



Instability in Chad

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Summary

The political and security situation in Chad remains volatile. Ethnic clashes, banditry, and fighting between government forces and rebel groups, both Chadian and Sudanese, have contributed to a fragile security situation in the east. The instability has forced over 185,000 Chadians from their homes in the past three years. An additional 30,000 fled to neighboring Cameroon during a February 2008 rebel attack on the capital city. In addition to the internal displacement, over 323,000 refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR) and Sudan's Darfur region have fled violence in their own countries and now live in refugee camps in east and southern Chad. With Chadian security forces stretched thin, the threat of bandit attacks on the camps and on aid workers has escalated. The instability has also impacted some 700,000 Chadians whose communities have been disrupted by fighting and strained by the presence of the displaced. The United Nations and the European Union began deployment of a multidimensional presence in Chad and the CAR in late 2007 to improve regional security so as to facilitate the safe and sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons. The U.N. mission, known as MINURCAT, assumed peacekeeping operations from the EU force in March 2009, but it continues to face logistical challenges in its deployment.

Contents

Introduction	1
Political Instability	1
The Armed Opposition.....	2
Ethnic Conflict.....	3
Regional Conflict	3
U.N. Presence and EU Peacekeepers	4
Child Soldiers	5
Oil and the Economy.....	5
U.S.-Chadian Relations	6
Prospects	7

Contacts

Author Contact Information	7
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Introduction

Chad, a landlocked country roughly twice the size of Texas, has had a turbulent history of religious and ethnic conflict and intermittent civil war in its 40 years of independence. Bordered by Libya to the north and Sudan to the east, it is considered to be among the world's ten poorest countries, according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Index. Persistent conflict has hindered the country's development, despite significant oil reserves. One in five children dies before the age of five. Chad also is perceived to be one of the world's most corrupt countries.¹ *Foreign Policy* magazine ranked Chad fourth on its Failed States Index.²

Political Instability

Chad gained its independence from France in 1960. The country has been politically unstable since 1965, when a tax protest led northern, Islamic tribes to rebel against the southern, Christian-dominated government. Years of authoritarian rule and civil war followed. Chad's current president, Idriss Déby Itno, a former general, took power by force when he launched a rebellion against then-President Hisssein Habré from Sudan in 1989. Déby's forces, reportedly aided by Libya and Sudan and largely unopposed by French troops stationed in Chad, seized the capital, N'Djamena, in 1990, forcing Habré into exile. Habré has been sentenced to death in absentia in Chad and is slated to be tried in Senegal for human rights abuses committed under his regime.³ Déby, named president in 1991, pledged to create a democratic multi-party political system.

Chad's first multi-party presidential elections were held in 1996; legislative elections followed in 1997. Déby won reelection in 2001, and his party won a majority of seats in the 2002 legislative elections. According to the State Department's annual human rights reports, Chad's elections have all been marked by irregularities and fraud. The opposition boycotted the most recent elections, held in 2006 after the constitution was amended to allow Déby a third term. The government initiated a dialogue with the political opposition in 2007; in August, the parties agreed to postpone the 2007 legislative elections to 2009 to allow a new census and the creation of a more representative electoral commission. A date for the 2009 elections has yet to be set.

¹ Chad ranks 173 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2008 Corruption Perceptions Index, which measures business people and country analysts' perceptions of corruption among public officials and politicians.

² The magazine uses economic, social, political, and military indicators to rank countries by their "vulnerability to violent internal conflict and social dysfunction." Only Somalia, Sudan, and Zimbabwe were considered more unstable.

³ In February 2009, Belgium filed a complaint against Senegal with the International Court of Justice because the country had yet to begin trial proceedings against Habré. Belgium's suit was dismissed in May 2009. Senegal has requested financial assistance from the international community to cover costs associated with a Habré trial.

