



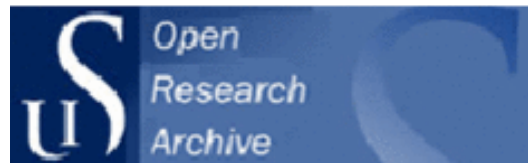
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A democratic dictator's success: how Chad's President Deby defeated the military opposition in three years (2008–2011)

Ketil Fred Hansen

This article focuses on how President Deby re-gained power after a nearly successful coup d'état against him in February 2008. The analysis points towards one major external reason for success and a divided internal strategy. The international community's little interest in Chad and the desire for political stability among the few interested states are the main external reasons for Deby's success. Internally, Deby's use of violence and co-optation explain his success. Deby defeated the Chadian military opposition by combining co-optation of adversaries in Chad's patrimonial marketplace.

Keywords: Chad; democracy; conflict; Deby; Coup d'Etat

Je préfère mourir au Tchad que de partir en exil¹

Early on Saturday morning, 2 February 2008, soldiers from three rebel movements entered N'Djamena together. They had driven from Eastern Sudan, crossing the Chadian frontier on 28 January in a column of 250–300 vehicles, each carrying between 10 and 15 men.² Within few hours, approximately 3000 rebel soldiers had taken control of large parts of the Chadian capital. The inhabitants applauded the rebels' arrival and supplied them with food and water.³ By noon, the rebels were only a few blocks from the palace where President Idriss Deby had barricaded himself. According to Agence France Press, the rebels were 'à deux doigts de renverser le régime'.⁴ The US State Department claimed that 'the situation [in N'Djamena] is too unsettled to predict the outcome'.⁵ The government, the police and the gendarmerie were paralysed and unable to function.⁶ Close collaborators of President Deby later admitted that the rebels had gained total control of the capital, with the exception of the presidential palace.⁷ General Mahamat Ali Abdallah was inside the palace with Deby and two French military officers.⁸ France offered to evacuate President Deby; however, he refused the offer.⁹ Then, suddenly, the rebels ran short of ammunition and left N'Djamena to restock their provisions. By Sunday afternoon, the battle was over and Deby remained the president of Chad.

A month later, in an interview with French television, President Deby explained that:

I had only two choices: either leave the country in disorder, chaos and civil war; or with the risk of losing my own life, defend what had been realized the last 18 years. I chose to defend what had been realized in Chad during the last 18 years.¹⁰

What President Deby had realised during his reign is, however, disputed. Deby and his regime are heavily criticised for a lack of development and democracy and negligence of human rights. Transparency International considered Chad to be the most corrupt country in Africa in 2008 (Transparency International 2008). Rule of law remained weak, and discrimination and violence against women were widespread (Freedom House 2007; Yorongar 2010). On the Ibrahim Index for 2010, only Somalia beat Chad on bad governance in Africa.¹¹ Internally, the Chadian people are also quite sceptical of Deby's regime. Professor Gali Gatta states that 'Le principe: "Gouvernement du peuple pour le peuple par le peuple" n'a aucune signification pratique chez nous'¹² (Gatta 2007, 138). Former Minister of Defense and rebel leader Mahamat Nouri stated that:

En 18 années de gestion mafieuse et calamiteuse, le régime cupide et sanguinaire du MPS [partie politique du président Deby] a fait du Tchad un Etat néant. Des bandes d'individus apatrides sans foi ni loi ont organisé le pillage systématique des richesses nationales et érigé le banditisme et la délinquance en système de gouvernement (2008).¹³

Nouri's characteristics of the Chadian state under Deby's regime can be read as a prototype description of a weak state with a strong regime. Yet the international community recognises Deby as the legitimate president of Chad. Despite the critique of massive electoral irregularities, Deby has won four internationally acknowledged presidential elections (1996, 2001, 2006, 2011). Hence, president Deby can be seen as a democratic dictator.

Celebrating his 20-year reign as president in December 2010, three years after the February attacks, Deby appeared stronger than ever.¹⁴ The current article focuses on how President Deby re-gained power after near defeat during the first weekend of February 2008.¹⁵

The article begins with an overview of the characteristics of weak states with strong regimes in Africa. A synopsis of the international community's interest in political stability in Chad is provided before discussing the three main strategies that Deby used to increase his powers in the three years following the February 2008 coup attempt. President Deby's militarisation and violence and his regime's politics of co-optation are analysed.

The article is based on various weblogs from the military opposition, the civil opposition and people who support Deby, including the president's official website and information from international news agencies and (online) newspapers in Chad, which were followed weekly between December 2007 and December 2010. These sources are supplemented with interviews with central politicians, opposition leaders, civil society leaders, journalists and bureaucrats conducted in N'Djamena in August and September 2010 and further triangulated with Wikileaks documents from the US embassies in N'Djamena, Paris and Khartoum.

Weak states with strong regimes

In a well-functioning state, the government delivers positive political goods to its citizens, with the rule of law and territorial control over violence as the most important. However, human security, education, health facilities, infrastructure and respect for human rights are also vital political goods that a proficient state delivers to its citizens.

