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CHAD: POLITICS AND SECURITY

A Writenet Report by Roy May and Simon Massey

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acronyms	i
Executive Summary	ii
1 Introduction.....	1
2 The Context of the Political/Security Nexus.....	3
2.1 Political, Social and Economic Background to the Current Conflict	3
2.2 Constitutional Amendment and the 2006 Presidential Election.....	5
3 Internal and External Actors.....	6
3.1 The Registered Opposition.....	6
3.2 Politico-military Factions	7
3.2.1 <i>UFDD</i>	10
3.2.2 <i>RAFD</i>	10
3.2.3 <i>FUC</i>	11
3.3 Involvement by External Interests	12
4 Human Rights Issues	15
4.1 Security of the Person.....	15
4.2 The Judiciary and the Right to a Fair Trial.....	16
4.3 Prison Conditions.....	17
4.4 Discrimination	18
4.5 Freedom of Expression and Information.....	18
4.6 Forced Conscription	20
5 The Current Security and Humanitarian Situation	20
5.1 Security on the East and South-eastern Border with Darfur	20
5.2 Security Situation on the South-eastern Border with CAR.....	23
5.3 Situation of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons.....	24
6 Conclusion.....	26
7 Bibliography	27

Acronyms

ANS	Agence Nationale de Sécurité
ANT	Armée Nationale Tchadienne
APRD	Armée Populaire pour la Restauration de la République et la Démocratie
CAR	Central African Republic
CDR	Conseil Démocratique Révolutionnaire
CEMAC	Central African Monetary and Economic Community
CNR	Conseil National de Redressement du Tchad
CPDC	Coordination des Parties Politiques de la Défense de la Constitution
DPA	Darfur Peace Agreement
FAR	Front des Forces d'Action pour la République
FDPC	Front Démocratique du Peuple Centrafricain
FROLINAT	Front de Libération Nationale
FUC	Front Uni pour le Changement
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
MDJT	Mouvement pour Démocratie et Justice en Tchad
MPS	Mouvement Patriotique du Salut
NRF	National Redemption Front
RAFD	Rassemblement des Forces Démocratiques
RDP	Rassemblement pour la Démocratie et le Progrès
SCUD	Socle pour le Changement, l'Unité et la Démocratie
SLA	Sudanese Liberation Army
SLA-MM	Sudanese Liberation Army – Minni Minnawi Faction
TSCTI	Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative
UFDD	Union des Forces pour la Démocratie et le Développement
UFDR	Union des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement
UFPD	Union des Forces pour le Progrès et la Démocratie
UNDR	Union Nationale pour la Démocratie et le Renouveau
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
URD	Union pour le Renouveau et la Démocratie
URPT	Union des Radios Privées du Tchad
Viva-RNDP	Viva Rassemblement National pour la Démocratie et le Progrès

Executive Summary¹

Ethnically diverse, religiously divided and prone to factionalism, Chad has known low intensity conflict, interspersed with periods of full-scale civil war since independence. President Déby Itno's defeat of the dictatorial regime of Hissène Habré raised hopes of a period of stability that might create conditions for development in one of the world's poorest countries. Despite continued coup attempts and minor rebellions, under his rule Chad has been relative peaceful, although underlying political and social schisms have not been addressed. After a lengthy consultation period Chad embarked on a democratic transition that led to political plurality and a series of elections, albeit flawed, in 1996/1997, 2001/2002 and 2006. The numerous registered political parties are weak and personalized and it is politico-military factions that pose the greatest challenge to the regime.

In power for 16 years Déby Itno currently faces a serious threat from rebel groups based in the neighbouring Sudanese province of Darfur, and spill-over from the conflict in Darfur has exacerbated domestic pressures inside Chad, not least because of the military involvement of the Zaghawa, Déby Itno's ethnic group, on both sides of the border. After initial hesitation, Déby Itno chose to assist his fellow kinsmen, and Zaghawa moral and physical support has sustained anti-Khartoum rebel groups in Darfur who have reciprocated by giving military support to Déby Itno's forces in Chad. In response Khartoum has allowed the anti-Déby Itno groups to operate out of Darfur and has supplied them with material aid. The question of where to position Chad in terms of the Darfur conflict coincided with a growing radicalization of the political and military elite. This had several causes: dissatisfaction with Déby Itno's handling of the conflict and the corruption surrounding his management of the oil portfolio, as well as social unrest stemming from the deepening economic crisis.

Following the campaign to amend the Constitution to allow Déby Itno to stand for a third term there were a series of influential elite defections. The two most important rebel groupings are the Union des Forces pour la Démocratie et le Développement (UFDD) led by former ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Mahamat Nouri, and the Rassemblement des Forces Démocratiques (RAFD) led by Déby Itno's former close confidants Tom and Timan Erdimi. However, in April 2006 it was an existing rebel group, the Front Uni pour le Changement (FUC) under Mahamat Nour that fought its way across eastern Chad and through the Central African Republic (CAR) to make an assault on the capital N'Djaména. The offensive was repulsed by the Chadian Army with logistical and intelligence support from the 1,000-strong French garrison based in the country. Nour has since rallied to the government. The failure of the April 2006 assault has seen a change of tactics. In a succession of offensives the UFDD and RAFD, originally acting separately but more recently acting in concert, have used attrition to exhaust the Chadian Army.

External involvement sees Western interests represented by former colonial power France and the United States with an economic stake in the oil project and an interest in Chad's strategic importance in terms of countering Islamic terrorism. These influences are competing with the regional ambitions of Sudan sponsored by its major trading partner, the People's

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Republic of China (PRC). To date only France has intervened directly in the conflict, lending its military support to Déby Itno. Chad's switch of allegiance from Taiwan to the PRC has reduced the danger of great power proxy conflict.

Chad has a poor human rights record and the situation is worsening with increased insecurity. Though the Constitution ensures equality before the law, ethnic, religious and gender discrimination is pervasive. A climate of impunity prevails. Summary executions and assaults against the person by state forces go unpunished. The judicial system is underdeveloped and partial. Prison conditions are harsh. Pressure on the regime as a result of increased rebel activity has led to an increase in forced conscription and the imposition of prior censorship on the media.

Rebel offensives, and the increased frequency of *janjaweed* militia attacks have created a major humanitarian crisis in eastern Chad. This situation has been aggravated by refugee flows following rebel offensives, involving the active participation of Chadian and Sudanese fighters in the Central African Republic. With supply lines already stretched by the adverse conditions, looting and assaults have forced a reduction in aid organizations' staff numbers.

To date Déby Itno has weathered the most serious threats to his tenure, although he has relied on French military support to do so. The politics of faction in Chad dictates that negotiated settlement is always a possibility, as evidenced by the *ralliement* of Nour to the regime. Continued Libyan mediation has brought renewed assurances that Chad and Sudan will desist from supporting rebel groups in each other's countries. However, continued conflict in Darfur, and the export of the destructive tactics employed by the *janjaweed* will continue to undermine prospects for a peaceful solution to the conflict in Chad.

1 Introduction

Despite his undoubted resilience – he has survived a succession of armed rebellions since he took power in 1990 – many believe that President Idriss Déby Itno² is likely to find it increasingly difficult to continue his long rule. On 14 November 2006, faced with a deteriorating security environment, then Prime Minister Pascal Yoadimnadjé announced a state of emergency in seven regions in the East, South-east and North and in the capital N'Djaména.³ Eleven days later, rebel fighters of the Union des Forces pour la Démocratie et le Développement (UFDD) fought their way into Abéché, the main town in the east of Chad. Holding it for 24 hours, the rebels withdrew and the Armée Nationale Tchadienne (ANT) retook the town without any further combat. The attack signalled a renewed commitment by the rebels to ending the regime of President Déby Itno. In a sign that the armed opposition, previously loath to act in concert, was presenting a unified front, the strategic town of Biltine was simultaneously temporarily occupied by fighters loyal to two other rebel groups. The UFDD's leader Mahamat Nouri stated that unlike previous rebel offensives, notably the assault on the capital N'Djaména in April 2006, his forces intended to use attrition as the main tactic in their campaign to oust Déby Itno. The April assault had brought chaos to the capital but proved a disaster for the attacking rebels. On that occasion the permanent French garrison lent Déby Itno's forces decisive logistics, communications, intelligence and, reportedly, air assault support. Although, at the time of writing, France has sent reinforcements to Chad, it is unclear how far militarily President Jacques Chirac would be willing to go to once more secure the position of the Chadian leader.

At the heart of his current dilemma is the conflict in the neighbouring Sudanese province of Darfur. Despite misgivings at taking sides against his long-time sponsor President Omar al-Bashir, pressure from within the Zaghawa ruling elite has pushed Déby Itno into supporting his kin fighting the Khartoum regime in Darfur. This decision has left him vulnerable to al-Bashir's ambition to play kingmaker in a post-Déby Itno Chad, and in particular susceptible to Chadian rebel groups, hitherto tolerated by Khartoum, now actively sponsored as proxies. The humanitarian situation in eastern Chad has also been adversely impacted by the expanded ambitions of the *janjaweed*, the Arab militia inspired by Khartoum and responsible for much of the ethnic cleansing in Darfur.

Yet, whilst the Darfur conflict has created a set of circumstances for the rebel groups and the militia to exploit, President Déby Itno's problems run deeper. Reliant since he took power on patronage, notably through his wider Zaghawa ethnic group, Déby Itno's circle of trusted allies has contracted markedly since oil from the southern Doba fields came on stream in 2003. Zaghawa domination has deeply antagonized the country's other ethnic groups, yet support even among his own people is now far from secure. Many Zaghawa, including members of the ruling party, the armed forces and his clan, are highly critical of the management of the oil portfolio which they suspect him to arrogate for the benefit of his immediate family, a perception borne out by his determination to revise the Constitution in order to extend his tenure into a third term. In a broader sense, the perception of *fin du regime* has been exacerbated by the country's endemic poverty, with wages unpaid for months and

² Idriss Déby added Itno, a Zagawa clan patronymic, to his official name in January 2006. This paper will use the form Déby Itno throughout.

³ Yoadimnadjé died in February 2007; interim successor is the Minister for Infrastructure, Adoum Younousomi. Reuters, Chad PM Dies in Paris from Brain Haemorrhage, 23 February 2007

defunct social services. Corruption – Chad ranks close to the bottom of Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index – and mismanagement have extinguished hopes that the newfound oil wealth might raise living standards for the majority.⁴ Despite Déby Itno’s promise to reverse the rights deficit he inherited from his predecessor, the dictator Hissène Habré, human rights are not respected and there exists an ever present threat to personal security. Déby Itno has made scant effort to open political space. His overtures to the registered opposition appear half-hearted and forced on him by his precarious position. He is unlikely to win a reprieve from politicians, especially politicians from the south of the country, who have been repressed and marginalized throughout his period of rule. More saliently, Déby Itno is only too aware that his fate lies not in constitutional politics but with the building blocks of Chad’s political economy since independence, the politico-military factions.

