

# Recent History

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## INTRODUCTION

A former French colony, Chad became independent on 11 August 1960 under President Ngarta (François) Tombalbaye. Shortly after assuming the presidency, he introduced a policy restricting public liberties and campaigning for a cultural transformation that would provoke strong political hostilities against his regime, ultimately leading to his demise. More than 60 years after independence, yet another head of state, Idriss Deby Itno, was killed on the battlefield fighting against a rebellion seeking to topple him from power. The history of Chad is one of political violence interrupted by failed attempts to build democratic institutions. The structure of this essay will reflect on this ongoing cycle of political violence fed by political exclusion and failed democratic processes.

## CHAD UNDER TOMBALBAYE

A teacher by profession, Tombalbaye made his first political appearance under the Parti Progressiste Tchadien (PPT), which was founded by Gabriel Lisette in 1946, and represented Chad in the French Assemblée Nationale (National Assembly). The PPT was affiliated with the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA), the federation of African political parties created in Bamako, Mali, in 1946 under the leadership of Dr Félix Houphouët-Boigny (the first President of Côte d'Ivoire) and which claimed an anti-colonial ideology. It was under the colours of the PPT/RDA that Lisette became Prime Minister on 1 January 1959, after Chad was declared an autonomous republic on 28 November 1958.

Building on the internal support of nationalists within the PPT, who took exception to Lisette's Guyanese origins, Tombalbaye succeeded in ousting Lisette from the leadership of the party, and became President of the Council of Ministers in March 1959. Shortly after full independence was achieved, Tombalbaye sought to consolidate his authority within the party. In August 1960 he removed Lisette from his position as Deputy Prime Minister while the latter was on an official trip representing Chad at an international conference in Tel Aviv, Israel. Lisette was subsequently banned from returning to Chad. Following the PPT/RDA victory in the general election, Tombalbaye signed the ordinance of 19 January 1962 dissolving and banning all political parties, with the exception of the PPT/RDA. Chad thus entered into a one-party system in which dissenting voices had no choice but to submit or resist through violence. In September 1963 a demonstration at the residence of Djibrine Kerallah, an opposition leader, was brutally suppressed, causing the deaths of at least 30 people and leading to the arrest of all political opponents.

Beyond the brutal repression against opposition leaders, Tombalbaye also implemented a stringent cultural policy in order to consolidate his power. As he sought to destroy the legacy of Lisette, who had the support of the majority of liberals, and Ahmed Koulamallah, the first politician to introduce ethnic based politics, Tombalbaye soon realized that his consolidation of power could only be achieved with the support of his ethnic base, the Sara, who were also the most represented ethnic group in the colonial administration and army.

## The Mangalme Revolt and the Creation of FROLINAT

In October 1965 a violent peasant revolt shook the town of Mangalme, in the region of Guéra. The origin of the revolt was popular dissatisfaction with the national borrowing programme and the increasing rates of the civic tax. The peasants felt that they were victims of an extortion campaign led by local officials. During the unrest, local representatives of the administration were killed, and, in a devious reprisal, the national army razed several villages. The revolt took place in a particular political context where the mainly Muslim populations of the northern regions accused the civil servants, the majority of whom were from the south and mostly Christians and animists, of practising on them a policy of humiliation and extortion. In 1966, citing his humiliations at the hands of

government officials, Kinimi Weddey, the traditional leader of the Tubu, a northern Muslim population, fled to Libya.

In June 1966 delegates at a congress in Nyala, Sudan, used the pretext of the humiliations suffered by the Muslim communities at the hands of Christian and animist civil servants to found the Front de Libération Nationale du Tchad (FROLINAT). Under the leadership of Ibrahim Abatcha, the movement waged an armed resistance against the regime of President Tombalbaye, which FROLINAT accused of persecuting the northern Muslim populations.