Chad at a Glance

Population: 10.3 million

Population Growth Rate: 2.069%

Gross National Income (GNI): \$4.9 billion

GNI per Capita: \$440

Key Exports: Oil, cotton, cattle, gum arabic

Religions: Muslim 51%, Christian 35%, indigenous beliefs 14%

Language: French and Arabic (official), Sara, and more than 120 indigenous languages and dialects

Infant Mortality Rate: 98.69 deaths per 1,000 births

Life Expectancy: 47.7 years

HIV/AIDS Adult Prevalence: 3.5%

Literacy: 25.7% ; male: 40.7%, female 12.8%

Sources: CIA; UNAIDS; World Bank

The February 2008 arrest of several opposition and civic leaders led some to question Déby's commitment to dialogue. Seven months later, in September, a commission of inquiry officially concluded that one of those arrested, Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh, a respected former minister who was the spokesman of the opposition coalition, the Coordination des partis politiques pour la défense de la Constitution (CPDC), had died in custody. European donors continue to support the 2007 political accord, though. After Déby's appointment of a new prime minister in April 2008 and the subsequent appointment of four former political opponents to high-level cabinet positions some observers suggested that the President might be moving toward more inclusive governance. Others have viewed the appointments as an attempt to divide the opposition.

The Armed Opposition

President Déby's perceived lack of legitimacy among the opposition has contributed to political tensions. He has faced several coup attempts, and diverse armed political and regional factions have been active since the 1990s. Shifting rebel alliances, which include defectors from the government, gained strength in the east in 2005-2006 and launched a series of raids on strategic government positions. Inter-communal violence not directly related to the rebellion also increased. Déby declared a state of emergency in November 2006. Critics charge that he used the state of emergency, which prohibited public rallies and campaigning and allowed the government to censor the press, to silence opposition.⁴

In October 2007, the government signed a peace agreement in Sirte, Libya with the main rebel groups based in eastern Chad. However, the agreement was not fully implemented, and the fighting has continued. The Sirte agreement was the latest in a series of failed negotiations to bring a peaceful settlement to the rebellion.⁵ In early February 2008, rebel forces advanced on the capital in an unsuccessful attempt to force Déby from power.⁶ Hundreds of civilians were reportedly killed in the fighting, and an estimated 30,000 Chadians fled across the Cameroon border, ten miles from N'Djamena. Rebel groups later attacked and briefly held several towns in eastern Chad in June 2008. In August 2008, a Chadian court issued death sentences *in absentia* for several rebel leaders. The main armed groups, who have been divided by ethnic and personal rivalries, agreed in November 2008 to unify their efforts to overthrow Déby.

The new rebel alliance, Union des forces de la résistance (UFR), which currently consists of eight diverse rebel groups and is led by Timane Erdimi, a nephew of President Déby, launched an advance in the east in early May 2009. They were repelled by Chadian forces, who pursued them into Sudanese territory. Many analysts speculate that, like former rebel groupings, the UFR is prone to infighting and faces a strategic disadvantage against the Chadian military's air power.⁷

⁴ The 2006 state of emergency lasted four months and applied to N'Djamena and select regions in the east, north and south. It was reissued in October 2007 for 3 regions in the east and north.

⁵ For example, in December 2006, Déby signed a peace agreement with Mahamat Nour, then-leader of a coalition of 13 rebel groups. Nour was appointed Minister of Defense in March 2007. Fighting between his forces and the national army resumed in November 2007, and Nour, who was subsequently dismissed from the government, fled to Sudan.

⁶ The U.N. Security Council unanimously adopted a statement drafted by France that condemned the attack and expressed support for African Union mediation efforts. The Security Council did not agree on a French proposal to use "all means necessary" to halt the rebellion.

⁷ The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Chad Country Report*, June 2009.

Ethnic Conflict

Chad's ethnic rivalries are complex and fluid, and they have been compounded by conflict over land and limited natural resources such as water. Ethnic violence between President Déby's ethnic group, the Zaghawa, and the Tama, and both non-Arab, has become an increasing focus of concern. Conflict within the factionalized Zaghawa tribe also is a factor. The Zaghawa, who compose less than 3% of Chad's population, control a majority of government positions. Both Chad and the Darfur region of Sudan are home to the Zaghawa, elements of which have played key roles in Chad's complex inter-ethnic alliances and conflicts and in the Darfur conflict.