In the absence of a domestic political breakthrough, the regime’s fate is increasingly in the hands of external actors, especially Sudan’s al-Bashir, although the Tripoli Agreement between Sudan and Chad signed in February and reaffirmed in November 2006 and February 2007 has had little influence on the actors on the ground. As ever those suffering the most from the increase in violence has been the civilian population. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is facing severe problems coping with the deteriorating security environment, and its offices, supply depots and staff have been targeted. The situation has meant that UNHCR and other relief organizations have had to withdraw personnel from the region, leaving a skeleton staff to maintain what is now a very tenuous but vital life-line.

Chronology of Conflict since May 2004⁵

May 2004	Attempted coup by elements of the Presidential Guard.
October 2005	40 soldiers opposed to Déby Itno’s constitutional revision defect.
December 2005	At least 370 rebels and government troops killed in a battle at Adré, a Chadian border post with Sudan
March 2006	Support from French garrison foils plot to shoot down Déby Itno’s plane. Defection of Tom and Timan Erdimi. More fighting at Adré kills 200 government troops.
April 2006	FUC rebel coalition seize towns of Am Timan, Goz beida and Mongo before attacking the capital. Fighting kills at least 200 people. The FUC is defeated with support from the French garrison taking serious casualties.
October 2006	UFDD rebel coalition captures Am Timan and Goz Beida for 24 hours. Escalation of attacks by <i>janjaweed</i> Arab militia from Sudan and Chad exacerbates inter-communal violence in east and south-east Chad.
November 2006	Government declares state of emergency. UFDD attack Abéché. UNHCR supplies ransacked. An RAFD/FUC coalition capture Biltine, then withdraw without engaging government reinforcements. Déby Itno calls for UN intervention along the border with Darfur.

⁴ Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2006*, Berlin, 2006, http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2006 [accessed January 2007]

⁵ Chronology based on reports on the website of United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks, <http://www.irinnews.org/> [accessed January 2007]

2 The Context of the Political/Security Nexus

2.1 Political, Social and Economic Background to the Current Conflict

Politics in Chad is the politics of faction. There is a clear link between the upsurge in insecurity in the East and South-east since 2004 and the continuing conflict in Darfur. The fundamental causes of that conflict, such as competition for scarce resources, notably land and water, apply equally to the fighting between groups in Chad. Yet beyond the violent contagion from Darfur, the dynamic of insurgency against the Déby Itno government has roots in the country's socio-political history. By 1963, just three years after independence from France, civil strife had gripped Chad. Since then rounds of factional fighting, ranging from chronic low intensity conflict to all out civil war, have been interspersed with cyclical external intervention, both regional and international. Factions form, fight, ally and dissolve seemingly in accordance with tacit conventions.⁶

At independence, Chad's immense ethnic diversity – there are an estimated 127 living languages spoken within its borders – exacerbated a pre-existing propensity toward factionalism. Furthermore, intra-group relations, especially in the combative North, were highly prone to segmentation. The factionalism of the civil war underscored this inclination to find allies amongst neighbouring sub-groups, rather than amongst inclusive ethnic, religious or linguistic groups.⁷ William Foltz points out that whilst the struggle against foreign domination engendered varying degrees of ethnic solidarity in other parts of Africa, “post-1965 conflicts in Chad more often broke solidarities down to lineage or family level, instead of promoting and sustaining cohesion of larger social groups”.⁸ Sam Nolutshungu designated these units semi-independent “community-constituencies”.⁹ As government in the capital N'Djaména dissolved into a succession of ever-changing coalitions, faction leaders personified a dual recognition of political representation.

The communities recognized themselves in their leaders, and judged their place in Chadian politics by the share of power their representatives enjoyed; on the other hand, coalition formation among leaders amounted to mutual recognition of spokespersonship of discrete community-constituencies within the shared discourse of common Chadian citizenship.¹⁰

Historically, discourse between these spokesmen has taken place not in terms of ideology, but on a quasi-feudal basis. Writing in 1989, prior to the coup that brought Déby Itno to power, Roger Charlton and Roy May noted “the apparent resilience of the politics of elite factionalism” concentrated on “regional centres of power based on personalized rule and military force, and the consequent prevalence of a politics of conflict and war”.¹¹ Despite the country's tortuous “democratic transition”, the concept of factional allegiance, whether

⁶ Charlton R. and R. May, Warlords and Militarism in Chad, *Review of African Political Economy*, Nos 45-6, 1989

⁷ Magnant, J-P, *Terre Sara, Terre Tchadienne*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1986, p. 261

⁸ Foltz, W., Reconstructing the State of Chad, in I. W. Zartman (ed.), *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 1995, p. 17

⁹ Nolutshungu, S., *Limits of Anarchy: Intervention and State Formation in Chad*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996, p. 228

¹⁰ *Idem.*, p. 231

¹¹ Charlton and May, p. 12

within Déby Itno's Zaghawa/Bideyat governing elite, or between the official opposition parties or the armed politico-military factions, remains fluid and personalized.

Whilst the tendency toward factionalism with its nuances and subtleties has driven conflict in Chad, there remains a more crude, but real, animus between two fundamental sections of the population. A derelict colonial administration exacerbated the pre-existing hostility between the Islamic North and the Christian/animist South, the "breadbasket" of the country referred to by the French as *Tchad utile* – useful Chad. France gave preferential treatment to the South and Southern leaders, and the legacy of French sectionalism endures.¹² Most of the country's agricultural wealth, as well as the vital oil reserves lie in the South. But there has not been a Southern president since the resignation of Félix Malloum in 1979, and successive Northern Muslim leaders, including Déby Itno, have made effective use of military repression and political "divide and rule" tactics to marginalize the South's influence. As a result Southern rancour towards the North has become entrenched. Although in post-independence Chad, federalism and, with still greater emphasis, secession have been minority positions with Southern politicians basically seeking to control a unitary state, it now seems clear that there is a groundswell of opinion behind autonomy for the South.¹³

The period of outright civil war ended in 1983. Yet continued factionalism made any viable process of state formation unrealistic. Many commentators counted Chad the epitome of the failed state in Africa. As an indicator of how little Chad has progressed in the years since the civil war, Chad still ranks as one of the ten most unstable states in the Failed States Index, compiled by the Fund for Peace and published in the *Foreign Policy* journal.¹⁴ The "two-Chad" model put forward in 1995 by William Miles, with a vestigial juridical state tenuously connected to whoever exercises authority in N'Djaména whilst large peripheral sections of territory and population operated beyond control of the centre, would seem to be equally relevant today.¹⁵

In 1990, the authoritarian regime of Hissène Habré was toppled by a rebellion, the Mouvement Patriotique du Salut (MPS) led by his former army commander Idriss Déby Itno. That attack was organized in Darfur, supported by Khartoum, and many of the MPS fighters were Zaghawa from the Sudanese side of the border. After 1989, Cold War proxyism in Africa diminished and was replaced ostensibly by a democracy and human rights agenda with aid and assistance tied to political reforms. Thus Déby Itno faced pressure from France's socialist government, albeit not without some obfuscation, to embark on a "democratic transition".¹⁶ However, the pace of change was extremely slow. After six years a referendum accepted a new Constitution that led to the first of three presidential and two legislative

¹² May, R., Chad. France's Fortuitous Success, *Review of Association for Modern and Contemporary France*, 1989

¹³ University of Maryland, Minorities at Risk Project, *Assessment for Southerners in Chad*, College Park MD, 31 December 2003, <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/assessment.asp?groupId=48302> [accessed January 2007]

¹⁴ Fund for Peace, The Failed States Index 2006, *Foreign Policy*, July/August 2006 and <http://www.fundforpeace.org/programs/fsi/fsindex2006.php> [accessed December 2006]

¹⁵ Miles, W., Tragic Tradeoffs: Democracy and Security in Chad, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 1995, p. 53

¹⁶ Mitterrand, F., La France liera tout son effort de contribution aux efforts accomplis pour aller vers la liberté, address delivered at the Sixteenth Conference of Heads of State of France and Africa, La Baule, 20 June 1990

elections, widely criticized at home and abroad as exercises in procedural democracy intended solely to assuage international opinion whilst maintaining Déby Itno in power.¹⁷

Because the “democratic transition” was inauthentic the primacy of faction and concomitant reliance on patronage was not altered.¹⁸ The President’s core supporters, mostly Zaghawa, perceived him the latest in a line of victorious warlords and expected to receive reward and influence. Although they constituted just two per cent of the population, the obligations of faction constrained the President’s options and prominent Zaghawa soon consolidated an impregnable hold on the large majority of senior and middle-ranking positions in the ANT and the governing MPS, now reconstituted as a political party. The reductionism of ethnic and kinship relationships in Chad led to growing distrust and rivalry within this small ruling clique. Déby Itno increasingly favoured his own Bideyat clan over the Kobe clan, attempting to establish a Bideyat *chefferie* but provoking the sensibilities and pride of the wider Zaghawa.¹⁹ Disaffection with his handling of the burgeoning oil portfolio and the Darfur conflict, however, eventually led to defections from core Bideyat loyalists. Reports that he announced during a secret meeting that he would like to see his son Brahim take over the presidency led to many of his own family disowning him. It was in response to the waning of clan support that he added “Itno”, his grandfather’s Bideyat name, to his family name “Déby” restyling himself “IDI”, Idriss Déby Itno.²⁰

2.2 Constitutional Amendment and the 2006 Presidential Election

Two main concerns have prompted the escalating number of defections. The first is Déby Itno’s handling of the Chadian dimension to the Darfur conflict. The other factor is the decision to engineer an amendment to the 1996 Constitution. The revision sought to remove the two-term limit, enabling Déby Itno to remain in office. Changing the Constitution meant renegeing on an explicit assurance made after the 2001 presidential election that he would not seek a further term of office.²¹ Given that the MPS dominates the National Assembly, Déby Itno had no problem in winning the necessary two-thirds majority needed to pass an amendment. However, a revision of the Constitution also required ratification by a popular referendum which was scheduled for late 2004. The proposal, however, provoked an unprecedented backlash. Fearing that Déby Itno was seeking to extend his rule indefinitely the opposition set up a coalition, the Coordination des Parties Politiques de la Défense de la Constitution (CPDC) to oppose the amendment and to campaign for electoral reform. More worrying for Déby Itno, former MPS allies and conservative Zaghawa elements in the ruling circle were also concerned. Déby Itno had been hospitalized in Paris on several occasions and there were rumours, which still persist, that he was terminally ill, and there was a widely held assumption that he would not be physically able to continue in power beyond 2006.²² Therefore to facilitate a stable transition of power senior personalities were willing to allow him to remain in post until the end of his original mandate; yet they were nonetheless eager to secure a change of leadership at that point, partly in order to address what they perceived as

¹⁷ May, R., and S. Massey, *The Presidential and Legislative Elections in Chad (2001-2002)*, *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 2003

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Marchal, R., *Chad/Darfur: How Two Crises Merge*, *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 109, 2006, p. 476