An abundant academic literature characterises many African states as weak (e.g. see Herbst 2004; Bøås and Jennings 2005; Dokken 2008; Hansen 2010; Reno 2010). A weak state does not perform its basic functions well; thus, it is the antithesis of an ideal state. In this understanding, the state's ability or willingness to deliver positive political public goods determines the degree of state failure. The vocabulary to describe the state, going from weak and fragile via failing and failed to collapsing and collapsed state, grades the gap in statehood.¹⁶

A weak state is characterised *inter alia* by flawed institutions, lack of real democracy, a biased bureaucracy and small degree of political accountability in addition to the poor quality and quantity of material goods delivery. Institutions and rules of law are formally in place but are flexible and bendable to the point of being completely controlled by the president. In such circumstances, it is particularly difficult to influence political outcome through formal procedural political rules.¹⁷ In weak states, the logic of political influencing follows personal networks and patron-client relationships. Thus, citizens in weak states care less about formal political policies and have smaller expectations of the government *per se* than citizens in well-functioning states. Their energies and (material) expectations are more geared towards the individual members of the national and local elites that they affiliate with than towards the state *per se*. The affiliation can be based on a combination of family connections, ethnic belonging, friendship, brotherhood, religious ties or other common traits, interests or relations (Utas 2012, 11). Being a nephew, an age-mate or a neighbour of a power holder increases one's chances of obtaining public resources. Because affiliations with elites are of primordial importance to access public material goods of any type, ousted elites may relatively easily reassemble groups of marginalised, un-connected people into an opposition movement. As human security is meagre in weak states, 'the homeless and the destitute become fodder for anyone who can offer food and a cause' (Rotberg 2004, 9). However, once created, it is often difficult to find a common cause to fight, except the typical teaser designated to gain goodwill from the international community, as follows: overthrowing the dictator, organising free and fair elections and establishing good governance (Herbst 2004; de Waal 2008; Herbst and Mills 2012, 11–12).

Due to patronage politics and a lack of public control over material public goods in weak states, the distinction between state resources and private resources is less evident than in well-functioning states. A prime goal of both political opposition and military rebels is to gain private control over the resources of the state. In states that are rich in natural resources, there is an increase in both competition to control the state and the level 'of political violence and the use of resources rents by ruling parties to maintain their hold on political power' (Jensen and Wanchekon 2004, 818). Thus, to hold down contenders of power in weak states, the regime in place typically uses a combination of co-optation through patronage (material benefits and/or positions of power) and repression (violence, threats, jail; for general examples, see Bangora 2005; Boggero 2009; Massey and May 2006; Prunier 2008a; Tubiana 2008a). By utilising a combination of patronage and repression, presidents in weak states remain in power for long periods of time (e.g. Cameroon under Paul Biya [1982–] Gabon under Omar Bongo [1967–2009], Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe [1980–], Zambia under Kenneth Kaunda [1964–1991], Chad under Idriss Deby [1990–]). The stability of the regimes in such weak states indicates a sort of regime resilience, often labelled 'strong regimes' (Bøås 2003).

Because the prebends that the regime offers to the political opposition or military rebels are often lucrative and the potential success of a regime change is meagre, opposition leaders shift sides in the middle of the conflict. As ideological differences play little or no role in forming political opposition, locals make sense of this brisk shift from political opposition towards the political power. For most people in weak states, rational behaviour is attempting to maximise their personal security, wealth and power by various means. This point has been described by a number of researchers. Alex de Waal argues that politics in Africa are organised as a 'patrimonial marketplace'. De Waal insists that in countries such as Chad, 'patrimony trumps law' (2009, 107). William Reno states that rebels in African conflict areas have an impressive capacity to shift roles and transform rapidly from warlords to legislators (2010, 135–139). Mats Utas claims that 'bigmanity' in Africa is based on 'fluid and ever-changeable webs of relations' and argues that people use official space for private entrepreneurship (2012, 2–8). Christopher Clapham (1998) argues that there is often a blurred distinction between government and insurgents in weak states. Finally, speaking about Chad, Marielle Debos (2008) states that the loyalties between the members of various rebel movements are extremely fluid.

The rulers' incapacity, or unwillingness, to continue the distribution of state resources, according to the neo-patrimonial logic, often leads to violent conflicts (Bøås and Dunn 2007; Mehler 2008, 328; Reno 2010; Herbst and Mills 2012). Herbst and Mills argue that to prevent violent conflict, national leaders and the international community should avoid 'the constituency of losers' to develop in a country. They argue that if 'few people aggrieved because resource allocation is unfair, biased and corrupt', violence is unlikely (2012, 5).

Aspirational deprivation in resource-rich weak states

In resource-rich states, an 'aspirational deprivation' or 'relative deprivation' of the would-be top elites rather than the lack of capacity to distribute resources, creates tensions and violent conflict. The value expectations of the would-be top elites rise faster than the value capabilities of the regime in place (Uchendu 1977; Muller 1985, 47–48). In such cases, opposition tends to militarise and the strong regime tends to use a mixture of patronage and repression to hold down power contenders. Strong regimes in weak states arbitrarily arrest or assassinate political opponents. They spy and torture, menace and spoil contenders of power (Jensen and Wanchekon 2004).

In Chad, the sense of political aspirational deprivation increased as a result of the 2005 amendment to the constitution, in which Deby eliminated the two-term presidential limit. As a result, several would-be presidents or ministers launched insurgency movements. Their only common goal was to oust president Deby. The various movements' troops were predominantly young drifters with shifting allegiances and the goal to make a living and improve their social status. Thus, anyone who offered them such opportunities had a good chance of obtaining their support.¹⁸

The feeling of economic aspirational deprivation increased as Chad began exporting oil in October 2003. Democratic control of the oil revenues was minimal, and when Deby distorted an agreement with the World Bank to spend 80% of oil revenues on development issues in 2006,¹⁹ his capacity of financial manoeuvring increased further. At the same time, rebellion intensified.