Regional Conflict ⁸

The current conflict in Darfur has displaced more than two million Sudanese and led large numbers to flee into Chad, generating a humanitarian crisis in the east. Refugee inflows from Darfur and the CAR have also increased social tensions linked to increasing demand on local resources, despite the provision of aid to the refugees by international aid groups. The conflict has also heightened political instability in Chad. Chad and Sudan have periodically accused one another of sponsoring rebellions against their respective governments. Despite a May 2007 peace agreement signed by the two countries in Saudi Arabia and another agreement signed in Dakar, Senegal in March 2008, the accusations have continued. Chad has alleged that Sudan backed the February 2008 assault on N'Djamena and the June advance in the east. Reports suggest that one of the Darfur rebel groups may have provided support to the Chadian army during the attack. Sudan in turn accused Chad of backing Sudanese rebels involved in a May 2008 attack on Omdurman, a suburb of the Sudanese capitol.⁹ The two governments renewed diplomatic ties in November 2008 after mediation by Libya, but allegations of support for each other's respective rebel groups continued. Another agreement was signed in Qatar in early May 2009, only days before a May 2009 advance by Chadian rebels, purportedly staged from Sudan. In response, the Chadian government reportedly authorized air strikes against rebels within Sudanese territory, which the Sudanese government in turn characterized as "acts of war."¹⁰ Sudan has threatened to shoot down Chadian planes if they cross into Sudanese airspace again. Reports suggest that the Sudanese Air Force bombed a refugee camp in Chad on May 28 as it pursued Sudanese rebels in the area.¹¹

The United Nations currently maintains 12 refugee camps in eastern Chad and several in the south. In addition to the estimated 250,000 Sudanese refugees, the camps provide shelter for some 73,000 refugees from the CAR and as many as 167,000 displaced Chadians.¹² The camps, and the host communities, struggle with shortages of water and firewood. As a result of a 2007

⁸ Also see CRS Report RL33574, *Sudan: The Crisis in Darfur and Status of the North-South Peace Agreement*, by Ted Dagne.

⁹ Other accusations have been addressed by the respective governments in letters to the President of the U.N. Security Council. See, for example, S/2008/212, S/2008/222, and S/2008/325.

¹⁰ "Sudan Accuses Chad of 'Acts of War' with Air Raids," Reuters, May 15, 2009.

¹¹ "Rights Groups Denounce Deadly Bombing Raids in Chad," Inter Press Service, June 3, 2009.

¹² Refugee and IDP figures provided by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and USAID. Refugee flows from the CAR increased in early 2009 due to renewed fighting there.

incident involving French aid workers,¹³ Chad reportedly tightened its oversight of non-governmental organizations working in the country and increased travel restrictions. Aid agencies contend that these restrictions have impeded the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The region where the camps in the east are located has also been plagued by insecurity and violence, and some international humanitarian aid compounds have been looted and aid workers threatened or attacked. Some groups have, at times, had to temporarily suspend operations. The director of the humanitarian group Save the Children, a French national, was killed in May 2008. The U.N. had repeatedly pressed the government to allow a peacekeeping force to secure the borders with Sudan and the CAR. President Déby opposed the proposals until June 2007, when the European Union offered to provide an EU peacekeeping force (primarily from France, which has been Chad's strongest military ally and one of its largest bilateral donors).

U.N. Presence and EU Peacekeepers

On September 25, 2007, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1778, approving the establishment of a multinational presence in Chad and the Central African Republic to (1) contribute to the protection of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and civilians in danger; (2) facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance; and (3) create favorable conditions for reconstruction and economic and social development. Based on Resolution 1778, two multinational bodies, a U.N. mission and a European Union (EU) military force, were created under a single mandate.¹⁴ The U.N. presence, known as the U.N. Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), has been responsible for police training and reinforcing judicial infrastructure, and is working with Chadian forces to reinforce safety for refugees, IDPs, and aid agencies in the camps in the east. The EU force, known as EUFOR Chad/CAR (hereafter EUFOR), was tasked with providing general security for civilians and facilitating the free movement of humanitarian assistance and personnel. EUFOR was authorized to use military force, whereas MINURCAT was not under its original mandate.

Some humanitarian officials have expressed concern that having two separate international missions in Chad complicated perceptions among the local population, as well among the region's various rebel groups. At least one rebel group warned that it considered the EU force a "foreign occupation army," because it included French forces, whom the rebels do not see as neutral.