²⁰ Wax, E., *To the President’s Rescue*, *Los Angeles Times*, 5 November 2006

²¹ Marchal, p. 471

²² Chad: Idriss Déby, *Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Social and Cultural Series*, Vol. 43, No. 5, June 2006

mismanagement, in particular in the oil sector and the Darfur policy, but also to further their own political ambitions.²³

The opposition parties were unable to construct a cohesive strategy to confront the “yes” camp, with some politicians arguing for a “no” vote and others calling for a boycott. The official turnout was put at 57 per cent although it was as low as 30 per cent in N’Djaména. The “yes” campaign emerged victorious, although the opposition claimed that the result was fixed in advance. Presidential elections were held in May 2006. For once, the opposition parties were largely united in boycotting the poll, leaving just four chanceless candidates to oppose Déby Itno: Kassire Coumakoye, Albert Padacké, Mahamat Abdoulaye, and Brahim Koulamallah. During the brief campaign, Déby’s message to the electorate was plain – “choose me or choose chaos”.²⁴ As the polling stations closed Mahamat Hissène, Secretary General of the MPS, declared a “victory for the ballot box over the bullet”.²⁵ Twelve days later the Electoral Commission announced a turnout of 61 per cent of Chad’s 5.7 million registered voters, although these figures were at odds with estimates in the local and international press who calculated that the turnout was much lower. Déby Itno won with 77.5 per cent of the vote.²⁶ The President hailed the victory declaring that “the people have made their choice and the choice is me ... you have exposed those who said that Chad was about to explode, proving once more that in Chad democracy works and is moving forward”.²⁷ Nonetheless, the CPDC called the vote “a masquerade”, whilst above a photograph of a young child casting his vote, the influential journal *N’Djaména Bi-Hebdo* ran the headline “What Legitimacy!”. As Roland Marchal remarks, “solutions will be more difficult to find after the election than before”.²⁸

3 Internal and External Actors

3.1 The Registered Opposition

Officially recognised opposition comes from political parties registered under the rules for party formation promulgated in 1991. These were to a large extent shaped by the desire to engineer the end of the politico-military faction, the basic element of political mobilization in post-independence Chad and the most likely threat to Déby Itno’s security of tenure. Parties were banned from setting up military or paramilitary organizations or reconstituting into political parties any erstwhile politico-military bodies.²⁹ In the case of the MPS, the fighting force that brought Déby Itno to power and now in control of the executive and the military, this proscription was meaningless. In practice, the registered opposition, harassed by the

²³ Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report Chad*, June 2006, p. 6

²⁴ BBC News, Chad Leader’s Victory Confirmed, 14 May 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/4771383.stm> [accessed January 2007]

²⁵ La victoire du bulletin de vote sur le fusil, *Le Progrès* [N’Djaména], 4 May 2006

²⁶ Official at Embassy of Chad, Paris. Written interviews, June 2006

²⁷ Agence France Presse, Chadian President Reelected but Storm Clouds Gather, N’Djaména, 15 May 2006; Idriss Déby réélu au Tchad, *Libération* [Paris], 16 May 2006

²⁸ Entretien avec Roland Marchal, politologue, chargé de recherche au CERI, ‘L’élection présidentielle n’a fait qu’aiguiser la crise, elle ne contribue pas à la dénouer’, *Le Monde* [Paris], 5 May 2006

²⁹ May, R. and Massey, S., The Chadian Party System: Rhetoric and Reality, *Democratization*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2002

government, rarely able to present a common front and prone to expedient rallyings to the regime has proved wholly ineffective.

By 1997 the number of registered parties had mushroomed to over 60, a fractured opposition that proved an electoral godsend to the ruling MPS. The last legislative elections in Chad, held in 2002, returned representatives from 15 parties. The six parties with more than one seat in parliament and their leaders are:

- Mouvement Patriotique du Salut (MPS) – Idriss Déby Itno
- Front des Forces d'Action pour la République (FAR) – Ngarlejy Yorongar
- Rassemblement pour la Démocratie et le Progrès (RDP) – Lol Mahamat Choua
- Viva Rassemblement National pour la Démocratie et le Progrès (Viva-RNDP) – Kassire Coumakoye
- Union Nationale pour la Démocratie et le Renouveau (UNDR) – Saleh Kebzaboh
- Union pour le Renouveau et la Démocratie (URD) – Wadal Abdelkader Kamougé

The opposition politicians fit the typical mould of charismatic, regional/ethnic-based leaders taken by the electorate to personify their respective parties. An exception, and the most significant figure in the registered opposition, is Ngarlejy Yorongar of the FAR. In what is otherwise an ideological vacuum, Yorongar has resurrected federalism as a political goal and in so doing has established himself as the South's most influential politician, eclipsing veterans such as Kamougué and Kebzaboh, widely seen by the electorate as vain and self-interested. No longer simply the repository of the protest vote, the FAR proposes autonomy for a South which currently has economic strength but no influence. The South produces Chad's main agricultural export, cotton, and the country's main oilfields are located around the town of Doba in the Southern prefecture of Logone Orientale. Yorongar represents the oil producing region in parliament. Far from naïve, he recognizes the challenges that the South will face should the regime fall and has already sounded possible sources of external support with visits to Washington, Paris and Beijing.³⁰

At present, however, there is little space for constitutional politics. At the end of October 2006, Yorongar made the opening remarks to a conference convened in Paris to bring together the internal and external opposition, both registered and politico-military. The conference, whilst acknowledging the justification for armed opposition, failed to clarify the position of the registered parties vis-à-vis politico-military factions.³¹ The imprecision of the distinction between constitutional and extra-constitutional politics reinforces the cosmetic nature of the "democratic transition" and underlines the continuity of the old politics.

3.2 Politico-military Factions

Although the current threat comes from rebel groups based over the eastern border in Sudan, Déby Itno has faced rebellion from other parts of Chad. He has adopted flexible tactics to confront politico-military factions, alternating rapprochement with repression. In the early years of his rule the locus of the most virulent insurrections was the South. Déby Itno responded with repressive tactics towards the civilian population, whilst holding out inducements to the rebel leaders to rally to him.³² Many Southern leaders who treated with

³⁰ Déby Hangs On, *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 27 No. 9, 2006, p. 6

³¹ Kebir, M.A., L'ultime conference de l'opposition plurielle tchadienne a Paris, *Ialtchad Presse*, 3 November 2006, <http://www.ialtchad.com/dossierconferenceoppositionoctobre06.htm> [accessed January 2007]

³² Amnesty International, *Annual Report: 1998*, London, 1999

the regime, however, such as Moïse Kette and Laokein Bardé, were either assassinated or betrayed. The same fate befell Abbas Koty, the leader of the Conseil National de Redressement du Tchad (CNR), who was extrajudicially executed during negotiations with the regime in 1993.³³

In 1998, the hub of insurrection shifted to the isolated and barren northern region of Tibesti with the establishment of the Mouvement pour Démocratie et Justice en Tchad (MDJT). Its founder was Youssouf Togoimi, a former Defence Minister. The MDJT has fought a sustained and bitter war that at one stage looked set to overthrow Déby Itno. The main ethnic component of the rebellion is Toubou, the ethnicity of Déby Itno's predecessor Habré, and members of the Toubou clan continue to suffer from the assumption that they support rebellion.³⁴ Since the death of Togoimi in 2002, apparently from wounds sustained in battle, the MDJT has been riven by a series of schisms, with the political wing of the faction rallying to the regime in 2003. The military wing under Hassan Mardigué continued to harass the ANT, and Déby was forced to illegally divert money from the first tranche of oil income to re-equip the armed forces.³⁵ The threat from the remnants of the MDJT has diminished significantly, although the faction has stated that it supports the aims and objectives of the groups fighting out of Darfur. In November 2006, in what would be an encouraging development for the regime, the government announced that it had signed a peace agreement with the last active part of the MDJT and that it was seeking to integrate its fighters into the ANT.³⁶ It has since been announced by a clique of rebels unwilling to rally that they are seeking to ally with the Front de Libération Nationale (FROLINAT), a diehard band of rebels loyal to the former President Goukouni Oueddei, long time exiled in Algiers.³⁷

Given the high profile of the leaders and the tacit support of external powers including Sudan, China and Eritrea, the various rebellions based in Darfur constitute the most serious challenge that Déby Itno has faced. The first indication of the incipient exodus of many core members of the regime's elite was an attempted coup in May 2004. At first dismissed by the government as a mutiny over pay and conditions, it was eventually confirmed that an attempt had been made to overthrow the regime by officers from the Republican Guard. This unit has since been disbanded. After the May coup attempt the rate of defections increased markedly. The personalities involved in the rebellion in the East and South-east are a combination of longstanding opponents of the regime and more recent defectors from the elite in the MPS and ANT. They have the support of Arab militia sponsored by the Sudanese government.³⁸

Why did a rebellion in an isolated and marginalized province of Sudan against the government in Khartoum have such a decisive effect on armed opposition to the regime in

³³ United States, Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 1993: Chad*, Washington, 31 January 1994

³⁴ Chadian nationals seeking asylum in the UK. Personal interviews, 1999-2006

³⁵ Oxford Analytica, Chad: Oil Revenues Fuel Growing Instability, 8 June 2004, <http://www.oxanstore.com/displayfree.php?NewsItemID=100397> [accessed January 2007]

³⁶ Chad, Prime Minister's Office, Retour à la légalité des rebelles du MDJT, 23 November 2006, <http://www.primature-tchad.org/?2006/11/23/385-retour-a-la-legalite-des-rebelles-du-mdjt> [accessed January 2007]

³⁷ Panafrican News Agency, Chadian Opposition Party MDJT Dissolves, Merges with FROLINAT, Paris, 9 December 2006

³⁸ Hanson, S., *Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2 January 2007, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/12309/> [accessed January 2007]

N'Djaména? There has been rivalry between the “Arab” and “African” populations in Darfur for centuries. Although these identifiers have no strong ethnographic basis and relate in essence to the relationship that individuals and groups have to the land, with pastoralists styling themselves Arab and agrarian farmers identifying themselves as African, the distinction is fundamental to the conflict. Competition for the best land was intensified by increased desertification following the drought and famine of the mid-1980s. The border is porous and African ethnicities, the Fur, Massalit and Zaghawa, are represented on both the Sudanese and Chadian sides.