Thus, in resource-rich weak states, a gap in statehood that leads to aspirational deprivation increases rebel activities, which further weakens the already weak state. Rebel

activities in weak states also blur the distinction between war and crime (Keen 2008; Reno 2010). 'Rebel leaders and soldiers appropriate resources derived from warfare or from natural resources in areas under rebel control, and thus maintain important benefits with their wartime positions as well as hindering the state administration in its state building efforts' (Reno 2010, 140).

Chad has embodied a weak state's characteristics since Independence (see e.g. Azevedo 1998; Buijtenhuijs 1998; Bangora 2005; Burr and Collins 2006; Tubiana 2008a). In the present paper, I analyse the Deby regime's response to the February 2008 attacks according to the characteristics of a weak state with a strong regime.

At the top level, political life makes fortunes in Chad. To make business out of politics, contracts and personal connections with international business corporations and development aid agencies are of primordial importance. Because these are all personal and 'patrimony trumps law', it is important for the international community to uphold political stability in the country. I will conduct a short analysis of some key countries' wishes for the political status quo in Chad.

Political stability in Chad at any price for international actors

Globally, few states have an interest in Chad. Most of the world neglects politics in Chad and president Deby (McDoom 2010). Few raise serious questions about the Deby regime's massive human rights violations and repressive style of governance. To president Deby's advantage, the states with an interest in Chad seem more interested in political stability in the country than in the harshness of the regime. Here, I will briefly discuss five of the most important states, the US, Sudan, Libya, China and France.

The US wants political stability in Chad primarily to secure its investments in the oil sector. The US companies Exxon and Chevron have invested more than US\$ 5 billion in Chad in the last 10 years, and 90% of oil exported from Chad is sold to the US (e.g. Pegg 2009).

In addition, the US wants political stability in Chad to continue its counterterrorism efforts in the Sahel through its 2007-established Africa Command (Africom; Moeller 2010). The Deby regime receives military training, ammunition, support and loans to purchase military equipment through various programmes under the Africom umbrella (Wezeman 2009). The US also wants to minimise Sudanese influence on Chad, as it perceives El-Bashir's regime as more Islamite than Deby's regime in Chad. Between 2005 and 2009, the US government provided nearly \$10 billion in assistance to Darfur and eastern Chad and was by far the largest international donor to the humanitarian crisis in the region. In a world that relies on patronage, such sums, even if not directed to the regime, benefit the regime's patrimonial elites.

Sudanese relations with Chad are more complicated. When Deby established his rebel movement, the Patriotic Salvation Movement, in Darfur in the late 1980s, El-Bashir's regime supported him actively. After the successful coup d'état in December 1990, Deby was a loyal ally of El-Bashir and his regime in Sudan throughout the 1990s. Between 2003 and 2005, however, relations between Deby and El-Bashir changed completely. Deby contributed to the intensified turmoil in Darfur from 2005 to 2010 by financing and arming the Darfur-based rebel movement Justice and Equality Movement.²⁰ During the same period, El-Bashir massively supported Chadian rebels with arms, vehicles and access to training ground in Sudan. However, a rapprochement between the two regimes

by the end of 2009 resulted in a (lasting) peace deal that was signed in January 2010. Thus, Sudan and El-Bashir are again friends of Chad and Deby. Without support from Khartoum, the various rebel movements in Chad lost their main sponsor and supporter and, thus, much of their strength.

Libya under Khadafy supported Deby since he took power in December 1990. Libyan investments in Chad have been on the rise over the last decade, and the extended Khadafy family and friends own large parts of oil and tourist establishments in Chad. To secure investments and support a peaceful solution to regional unrest that may hamper development in Libya, the Khadafy regime supported Deby's regime politically and with weapons and military support in difficult times (including during the February 2008 attacks). In addition, Khadafy facilitated numerous peace negotiations both between Chad and Sudan and between Deby's regime and various rebel movements. After the fall of Khadafy in October 2011, relations between Chad and Libya changed. It is not yet known how the Deby's regime will cooperate with the new regime in Libya.

China's importance in supporting Deby's regime is on the rise. In August 2006, Chad broke with Taiwan and explicitly supported China's 'one China policy'. Since then, China has actively been engaged in developing infrastructure in Chad through weak loans and development aid. Numerous diplomatic missions between the two countries have taken place in the last few years and president Deby is reported to emphasise that 'Chadian-Chinese relations are based on equality, mutual respect and non-interference in each other's interior affairs'.²¹

According to the International Crisis Group, France's principal political objective in Chad has been to sustain the power of President Deby (International Crisis Group 2008, 19). From an economic point of view, this may seem strange. Less than 0.5% of total French exports are directed towards Chad (Arntsen 2011, 38). However, potential unexploited natural resources in Chad may attract France. Uranium has been discovered in northern Chad, and geological data suggest that the Chadian soil contains bauxite, diamonds and gold (Mobbs 2010).

Politically, Chad is important to France. French soldiers who are sent to Afghanistan are trained in Chad (Arntsen 2011). France has also built important intelligence capabilities in Chad that have been used in the US-led war against terror. In addition, the French military presence in Chad gives France the capacity to secure French citizens and economic interests in Chad and neighbouring countries during a future emergency. Most analyses of the February 2008 battle of N'Djamena conclude that France contributed their intelligence and military to secure Deby's position (see e.g. Bayart 2008; Marchal 2009; Hansen 2011a).

