### Return of the Erdimi Brothers

Tom and Timan Erdimi have been contemplating that, should Déby die, they would return peacefully from exile and enjoy the political and military support of other parts of the Bideyat subgroup; according to some Bideyat officials, the Erdimi brothers would be best placed to control the Beri bulk of the armed forces. They also have good relations with intellectuals from various regions, including the south, and thus their return could lead to a peaceful transition open to non-Beri. This scenario, however, overlooks the lack of unanimity among Beri decision makers. Some Beri officials reportedly discussed with Déby a possible reconciliation with the Erdimis, but the conversation led nowhere.

The Beri community and the armed forces are already divided over Déby's succession. Most Beri realize that the group's political importance is likely to diminish after Déby exits the political scene, but what is vital for them is being protected from retaliation by other ethnic groups, maintaining their influence within the armed forces, and securing their economic wealth. Although some non-Beri opponents do not hesitate to stir up anti-Beri feelings, others are ready to give the Beri some guarantees and to negotiate an open transition in which Déby's kinsmen would participate.

### A Southern President

Some Beri see as a possible scenario Déby's replacement by a southern president who would let them keep key political and military positions.<sup>105</sup> A southern leader would symbolize a

regional shift after more than thirty years of northern rule, but without restoring the unfettered southern dominance of the 1960s and 1970s. Among southern politicians seen as able to work with northerners are opposition leader Saleh Kebzabo and former prime minister Kalzeubé Payimi Deubet.

Another transitional option that some members of the regime and opposition favor would be for Déby to appoint depoliticized, competent cadres or technocrats to run, if not the entire government, then at least some ministries, such as finance, economy, and justice.

Déby's successor—no matter who he or she will be, what his or her origins are, and whether he or she takes power peacefully or democratically—will have to deal with the same foreign policy issues confronting Déby. Moreover, the successor may depend on the support of one or more neighboring countries seeking to install a friendly government in N'Djamena. Sudan and the Tripoli authorities in Libya might support one of the northern opponents to Déby with whom they have already established relations. There is no guarantee that Déby's successor will support a continuation of the Chad-Sudan entente, raising the prospect that Sudan may resume destabilization policies toward Chad to prevent it from once again hosting Darfur rebels, or just to weaken a regional rival.

Another uncertain relationship will be the one between Déby's successor and France. Paris's strong support for Déby has allowed France to limit engagement with his opponents, armed or not; as a result, many of them have spoken out against France. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that Déby's successor, even if he comes from the opposition, will abandon Chad's alliance with France.

The next regime is likely to try to maintain, and even improve, the Chadian army's capacity to intervene abroad, which is seen as a major asset in Chad's foreign relations and key to its ability to play a leading regional role. To bolster this interventionist capacity, the next regime will have to not only control the current armed forces but also transform them into a truly national, more professional army.

### *Evolving Religious Tensions*

Like neighboring Nigeria, Chad has large populations of both Muslims (53 to 58 percent of the whole) and Christians (35 to 40 percent). Unlike Nigeria or the former Sudan prior to the 2011 southern independence, however, Chad seems relatively free from significant violent conflicts between Muslims and Christians and from extremist movements.<sup>106</sup> Yet the country is similarly seen as a strategic area for proselytizing by both Islamic and Christian NGOs and religious organizations.<sup>107</sup> Evangelical and Pentecostal-charismatic churches have been established in southern Chad more recently, as in many parts of Central Africa.

Foreign political Islamist influences appeared in Chad as early as the 1960s, and have increased since the 1990s. While Western observers were focused on the prospect of renewed Libyan influence in Chad, the Muslim Brotherhood, in charge in Khartoum, worked with Sudanese Beri Muslim Brothers to discreetly invest in Chad's economy and political life (they had notably supported Déby's takeover and placed a few people in his entourage). Thereafter, many of those Beri Muslim Brothers joined Darfur's JEM and focused on rebellion in Sudan.<sup>108</sup>

From the 1990s on, seasoned observers as well as representatives of the Tijaniya, the dominant traditional Sufi sect in Chad, have grown concerned about the increasing influence of the Wahhabi Ansar al-Sunna sect.<sup>109</sup> This sect is also present in Sudan, where some of its members have obtained government positions. In Chad, it is reportedly divided into two branches; one of which is believed to be funded by Saudi proselytizing organizations, the other and less influential to be linked to Pakistani preachers.

Both branches are reportedly present among the Kreda of the Bahr-el-Ghazal region. Badly affected by major droughts in the 1970s and 1980s and still suffering from chronic food insecurity, Kreda communities have emigrated en masse, in particular to Saudi Arabia. Those migrants often return to Chad with a Wahhabi message, local residents claim. Wahhabi Kreda are also reportedly present within the Chadian community and the embryonic Chadian rebellion in Libya. Within Chad, Wahhabi imams reportedly criticized Chad's military engagement in Mali. As of 2012, 5 to 10 percent of Chadian Muslims were estimated to follow Wahhabism or another strain of Salafism; this growing trend is worrying both the Tijaniya and non-Muslims.<sup>110</sup>

### *The Threat from Boko Haram*

As yet no links are apparent between the Wahhabi presence in Chad, which is already well established and carefully watched by the regime and the Tijaniya, and the armed Salafist group active immediately southwest of Bahr-el-Ghazal, in the Lake Chad region, in the form of Boko Haram. As noted, Boko Haram at first appeared to respect a tacit nonaggression pact with N'Djamena. This stance changed in January 2015 when the Chadian army struck the group's bases in Cameroon and Nigeria, and Boko Haram immediately responded with attacks on Chadian targets within Chad. The arrests and rendition of members of the group in Chad revealed that Chadians are to be found among Boko Haram's fighters.

The UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions, as well as local and international human rights organizations, raised concerns about the summary execution of some individuals arrested on suspicion of belonging to Boko Haram. In August 2015, after a swift trial, Chad executed ten suspects.<sup>111</sup>

The authorities have regularly accused the Buduma, an ethnic group living on Lake Chad's islands and shores, of providing recruits for Boko Haram. This accusation, however, is based solely on the presence among killed alleged Boko Haram militants of a few individuals who have had typical Buduma scarifications. Condemning the whole community on this basis may not only be unfounded but also prove counterproductive.<sup>112</sup> The combined effect of Lake Chad growing ever smaller, drought in the Kanem and Bahr-el-Ghazal regions, and the political and economic marginalization of the people living there is to make those regions porous to both cross-border politico-military entrepreneurs, and not only those with a jihadist agenda. In early 2016, the Chadian government promised to allocate \$5 million for the region's development and has expressed hopes that Nigeria will contribute to similar development efforts, but such moves are unlikely to have enough immediate impact to prevent the spread of Boko Haram. The government has also begun to rely on civilian committees or vigilante groups, partly funded by the government or by taxes, to counter Boko Haram infiltrations, a tactic that risks making armed communities yet more bellicose and fueling local conflicts between tribal militias to the detriment of the state's authority.

In the meantime, Boko Haram has seen its support diminish within the cross-border communities that previously supplied many recruits. As Boko Haram became more radical, it undermined the cross-border trade and smuggling activities on which communities in the Lake Chad enclave largely depend. This trend has been particularly pronounced in the Kanuri community, with which Boko Haram has been linked in its northeastern Nigerian stronghold. The Kanuri are also present in Chad, and are closely related to the Kanembu community settled north of Lake Chad.<sup>113</sup> The support given to Boko Haram in the early 2000s by the Kanuri community, which has its own grievances against the Nigerian state, has declined

notably because Boko Haram's violence halted cross-border trade between Nigeria's Borno State, northern Cameroon, and Chad, which was the main source of income for Kanuri (and others) in the three countries.<sup>114</sup>

Whether the Boko Haram threat is likely to grow in Chad is uncertain. Although the weakened group still regards Chad as a main target, N'Djamena's efforts against Boko Haram are one of the few areas where the regime has garnered wide support, including among the opposition. Boko Haram may find new recruits, however, as a result of continuing dissatisfaction with Déby's regime and resentment at the regime's targeting of ethnic or religious communities accused of sympathizing with Boko Haram. The group is also unlikely to be eradicated unless a policy of long-term development addresses the root cause of the problem.

The leading role that Chad played in reducing Boko Haram from a well-armed group controlling a strategic territory to a more clandestine terrorist group means that if Chad were to withdraw from the MNJTF, Boko Haram could regain strength.

### *Economic Woes*

Uncertainty over Déby's succession and concern about the extent of the danger posed by an expansion of Boko Haram into Chad and the recruitment of a Chadian base has developed against a backdrop of economic difficulties.

Chad has been an oil-producing country since 2003 and, according to the International Monetary Fund, earned the "impressive amount" of \$13 billion in oil revenues between 2004 and 2015; it currently produces about 120,000 barrels a day.<sup>115</sup> At first, Chad pioneered the use of a mechanism sponsored by the World Bank to monitor the oil revenues, 80 percent of which should have been allocated to five "priority sectors" that included health, education, and basic infrastructure. However, that mechanism was dismantled in 2006 so that the regime could spend at least \$4 billion of the money on military equipment.<sup>116</sup>

Chad's gross domestic product (GDP) has risen significantly since the oil started flowing, but the benefits have been confined to the elite—one-third of the country's wealth is reportedly in the hands of the richest 10 percent. A small group of businessmen close to Déby and his wife Hinda have grown richer thanks to oil money, yet Chad's population remains one of the poorest in Africa. Chad ranks 186 of 188 countries in the UN Development Program's Human Development Index, and life expectancy at birth is only fifty-two years (versus fifty-six in neighboring Cameroon). In 2016, GDP per capita was \$664, a figure that conceals huge socioeconomic discrepancies. Eighty percent of the fourteen million Chadians live in rural areas and depend on small-scale farming, herding, and fishing for their livelihoods.<sup>117</sup>

During the brief oil boom, Chad was affected by the resource curse and by 2011 the government depended on oil for more than 75 percent of its revenue.<sup>118</sup> Falling oil prices on the world market—tumbling from around \$110 a barrel in early 2014 to \$43 in 2015—had a severe impact on Chad's oil revenue, which declined by 90 percent between 2011 and 2015.<sup>119</sup> GDP contracted, dropping from its 2014 peak of almost \$14 billion to less than \$10 billion in 2016.<sup>120</sup>

The crisis was due to more than lower oil prices. Chad was unable to properly use its oil revenues when oil was at its highest price and made itself dependent on those unstable royalties. Debt with a private company, the Anglo-Swiss Glencore, was also a contributing factor. In 2013 and 2014, N'Djamena borrowed \$2 billion from Glencore to buy US Chevron's shares in the consortium exploiting oil in southern Chad. Oil prices declined shortly afterward, so that most Chadian oil royalties now serve to reimburse this debt.<sup>121</sup> In the spectacular interview mentioned earlier, Déby "recognize[d] the loan contracted with Glencore was an irresponsible

approach...It was a fool's bargain." Suggesting that those among his associates who made the deal were not incompetent but instead corrupt, aware that oil prices would soon fall, the president further said he asked "lawyers to see whether there had not been an insider dealing."<sup>122</sup> Déby's admitting such a possibility is surprising, but he should not have been caught unaware. In 2014, Glencore also bought Griffiths Energy, a Canadian company exploiting some Chad-ian oilfields. Griffiths Energy pleaded guilty to bribing Chadian diplomats to the United States, including a relative of Déby, with shares estimated at \$34 million, to obtain these fields.<sup>123</sup>

The economic crisis fueled social discontent. Civil servants—whose numbers increased during the oil boom—went on strike because they did not receive their wages, estimated at some \$50 million per month for both civil servants and armed forces. In 2015, protests were held against the high cost of living and corrupt local state officials, who by smuggling oil were producing oil shortages and higher prices.