Harbouring a grievance against the local Arab population, favoured by the Khartoum regime, the Sudanese Zaghawa joined the rebellion against the al-Bashir government that erupted in June 2002. The various rebel groups are marked by internal factionalism. The largest rebel group is the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA), which has split into two factions, the largest section (SLA-MM) led by Minni Arkou Minnawi, a Zaghawa, and the remainder led by a Fur, Abdel Wahid el-Nur. In May 2006 the SLA-MM signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). Some Minnawi fighters were integrated into the national army and Minnawi was appointed Khartoum's senior official in Darfur. However, he continues to criticise the government's liaison with the notorious *janjaweed* militias, which are accused of pursuing a policy of genocide in Darfur and exporting violence to eastern Chad. Minnawi has also broken ranks over his support for the conversion of the AU Mission in Sudan into a UN force. A former ally of Déby Itno, Minnawi's political shift into government was a blow to the Chadian regime's policy of offering support to the Darfur rebel groups. The remaining faction of the SLA led by an ethnic Fur, Abdel Wahid el-Nur, continued in armed opposition to Khartoum. There was a further split in the Wahid faction in July 2006 when he was removed by a group of his commanders and Ahmed Abdelshaafie appointed to replace him.³⁹

The other rebel group opposing President al-Bashir is the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), led by Khalil Ibrahim Muhammad. The JEM has received solid material and moral support from the Chadian government. It is said to be backed by the Sudanese opposition leader and charismatic cleric Hassan al-Turabi.⁴⁰ JEM fighters intervened on Déby Itno's side during the attacks on N'Djaména and Sarh in April 2006, and they are reported to form the major security presence in the strategic town of Abéché in eastern Chad.⁴¹ In June 2006 in Asmara, the non-signatories to the DPA formed a coalition, the National Redemption Front (NRF), linking JEM, elements of the SLA led by former SLA Deputy Chairman Khamees Abdallah and two leaders of the Sudan Federal Democratic Alliance, Sharif Harir and Ahmed Deraige. Abdel Wahid has not joined the NRF although some of his field commanders have. The NRF resumed operations against the Sudanese army in June 2006.⁴²

The involvement of ethnic Zaghawa in the fighting in Darfur placed Déby Itno in an impossible position. Under pressure from many within the almost exclusively Zaghawa leadership of the MPS and ANT to offer assistance to their Sudanese kin, he nonetheless understood the potentially calamitous consequences of opposing his powerful neighbour. The

³⁹ International Crisis Group, Getting the UN into Darfur, *Africa Policy Briefing*, No. 43, October 2006

⁴⁰ Sudan: Mass Murder, *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 45, No. 9, 2004

⁴¹ Center for American Progress, *The Answer to Darfur*, 7 February 2007, quoting Colin Thomas-Jensen of the International Crisis Group, http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/02/darfur_event.html [accessed February 2007]

⁴² African Union, Peace and Security Council, Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Situation in Darfur, PSC/MIN/2(LXIII), 18 September 2006

al-Bashir government, whilst officially a strong ally of the N'Djaména regime, had tolerated Chadian rebels on its soil as a political lever against possible Chadian adventurism. However, with Déby Itno unable to prevent covert assistance in men and materiel crossing the permeable border, and with anti-Sudanese sentiments coming from within government ranks, al-Bashir concluded that his former ally was no longer dependable and Khartoum's toleration of Chadian rebel groups switched to active logistical support.⁴³

Libya has sought to negotiate a settlement to the proxy conflict between Sudan and Chad. In February 2006 Déby Itno and al-Bashir signed the Tripoli Peace Agreement, requiring the two parties to stop rebels from establishing bases in their respective countries and to end propaganda against one another. This agreement was effectively not implemented. It was reaffirmed in November 2006 and again in February 2007 when the two leaders agreed to "implement honestly" the original Agreement.⁴⁴

Chad's propensity to factionalism and expedient alliances makes tracking the armed opposition to the regime effectively conjectural, and an assessment of the current standing of the rebellions is at best a snapshot. Individual groups are liable to disband, splinter, change name, ally or even rally to the regime overnight. At the time of writing the three main factions, UFDD, RAFD and FUC, operating out of Darfur and posing the greatest threat to Déby Itno, are coalitions.

3.2.1 UFDD

The most recently established, and to date most effective rebel coalition, is the Union des Forces pour la Démocratie et le Développement (UFDD), whose most important component is the Union des Forces pour le Progrès et la Démocratie (UFPD), led by Mahamat Nouri, a former pillar of the regime, having been Minister for Defence and Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. A Toubou like former President Hissène Habré, Nouri is charismatic, experienced and diplomatically adept. He is the most credible challenger to Déby Itno since the MDJT's Togoimi, himself a previous Minister of Defence. In particular Nouri offers key external actors, France and the US, a viable alternative if they decide to abandon Déby Itno. His second-in-command is Acheik Ibn Oumar, the leader of the Conseil Démocratique Révolutionnaire (CDR). The last Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Habré government, Déby Itno has used the connection to assert that the UFDD is a Trojan horse for the former dictator.⁴⁵

3.2.2 RAFD

The second main rebel grouping is the Rassemblement des Forces Démocratiques (RAFD), whose fighting backbone is formed by Zaghawa defectors from the disbanded Republican Guard. The RAFD is comprised of three groups: the Socle pour le Changement, l'Unité et la Démocratie (SCUD) led by Yahya Dillo Djerou, a second group led by former army commander Séby Aguid and a third group led by Ramadane Bokhit, former commander of the Presidential Guard and a close confidant of Déby Itno. In mid-December Aguid was killed during the fighting in the East. The driving forces behind the RAFD coalition are Déby Itno's nephews Tom Erdimi, former Head of Cabinet and coordinator of the Doba oil project, and his twin brother Timan, a former director of Cotontchad, Chad's cotton parastatal. Formerly leading members of the regime, they joined SCUD after being sent by the President

⁴³ Center for American Progress, *The Answer to Darfur*

⁴⁴ Sudan, Chad Again Agree to Avoid Hostilities, *Sudan Tribune*, 22 February 2007

⁴⁵ Radio France Internationale, Nouvelles accusations contre le Soudan, 26 October 2006

to negotiate with them.⁴⁶ In March 2006, using intelligence from high-ranking disaffected army officers still in Chad, RAFD plotted to assassinate Déby Itno by shooting down his plane as he returned from a meeting in Equatorial Guinea. The conspiracy was discovered and the French garrison moved to secure the air space. The regime responded by issuing international arrest warrants for a number of senior Zaghawa including the Erdimis and Séby Aguid.⁴⁷

3.2.3 FUC

The third main grouping, the Front Uni pour le Changement (FUC), was formed in December 2005 by Mahamat Nour Abdelkerim. Based in Sudan since 1994, Nour was a long-time opponent of Déby Itno and collaborated with the *janjaweed*, led by Musa Hilal, who claims that the *janjaweed* are a legitimate counter-insurgency force authorized by the Sudanese government. There is credible evidence that the Sudanese armed forces operate in tandem with the *janjaweed*, and Human Rights Watch has official Sudanese government documents on file that describe an official policy of support to the militia.⁴⁸ President al-Bashir is careful to distance himself from atrocities committed by Hilal's fighters.⁴⁹ A member of the small Tama ethnic group, Nour was used by Khartoum to recruit fellow kinsmen to fight alongside the *janjaweed*. He has been described as the only Chadian rebel in which Khartoum has confidence.⁵⁰ Under Nour the FUC suffered two significant defeats. In December 2005, his fighters were humiliated by the ANT at Adré on the Sudanese border. On 13 April 2006, the FUC launched a more audacious offensive on the capital, making a lightning assault across the desert from Darfur and the Central African Republic (CAR) to N'Djaména.⁵¹ On both occasions the military assistance from the permanent French garrison permitted the ANT to inflict serious casualties on the FUC, whilst also exposing Nour's military naivety.⁵² The failure of the offensive, coupled with Nour's notoriously authoritarian style of leadership, has seen his faction superseded by a more "political" faction led by Abdelwahid About Makkay. Other FUC fighters defected to the RAFD. Nour retired to Khartoum, but in mid-December resurfaced in Tripoli to announce that he was rallying to the regime and that his fighters would be integrated into the ANT. Given his animus against Déby Itno the move came as a surprise, but reflects his greatly diminished standing and dwindling military strength following the defeats of 2005 and 2006, whilst reaffirming the fluidity of factional allegiance in Chad. In response to the *ralliement*, Timane Erdimi declared that "this accord means nothing to us...we began this struggle without Mahamat Nour and we shall finish it without Mahamat Nour... He represents nothing today".⁵³ The UFDD and RAFD leaderships also explicitly agreed to unite their forces and to continue the fight.⁵⁴

⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch, *They Came Here to Kill Us: Militia Attacks and Ethnic Targeting of Civilians in Eastern Chad*, New York, January 2007, p. 68

⁴⁷ United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks, *Coup Attempt Foiled Government Says*, 5 March 2006

⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Darfur Documents Confirm Government Policy of Militia Support*, New York, 20 July 2004.

⁴⁹ BBC News, Sudan 'Backs' Janjaweed Fighters, 30 October 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/6100532.stm> [accessed January 2007]

⁵⁰ Boisbouvier, C., *Qui est le chef des rebelles? Jeune Afrique* [Paris], 16 April 2006

⁵¹ Human Rights Watch, *They Came Here to Kill Us*

⁵² Chad: Rebels Attack N'Djaména, *Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Social and Cultural*, Vol. 43, No. 4, May 2006

⁵³ Agence France Presse, *Chad Rivals Back Home after Peace Deal, but Threats Remain*, 25 December 2006

⁵⁴ Barber, K., *Chadian Peace Accord Dismissed by Some Rebel Factions*, *Voice of America*, 25 December 2006

3.3 Involvement by External Interests

In terms of geopolitics, external involvement in Chad is marked and complex. The strategies of external actors are increasingly fluid. Moreover, it is not entirely fanciful to read the international dimension to the conflict as not only dangerous to regional, but potentially global peace and security. Arguably the spillover from the Darfur conflict has laid the foundations for wider conflict, setting Western interests, represented by French and American support for Déby Itno, against Sudanese and possibly Chinese backing for the Chadian rebels, encompassing such diverse issues as resource conflict and transnational terrorism.⁵⁵

For reasons of history and prestige as much as concrete strategic or economic rationales France maintains a close relationship with its former colony. It has three military bases in the country, Camp Adji Koussei in N'Djaména, Camp Croci at Abéché and a base at Faya-Largeau, involving 1,100 troops with airlift capacity, as well as a squadron of Mirage fighters as part of Opération Epervier, deployed since 1986 to contain Libyan expansionism.⁵⁶ Although the withdrawal of the permanent garrison has been mooted in the past, Chad's location gives France a strategic hub from which to pursue its geostrategic interests in central Africa. However, critics of *la Françafrique* are quick to point out the number of times that Paris has come to Déby Itno's aid since the French external intelligence agency helped bring him to power in 1990.⁵⁷ Following a period of strained relations between the two countries during the cohabitation between the Gaullist presidency and the Socialist government, Chirac has unequivocally positioned France's Africa policy in the traditional Gaullist mould of support for the "Big Man". He has offered solid support to Déby Itno, underlined when he became the first French president to visit N'Djaména.