The U.N. Security Council extended MINURCAT's mandate through Resolutions 1834 in September 2008 and 1861 in January 2009. Logistical challenges have impeded the deployment of the mission, which was initially authorized to include some 300 police and 50 military liaison officers, as well as civilian personnel.¹⁵ MINURCAT has been training a special local police unit, *Détachement Intégré de Sécurité (DIS)* to assume security responsibilities for the camps, and the first group of trained officers deployed in October 2008. Over 500 DIS personnel were deployed

¹³ In October 2007, six French aid workers from the charity Zoe's Ark were arrested in Chad on charges of abduction and fraud after they attempted to fly 103 Chadian children to Europe. The majority of the children, whom the aid workers claimed were Darfur orphans, were, in fact, native Chadians, many of whom still had at least one living parent or guardian. The aid workers were repatriated to France to serve eight-year sentences. Déby later pardoned them.

¹⁴ This "dual-mission system," with a combined U.N.-EU mandate, was the first of its kind. "Chad: Dual Peacekeeping Mission Seeks to Dispel Confusion," *IRIN*, January 11, 2008.

¹⁵ As of early July 2008, MINURCAT had recruited 211 U.N. police officers, 175 of whom were deployed. In addition, 24 military liaison officers were deployed. Those personnel numbers had increased to 241 police officers and 46 military liaison officers by March 2009.

as of January 2009. EUFOR's deployment of 3,700 troops, originally expected in November 2007, was also delayed by funding and logistical challenges. The rebel advance on N'Djamena in early February 2008 further delayed deployment, but the force reached initial operating capacity, with almost half its full force deployed, in March, and as of December 2008 3,300 troops had deployed.¹⁶ Déby criticized EUFOR in June for not engaging the rebel advance, and some aid groups charge that the force failed to protect them. Under Security Council Resolution 1834, the Council expressed its intention for EUFOR to transfer authority to a U.N. military component. That transfer took place on March 15, 2009, when EUFOR's mandate expired. Under the new mandate authorized in Resolution 1861, MINURCAT, which had an estimated 2,000 troops in late March, is authorized to have a military component of 5,200 troops.¹⁷ Anticipating continued deployment delays, due in part to a shortage of helicopter assets, the U.N. Secretary-General has revised the target to 4,700 soldiers by the end of the year.

Child Soldiers

According to U.N. estimates, there may be as many as 10,000 children used in combat and non-combat roles by Chadian rebel groups, paramilitary forces, and the national army. The government denied the existence of child soldiers in its army until May 2007, when it signed an agreement with UNICEF to end recruitment of persons under age 18 and begin demobilization of those already within the security forces. According to Human Rights Watch the government has limited access by international child protection officials to military installations to verify demobilization.¹⁸ Humanitarian officials have also expressed concern regarding the recruitment of children by rebel groups and local self-defense militias in and around refugee camps.¹⁹

Oil and the Economy

Eighty percent of Chad's population is dependent on subsistence farming and herding, and droughts and locust infestations continue to affect food production and contribute to a high malnutrition rate. When Chad began oil production in 2003, Chadians had high expectations that oil revenues might serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development.²⁰ Corruption, weak state institutions, and chronic instability, however, threaten to undermine advances made in the oil sector and could deter future high capital investment projects elsewhere in the region. The Chad-Cameroon Petroleum Development and Pipeline Project is a \$4 billion initiative, initially backed by the World Bank, to develop oil fields in southern Chad and export the oil through a 665-mile pipeline to offshore oil loading facilities on Cameroon's coast.²¹ World Bank funding for the

¹⁶ The European Union reached an agreement with the Russian Federation in November 2008 for four Russian transport helicopters to aid EUFOR's deployment.

¹⁷ U.N. officials had initially recommended 6,000 troops, but the Chadian government expressed concerns with a force of that size. See U.N. Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad," S/2008/760, December 4, 2008.

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Early to War: Child Soldiers in the Chad Conflict*, July 2007.

¹⁹ U.N. Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Chad," S/2007/400, July 3, 2007.