Thus, political indifference from most international actors, together with political and economical support from a few important states with an interest in political stability in Chad helped Deby secure his powers. Internally, he utilised the following three factors to increase his powers after the February 2008 attacks: military force, threats of violence and co-optation.

The Deby regime's military force

Today, Chad is one of the most militarised countries in Africa, as measured in military budget per capita and in military budget in proportion to gross domestic product (GDP).²² In the mid-1990s, its military and security forces numbered 30,000, including a special

presidential guard that was notorious for violence, the Forces d'Intervention Rapide (Bangora 2005, 380). In 2010, Deby proclaimed that the National Army of Chad numbered 80,000 men.²³

Deby admitted to the use of enormous sums on military equipment in the last few years. However, as he stated, 'we don't have a choice'.²⁴ He explained that there would be no development without peace in Chad. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) calculated that Chad's official military expenditure varied between 0.9% and 2% of GDP from 2000 to 2005, altering between \$54 million US (constant 2008 US dollars) and \$71 million US. Yet, in 2007, 5% of GDP (amounting to \$459 million US) was spent on the military, increasing to 7.1% of GDP (\$611 million US) in 2008.²⁵ The annual military budget in constant dollars grew more than eightfold from the beginning of the century to 2008.

France plays an important part in Chad's military defence. First and foremost, France delivers military training to the Chadian National Army, soldiers and officers. Senior armed forces personnel are offered military instruction in France.²⁶ Second, the 1976 agreement of military cooperation between France and Chad, with amendments from 1990, remained in effect in 2008. A central part of this contract stated that France should 'garantir la souveraineté de l'État tchadien'.²⁷ However, the implications remain vague. In a meeting with the American ambassador in Chad, a week before the February attack, the French ambassador in Chad stated that 'France still retains great influence with Deby and is not reticent about using it'.²⁸ In addition, Chad was the most important buyer in Africa of military equipment from France in 2008, purchasing 13 million euro worth of arms.²⁹

Ukraine also supplied Chad with considerable military equipment, officially³⁰ supplying Chad with two Mi-24 combat helicopters in 2007, two Mi-24s and three Su-25 combat aircraft in 2008, 80 BMP-1 armoured personnel carriers and eight BTR-3E armoured personnel carriers in 2008 and 12,000 rifles in 2006–2007 (Wezeman 2009, 4).

To officially celebrate the liberation of the Chadian people from a dictator and his own coming to power in December 1990, Deby organises a military show every December in N'Djamena. This show also demonstrates Deby's power and control over the population and territory of Chad. In 2008, the show included four new combat helicopters (MI 17 and MI 24) and two combat planes.³¹

By the end of 2010, the Chadian regime was militarily much better equipped to combat rebel attacks than it was in February 2008, and Deby has never been afraid of using his military means to combat his adversaries.

The Deby regime's repressive violence

President Deby's use of coercion is well documented. The regime uses various methods to repress political opponents and persons impeding Deby. Arbitrary arrests, torture and enforced disappearance are common (Human Rights Watch 2010). Every year, a number of prison detainees are tortured, disappear or are simply killed by official security forces.³² During and after the February 2008 attempted coup, the regime increased its repressive violence. The Chadian journalist Passalet may have exaggerated when writing that numerous corpses of former rebels were floating in the rivers Chari and Longone (Passalet 2010). Yet, the US State Department reported that in 2008, 'members of the security forces tortured, beat, abused, and raped persons'.³³ Human Rights organisations

such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International also reported a number of extrajudicial executions committed by government forces in 2008 and 2009.³⁴ Among the most notorious acts of violence was the disappearance of the former rector of the University of N'Djamena, Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh, on 3 February 2008.³⁵

In addition, the regime used Chadian laws and the courts to intimidate and suppress its adversaries. This relatively new tactic fit well with the tendency that Jean and John Comaroff have named 'lawfare'. The Comaroffs argue that in Africa, 'politics and political contests [a]re being increasingly judicialised'. Explaining that 'ordinary differences over public policy, over elections, over rights and interests [a]re ever more likely to find their ways into the courts', they insist that 'the law has intrinsic to it a measure of violence that manifests itself in a good deal of contemporary politics' (Bangstad et al. 2012, 126–127). Alex de Waal also points to the use of law and courts in politics. He, however, argues that political elites in weak states handed over to pursuits by international justice eliminates their value in political-market terms (2009, 109).

On 15 August 2008, the Criminal Court in N'Djamena ordered the death sentence and the confiscation of the property of former President Hissène Habré and 11 of the major militarised opposition leaders.³⁶ The court convicted them in their absence for crimes against Chad's 'constitutional order, territorial integrity and security'. Thirty-one other rebel leaders were convicted and sentenced to lifetime prison.³⁷ Thus, all major rebel leaders were found guilty of serious crimes against the state and convicted to life imprisonment or death by an official legal court in Chad.

This action was an important step in defeating the rebellion. With a valid and pendent warrant order, the rebel leaders are legal targets across Chad. Because all of their property in Chad was confiscated, it is difficult for the opposition leaders to remain hidden in the country.

Deby is the only person who may legally invalidate the rebels' death warrants by pronouncing a presidential pardon. Negotiating with money and/or positions, Deby (through his negotiator, Amhat Yacoub) sets individual addresses for some of the rebels. These individual deals further split the military opposition. Deals may be arranged by the initiative of Deby, his close collaborators or the rebels through a third party that both sides trust.³⁸ Deby thus uses his powers to divide and rule the military opposition.