Yet, despite the government's questionable economic policy, the country benefited from strong international support. In 2015, Chad became eligible to receive \$1.1 billion in debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank's International Development Association. Rewarding Chad for its international role, its foreign allies, most importantly France, supported Chad's application for debt relief. Since then, the government has increased its efforts to find more countries willing to support it economically.<sup>124</sup> In September 2017, a donor conference in Paris, aimed at collecting about 60 percent of a \$10 billion five-year development plan, was a success for Chad (thanks again to French support), described as a reward for Chad's military interventions abroad. Déby was also rewarded for his alignment with Saudi Arabia in the Gulf crisis with \$1.8 billion loans promised by Arab donors.<sup>125</sup>

In October 2016, Chad's High Court ruled that ExxonMobil must pay \$819 million in unpaid royalties and fined the company \$75 billion—equivalent to seven times Chad's GDP—for failing to meet its tax obligations and withholding royalties.<sup>126</sup> In a country where the judiciary is not independent from the executive, this court's decision was a way for Déby to try to transfer a part of the economic crisis onto the oil companies and to convince people that the consortium, rather than his policies, was responsible for Chad's financial crisis. The consortium was unlikely to pay such a fine, and even before the court handed down its judgment, both sides had taken the case to the International Court of Arbitration in Paris, the forum they had agreed would settle disputes.<sup>127</sup> A settlement was reached in June 2017.<sup>128</sup>

Chad has slipped into recession and the economic crisis is unlikely to be resolved soon. The government recently adopted severe austerity measures—reducing spending by half—that are affecting students, civil servants, and even the military, provoking the anger of unions over unpaid stipends and salaries and triggering street mobilizations and strikes. The strikes severely affect the functioning of crucial institutions such as schools, hospitals, and courthouses.<sup>129</sup>

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Today, thanks to Chad's military capacity, France and the United States consider Idriss Déby a crucial ally and prioritize Chad's regional role over the implications of it using oil revenue to buy military equipment (not to mention of the private profits made by the regime's barons) rather than to fund desperately needed development. Chad's partners who give the regime materiel, financial, and political backing should not, however, confuse military capabilities with stability. Affected by both domestic and regional sources of instability, Chad remains a "precarious counterterrorism partner."<sup>130</sup> Moreover, Chad's allies should be aware that backing an

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***Chad has slipped into recession and the economic crisis is unlikely to be resolved soon.***

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authoritarian ruler who has held on to power for twenty-seven years thanks to rigged elections, co-optation, and repression of political opponents may prove a dangerously unsustainable strategy. They may end up encouraging the very political instability and violence they want to curb.

At first glance, Chad seems less vulnerable than it was in the 2000s, but it would be premature to conclude that war belongs to the past. The rapprochement with Sudan in 2010 has deprived the Chadian armed opposition of Sudanese support and of most of its military capability. Yet, though most combatants have returned to Chad and resumed civilian life, remnants of the Chadian rebellion are still active, especially in Libya, where armed factions are eager to recruit seasoned combatants and reconstitute themselves. The other borders of Chad are also insecure: Boko Haram in the west, the unresolved Darfur crisis in the east, and the volatile situation in CAR to the south. Moreover, given the role N'Djamena has played in CAR, Chad is anything but a safeguard for the stability of the region.

As far as Chad's domestic political situation is concerned, the underlying problems have not been resolved: resources are still unequally distributed; economic and political elites continue to prey on the country with impunity; elections are still rigged; and power remains concentrated within the president's clan and family as elites from other regional and ethnic backgrounds are co-opted. In addition, Chad's poor and vulnerable populations, including refugees and the internally displaced, are affected by a severe economic crisis, the origins of which are to be found in poor governance as much as in falling oil prices. Recent austerity measures, supported by international partners, have fueled social discontent. In 2015 and 2016, political parties, civil society organizations, and a new generation of politicized youth organized massive protests. The scale of these protests was limited by government harassment and intimidation, but nonetheless they are a promising sign that politics in Chad need not be the exclusive domain of men with guns and military entrepreneurs.

Rather than giving largely unconditional support to an aging regime, Chad's international backers should discourage it from repressing dissent and encourage it to negotiate a more inclusive transition. Ultimately, the decision whether to pursue a peaceful succession or to use violence to determine Déby's successor will be the responsibility of Chad's disparate political players. International actors, though, could make a peaceful transition more likely if they were to help those players find an arena in which to build consensus on their country's future.