²⁰ According to the Bank of Central African States, Chad received \$340 million in oil revenues in 2005, and \$953 million in 2006. "Chad: Weapons Instead of ARVs," IRIN, June 30, 2008.

²¹ In addition to the World Bank, sponsors included ExxonMobile (with 40% of the private equity), Malaysia's (continued...)

project was conditional on a portion of the oil revenues being held in a British bank account from which Chad could only draw for poverty-reduction projects. In 2006, the World Bank suspended loans to Chad and froze oil revenue accounts after the government changed its revenue management law and significantly increased military spending. Chad and the World Bank reached a compromise in June 2006, allowing the government to use 30% (formerly 20%) of oil revenues for its own purposes, while the remainder would continue to be used for development programs. In September 2008, the World Bank announced its withdrawal from the project, citing Chad's failure to comply with key aspects of the agreement. Chad has reimbursed the Bank for its loans. The World Bank continues to engage the Chadian government, however, and reopened its office in N'Djamena in January 2009. The International Monetary Fund began a new Staff-Monitored Program with the government focusing on fiscal discipline in April 2009.

U.S.-Chadian Relations

The United States has provided over \$512 million in humanitarian assistance to eastern Chad since the onset of the humanitarian crisis in FY2004, including over \$110 million in FY2009. U.S. foreign policy priorities in Chad have included 1) advancing stability and resolving the refugee crisis; 2) promoting democracy and respect for human rights; 3) supporting health and agriculture programs; and 4) strengthening Chadian counterterrorism capabilities and professionalizing the military.²² The U.S. Agency for International Development's Mission in Chad closed in 1995 due to declining funding and security concerns; USAID assistance, much of which consists of monetized food aid to support health and agriculture initiatives, is coordinated through its regional office in Kenya. The U.S. Treasury Department has provided technical assistance to the country's oil revenue management oversight body to promote transparency.

Despite concerns regarding poor governance, the Bush Administration considered the Déby government an ally in the war on terror. In 2004, elements of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) (now known as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) entered Chadian territory and met resistance from Chadian forces. Chad is a part of the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP), a U.S. interagency effort that aims to increase Chad's border protection and regional counter-terrorism capabilities, as well as "to promote democratic governance as a means to discredit terrorist ideology."²³ The United States has also provided security assistance to Chad, although the FY2008 and FY2009 appropriations legislation has limited some of this training to that which promotes "democratic values" and respect for human rights. The U.S. government has discontinued demining assistance due to "institutional weakness and a lack of political will to address the problem." Landmines continue to kill hundreds of Chadians annually, and approximately 80% of the victims are children, according to U.N. Mine Action.

Congress has expressed concern for the ongoing violence and humanitarian crisis in the region through various legislation and hearings in recent years. The Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011, (H.R. 2410), as passed by the House of Representatives, would authorize the Secretary of State to use funds from its Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI)

(...continued)

Petronas (35%), and Chevron-Texaco (25%).

²² U.S. Department of State, International Affairs Congressional Budget Justification, FY2009.

²³ Testimony of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs James Swann at the Senate Foreign Relations Africa Subcommittee hearing on Chad and the CAR, March 20, 2007.

for the refurbishment of helicopters for use in U.N. peacekeeping operations such as MINURCAT.²⁴

Prospects

Persistent conflict with rebels in the north and east; refugee inflows and instability from the conflict in Darfur; and ethnic tensions all contribute to concerns for Chad's future. Under President Déby, Chad has made limited progress toward democracy. Human rights conditions remain notably poor, in part due to the actions of state security forces; freedom of expression is often curtailed; and many critics and observers see the government as lacking in transparency, accountability, and functional capacities. Reports of human right abuses, including sexual violence against women, are particularly high in the country's conflict zones. Some suggest that prospective increases in state oil revenues and multifaceted international assistance to bolster political and economic reform could engender more participatory governance and economic growth in Chad. However, international donor frustration, as evidenced by the World Bank's withdrawal from the pipeline project, may affect future assistance and investment. If the Déby government does not embrace political and economic reforms, popular resentment against those in power may perpetuate the current instability.

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²⁴ For further information, see CRS Report RL32773, *The Global Peace Operations Initiative: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Nina M. Serafino.