Changing friends and bribing rivals: co-optation à la Deby

The fluidity of loyalties, blurred boundaries and the changing values of elite members at the patrimonial marketplace in Chad are central to the understanding of politics in Chad (see e.g. Debois 2008; Tubiana 2008a, 2011; Hansen 2011b). I will provide several examples to illustrate the importance of co-optation in Chad. The itinerary of the various rebel leaders, however, differs considerably.

Former Captain Mahamat Nour Abdelkerim united several rebel movements under a unified banner Front Unie pour le Changement Democratique (FUC) in December 2005. Nour Abdelkerim had 6000-7000 men under his command when he attacked N'Djamena on 13 April 2006. Due to French military support for Deby, FUC did not succeed (May and Massey 2007; Prunier 2008b; Tubiana 2008b). Soon after the attack, many accomplices left FUC for other rebel movements or re-joined civil life. Nour Abdelkerim lost support but was perceived as a threat to Deby; therefore, he used his value in the patrimonial marketplace to negotiate personal political benefits with the regime. In

December 2006, Mahamat Nour Abdelkerim signed a peace agreement with Deby's regime. A few weeks later, Deby nominated him Minister of Defence. However, not all of Nour Abdelkerim's rebel-soldiers followed him by integrating into the National Army (see e.g. Amnesty International 2009). Thus, Mahamat Nour Abdelkerim lost political value and Deby dismissed him in December of the same year. After a short period in refuge in the Libyan embassy in N'Djamena, he fled to Saudi Arabia, where he is now a successful businessman.³⁹ His absence from the political scene in Chad since 2007 has likely heavily reduced his value at the patrimonial marketplace in Chad.

Since 1993, former General Mahamat Nouri has held powerful positions within Deby's government. Nouri had been Minister of Health, Minister of the Interior, Minister of Defence and Chad's ambassador to Saudi Arabia. On the day that president Deby was re-elected as president for the third time, Nouri resigned as ambassador. Soon after, he established a rebel movement. Then, in October 2006, he formed the Union des Forces pour la Démocratie et le Développement (UFDD), a coalition of six rebel movements. After a few unsuccessful coup attempts and disagreements over powerful positions within the rebel movement, one fraction of the UFDD split into the UFDD-Fondamentale (UFDD-F) in April 2007 (Prunier 2008a, 8; Tubiana 2008a). On 25 October 2007, both the UFDD and the UFDD-F signed a peace address president Deby.⁴⁰ However, the peace was short-lived. In the nearly successful coup in N'Djamena in February 2008, UFDD under Nouri's command was the most important rebel movement.⁴¹ Nouri was among the 12 rebels sentenced to death in August 2008. After the January 2010 peace agreement between Chad and Sudan, he was expelled from Sudan and now lives in exile in Saudi Arabia.

Mahamat Nour Abdelkerim and Mahamat Nouri are only two of the numerous elites who were formerly part of Deby's regime but live in forced exile today. Other well-known Chadian personalities are former rector of N'Djamena University and director of the oil consortium in Chad, Tom Erdimi (in exile in Houston), former cabinet director for Deby and director of the parastatal CotonTchad, Timan Erdimi (in exile in Doha) and former foreign minister, Achei Ibn Oumar (in exile in Reims). These men have publicly proclaimed that they are not interested in re-joining Deby's regime and that their prime goal is to oust Deby. Yet, others in similar situations have made the same public assertions but chosen different solutions and personal itineraries.

Ahmat Hassaballah Soubiane was Chad's ambassador to the USA. In 2005, he publicly protested against the constitutional change that ended the two-period limit of presidency in Chad. As a result, Deby dismissed him. Installing himself in south-eastern Sudan, he formed the rebel movement Front pour le Salut de la République (FSR) in July 2007. Leading 800-1000 armed men, Hassaballah Soubiane did not participate in the February 2008 attack on N'Djamena (Tubiana 2008a, 67).⁴² According to FSR's international spokesperson in Dakar, Hassaballah Soubiane did not accept the idea that Erdimi could become president in Chad. In his opinion, there was no difference between Deby and Erdimi, as they were both ethnic Zagawas from the same clan.⁴³

Hassaballah Soubiane was also among those who were prosecuted for breaching the constitution, territorial integrity and security on 15 August 2008. Soon after, negotiations about Hassaballah Soubiane's future began via middlemen. On the 26 July 2009, Soubiane (on behalf of FSR) signed a peace agreement with President Idriss Deby and his death sentence was lifted by a presidential pardon (Sudan Tribune 2009). According to a trustworthy weblog, Soubiane had received Communauté Financière Africaine (CFA) 300 million (300 million CFA = 460.000 Euro) to leave the rebellion and join Deby's power

circles.⁴⁴ Yet, this is said to be 'De la monnaie de singe en somme, au regard de ce que le Général Idriss Déby Itno offre aux grosses cylindrées de la rébellion qui le rallie'.⁴⁵ His soldiers were not pleased about receiving only CFA 400,000 (US \$820) to disarm and accused him 'of "eating" the fruits of the armed struggle alone' (Debos 2011). Others within his ranks did not receive any compensation and left Chad, frustrated and dissatisfied (Tubiana 2011, 39). In April 2010, Soubiane was nominated special adviser to the president. Thus, within a few years, Soubiane transformed from Chad's ambassador to a rebel who fought the president, to being sentenced to death by Deby, to becoming his special adviser. Yet, Soubiane might have been cheated, as his position as 'special adviser' is without real influence.