## The Claustre Affair

In April 1974 archaeologist Françoise Claustre and aid worker Marc Combe, both French nationals, and Christophe Staewen, a German doctor, were abducted in Bardai by FROLINAT fighters. Following negotiations, Staewen was quickly released, but the French hostages were kept in captivity. In April 1975, one year after the hostage-taking, Commdr Pierre Galopin was sent as a mediator to secure the release of the two Frenchmen. However, he was in turn arrested and executed. Combe succeeded in defying the vigilance of his guards and escaped captivity, while Claustre was not released until February 1977, after 33 months of detention. The ransom obtained from this liberation, especially in the form of military aid from Libya, which was at that time attempting a rapprochement with France, changed the course of the conflict. With their new armaments, the rebels occupied the military garrisons of Bardai and Zouar, while increasing the pressure on government forces. On 13 April 1975 Tombalbaye was assassinated by officers of the regular army. Officially, they were stated to have revolted against the President's iron-handed policy towards southern civilian and military cadres, including the arrest, in 1973, and arbitrary detention of Gen. Félix Malloum, who had served as army Chief of Staff since independence. Malloum succeeded Tombalbaye as President of Chad.

## THE CIVIL WAR AND THE NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT

Despite the military taking charge of the country, it was unable to restore peace and security in the face of the persistence of the FROLINAT fighters led by Goukouni Weddeye and Hissène Habré. Thus Malloum's regime attempted to negotiate with a faction of the rebellion led by Habré. On 17 September 1977 the two sides signed an accord in Khartoum, Sudan, which provided for a power-sharing settlement that would result in Malloum retaining the post of President of the Republic and Habré becoming Prime Minister. The Khartoum Agreement allowed Habré to return to the Chadian capital, N'Djamena, in April 1978.

Upon his return, Habré was accompanied by about 500 fighters of the Forces Armées du Nord (FAN) and several rebel factions, who found their path to the capital without being integrated into the regular army.

On 29 August 1978 Habré was installed as Prime Minister of a unity Government. However, the power-sharing arrangement was to be short-lived. In February 1979 the FAN fighters called for a general strike to protest against what they perceived as the Government's ill-will in implementing the Khartoum Agreement. In February 1979 students supportive of the strike broke up a protest at the Félix Eboué High School. The police intervened and, in the confusion, attacked Habré's residence, which was located in the vicinity. The ensuing clashes between the regular army and the FAN led to the first battle of N'Djamena, plunging Chad into a civil war. It was in this context that Chadian stakeholders were invited to the Conference of Kano, Nigeria, in early March 1979. The Conference culminated in an agreement that provided for the formation of a Gouvernement d'Union Nationale de Transition (GUNT), the demilitarization of N'Djamena and the withdrawal of fighters from all factions. The GUNT thus replaced

the alliance between Malloum and Habré, and was to be led by Weddeye as President. A second Kano Conference and a further meeting in Lagos, Nigeria, failed to silence the rivalries between the warlords that paralysed the first and second GUNT. The second battle of N'Djamena broke out on 20 March 1980 and did not end until 15 December, when Habré and the FAN fighters were expelled from the capital following the intervention of Libyan forces.

### THE DICTATORSHIP UNDER HABRÉ

On 7 June 1982 Habré led a coup which ousted the administration of President Weddeye. After seizing power, Habré abolished the position of Prime Minister and conducted a policy of repression against his political opponents. The internal secret service, the Direction de la Documentation et de la Sécurité (DDS), was believed to have been responsible for the abduction, sequestration, torture and murder of more than 40,000 opponents. During his trial by the Extraordinary African Chambers (EAC) in Dakar, Senegal, in the mid 2010s, Habré was found guilty of these crimes and sentenced to life in prison (see *The Trial of Hissène Habré*).

#### The DDS and its Political Crimes

Habré's regime was swiftly confronted with pockets of resistance, especially in the south and centre of the country. Indeed, following the civil war of 1979, a significant part of the regular Chadian army had fallen under the leadership of Lt-Col (later Gen.) Wadal Abdelkader Kamougué. The Chadian armed forces retreated to the southern areas of the country, where they formed the Permanent Committee, an autonomous government that administered the south. From 1979 to 1982 the Chadian territories were in effect divided in two, and when Habré came to power in 1982, he had the difficult mission of reunifying the southern part of the country to its new regime. He attempted the *coup de force* against the Permanent Committee and managed to take Moundou, the largest southern city, in September 1982. With their commander, Kamougué, on the run, the remaining fighters of Chad's armed forces formed the movements of the Codos. The Codos rebels (a diminutive of commandos) were particularly active in southern Chad and their resistance against Habré provoked a brutal period of repression by the regime known as 'Black September'. During this month in 1984 hundreds of people (civil authorities, religious leaders, peasants, etc.) were killed on the basis of mere suspicion of their involvement in insurrectional activities against the Habré regime.