## Notes

1. A multiparty system existed from 1946 to 1962. Chad had a one-party system from 1962 to 1991.
2. In 2016, the African Union-backed Extraordinary African Chambers sentenced Habré to life in prison for crimes against humanity, war crimes, and torture. He had been accused of rape, sexual slavery, and ordering the killing of forty thousand people while president of Chad. See Henri Thulliez and Elea Gary, "Allié de la France, condamné par l'Afrique: Les relations entre la France et le régime tchadien de Hissène Habré (1982–1990)," Human Rights Watch, June 28, 2016, [www.hrw.org/fr/report/2016/06/28/allie-de-la-france-condamne-par-lafrique/les-relations-entre-la-france-et-le](http://www.hrw.org/fr/report/2016/06/28/allie-de-la-france-condamne-par-lafrique/les-relations-entre-la-france-et-le); Reed Brody, Enabling a Dictator: The United States and Chad's Hissène Habré, 1982–1990, Human Rights Watch, June 28, 2016, [www.hrw.org/report/2016/06/28/enabling-dictator/united-states-and-chads-hissene-habre-1982-1990](http://www.hrw.org/report/2016/06/28/enabling-dictator/united-states-and-chads-hissene-habre-1982-1990).
3. Since 2006, Déby's official name has been Idriss Déby Itno. He added his grandfather's name, Itno, to his official name, claiming to honor his cousin and friend, Ibrahim Mahamat Itno, who was killed by the previous regime after both men attempted a coup in 1989. More importantly, the name change also signaled a further concentration of power in the hands of the Itno family, at a time when other Bideyat kinsmen were joining the rebellion against Déby.
4. The nomenclature can be confusing, because the Beri are better known by the Arabic names of their subgroups, the Zaghawa and Bideyat. Déby belongs to the Bideyat (Jérôme Tubiana, "Land and Power: The Case of the Zaghawa," Making Sense of Sudan [blog], Social Science Research Council, May 28, 2008, <http://africanarguments.org/2008/05/28/land-and-power-the-case-of-the-zaghawa/>).
5. Robert Buijtenhuijs, *Transition et élections au Tchad, 1993–1997: Restauration autoritaire et recomposition politique* (Paris: Karthala, 1998).
6. *Le Monde*, "Idriss Déby: 'Je ne suis pas un aventurier, pas un guerrier, je suis un homme seul,'" June 25, 2017.
7. See Roland Marchal, "An Emerging Military Power in Central Africa? Chad under Idriss Déby," *Sociétés politiques comparées*, no. 40 (October–December 2016); Comité de suivi de l'appel à la Paix et à la réconciliation nationale (CSAPR), *Les partis politiques tchadiens* (N'Djamena, 2014), 20–21, 82, [www.acordinternational.org/silo/files/rapport-sur-les-partis-politiques-tchad.pdf](http://www.acordinternational.org/silo/files/rapport-sur-les-partis-politiques-tchad.pdf).
8. Marielle Debos, "Biometric Voting in Chad: New Technology, Same Old Political Tricks," *The Conversation*, May 4, 2016, <https://theconversation.com/biometric-voting-in-chad-new-technology-same-old-political-tricks-58663>.
9. The government refused identification kits, which might have prevented various kinds of fraud, such as individual voters possessing several identification cards.
10. See "African Union: Chad Polls free and fair despite Anomalies," *Africa News*, April 13, 2016, [www.africanews.com/2016/04/13/african-union-chad-polls-free-and-without-fraud-despite-anomalies/](http://www.africanews.com/2016/04/13/african-union-chad-polls-free-and-without-fraud-despite-anomalies/).
11. Marielle Debos, "International Interventions and the Human Cost of a Militarized Political Marketplace in Chad," *Reinventing Peace* (blog), World Peace Foundation, July 2014, <https://sites.tufts.edu/reinventinpeace/2014/07/17/international-interventions-and-the-human-cost-of-a-militarized-political-marketplace-in-chad/>.
12. On co-optation in Chad, see Jérôme Tubiana and Clotilde Warin, "This Punchline Has Been Approved for All Audiences," *Foreign Policy*, June 30, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/06/30/this-punchline-has-been-approved-for-all-audiences/>.
13. See Bichara Idriss Hagggar, *Tchad: Les partis politiques et les mouvements d'opposition armés de 1990 à 2012* (Paris: L'Harmattan, pour Mieux Connaitre le Tchad, 2014), 17–29; CSAPR, *Les partis politiques tchadiens*, 20, 22–23.
14. See CSAPR, *Les partis politiques tchadiens*, 42.
15. Since then, some 110 parties are said to be part of the presidential "majority." See Radio France International (RFI), "Tchad: Le MPS réunit une centaine de partis pour soutenir Idriss Déby," February 27, 2016.
16. Hagggar, *Tchad*, 17–29; CSAPR, *Les partis politiques tchadiens*, 20, 22–23, 43, 45; Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Chad: Assemblée Nationale," [www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2061\\_E.htm](http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2061_E.htm).
17. See Hagggar, *Tchad*, 17–29; and CSAPR, *Les partis politiques tchadiens*, 27, 35.
18. Teda-Daza is the name given by anthropologists to the main ethnic group of the Chadian Sahara, whose members divide themselves between Teda (or Tubu) and Daza (or Goran). They constituted a key component of the northern rebellion against southern rule in the 1960s and 1970s, with rival rebel leaders Goukouni Weddey (a Teda) and Hissène Habré (a Goran) becoming Chad's presidents—Weddey between 1979 and 1982 and Habré between 1982 and 1990. Once close to Habré, Déby managed to co-opt many Goran even after overthrowing his mentor; and, though he repeatedly faced new Teda-Daza rebellions, it was always assumed that in the absence of serious challengers from the region, the Teda-Daza would keep voting for him. See "Tchad: Grosse fatigue," *Jeune Afrique*, April 3, 2016.
19. Tchad pages (@tchadpages), "Le mouvement citoyen 'Iyina' est né au Tchad, mais un mouvement créé par des hommes politiques peut-il être un mouvement citoyen?" Twitter, January 15, 2016, <https://twitter.com/tchadpages/status/688172919881502720>.