The spokesperson for the Union des Forces de la Résistance (UFR), former minister Abderaman Koulamallah, has also returned to Chad and been given amnesty.⁴⁶ In May 2009, Koulamallah stated in personal communication that the only solution to the problems in Chad was to overthrow president Deby.⁴⁷ In March 2010, Abdéraman Koulamallah told iTchad Presse that he would not end the rebellion before Deby was out of power. Commenting on other rebels joining, Deby's power circles a few weeks later, Koulamallah stated: 'Je ne fais pas partie de ces gens qui abandonnent leurs camarades au milieu du chemin et s'en vont régler leur sort personnel en ralliant un pouvoir qu'ils ont décrié'.⁴⁸ By the end of 2010, however, Koulamallah informed the French news agency Agence France Press (AFP) that 'the only way to peace in Chad now was through dialogue'. UFR, as many other former military rebel movements, launched the non-military political party 'UFR-l'aile de la paix' in October 2010.

In June 2011, after individual negotiations with Deby, Koulamallah returned to Chad. However, at his arrival in N'Djamena from his exile in France, he was imprisoned by Deby's security forces. After 10 days in prison, Deby signed a presidential pardon and Koulamallah was released. Deby also instated Abdéraman Koulamallah as his special adviser. The remainder of the deal is not publicly known (that is part of the game), although rumours indicate that Koulamallah received large sums of money.

While Soubiane and Kollamallah had high patrimonial market value after the February 2008 attacks, Deby demonstrated that rebels could gain even more prominent positions in his regime if they quickly abandoned the rebellion. In April 2008, the first of seven government reshuffles between 2008 and 2010 began.⁴⁹ Two of the newly appointed ministers were former rebel leaders. Youssouf Saleh Abbas, who had been central in the rebel Mouvement pour la Démocratie et la Justice au Tchad (MDJT), was appointed Prime Minister in April 2008 (see e.g. Amnesty International 2009). The leader of the (non-military) opposition party Union pour le Renouveau et la Démocratie, Wadel Kamougue, was appointed Minister of Defence in April 2008, after having escaped arrest during the February attempted coup by fleeing to Cameroon.

Yet, these men were not alone in re-joining the regime after the February coup attempt. In fact, many rebel leaders of lesser importance accepted various gifts from the regime, abandoned resistance and joined Deby. The head of Rassemblement des Forces pour le Changement (RFC), Bachar Issakh Togou signed an agreement with Deby's regime a few days after being sentenced to a lifetime of forced labour and returned to N'Djamena.⁵⁰ In August 2010, several of the military leadership of UFFD, including second in command, Alhadji Moyta and General Nouris younger brother, changed sides and joined Deby's regime.⁵¹

Deby also convinced diaspora dissidents to return home. Abdelaziz Khoulamallah, a central political-military rebel and president of l'Action pour le Changement du Tchad, who had spent 12 years in France, Canada and Sudan, arrived on 22 March 2010 to re-settle in N'Djamena. He told the press: 'I changed side to align myself with the dynamic power in charge in Chad'.⁵² On 14 July 2010, the former president of MDJT, Hassan Soukaya Youssouf, together with a former opponent in diaspora, Youssouf Hamidi, and an international adviser of the UFDD, Moussa Imam Mahamat, all changed sides, returned home and were received by the Prime Minister in Chad.⁵³

In addition to these elite figures, many regular people joined the regime. Thousands of rebel soldiers disarmed collectively and joined the Chadian National Army (ANT) or an official repatriation programme in 2010.⁵⁴ Some rebel soldiers also left Sudan and CAR on an individual basis and re-joined Chad without any agreement with ANT or other official repatriation programmes (Tubiana 2011, 44).

News agents also changed sides. The informative weblog Alwihda, owned and operated by Ahmat Yacoub, changed from opposition to pro-government after the coup attempt in February 2008 and began to publish articles such as: 'Chad: The rebellion is only destructive for the country. Lessons from a former rebel' and 'The rebels ask the Chadian people for pardon'.⁵⁵ Ahmat Yacoub was later nominated special adviser to the president with the task of negotiating return addresses rebels.

It is quite difficult, if not impossible, to obtain firm information about the deals offered to the adversaries of the regime for returning 'home'. This secrecy is part of the game. The value of an opposant is negotiable and constantly changing in the 'political marketplace' depending on the weight and density of his various networks within legitimate and illicit trade, within local, national and international politics, within the foreign aid and peacekeeping business, in number of arms and soldiers at his disposal and personal, ethnic, religious and other connections (de Waal 2009; Utas 2012). Official nominations to various formal positions within the regime likely only show part of the negotiated deals. While rumours on the web and in N'Djamena reference billions of CFA, the regime repeats continually that no money is involved.

In 2008, Prime Minister Abbas argued that 'you can't buy peace', indicating that adversaries to the regime would not be offered money to join the regime.⁵⁶ In April 2010, Deby publicly stated that there would be no distribution of goods, positions or preference to former rebels who abandoned the insurgent movements.⁵⁷ In May 2010, Deby's peace negotiator, Ahmat Yacoub, amplified that there would be no more peace agreements purchased by money or powerful position, thus admitting that this had been the case earlier.⁵⁸

Conclusion

Through heavy militarisation of the state, the use of threats and violence against adversaries and co-opting adversaries in the patrimonial marketplace, president Deby regained control in Chad after the near defeat in February 2008. This is a well-known strategy for remaining in power for leaders in weak states with strong regimes. Financially, Deby remained in power due to the billions of dollars earned on oil since October 2003.⁵⁹

In addition, Deby has played effectively on foreign states' interests in political stability in Chad. Chad seems less dependent on its former colonial power France than it was in February 2008, and the relationship with Sudan transformed from hate to

partnership with the signing of the peace deal in January 2010. The modest international interest in Chad is an advantage for Deby, as he can govern Chad with little attention on his authoritarian form of governance and the massive human rights abuses of his regime.