France has repeatedly claimed that it now adheres to non-intervention in Africa.⁵⁸ To explain the relationship between its garrison and the Chadian armed forces, Paris invokes the defence pact between the two countries, suggesting that France offers logistical assistance to Chad, but would not use its offensive capacity to prop up the regime. Yet, in reality the French military remains at the heart of Chad's political entanglements and its artillery, armour and especially air power have saved Déby Itno at least three times in the last year, notably during the abortive offensives in April, October and December. A French diplomat with responsibility for Chad describes Déby as "a natural ally and the only guarantee against the 'Somalization' of the country and a possible domino effect that would see other French allies such as François Bozizé in the CAR forced from power".⁵⁹ A former Chadian president, Goukouni Weddeye, is yet more candid, stating that Déby came to power with the support of Paris for economic and geo-strategic reasons, and remains, for the same reasons, "France's man".⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Massey, S. and R. May, Commentary: The Crisis in Chad, *African Affairs*, Vol. 105, No. 420, 2006, pp. 443-9

⁵⁶ France, French Embassy in Chad, Les Elements Français au Tchad, N'Djaména, [2006], http://www.ambafrance-td.org/article.php?id_article=345 [accessed January 2007]

⁵⁷ Bauer, C., Comment Sauver le Soldat Déby, *L'Humanité* [Paris], 18 April 2006

⁵⁸ France Flexes Its Muscles in Africa, *Guardian* [London], 29 January 2003

⁵⁹ Rémy, J.-P., Les conflits tchado-soudanais: Enjeux régionaux et globaux, *Le Monde* [Paris], 5 May 2006

⁶⁰ Goukouni Weddeye, ancien président du Tchad, à Liberté: 'Idriss Déby est l'homme de la France', *Liberté* [Algiers], 19 April 2006

France is currently talking tough. On a visit to N'Djaména in late November 2006 Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin, acknowledging that France had a “specific responsibility” to Chad, outlined “a framework of dissuasion and support”.⁶¹ The defence of Déby Itno represents a serious challenge to France’s Africa policy; if Chirac goes with his instincts he will once more intervene to protect a man he calls his personal friend. On the other hand there will be plenty of strategists cautioning him to let history take its course, and the forthcoming French presidential elections constitute a further source of uncertainty for Chad.

American interest in Chad currently rests on three main concerns, all with international connotations. Two of the three members of the consortium that has invested in and is operating the Doba oil fields, Exxon and Chevron, are American, the third being Petronas of Malaysia. The relationship between the investors and the regime has become increasingly fraught. The US strategy to source a significant proportion of its oil needs from Africa has been well documented, and in many ways Doba can be taken as a model for this ambition.⁶² The World Bank was the moral guarantor of the project and negotiated a unique model that sought to make the management of revenues transparent and channel the large majority of Chad’s profits to priority sectors such as health and education. Even so, a US interagency review conducted six months after the onset of the project concluded that 60 per cent of the US\$ 25 million signing bonus oil revenue was spent “outside the budget procedures”.⁶³ With the completion of the wells and the export pipeline to the Cameroon coast, however, Déby Itno was no longer constrained by the conditions of the World Bank model. Moreover, with crude oil selling at over US\$ 60 a barrel, the potential oil revenue was more important to Déby Itno than the Bank’s aid. He outpaced both the World Bank and the Chevron/Petronas component of the consortium, rewriting the Memorandum of Understanding with the Bank and greatly increasing the percentage of the profits that now fall under his personal control.⁶⁴ Déby’s motivations for rewriting the agreement were to a large part driven by the necessity to counter the growing rebellion in the East, notably the immediate need to redirect revenues from the priority development sectors to buy arms and aircraft and fund an expansion of the armed forces. Nonetheless, with the price of oil having risen five fold since the agreement between the government and the consortium was negotiated, there were legitimate grievances over the amount of profit accruing to Chad. A new law was passed by parliament in December 2005 that scrapped the fund that put aside 10 per cent of the oil revenue for future generations and added “state security” to the list of priority sectors. That the law was passed by 119 votes to 13 emphasises the resentment that parliamentarians held over the perceived loss of sovereignty implicit in the original arrangement.⁶⁵ Déby Itno also seized the opportunity to put pressure on the Bush administration to support his continued tenure in office, threatening to expel Chevron and Petronas from the country and put their share of the project under state control.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Reuters, Chad Accepts UN Plan for Border Peace Force, 30 November 2006

⁶² African Oil Policy Initiative Group, *African Oil: A Priority for US National Security and African Development*, Proceedings of a symposium organized by the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, Washington, September 2002, <http://www.iasps.org/strategic/africawhitepaper.pdf> [accessed January 2007]

⁶³ Wysham, D., World Bank OK with Blood for Oil, *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 5 January 2007, <http://www.fpif.org/fpifoped/3879> [accessed January 2007]

⁶⁴ Soares, C., President Grabs at Profits Pouring out of the Country, *Guardian* [London], 4 October 2006

⁶⁵ United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks, Chad: Parliament Defies World Bank, Scraps ‘Future Generations’ Fund, 30 December 2005

⁶⁶ See, for instance, Fuels to Ourselves, *Guardian* [London], 1 September 2006

Concern within the Bush administration over Déby Itno's assertive oil policy is counter-balanced by his support for the "war on terrorism". Chad is considered a strategically important ally in containing Islamic fundamentalism.⁶⁷ The US has been involved in training units of the ANT as part of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI), formerly the Pan-Sahel Initiative. Whether these troops have since defected or remain loyal to Déby is unclear, but the presence of units with superior skills and training would help to explain the ANT's capacity to withstand repeated rebel offensives. Finally, like France the US is concerned with the impact on Chad of the conflict in Darfur. The Bush administration has resisted pleas to intervene in the Darfur conflict, despite former Secretary of State Colin Powell raising the spectre of an ongoing genocide.⁶⁸ Whilst the direct involvement of American forces is unlikely, a wholesale exportation of the conflict into Chad would increase pressure on the US to "do something" at a time when its resources are stretched in Iraq and Afghanistan.

For its part the Sudanese government continues to play a deft diplomatic game. Adopting the roles of mentor and student, for much of the time the relationship between al-Bashir and Déby Itno has been one sided. For reasons outlined above, the outbreak of the Darfur conflict destroyed that understanding and there is a tacit acknowledgment that al-Bashir no longer trusts Déby Itno and that the feeling is mutual.⁶⁹ The Panel of Experts monitoring compliance with the embargo on the delivery of arms to combatants in Darfur reported that Khartoum is supplying material assistance to some or all of the rebel factions.

There are reliable reports that the Chadian rebels have been resupplied by the Government of the Sudan with weapons and vehicles to support their own cause in Chad also. Weapons and ammunition have been observed being offloaded at the Geneina airport, transported to the national security compound in Geneina and, under cover of darkness, after the curfew, delivered to Chadian rebel locations.⁷⁰

The al-Bashir government, however, is not advertising the policy. Rather Sudan denies charges that it is encouraging the *janjaweed* to press further into Chadian territory and that Sudanese planes are bombing Chad's border towns.⁷¹

The principal source of Sudanese funding for the rebel groups is its oil wealth and Sudan exports 60 per cent of its oil to the People's Republic of China, a percentage that is growing.⁷² China would stand to benefit from a government in N'Djaména willing to switch from Western investment in further exploration to Chinese investment and from the west

⁶⁷ McLaughlin, A., US Engages Africa in Terror Fight, *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 September 2004

⁶⁸ Kessler, G. and C. Lynch., US Calls Killings in Sudan Genocide, *Washington Post*, 10 September 2004

⁶⁹ United Nations Security Council, Final Report of the Panel of Experts as Requested by the Security Council in Paragraph 2 of Resolution 1665 (2006), S/2006/795, 3 October 2006

⁷⁰ *Idem*

⁷¹ Human Rights Watch, *Darfur Bleeds: Recent Cross-border Violence in Chad*, New York, February 2006, <http://hrw.org/backgrounders/africa/chad0206/chad0206.pdf> [accessed January 2007]; Amnesty International, *Chad: Are We Citizens of this Country? Civilians in Chad Unprotected from Janjawid Attacks*, London, January 2007

⁷² Pan, E., *China Africa and Oil*, New York: Council for Foreign Relations, 26 January 2007, http://www.cfr.org/publication/9557/china_africa_and_oil.html [accessed January 2007]

coast of Africa as an export hub to the east. There are some indications that China has become involved, albeit possibly indirectly, in supporting the anti-Déby Itno groups. There have been reports that arms captured during the FUC attack on N'Djaména in April were Chinese and new and that the Toyota vehicles that ferried the FUC to N'Djaména were bought by a Chinese oil company based in Sudan for which Mahamat Nour Abdelkerim used to work.⁷³ Déby Itno was sufficiently concerned about Chinese involvement in arming the rebels that in August he severed diplomatic relations with Taiwan in favour of the People's Republic of China. Remarking on Déby Itno's decision the Taiwanese Foreign Minister accused China of supporting the rebels destabilizing eastern Chad.⁷⁴ China is currently in the process of negotiating to buy the option to explore for oil in a large swathe of Chadian territory.

4 Human Rights Issues

On overthrowing Habré in 1990, Déby Itno condemned his “dictatorial regime” in which “only one choice was allowed us: the right to submit”. After a six year consultation exercise, a new Constitution was passed by referendum. Its preamble denounces Habré's means of governance:

Years of dictatorship and single-party rule prevented the development of any culture of democracy and political pluralism. The various successive regimes created and sustained regionalism, tribalism, nepotism, social inequalities and violations of individual and collective fundamental human rights and freedoms, leading to war, political violence, hatred, intolerance and distrust among the various communities which make up the Chadian nation.⁷⁵

Chad's history of violent factionalism was not a promising foundation for reform, but the prevailing post-Cold War climate seemed to offer the possibility of authentic improvements in political rights and civil liberties. The Constitution devotes 31 articles to comprehensively upholding civil rights and fundamental freedoms. The reality, however, has been a “democratic transition” that delivered a purely procedural democratic system heavily skewed to the incumbent and a human rights environment that began as a significant improvement on the record of the previous regime, but has deteriorated throughout Déby Itno's tenure. In its annual report on human rights practices, the US State Department details a series of areas where constitutional safeguards are ignored, including torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, denial of a fair and public trial, interference with privacy, freedom of speech and press, freedom of assembly, and freedom of movement.⁷⁶

4.1 Security of the Person

Even prior to the current escalation of insurrectionary violence in the east and south-east of the country, human rights organizations were reporting rising levels of insecurity in the country fuelled by increased disorder.⁷⁷ The pervasiveness of violence stems in large part

⁷³ Delafon, G., Tchad: la Chine a financé les rebelles, *Journal du Dimanche* [Paris], 23 April 2006

⁷⁴ Chang Yun-ping, Ministry Regrets Diplomatic Break, *Taipei Times*, 7 August 2006

⁷⁵ Chad, Constitution of the Republic of Chad, 1996, Preamble

⁷⁶ United States, Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2005: Chad*, Washington, 8 March 2006

⁷⁷ Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Annual Reports, 2000-2006*

from the country's warrior traditions, from its violent past and from the ready availability of small arms. Moreover, with his hold on power under threat from armed opposition for most of his period in office, Déby Itno has had little incentive to govern by the rule of law. The use of arbitrary arrest, torture and summary execution as tactics by the security services has added to the culture of lawlessness that now grips the country.⁷⁸

Since 1990 Chad's security forces have been involved in hundreds of extrajudicial executions and other human rights abuses such as 'disappearances', and acts of torture...the security forces have been responsible not only for extrajudicial executions in areas of conflict, they have also arbitrarily executed people known for their peaceful opposition to the government, people who had denounced violations of human rights, and opponents who had been repatriated – often under duress – from neighbouring countries.⁷⁹