20. See Reporters Sans Frontières, “Un journaliste enlevé, deux autres menacés par l’agence de renseignements tchadienne,” February 28, 2017, <https://rsf.org/fr/actualites/un-journaliste-enleve-deux-autres-menaces-par-lagence-de-renseignements-tchadienne>.
21. Agence Ecofin, “Chad: 235 days without internet or social networks lead to €18 million losses,” January 3, 2017, <http://en.africatime.com/tchad/articles/chad-235-days-without-internet-or-social-networks-lead-eu18-million-losses>.
22. On the history of armed violence in Chad, see Marielle Debos, *Living by the Gun in Chad: Combatants, Impunity and State Formation* (London: Zed Books, 2016).
23. See Jérôme Tubiana, “Renouncing the Rebels: Local and Regional Dimensions of the Chad-Sudan Rapprochement,” Working Paper no. 25 (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2011), 38–45, [www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/working-papers/HSBA-WP-25-Local-and-Regional-Dimensions-Chad-Sudan-Rapprochement.pdf](http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/working-papers/HSBA-WP-25-Local-and-Regional-Dimensions-Chad-Sudan-Rapprochement.pdf).
24. See Tubiana, “Renouncing the Rebels,” 38–45.
25. See Jérôme Tubiana and Claudio Gramizzi, “Tubu Trouble: State and Statelessness in the Chad-Sudan-Libya Triangle,” Working Paper no. 43 (Geneva: Small Arms Survey and Conflict Armament Research, 2017), 144–51; Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement, “Communiqué no. 8/UFDD/ANCD/016,” March 26, 2016; Front pour l’alternance et la concorde au Tchad (FACT), “Communiqué de presse constitutif,” April 8, 2016.
26. RFI Afrique, “Le Niger s’apprête à extraditer le rebelle tchadien Mahamat Hassan Boulmaye,” October 20, 2017, [www.rfi.fr/afrique/20171019-le-niger-s-apprete-extraditer-le-rebelle-tchadien-mahamat-hassan-boulmaye](http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20171019-le-niger-s-apprete-extraditer-le-rebelle-tchadien-mahamat-hassan-boulmaye).
27. Zara Mahamat Brahim (aka Zouhouira), in a press conference, Paris, March 18, 2016.
28. RFI Afrique, “Viol d’une jeune tchadienne: arrestations et marche en noir et blanc,” February 17, 2016, [www.rfi.fr/afrique/20160217-tchad-viol-jeune-fille-arrestations-marche-noir-blanc](http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20160217-tchad-viol-jeune-fille-arrestations-marche-noir-blanc).
29. The violent repression of demonstrations is common. See *Jeune Afrique*, “Tchad: Un lycéen tué et cinq autres blessés lors d’une manifestation dans l’Extrême-Nord,” February 22, 2016; “Tchad: Trois leaders de la société civile arrêtés pour avoir appelé à manifester contre Déby Itno,” March 22, 2016.
30. For background, see Claude Arditi, “Les violences ordinaires ont une histoire: Le cas du Tchad,” *Politique Africaine* 91 (2003).
31. Two weeks earlier, two of the alleged rapists had escaped from prison. “Tchad: Dix ans de prison pour les violeurs de Zouhouira,” *Le Monde*, July 1, 2016.
32. International and Chadian observers alike have often debated the importance of the ethnic phenomenon in Chad. It is hard, however, to overlook the fact that since Chad’s independence, successive regimes, political parties, and armed opposition groups have been largely based on ethnic, and even clan, identities. As recently as 2016, for instance, the Dazagada rebellion in Libya split into three factions that reflected clan identities. To be sure, ethnic and clan identities are not the only factors explaining political divisions. Other factors do matter, including geographic, socioeconomic, cultural, religious, and generational divides. Some observers have emphasized a division between the north and the south (a division that encompasses geographic, cultural, and religious differences); arguably, however, the conflict Nord-Sud has been exaggerated and instrumentalized by various political leaders, particularly since the toppling in 1979 of a southern government by northern rebels.
33. The Kolyala is his father’s clan. His mother’s clan is the Gerikawra. He has sometimes favored the latter over the former.
34. Tubiana, “Renouncing the Rebels,” 155.
35. Tubiana, “Land and Power.”
36. See Tchadactuel (@tchadactuel), “Tchad: comment Hinda Déby Itno contrôle les leviers pétroliers du pays,” Twitter, October 30, 2015, <https://twitter.com/tchadactuel/status/660397857925672960>; Hugo Joncas and Emmanuel Freudenthal, “Tchad: pétrole, contrats publics et condos à Montréal,” *TVA Nouvelles*, June 3, 2017, [www.tvanouvelles.ca/2017/06/03/tchad-petrole-contrats-publics-et-condos-a-montreal](http://www.tvanouvelles.ca/2017/06/03/tchad-petrole-contrats-publics-et-condos-a-montreal); Marchal, “An Emerging Military Power.”
37. See *Africa Intelligence*, “How Hinda Déby Itno Controls Chad’s Oil Sector,” October 30, 2015.
38. On the Chadian army, see Debos, *Living by the Gun in Chad*, in particular, chap. 5.
39. See Yves Fromion and Gwendal Rouillard, “Rapport d’information en conclusion des travaux d’une mission d’information sur l’évolution du dispositif militaire français en Afrique et sur le suivi des opérations en cours,” No. 2114 (Paris: Assemblée nationale, July 9, 2014), 228, [www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/pdf/rap-info/i2114.pdf](http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/pdf/rap-info/i2114.pdf); European Union Institute for Security Studies, “Understanding African Armies” (Paris: EUISS, 2016), 46; Jean-Louis Le Touzet, “Notre mission était de nettoyer Boko Haram, c’est fait,” *Libération*, April 9, 2015, [www.liberation.fr/planete/2015/04/09/notre-mission-etait-de-nettoyer-boko-haram-c-est-fait\\_1238028](http://www.liberation.fr/planete/2015/04/09/notre-mission-etait-de-nettoyer-boko-haram-c-est-fait_1238028).