Today, few people have hope for a successful coup d'état. Timan Erdimi estimates that the rebellions have lost 80% of their forces between February 2008 and December 2010 (In Tubiana 2011, 45). Without strong or unified rebel groups and without support from Sudan, the rebel movements seem to have lost any hope of a military toppling of Deby in the near future.⁶⁰ Celebrating 20 years of reign in December 2010, President Deby seems stronger than ever.

Notes

1. [I would rather die in Chad than to go into exile] Talk de Paris, France 24, 06.03.2008 available at <http://www.france24.com/fr/20080306-talk-de-paris-idriss-deby-itno-president-tchad-rebelle-soutien-regime&navi=DEBATS> (Accessed 19 August 2009).
2. United Nations (2008).
3. Interviews with various inhabitants in 'Moursal' and 'rue de 40' quarters of N'Djamena (August and September 2010).
4. [Two fingernails from overthrowing the regime] (AFP, dépêche, 05 February 2008).
5. Cited in 'Chad. Battle for N'Djamena' in Africa Research Bulletin 45 (1). 2008.
6. <http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/Rapportcommissiondenquete.pdf>.
7. Interview with Prime Minister Youssouf Saleh Abbas, Conseiller Diplomatique à la Présidence au moment des faits; in La Commission d'Enquête (2008).
8. Email from NN, Ndjama, 14 November 2010 and La Commission d'Enquête. Available at <http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/Rapportcommissiondenquete.pdf>.
9. Chad rebels besiege presidential palace. In The Guardian (London) February 4, 2008 available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/feb/04/international.mainsection4> (see also Massey and May 2009).
10. Je n'avais que 2 choix : soit laisser le pays dans le désordre, dans le chaos et dans la guerre civile ; soit, au prix du sacrifice suprême de ma vie même, défendre les acquis de dix-huit années. J'ai choisi de défendre les acquis de dix-huit années du Tchad. President Deby, television Interview with France 24, 5.Mars 2008.
11. The Ibrahim African Governance Index 2010, published 04 October 2010, available at http://www.moibrahimfoundation.org/en/media/get/20101108_eng-summary-iaig2010-rev-web-2.pdf.
12. ['The principle of governing the people by the people for the people has no meaning in Chad'].
13. ['In 18 years of mafia-style, calamitous management, the greedy and bloodthirsty regime of the Mouvement Patriotique du Salut (MPS) [President Debys political party] has nullified the Chadian state. Gangs of lawless individuals without morals have systematically plundered the national wealth and instituted banditry and crime as a system of Government'].
14. See for example Djiraibe (2010) and Tubiana (2011).
15. The article does not discuss political developments in Chad prior to 2008 in any detail. For informative academic literature on post-colonial political history in Chad, see Behrends (2007), May and Massey (2000), Buijtenhuijs (1998).
16. Stephen Ellis argues that most African countries can be called 'fragile' (2012). In the present article, I will not rate the degree of state failure, but use 'weak' as a common denominator.
17. Karin Dokken strongly insists that in weak states, 'strong regimes make political opposition impossible' (2008, 47).
18. Many of them were only children (see e.g. Human Rights Watch 2007)
19. Please provide 3–5 keywordsquiteals: cooptation ernational actors. Please provide 3–5 keywordsquiteals: cooptation ernational actors. Loi n °001/PR/2009 du 5 janvier 2009. More on this issue can be found in Pegg 2009 and Hansen (forthcoming).
20. For a more comprehensive study of the various rebel movements in Chad from 2005 to 2010, see Hansen (2011a) and Tubiana (2011). This section draws on Hansen (2011a).
21. Chadian president says to expand cooperation with China in various fields. In People's Daily online 17 February 2011. <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/7290264.html>.