In her report to the UN Commission on Human Rights, the Independent Expert Mónica Pinto remarks that whilst there is a belief that life is increasingly insecure for most Chadians, specific reasons for this situation are unclear. Amongst factors submitted to her are increased migration from the countryside to the towns, lack of education and skills resulting in people turning to violent crime to make a living, and the role of demobilized members of the security forces who man unofficial roadblocks extorting money from travellers. A common thread put forward by civil society representatives, however, is the existence of a climate of impunity. Branches of the armed forces and security services including the state security agency, the Agence Nationale de Sécurité (ANS), as well as individuals and groups with access to the levers of power, can infringe the individual's right to physical security without sanction.⁸⁰

In the experience of the authors of the present report, Chadian nationals claiming asylum in the United Kingdom often state that they have been tortured by members of the armed forces and police.⁸¹ Methods of torture range from beatings to the use of electric shocks. The fatalism of the population's reaction to abuse is highlighted by the ubiquity of the *arbatachar* technique of tying the arms behind the back that is so common that it is barely considered torture by the Chadian populace.⁸² *Arbatachar* causes extreme pain, open wounds, and in some cases gangrene and the victims are also often submerged once tied. Instances of people tied *arbatachar* being found in the Chari and Logone rivers are not infrequent.⁸³

4.2 The Judiciary and the Right to a Fair Trial

Under the Constitution, a member of the magistrature should usually sign arrest warrants.⁸⁴ This stricture is often ignored and arrest and detention is now often made without due process.⁸⁵ Far from ensuring that the executive and elected officials operate under the rule of

⁷⁸ *Idem.*

⁷⁹ Amnesty International, *Chad: The Habré Legacy*, London, 2001

⁸⁰ United Nations, Commission on Human Rights, Advisory Services and Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights, Situation of Human Rights in Chad, Report Prepared by the Independent Expert Mónica Pinto, E/CN.4/2005/121, 27 January 2005

⁸¹ Chadian nationals seeking asylum in the UK. Personal interviews, 1999-2006

⁸² Amnesty International, *Chad: The Habré Legacy*

⁸³ Amnesty International, *Annual Report: 1998*

⁸⁴ Chad, Constitution of the Republic of Chad, Chapter 1, Article 21

⁸⁵ See e.g. United States, Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2005*

law, both the lower courts and the Court of Appeal collude with the regime to stifle opposition. Complaints of military intimidation in judicial affairs by the magistrature to higher courts are routinely ignored, since these higher courts are themselves subject to interference. Aside from corrupt and discriminatory practices, the legal system retains traditional elements that are often inequitable and result in inconsistent and capricious application of the law. Often, the courts operate under a hybrid system that marries written legislation and local customary law. An example is the tradition of paying a cash sum or *dia* as compensation for injury in civil matters that nonetheless is not intended to preclude criminal proceedings. However, it is widely accepted that the payment of *dia* is an alternative to statutory remedy and in practice precludes any further action in criminal law.⁸⁶ In May 2005, it was reported that communal violence which killed over 20 people and injured dozens in the village of Ouadi Harmra was instigated by Zaghawa villagers attacking their Ouaddai neighbours over the disputed payment of *dia* following the death of a family member. For Independent Expert Monica Pinto, the issue of *dia* evidences the existence of a parallel system of justice, “in which disputes are settled by the most powerful party, and there is no right of appeal”.⁸⁷

4.3 Prison Conditions

Imprisonment in Chad whether through sentence, on remand or while being held without charge is, according to the US State Department, potentially life threatening.⁸⁸ The authorities allow for the inspection of prisons by domestic and international organizations, although this does not extend to secret prisons operated by the ANS or military detention centres run by the armed forces and security services. There are around 40 prisons in the country. They are insanitary and health facilities are extremely basic, whilst the allocation of food is insufficient and nutritionally inadequate.⁸⁹ The editor of the newspaper *Notre Temps*, Mbainaye Bétoubam spent two months in the prison in 2003 and wrote a number of articles condemning the conditions in the jail from his cell.⁹⁰ The main prison in N’Djaména, built in colonial times to hold 300 inmates, currently has just 40 cells holding 1,200 prisoners. This number includes a small number of children and minors.⁹¹ The prison perimeter is guarded by a few wardens, but security within the prison is organized by the prisoners themselves. Although the regulations allow for the levy of a small fee to be paid for prison visits, essential if the prisoner is to receive supplementary food and medicine, an ethos of bribery and corruption means that prisoners and their families invariably pay much more than stipulated. Corruption extends to the complicity of wardens in prisoner escapes in return for cash payments.⁹² Reporting on the “escape” of 23 prisoners in one night from N’Djaména prison,

⁸⁶ United Nations, Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/2005/121)

⁸⁷ *Idem*.

⁸⁸ United States, Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2005*

⁸⁹ United Nations, Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/2005/121); Droits de l’Homme Sans Frontières [N’Djaména], Rapport des visites de la Maison d’Arrêt de N’Djaména et de la Section Nationale de la Recherche Judiciaire, 26-25 April 2005, <http://www.ialtchad.com/dossiervisiteprisondhsf.htm> [accessed January 2007]

⁹⁰ Reporters Without Borders, Two Journalists Released Following Appeals Court Decision, 2 April 2003, http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=5669 [accessed December 2006]

⁹¹ United Nations, Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/2005/121)

⁹² *Idem*.

the journal *Le Progrès* remarked that Chad's prisons "are full of holes".⁹³ Chadians seeking asylum in the UK often claim that they escaped imprisonment through bribery.⁹⁴

4.4 Discrimination

The Constitution affirms respect for "ethnic, religious, regional and cultural diversity" whilst assuring "equality before the law without distinction of origin, race, sex, region, political opinion or social position".⁹⁵ In practice, with the forces of the state flouting the law and the judiciary unwilling or unable to uphold its provisions, the Constitution offers no protection. The most common form of discrimination claimed by individuals seeking asylum in the UK, is discrimination on the grounds of race, most typically discrimination by Zaghawa of other ethnic groups, but also more recently discrimination by Déby Itno's Bideyat clan of other Zaghawa.⁹⁶ The domination of state institutions by the Zaghawa was apparent by 1995 when the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination warned the UN General Assembly of "the ethnic aspect of the human rights violations, the predominant influence of certain ethnic minorities close to the State within the administration and the army, and the growing antagonism between the north and south of the country".⁹⁷

The Muslim-on-Muslim antagonism in the East has obscured the religious intolerance still extant in the capital and in areas of the South. The enduring legacy of the French colonial administration dividing the country into the "useful" South and the "useless" North is an unsubstantiated, but widely held belief that "southerners, mostly Christian or animist, are better-educated – especially the women – and developed and that northerners, mostly Muslim, are less literate and consequently less culturally advanced".⁹⁸ Déby Itno and most senior ministers are, however, Muslim and some government policies favoured Islam, for example sponsored *hajj* trips to Mecca for government officials.⁹⁹

On 30 October 2004 serious unrest broke out in the town of Bébedja, the constituency of the Southern federalist politician Ngarlejy Yorongar in the heart of the Doba oil field. A seemingly insignificant quarrel between a Northerner and a local trader escalated into a gun and machete fight in which 12 were killed and 16 injured. The local community took up arms against the Northerners seen as interlopers. Yorongar put the death toll much higher and claimed that this confrontation was only the latest in the conflict between the two communities, commenting that "this is what happens because of the difficulty of cohabitation between the indigenous population who are Christian farmers and the Muslim herdsmen".¹⁰⁰

⁹³ Vingt-trois prisonniers s'évadent encore, *Le Progrès* [N'Djaména], 16 October 2006

⁹⁴ Chadian nationals seeking asylum in the UK. Personal interviews, 1999-2006

⁹⁵ Chad, Constitution, Preamble; Article 14

⁹⁶ Chadian nationals seeking asylum in the UK. Personal interviews, 1999-2006

⁹⁷ United Nations, General Assembly, Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, A/50/18, 22 September 1995, paragraph 659

⁹⁸ United Nations, Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/2005/121)

⁹⁹ United States, Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2005*

¹⁰⁰ United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks, Chad: Ethnic Clash in South Kills 12, Wounds 16, 5 November 2004

In terms of the growing religious intolerance in the country the Independent Expert for the UN Commission on Human Rights reported that “the secular State does not seem capable of handling this situation”.¹⁰¹

4.5 Freedom of Expression and Information

The establishment of a functioning, vibrant, independent media following the removal of Habré was a concrete accomplishment of the new regime in the field of human rights. However, with the large majority of the independent media critical of the regime, limits to the freedom of expression have increased year on year. From the establishment of a plural political system, newspaper offices have been raided and ransacked. Journalists, editors and proprietors from the *N’Djaména Bi-Hebdo*, *Le Temps* and *L’Observateur* have been fined and sentenced to punitive prison sentences. The incidence of suppression of freedom of information has increased since the start of the current conflict.¹⁰² The independent newspaper with the widest circulation, the *N’Djaména Bi-Hebdo*, publishes under the maxim “press freedom is a right; the obligation is responsibility”. However, despite promising to do so, the regime has failed to engage with the independent media to advance a regulatory or self-regulatory framework, preferring to use the blunt instrument of the civil and criminal law.¹⁰³

As part of the state of emergency proclaimed in November 2006, the regime introduced prior censorship for privately-owned newspapers and a ban on “radio stations dealing with matters liable to jeopardize public order, national unity, territorial integrity and respect for the republic’s institutions”. The initial ten-day ban was then extended to 60 days. Required to submit a provisional copy of each issue to a unit within the Ministry of Communication prior to publication, newspapers appeared with sections of copy blacked out. The day after censorship was imposed, the newspaper *l’Observateur* as a protest against the measure superimposed the word “censured” across its front page and left its editorial section blank. Much of the N’Djaména press, as well as newspapers in the second city of Sarh, declared a 15 day strike in an effort to bring the situation to international attention.¹⁰⁴ The only newspaper to appear was the pro-government private *Le Progrès*.