40. Institut national de la statistique, des études économiques et démographiques du Tchad, "Recensement et profilage des militaires démobilisés" (N'Djamena, August 2013), [www.inseedtchad.com/IMG/pdf/rapport\\_final\\_rmd\\_aout\\_2013-version\\_finale\\_pour\\_impression.pdf](http://www.inseedtchad.com/IMG/pdf/rapport_final_rmd_aout_2013-version_finale_pour_impression.pdf).
41. See Tubiana, "Renouncing the Rebels"; CSAPR "Les partis politiques tchadiens," 29.
42. See Fromion and Rouillard, "Rapport d'information," 150; EUISS, "Understanding African Armies," 46; "Idriss Déby Itno, le boss du Sahel," *Jeune Afrique*, March 9, 2015.
43. GRIP (Groupe de recherche et d'information sur la paix et la sécurité), "Le Tchad: un hégémon aux pieds d'argile," May 18, 2015, 10; Fromion and Rouillard, "Rapport d'information," 22; Chris Biggers, "First of Chad's Mig-29 Arrives in N'Djamena," Bellingcat, September 11, 2014.
44. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Arms Transfers Database, [www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers](http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers).
45. Tubiana, "Renouncing the Rebels," 16.
46. See Tchad pages (@tchadpages), "Au Tchad, l'ANS ne connaît pas la crise financière: son Directeur général Djiddi Saleye s'achète une nouvelle image," Twitter, September 24, 2015, <https://twitter.com/tchadpages/status/646920051463852033>.
47. Millard J. Burr and Robert O. Collins, *The Long Road to Disaster in Darfur* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2006).
48. Even before Déby grabbed power in 1990, Chad had a tradition of sending troops abroad in Central Africa, including quietly dispatching troops under Habré to be trained in Mobutu's Zaire.
49. Roland Marchal, "Petites et grandes controverses de la politique française et européenne au Tchad" (N'Djamena: CSAPR, 2015), 27.
50. In 2008, for instance, French president Nicolas Sarkozy contemplated halting French support for Déby when rebel forces had moved into the capital. But when the rebel groups could not agree among themselves on who should hold which positions in a new government, Sarkozy decided to give fuel and weapons to Déby, enabling him to remain in power.
51. Numbers of casualties vary and information on the Chadian forces' efficacy is difficult to confirm, notably because, as various observers complained, French and Chadian forces limited the access of independent media to the Malian battlefield. See GRIP, "Le Tchad: un hégémon," 13; Fromion and Rouillard, "Rapport d'information," 228.
52. See Pascal Airault, "Moussa Faki Mahamat: 'Nous allons lancer des opérations terrestres contre Boko Haram en janvier,'" *L'Opinion*, November 13, 2015.
53. Such support is greater than before but not new. France and the United States have backed Déby for many years and before him Habré. See, for example, HRW, "Enabling a Dictator"; HRW, "Allié de la France."
54. See GRIP, "Le Tchad: un hégémon," 15.
55. The airport in N'Djamena features significantly in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel. France uses the airport as its main desert aircraft carrier, and the United States uses it as a base for drones (both Predator MQ-1 drones and their larger cousins, MQ-9 Reapers). See Joshua Hammer, "Hunting Boko Haram: The US Extends Its Drone War Deeper into Africa with Secretive Base," *The Intercept*, February 26, 2016, <https://theintercept.com/2016/02/25/us-extends-drone-war-deeper-into-africa-with-secretive-base/>.
56. Marielle Debos, "Behind the Cliché of the Chadian 'Desert Warriors': Militarized Politics and Idriss Déby's Global Political Capital," Research Paper no. 22 (Medford, MA: World Peace Foundation, June 2016); Nathaniel K. Powell, "A Flawed Strategy in the Sahel: How French Intervention Contributes to Instability," *Foreign Affairs*, February 1, 2016.
57. Journal officiel de la République Française, January 18, 2017; statement by the spokesperson of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 30, 2017.
58. Célian Macé, "La France gèle discrètement les comptes de trois opposants africains," *Libération*, January 27, 2017.
59. France 24, "L'Union africaine dénonce la 'cacophonie' des interventions extérieures en Libye," September 10, 2017.
60. See White House, "Presidential Proclamation Enhancing Vetting Capabilities and Processes for Detecting Attempted Entry Into the United States by Terrorists or Other Public-Safety Threats," Press release, September 24, 2017, [www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/09/24/enhancing-vetting-capabilities-and-processes-detecting-attempted-entry](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/09/24/enhancing-vetting-capabilities-and-processes-detecting-attempted-entry).
61. See Célian Macé, "Moussa Faki Mahamat, un fidèle d'Idriss Déby élu à la tête de l'Union africaine," *Libération*, January 30, 2017; RFI Afrique, "Tchad: Un candidat désigné pour présider la Commission de l'Union africaine," October 8, 2016, [www.rfi.fr/afrique/20161008-tchad-moussa-faki-mahamat-candidat-presidence-ua-commission](http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20161008-tchad-moussa-faki-mahamat-candidat-presidence-ua-commission).
62. See Arnaud Jouve, "Mahamat Saleh Annadif: Un Tchadien à la tête de l'ONU au Mali," RFI Afrique, January 15, 2016, [www.rfi.fr/afrique/20160114-mahamat-saleh-annadif-tchadien-tete-onu-mali](http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20160114-mahamat-saleh-annadif-tchadien-tete-onu-mali).
63. Omar Mbadi, "Le Tchadien Abbas Mahamat Tolli sera le prochain gouverneur de la Beac," *Jeune Afrique*, August 1, 2016.