22. Military expenditures in dollars are available at: http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/mil_exp_dol_fig_pergdp-expenditures-dollar-figure-per-gdp. SIPRI, Programme on Military Expenditure and Arms Production; see <http://www.sipri.org>.
23. Deby in interview with Jeune Afrique (24 April 2010).
24. Deby in interview with Jeune Afrique (24 April 2010).
25. 'Military expenditure as share of GDP 2004–2009' http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/resultoutput/milex_gdp/milex_gdp_default/?searchterm=Chad (Accessed 12 March 2012).
26. La France au Tchad, coopération militaire et de defense. www.ambafrance-td.org.
27. ['guarantee the sovereignty of the Chadian state'] http://www.ambafrance-td.org/france_tchad/spip.php?article327#Les-accords-de-cooperation (Accessed 23 October 2010).
28. Confidential note from US Embassy in N'Djamena dated 29 January 2008 (WikiLeaks, id 139169).
29. (8,5 billion CFA) La Voix, no 22, 13-20 October 2009 and Vente d'armes : les bonnes affaires de la France au Tchad. <http://www.afrik.com/article17664.html> (Accessed 24 September 2010).
30. According to the Ukrainian government's public submissions to the UN Register of Conventional Arms and Ukraine's annual reports on arms exports reported in Wezeman (2009).
31. http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAJA_2501_p006-007.xml4/france-armement-grifon-aerospace-vente-d-armesvente-d-armes-bloquees.html (Accessed 04 October 2010). See also official photos from the military show at http://www.presidencetchad.org/defile_11_08_08.htm (Accessed 25 October 2010).
32. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/chad/>.
33. US Department of State, Human Rights Report 2008 Chad. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/af/118993.htm> (Accessed 20 September 2010).
34. <http://www.hrw.org/en/world-report-2009/chad>. and <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/chad/>.
35. <http://www.tchadenligne.com/article-suivre-le-film-court-metrage-sur-ibni-oumar-intitule-espoir-brise-98541848.html> (Accessed 22 March 2012).
36. Including Timane Erdimi, leader of the Union des Forces pour le Changement, Ahmat Hassaballah Soubiane of the Front pour le Salut de la République (FSR), Abdelwahid Aboud Makaye and Acheikh Ibn-Oumar of the UFDD-F and Mahamat Nouri, leader of the UFDD.
37. <http://french.chad.usembassy.gov/uploads/images/GUBkGuthvTeGfINCB8xLVg/homme2008.pdf>. and <http://www.afriquejet.com/news/africa-news/chad-seizes-property-of-12-rebel-chiefs-2009071431651.html> (Accessed 12 June 2010).
38. Phone interview with Eric Topona (journalist, N'Djamena) March 2012.
39. 'Mahamet Nour Abdelkarim n'est plus général d'armée'. <http://tchadonline.com/?p=44056> and phone interview with NN (central within one opposition movement), Dakar, February 2010.
40. Chad signs peace deal with main rebel groups. <http://en.baybak.com/chad-signs-peace-deal-with-main-rebel-groups.azr> (Accessed 04 June 2010).
41. UFFD-F, headed by former Sous-Prefet Abdelwahid Aboud Makaye and supported by former Foreign Minister Acheik Ibn Oumar, counted around 500 men while Erdimi's RFC had around 800 soldiers at that time.
42. <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2008/02/2008525143329491639.html>.
43. Phone interview with Makaila (Dakar) 8 May 2009.
44. Interview with A. Ibn-Oumar, Reims 24 August 2010 and Sudan Tribune 2009.
45. (Only peanuts compared to the sums General Idriss Deby Itno pays to important rebel leaders for joining him). Colonel Ahmat Hassaballah Soubiane Ancien Ambassadeur aux USA. (Top Secret Africa, November 2009. <http://www.icicemac.com/actualite/colonel-ahmat-hassaballah-soubiane-ancien-ambassadeur-aux-usa.html> (Accessed 09 May 2010).
46. <http://www.afriquejet.com/news/africa-news/chad-seizes-property-of-12-rebel-chiefs-2009071431651.html> (Accessed 12 July 2010).
47. Phone interview with A. Koulamalla, May 2009.
48. 'I am not of these people who abandon their comrades on the half way and quit to arrange their personal sorts with the regime they fought'. <http://tchad.presse.over-blog.com/article-je-serai-le-dernier-des-mohicans-interview-a-koulamalla-47028978.html> (Accessed 23 March 2012).
49. During his first 20 years of reign, Deby nominated and deposed some hundred ministers, including 16 prime ministers (Passalet 2010). As an indication of the use of ministerial posts to calm the opposition, one can count seven changes in government between February 2008 and

- December 2010. These occurred 16 October 2010, 2 April 2010, 3 March 2010, 23 March 2009, 3 April 2009, 14 September 2008 and 15 April 2008.
50. <http://www.cefod.org/spip.php?article1899>.
 51. <http://makaila.over-blog.com/article-fin-de-lutte-armee-pour-l-ufdd-adoum-allatch-nouri-rallie-idriss-deby-55209547.html> (Accessed 24 April 2012).
 52. http://www.alwihdainfo.com/Tchad-L-opposant-Khoumalah-regagne-N-djamena_a3126.html (Published 31 March 2010, Accessed 15 April 2010).
 53. <http://www.primature-tchad.org/> (Published 16 July 2010, Accessed 16 July 2010).
 54. See various accounts on different weblogs. For example <http://makaila.over-blog.com/article-rebellion-tchadienne-le-desarmement-a-t-il-ete-monnaye-59116318.html>, published 18 October 2010 (Accessed 23 October 2010). http://www.alwihdainfo.com/Les-rebelles-demandent-pardon-au-peuple-tchadien_a3662.html. See <http://tchadonline.com/deby-n%E2%80%99a-pas-rate-1%E2%80%99occasion/> (Published 21 November 2010, Accessed 30 November 2010).
 55. <http://www.alwihdainfo.com/> (Accessed 14 November 2010).
 56. 'La paix ne s'achète pas; il faut que les gens cessent de monnayer la rébellion'. Interview with Prime Minister Y. S. Abbas, (diplomatic adviser to the presidency in February 2008) in La Commission d'Enquête 2008.
 57. 'Il n'y aura ni marchandage ni distribution des postes ou de prébendes. Seul la paix, une paix sans condition, nous intéresse'. *Jeune Afrique*, 24 April 2010.
 58. 'Plus d'accord de paix monnayés contre des liasses de billets de banque ou de postes de responsabilité'. Deby's adviser Ahmat Yacoub, 6 Mai 2010, Hôtel Kimpinski, N'Djamena at <http://grat.overblog.com/categorie-11426785.html> (Accessed 16 May 2010).
 59. <http://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?c=cd&v=65>.
 60. A successful coup today would have to come from the presidential guards inside the palace, according to popular understanding in N'Djamena today.

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