Given the levels of illiteracy in rural Chad, radio is the principal means of mass communication. The Iranian-born editor of the private community radio station Radio Brakoss and president of the Union des Radios Privées du Tchad (URPT) was arrested on 28 April 2006 and placed under an order to be expelled from the country. The journalist had been regularly threatened for his anti-corruption campaign and arrested once before, in September 2005, on the grounds that his radio “revived animosity between different rural communities in conflict”.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ United Nations, Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/2005/121)

¹⁰² Reporters Without Borders, Five Newspapers To Stop Publishing for Two Weeks in Protest against Prior Censorship, 4 December 2006, http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=19885 [accessed January 2007]

¹⁰³ Reporters Without Borders, Appeal Court Frees All Four Imprisoned Journalists, 26 September 2005, http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=15140 [accessed January 2007]

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Reporters Without Borders, *Annual Report 2007: Chad*, Paris, 2007, http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=20733 [accessed January 2007]

4.6 Forced Conscription

As the scale of the conflict has increased so the numbers of young men press-ganged into the armed forces has increased. According to Daphne Wysham, a fellow at the Washington-based Institute for Policy Studies, Déby Itno began forced recruitment into the army in December 2005.¹⁰⁶ Ostensibly, the Constitution requires military service and the conditions are set by an ordinance promulgated shortly after independence and reaffirmed by the current administration.¹⁰⁷ However, in 1992 the Déby Itno government informed the UN Commission on Human Rights that in practice military service would only be performed by students of the National College of Administration and Sports.¹⁰⁸ Although the conscription laws have not been consistently applied, forced conscription has in the past been used to augment the armed forces in times of crisis, as a punishment and to disassociate Southern youth from their home territory. Following the FUC attack on Adré in December 2005, the government instigated a wave of arrests of young people in N'Djaména. Despite government denials, human rights activists accused the government of adopting a policy of forcible recruitment. Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh, the President of the Coalition of Political Parties for the Defence of the Constitution, pointed out that a similar campaign of forced recruitment followed the escalation of MDJT activity in 2002.¹⁰⁹ The Head of the Chadian Association for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights, Jacqueline Moundeina, emphasized that the arrests were not “a question of the police ensuring security”, but rather that “youths are being rounded up to be sent to die on the front lines”.¹¹⁰ In October 2006, the journal *Notre Temps* deplored “young Chadians forcibly conscripted” to act as “cannon fodder on different fronts in a war whose causes they do not understand”.¹¹¹ The forced conscription of Sudanese refugees into anti-Khartoum rebel groups has also been condemned by the European Parliament, jointly with UNHCR.¹¹²

5 The Current Security and Humanitarian Situation

5.1 Security on the East and South-eastern Border with Darfur

The situation in eastern and south-eastern Chad is complex and dangerous. As Jan Egeland of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs comments, “fighters attack Chad from Darfur...others attack Darfur and Sudan from Chad...and they all seek refuge in the Central African Republic...it’s a really dangerous regional crisis”.¹¹³ The facile victory over the FUC in the streets of N'Djaména in April encouraged the belief that Déby Itno, with the help of the French garrison, had definitively outflanked the armed opposition. This was premature. The commanders of the two other main politico-military factions, the RAFD and

¹⁰⁶ Wysham, D., World Bank OK with Blood for Oil

¹⁰⁷ Chad, Ordinance No. 2/PC-CM, 27 May 1961

¹⁰⁸ United Nations, Commission on Human Rights, The Role of Youth in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Including the Question of Conscientious Objection to Military Service, Report of the Secretary-General Prepared Pursuant to Commission Resolution 1991/65, Addendum, E/CN.4/1993/68/Add.2, 6 January 1992

¹⁰⁹ United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks, Chad: Minister Denies Forced Recruitment into Army, 6 January 2006

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Conflit de l’Est: une guerre inutile, *Notre Temps* [N'Djaména], 23 October 2006

¹¹² European Union, European Parliament, Joint Motion for a Resolution on Darfur, B6-0250/2006, 5 April 2006

¹¹³ Associated Press, Darfur’s Violence, Passions Spreading Across Borders, 1 December 2006

in particular the UFDD, as well as Makkay's faction of the FUC have proved themselves apt tacticians. For Nouri attrition will be the main tactic to defeat the regime, employing hit and run tactics, taking vulnerable towns, inflicting casualties, seizing weapons and materiel and then retreating to rear bases in Darfur. Speaking in November 2006, he stated that "our objective is to progressively defeat the enemy troops to weaken them ... we have inflicted heavy losses on Deby's army, now we are withdrawing ... our final objective remains the fall of N'Djaména, but without haste".¹¹⁴

The end of the rainy season in 2006 was the catalyst for the resurgence of the conflict. On 23 October, the day of the Ramadan celebrations, the UFDD targeted the towns of Am Timan and Goz Beida, a major aid agency hub and site of a UNHCR camp for Darfurian refugees. After a brief engagement with the ANT the rebels took the towns, "targeted the local administration and stole munitions" prior to withdrawing leaving the town to be reoccupied, according to a government soldier.¹¹⁵ During the attack a surface-to-air missile was fired at a French reconnaissance plane, prompting N'Djaména to reiterate the accusation that Sudan was arming the rebels. The two sides gave widely varying numbers of dead and injured with the UFDD reporting 73 government troops killed against two rebels and the ANT claiming 100 rebels killed.

On 25 November 2006, in the most daring attack since the assault on the capital in April, the UFDD took Abéché, the largest town in eastern Chad, a military base and airstrip for the ANT and the French garrison and a major hub for aid agencies. Despite the claim that they do not coordinate tactics, a combined RAFD/FUC force took Biltine the same day. Both groups withdrew after 24 hours. The attack on Abéché proved particularly destructive. In the wake of the attack, US\$ 1.3 million worth of relief items destined for the refugee camps in eastern Chad were looted from a UNHCR warehouse by local civilians.¹¹⁶ About half of the supplies have been recovered following an extensive ANT operation after the reoccupation of the town. For their part the rebels escaped with a quantity of materiel, vehicles and spares.¹¹⁷ That such a major town was vulnerable to rebel attack suggests that at present the momentum is with the rebels. The change of tactics, a campaign of attrition rather than attempted lightning strikes across the desert in all-terrain vehicles that can be monitored by French reconnaissance, has proved successful. A few days after the assault, a Chadian spotter plane, made available to the government by Libya, was shot down by a surface-to-air missile that the UFDD claimed had been seized from the ANT. In response the government declared, for the second time in a year, that it was "in a state of war with forces from Sudan". A further attack came on 1 December 2006, when RAFD attacked the town of Guereda. During the attack four armed men forced their way into the UNHCR field office and stole two vehicles at gunpoint.¹¹⁸ After a hiatus in the fighting, the UFDD announced on 13 January 2007 that it had resumed the offensive against the ANT, claiming to have taken the north-eastern town of

¹¹⁴ Agence France Presse, Chad Rebel Column Withdraws Away From the Capital, 27 November 2006

¹¹⁵ United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks, Fighting on Two Fronts in Chaotic East, 30 October 2006

¹¹⁶ Chad: Emergency Aid Looted, *Africa Research Bulletin: Economic, Financial and Technical Series*, Vol. 43, No. 11, January 2007

¹¹⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Agencies Reduce Presence in Eastern Chad amid Security Concerns, 4 December 2006, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/chad?page=news&id=45745fc92> [accessed January 2007]

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Ounianga Kebir, opening a new front in the campaign and further stretching government forces.¹¹⁹

In general, civilians have not been targeted by the rebels.¹²⁰ However, an ominous development saw an increase in the number of *janjaweed* attacks on the civilian population deep into Chadian territory. Attacks by Arab militia on Chadian civilians had been reported from late 2005.¹²¹ However, a new and more virulent wave of attacks began on 3 October 2006 in the regions of Salamat, Ouaddai and Wada-Fira. In the first ten days of November at least 220 people were killed by Arab militia. Initially the attacks were largely confined to clashes between non-Arab villagers and Arab raiders, although the more recent attacks appear to be the work of *janjaweed* from both sides of the border. The violence was particularly brutal. A researcher from Human Rights Watch warned that “it is as if it [the violence] is driven by hatred”, commenting that “sometimes the motive is only to kill”.¹²² The Arab-African hostility that marks the Darfur conflict is not directly replicated in eastern Chad. Nonetheless, Chadian society is more diverse and underlying historical tensions are even more distinct. Whilst inter-communal violence for a variety of reasons including access to pasture and water is common in Chad, copy-cat violence will only exacerbate tensions. Although most of the current spate of attacks has been carried out by Arabs on non-Arabs, there has been at least one incidence of an attack by a Dajo militia group on Chadian Arabs. In mid-October 2006 the Arab village of Amchangari in Kerfi, 40 km south-east of Goz Beida was attacked resulting in the deaths of 17 people.¹²³

As the upsurge in inter-communal violence ignited by the *janjaweed*, combined with the increasingly successful series of hit-and-run attacks by the Darfur-based rebel groups, forced the government to declare a state of emergency, then Prime Minister Yoadimnadjji decried the violence “that passes all proportion and puts national cohesion in peril”.¹²⁴ As evidenced by the military actions in Abéché, Biltine and Guereda, the state of emergency has done little to staunch rebel mobilization and rebel activity continued through January 2007.¹²⁵ The regime’s public relations tactics have shown signs of increasing desperation. In order to lift the effective state of siege along the Darfur border, Déby Itno is lobbying actively for intervention. Aware of France’s uncertainty over the extent of its military commitment to the regime, he is aiming his propaganda at the preoccupation with global terrorism, encouraging the US to put its weight behind the deployment of a UN force. Widening the rhetoric, Hourmadji Mousa Doumgor, the Minister for Communication, accused Saudi Arabia as well as Sudan of backing the UFDD as part of a Wahhabist terrorist strategy, claiming that Nouri is capitalizing on connections forged during his time as ambassador to Riyadh and that 60 per cent of his forces are child soldiers recruited in the *madrasas* of Riyadh, Mecca and

¹¹⁹ Reuters, Rebels Say Seize Town in Remote North-east, 13 January 2007

¹²⁰ United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Chad and the Central African Republic pursuant to paragraphs 9 (d) and 13 of Security Council resolution 1706, S/2007/97, 27 February 2007

¹²¹ Human Rights Watch, *Darfur Bleeds: Recent Cross-border Violence in Chad*

¹²² Hundreds Killed Near Chad’s Border With Sudan, *New York Times*, 14 November 2006; see also Amnesty International, Chad: Thousands Flee Janjawid Attacks, London, 20 October 2006 (press statement)

¹²³ Human Rights Watch, Chad: Arab Civilians Also Targeted by Militias, 27 November 2006 (news item), <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/11/27/chad14672.htm> [accessed December 2006]

¹²⁴ Le temps est grave, très grave, *Le Progrès* [N’Djaména], 13 November 2006

¹²⁵ United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Chad and the Central African Republic, S/2007/97

Jeddah.¹²⁶ In an effort to force the hand of the international community, Déby Itno has publicly stated that he would welcome the deployment of a UN force on the Chadian side of the border.¹²⁷ However, as the international impetus for a UN deployment on the Chadian side of the border increases, his willingness to host a force is wavering. A UN source commented that Déby Itno was “swinging back and forth – his position is no longer stable”.¹²⁸ A diplomatic source in N’Djaména argued that “he’s worried about what they [a UN force] would witness...he doesn’t want people to know what is really happening with all the fighting – it could be very embarrassing for him”.¹²⁹ Even if he accepts a UN military presence, however, it might be too late. The current intensity of the fighting would mean the deployment of a sizeable force with a war-fighting profile and a highly robust Chapter VII mandate capable of enforcing peace in the region. It is far from sure that the international community has the physical capacity or political will to undertake the task.