64. See Tchad Infos, “Le Tchad renonce à organiser le prochain sommet de l’Union africaine,” January 11, 2015.
65. See, for example, RFI Afrique, “Minusma: Visite d’une délégation militaire du Tchad pour calmer les tensions,” March 19, 2016, [www.rfi.fr/afrique/20160319-mali-visite-delegation-tchad-ONU-minusma](http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20160319-mali-visite-delegation-tchad-ONU-minusma).
66. See BBC, “Saudis Announce Islamic Anti-terrorism Coalition,” December 15, 2015, [www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35099318](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35099318).
67. Mahamat Adamou, “Sudanese Refugees in Chad Must Adapt or Starve,” IRINEWS, June 9, 2016; Michael Boyce and Ann Hollingsworth, “Sudanese Refugees in Chad: Passing the Baton to No One” (Washington, DC: Refugees International, July 9, 2015).
68. *Journal du Tchad*, “5000 soldats tchadiens seraient envoyés en Arabie Saoudite et directement engagés dans la guerre contre les rebelles Yéménites,” March 1, 2016. See also Tubiana, “Renouncing the Rebels.”
69. Ibid.
70. International Crisis Group (ICG), “Sudan’s Spreading Conflict (III): The Limits of Darfur’s Peace Process,” Africa Report no. 211 (January 27, 2014); ICG, “Sudan’s Spreading Conflict (I): War in South Kordofan,” Africa Report no. 198 (February 14, 2013); ICG, “Sudan’s Spreading Conflict (II): War in Blue Nile,” Africa Report no. 211 (June 18, 2013); ICG, “The Chaos in Darfur,” Africa Briefing no. 110 (April 22, 2015), 14.
71. See *Sudan Tribune*, “SLM Factions Demand Bashir to Separate Peace Talks from Sudan’s Dialogue,” October 15, 2015.
72. See ICG, “Chaos in Darfur,” 14.
73. *Sudan Tribune*, “Chadian rebels participated in North Darfur recent fighting: RSF commander,” June 3, 2017.
74. Jérôme Tubiana, “Remote-Control Breakdown: Sudanese Paramilitary Forces and Pro-government Militias,” HSBA Issue Brief no. 27 (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, April 2017), 5–7; Jérôme Tubiana, “Out for Gold and Blood in Sudan,” *Foreign Affairs*, May 1, 2014; ICG, “Chaos in Darfur,” 5–6.
75. See Jérôme Tubiana, “The Small War in Eastern Chad,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 18, 2016.
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91. See Roland Marchal, “Brève histoire d’une transition singulière. La République Centrafricaine de janvier 2014 à mars 2016” (report for the Réseau des organisations de la société civile de Centrafrique pour la gouvernance et le développement [ROSCA-GD], September 2016).
92. Jérôme Tubiana, “The Chad–Sudan Proxy War and the ‘Darfurization’ of Chad: Myths and Reality,” Working Paper no. 12 (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2008), 35.
93. Marielle Debos, “Fluid Loyalties in a Regional Crisis: Chadian Combatants in the Central African Republic,” *African Affairs* 107, no. 427 (April 2008): 225–41.
94. See UN, “Report of the Mapping Project documenting serious violations of international human rights law and international rights law committed within the territory of the Central African Republic between January 2003 and December 2015,” May 2017, 152; Marchal, “An Emerging Military Power,” 11. Chad has played a significant role in various peace missions in CAR, including in the Force multinationale en Centrafrique (2002–2008), the Mission de consolidation de la paix en Centrafrique (2008–2013), and MISCA (2013–2014).