5.2 Security Situation on the South-eastern Border with CAR

Chad also faces instability on its border with CAR, the other country in an increasingly entrenched triangle of violence. The links between the Chadian and CAR regimes run deep. If Sudan’s Omar al-Bashir was the mentor to Déby Itno, then the latter sought to play the same role for CAR’s president, François Bozizé. The rebellion that brought Bozizé to power, overthrowing the regime of Félix-Ange Patassé, was possible because of covert support sent over the border by elements in the Chadian armed forces.¹³⁰ Once Bozizé was in power Déby Itno attempted to maintain influence over his protégé. Although a contingent of Chadian troops remained, ostensibly as a protection force for the new president, there was little substantial opposition from Patassé loyalists. Bozizé’s main problem has been appeasing his own former rebel fighters, many of whom are demanding a larger share of the spoils of victory and engaging in banditry in the remote north-west near the borders of Chad and Cameroon and the north-east of the country near the Sudanese and Chadian borders. In the north-east three disparate groups of former “liberators” joined with anti-Bozizé rebels to form an umbrella group, the Union des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement (UFDR) under the political leadership of Michel Detodia, and the Chadians Abakar Sabone and the military commander Faki Ahmat known as Colonel Marabout.¹³¹ There are also Chadians and Sudanese amongst the UFDR’s compliment of about 200 fighters. The FUC used north-eastern CAR as a conduit for its attack on N’Djaména in April.¹³² Bozizé responded by closing the CAR border with Sudan, although he lacked the military manpower to enforce the closure.¹³³ In the north-west, another Chadian, Abdoulaye Miskine, claimed to lead an incohesive grouping, the Front Démocratique du Peuple Centrafricain (FDPC). A more active force, the Armée Populaire pour la Restauration de la République et la Démocratie (APRD)

¹²⁶ Agence France Presse, Chad Government Denies Rebels Heading for Capital, 27 November 2006

¹²⁷ Chad Backs UN Proposal for Sudan Border Peacekeepers, *Sudan Tribune*, 1 December 2006

¹²⁸ Hancock, S., UN May Step Into Lawless Triangle, *Mail and Guardian* [Johannesburg], 26 February 2007

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Melly, P., Central African Republic: Insecurity in the Regions Bordering Cameroon, Writenet for UNHCR, 2005

¹³¹ Small Arms Survey, *A Widening War around Sudan: The Proliferation of Armed Groups in the Central African Republic*, Sudan Issue Brief, No.5, Geneva, January 2007, p. 5

¹³² United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Chad and the Central African Republic, S/2007/97

¹³³ Small Arms Survey, *A Widening War*

led by former CAR army officer Ndjadder Mounoumbaye, has links with Patassé and is demanding power-sharing with Bozizé and an end to exactions by the CAR army and pro-Bozizé militias.¹³⁴

Since late October 2006 the UFDR has mobilized to take a series of towns including Sam-Ouandja and Birao near the Chad-Sudan border, as well as the more southerly town of Ouadda-Djalle. In mid-November 2006 the presidents of Chad and CAR joined together to accuse their former protector, President al-Bashir, of supporting rebel groups confronting their respective governments, a claim rejected by Khartoum. Despite the Army's commitments in eastern Chad, Déby Itno announced that he would send units from the ANT to reinforce Chadian forces already in CAR as part of a 380-strong peacekeeping force from the Central African Monetary and Economic Community (CEMAC). France also increased its military presence with 100 soldiers from the Chad garrison to supplement the 200 troops permanently based in CAR to support the CEMAC force. France announced that its military assistance would be essentially logistical in terms of transporting CAR troops to the combat zone. To this end French soldiers had engaged the rebels at Birao airport in order to secure the runway for its heavy airlift planes. However, on 2 December 2006 six Mirage fighters based in Chad as well as four helicopter gunships, providing support to a CAR operation to retake Birao, received a request for covering fire which was accepted.¹³⁵ Strikes were made on the airstrip at Birao and on the village of Gordil. Although, Birao was retaken by French and CAR armed forces, the air strikes killed a number of villagers and instigated civilian displacement.¹³⁶ Despite the difference in the scale and consequences of the engagement, the decision to use offensive capacity in support of Bozizé and against the rebels could indicate France's reaction to an assault on N'Djaména. A French official, defending the military action, argued that "it is the stability of the whole region, Chad and Sudan included, that is at stake".¹³⁷

In early February 2007, following the mediation of Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, Miskine agreed to rally to the government and that his forces would disband or be integrated into the CAR Army. Efforts are also being made to involve Djotodia and Sabone, who were taken into custody in Cotonou during the occupation of Birao, in the peace deal.¹³⁸ The peace deal with the rebel leaders has been described in some quarters as "the Chadian syndrome ... whereby a president signs peace deals with certain coerced individual rebel leaders for propaganda reasons, while the rebellion continues".¹³⁹

5.3 Situation of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

The UNHCR office in Chad was reopened in 2003 to address the exodus of refugees from the conflict in Darfur. The operation has since expanded dramatically. There are approximately 240,000 Sudanese refugees in Eastern Chad of which 225,000 are hosted in 12 camps supported by the UNHCR along a 500 km strip on the Chad-Sudan border. There are three

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Duval Smith, P., France Admits Air Raids on Darfur Neighbours, *Independent* [London], 15 December 2006

¹³⁶ United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks, Rebel Activity Fuels Instability in the North-east, 8 February 2007

¹³⁷ Grange, A. de la, La France dans la guerre des 'trois frontières', *Le Figaro* [Paris], 6 December 2006

¹³⁸ Reuters, CAR Ups Peace Deal Effort with UN Force in Balance, 13 February 2007

¹³⁹ Voice of America, CAR Rebels Sign Deals, Doubts Persist, 3 February 2007 <http://voanews.com/english/2007-02-03-voa11.cfm> [accessed February 2007]

camps in southern Chad near the town of Goré accommodating 60,000 refugees who have escaped from the conflict and lawlessness in north-eastern CAR, all of whom are supported by UNHCR. There are a further 5,500 refugees from various countries including a number from the two Congos who are located in N'Djaména and other urban centres of whom 130 are assisted by UNHCR.¹⁴⁰

Given that the relief effort is already stretched it is particularly worrying that the numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in settlements in the border area has increased rapidly throughout 2006 from 30,000 persons in March 2006 to 120,000 at the beginning of February 2007.¹⁴¹ UNHCR are planning for up to 150,000 IDPs by the end of 2007.¹⁴² The IDPs come from a variety of ethnic groups located in the east of Chad and include Ouaddai, Massalit, Fur, Dajo and Arabs. Many are living in makeshift shelters in locations close to the border where they remain susceptible to attack by the *janjaweed*.

The supply lines to the remote and inhospitable eastern and south-eastern Chad were already tenuous before the escalation of rebel activity and the extension of *janjaweed* raids deep into Chadian territory. The rapidly deteriorating security situation has had a deleterious effect on the refugee and IDP populations. Prior to the assault on Abéché that resulted in the looting of the World Food programme and UNHCR stockpile of food and relief supplies, the High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, warned that an upsurge in fighting would adversely impact the people under UNHCR care.

Given the remoteness and lack of infrastructure in eastern Chad, getting help to these hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced people is difficult in the best of times. The humanitarian lifeline there is very, very fragile and we fear that continuing violence in the region could easily sever it, jeopardizing the lives of thousands of Darfurians and Chadians who have already suffered too much. I appeal to all sides to bear in mind the enormous humanitarian needs we're already facing in Chad.¹⁴³

In response to the looting in Abéché UNHCR airlifted 110 tonnes of replacement supplies. Even so, the organization admitted that "the fragile life-line to the refugees in eastern Chad is growing even thinner".¹⁴⁴ The capacity of the UN agencies to cope with the situation was further diminished following the decision to withdraw most of their staff from Oure-Cassoni, Iridimi, Touloum, Am Nabak, Mile and Kounoungo camps. As of December 2006 these camps housed around 110,000 Darfurian refugees. Likewise most of the staff in the field offices in the towns of Bahai, Iriba and Guereda are being withdrawn. Understaffed, the UNHCR and other organizations working in the area must find other means of maintaining supplies to the camps, possibly including mobile teams operating out of Abéché to distribute vital food aid and deliver essential services.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Appeal 2007*, 1 December 2006

¹⁴¹ United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Chad and the Central African Republic, S/2007/97

¹⁴² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR Launches \$6.2m Appeal for Displaced Chadians, 27 February 2007 (briefing note)

¹⁴³ Reuters, Thousands at Risk in Chad Fighting, 25 November 2006

¹⁴⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Agencies Reduce Presence

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

6 Conclusion

Can Déby Itno survive? Whilst the immediate threat to his regime is directly linked to the spillover from the conflict in Darfur, a chronic, underlying dysfunctionality seems to exist in Chad's political society of which the current regime is the latest symptom. Déby Itno gives the impression of being unable, or perhaps rather unwilling, to address the factionalism that underpins political relationships. The inauthentic "political transition" appears designed not to open political space but to rather to ensure Deby's political survival. With a deft political touch and an absence of credible rivals he fostered the impression that the choice for Chad is "Déby Itno or chaos". However, the denegation of human rights in various fields undermines national cohesion. In addition there appears to be growing dissatisfaction at his handling of the economy and in particular the oil portfolio about which there is an assumption of corruption. The Zaghawa involvement in the Darfur conflict has added a potentially decisive element to the admixture.

Déby Itno has relied upon French support to sustain his regime. Up to the recent upsurge in rebel activity there was a strong suggestion that the French position was that there was no viable alternative to Déby Itno. In public this appears to remain the policy. However, with signs that the US is now ambivalent as to the benefits over costs of continued support, the possibility of France accepting the inevitability of regime change arises. A key issue will be whether Mahamat Nouri, a credible personality and probably more acceptable than Mahamat Nour Abdelkerim, can consolidate his position as the rebel leader most likely to take over power. There is some evidence that China, who would potentially stand to gain from a pro-Khartoum regime in N'Djaména, is adopting a more cautious stance and urging Sudan to curb ambitions to establish a proxy regime in Chad, and Sudan was left off the latest list of countries to which China will provide incentives for companies to invest in.¹⁴⁶

Internally the core quandary would seem to remain factionalism. However, postulating that current tactics hold, with the various groups seemingly acting in concert, an initial, sustained, assault on N'Djaména would probably involve all the major politico-military factions. Nevertheless it is very unlikely that unity would long outlast a military victory, and a scenario involving multiple rifts can easily be envisaged. A first potential schism would be in the South, increasingly impatient for autonomy. A Nouri victory would also reopen the Toubou-Zaghawa rivalry. Even the dynamic within the UFDD between the Toubou Nouri and the Arab Ibn Oumar is in Chadian terms unnatural. While it is certainly the case that the current conflict in the east and south-east of the country has been widely ascribed to the spillover from the Darfur conflict, and the ethnic politics of that conflict and Sudan's dangerous expansionist policy have stimulated violent contagion in Chad and also CAR, this should not deflect attention from internally generated rifts. Therefore, the international community must also address the threat of a potentially deeper and wider conflict driven by unresolved schisms and rivalries within Chad itself.

¹⁴⁶ Iran, Sudan and Nigeria Left Off China Incentives List, *Sudan Tribune*, 2 March 2007, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article20538>, [accessed March 2007]

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