95. UN, "Report of the Mapping Projet"; "Idriss Déby: 'Je ne suis pas un aventurier'."
96. UNHCR, "Chad: Factsheet," 30 September 2017.
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100. *Le Monde*, "Idriss Déby."
101. "Would Déby disappear brutally, the country could turn to a kind of Somalia," according to a former ANT general, quoted by Le Touzet, "Notre mission."
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104. See Clément Fayol, "Les fils de présidents: Zakaria Idriss Déby, le petit prince du Sahel," *Mondafrique*, July, 21, 2014.
105. The terms southern and northern are relative in this context, because many southerners have been part of northern regimes.
106. Department of State, "Chad 2014 International Religious Freedom Report," 2014, [www.state.gov/documents/organization/238410.pdf](http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/238410.pdf). It would be incorrect to suggest that there is no mistrust between Muslims and Christians, but it is much less than in some neighboring countries. In addition, although Muslims are more prominent in the business and trade sectors and Christians tend to be more educated and to make up more the civil service, the education gap has narrowed at the elite levels.
107. Mayke Kaag, "Aid, Umma and Politics: Transnational Islamic NGOs in Chad," in *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*, ed. René Otaeyek and Benjamin F. Soares (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Ladiba Gondeu, *L'émergence des organisations islamiques au Tchad: Enjeux, acteurs et territoires* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012).
108. See also Raphaëlle Chevillon-Guibert, "Des commerçants au cœur de l'expérience islamiste au Soudan" (PhD thesis, Université d'Auvergne, 2013), 534–40.
109. Ansar al-Sunna is an Islamic organization with branches in Egypt, Sudan, and Chad. It professes a rigorist type of Islam based on Saudi Wahhabism, though its members prefer to refer to themselves as Salafi. Most of them are believed to be quietist salafis, opposed to violent forms of jihad.
110. Wahhabism is generally considered as one of the branches of Salafism. See Department of State, "Chad 2012 International Religious Freedom Report," 2012, [www.state.gov/documents/organization/208344.pdf](http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/208344.pdf).
111. OHCHR, "Chad: UN Human Rights Expert Alarmed by the Executions of 10 People Following a Swift Trial," September 7, 2015, [www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx). Few of the alleged Boko Haram members who were arrested and shown on television are believed to be still alive. The death penalty had been abolished in 2014, but a new law was passed shortly after the attacks to allow the death penalty for terrorists.
112. Fifty years ago, the Buduma were considered weakly Islamized; they suffered greatly from droughts, which obliged them to convert from fishing to farming. The conversion was successful, but they entered into competition with other farming communities attracted to newly uncovered, fertile shores of Lake Chad. See Albert Le Rouvreur, *Sabéliens et Sahariens du Tchad* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989), 219–39.
113. Kanuri, Kanembu, and Bornu are three names given to the same community, which originated from the precolonial sultanate of Kanem-Bornu. The sultanate's territory was divided by colonial powers among the current states of Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon—the four states where Boko Haram is currently operating.
114. See also Michael Baca, "Boko Haram and the Kanuri Factor," *African Arguments* (blog), February 16, 2015.
115. De Beke et al., "Tchad: questions générales," 51.
116. Celeste Hicks, *Africa's New Oil: Power, Pipelines and Future Fortunes* (London: Zed Books, 2015).
117. UNDP, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>; World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=TD>; Concern Worldwide UK, "Chad National Policy Review Using a Resilience Lens" (2014), 8.
118. De Beke et al., "Tchad: questions générales," 50; Celeste Hicks, "Chad's Protests Fade into Memory as Déby Renews Power," *Global Observatory*, May 9, 2016, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2016/05/deby-chad-election-kebzabo/>.
119. De Beke et al., "Tchad: questions générales," 50.
120. World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/chad>.
121. Laurence Caramel, "Privé de sa rente pétrolière, le Tchad s'enfonce dans la crise," *Le Monde*, May 26, 2017.
122. *Le Monde*, "Idriss Déby."

123. Reuters, "UPDATE 1-U.S. seeks \$34 mln for Griffiths Energy bribe scheme of Chad diplomat," June 30, 2015. [www.reuters.com/article/usa-justice-corruption/update-1-u-s-seeks-34-mln-for-griffiths-energy-bribe-scheme-of-chad-diplomat-idUSL1N0ZG1Z120150630](http://www.reuters.com/article/usa-justice-corruption/update-1-u-s-seeks-34-mln-for-griffiths-energy-bribe-scheme-of-chad-diplomat-idUSL1N0ZG1Z120150630).
124. See International Monetary Fund, "IMF and World Bank Announce US\$1.1 billion Debt Relief for Chad," Press release, April 29, 2015, [www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2015/pr15183.htm](http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2015/pr15183.htm).
125. Laurence Caramel, "Tchad: Idriss Déby touche les dividendes de son engagement contre le terrorisme," *Le Monde*, September 8, 2017.
126. The original partners in the consortium were Chevron, Exxon, and Petronas. Chevron sold its stake to Chad's government in 2014. Exxon's partners now are Petronas and the Société des Hydrocarbures du Tchad, the state-owned oil company.
127. Maggie Fick and Ed Crooks, "Chad Leader Gambles on Political Gain from \$75bn ExxonMobil fine," *Financial Times*, October 20, 2016; "Chad Strong-Arms Another Oil Company," *Stratfor*, October 10, 2016.
128. Daniel N'Doh Nadjitan, "Exxon Settles Dispute With Chad, Avoiding \$74 Billion Fine," *Bloomberg*, June 9, 2017, [www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-06-09/exxon-settles-dispute-with-chad-avoiding-74-billion-fine](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-06-09/exxon-settles-dispute-with-chad-avoiding-74-billion-fine).
129. Caramel, "Tchad: Idriss Déby touche les dividendes."
130. Benjamin Nickels and Margot Shorey, "Chad: A Precarious Counterterrorism Partner," *CTC Sentinel* 8, no. 4 (2015).



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Since gaining its independence from France in 1960, Chad has evolved from a one-party state into a multiparty regime, endured successive rebellions, and become an interventionist regional actor. Thanks to an oil boom and corruption, segments of the Chadian elite have become very rich, but most people are mired in poverty. The country as a whole is near the bottom of global development rankings. If arrangements are not made in advance for a successor to President Idriss Déby, the country may well plunge into crisis. The decision whether to pursue a peaceful succession or to use violence to determine Déby's successor will be the responsibility of Chad's disparate political players. International actors, however, could make a peaceful transition more likely. This report examines the country's political system, which has kept Déby in power for twenty-seven years, and the country's recent foreign policy, which is notable for a series of regional military interventions, to assess Chad's current and future regional role.

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