This brutal repression also happened in the centre of the country, where people suspected of collusion with the rebel organization the Mouvement du Salut National du Tchad in Guéra were assassinated. The policy of terror would be extended throughout Chad, facilitated by the logistical and institutional support of the DDS, which had been created by Habré in October 1982 and placed officially in charge of espionage and counterespionage. In fact, the service acted as the political police that took its orders directly from the President 'because of the confidential nature of its activities'.

However, on 1 December 1990 the dictatorial regime of President Habré was overthrown by a rebellion led by Idriss Deby. In 1992 a national commission estimated that more than 40,000 people had died from extrajudicial execution or during arbitrary detention by the DDS, while as many as 200,000 people were alleged to have been tortured.

#### The Trial of Hissène Habré

Habré, who sought refuge in Senegal after he was ousted from power in December 1990, has been the subject of several attempts by human rights organizations to prosecute him on behalf of the victims of his policy of repression. In Senegal, a first procedure was launched against Habré in February 2000, accusing him of crimes against humanity, torture and barbarism. The procedure, which followed a complaint filed by a group of his victims within the Association for the Victims of Crimes and Political Repression in Chad, was rejected by the judge of the Dakar Court of Appeal, who declared himself incompetent in July 2000. This decision was confirmed by the Court of Cassation in September 2001.

In September 2005 a Belgian judge issued an arrest warrant against Habré, seeking his extradition from Senegal. This followed an initial case brought to justice in November 2000 by a group of Habré's victims living in Belgium. The judge at the Dakar Appeal Court denied the Belgian request and Habré, who was arrested in November 2005 pending the request, was released from bail. At the same time, the victims of Habré who lost their case in Dakar referred the issue to the United Nations (UN) Committee against Torture, on the grounds that Senegal's refusal to prosecute Habré was a violation of the International Convention against Torture. In May 2006 the Committee agreed with the querants and concluded that the state of Senegal must implement the legislative measures necessary to prosecute the crimes alleged against Habré. Following these conclusions, the Conference of Heads of State of the African Union encouraged Senegal to proceed with the legislative and institutional reforms required to facilitate Habré's prosecution.

As these measures were adopted by Senegal, Habré in turn referred the matter to the Court of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in October 2008, challenging the application of the new legislative measures on the grounds that the crimes had taken place prior to the law, in effect claiming the principle of non-retroactivity of the penal law. The ECOWAS Court ruled in his favour in November 2010 and, in order to remedy the violation of the principle of non-retroactivity, recommended that Senegal establish a special ad hoc jurisdiction with an international character. In 2012 the AU and Senegal signed an agreement to create the EAC within the Senegalese judicial system. A law to this effect was adopted by the Senegalese National Assembly in December 2012, and the Chambers were inaugurated on 8 February 2013. Habré was arrested and taken into custody on 30 June and charged with war crimes, crimes against humanity and torture. On 30 May 2016 the EAC sentenced him to life imprisonment for war crimes, crimes against humanity, torture and rape. In July 2016 the same Chambers sentenced him to a pecuniary compensation worth 20m. francs CFA for each of his victims. This judgment was confirmed on 27 April 2017 following an appeal trial, and the EAC was dissolved on 30 June. Even if this judicial saga finally provides justice for the 40,000 victims of Habré's regime, the survivors of these atrocities are still waiting for the financial compensation they were promised at the end of the trial. More than four years later the fight for financial reparation is continuing.

### CHAD UNDER IDRIS DEBY

On 1 December 1990 Idriss Deby toppled Hissène Habré's regime after a successful rebellion swept from Darfur, Sudan, to N'Djamena. On his first address to the nation, Deby promised nothing but freedom and democracy. However, after more than 30 years in power, the promise faded away, and on 20 April 2021 Idriss Deby Itno (as he was renamed in 2006) was killed by yet another rebellion supported by people who felt disenchanted by his regime.

#### The National Sovereign Conference and its Democratic Achievements

The sessions of the National Sovereign Conference began on 15 January 1993 and lasted until 4 April. For three months participants from political parties, civil society and religious organizations debated issues concerning the structure of the state, the political regime and public liberties. At the end of the Conference, mechanisms for a new constitution were adopted and a transitional Government was put in place.

The Conference was in charge of designating the three personalities to lead the transition to Chad's first democratic elections since the establishment of single party rule under President Tombalbaye. Idriss Deby would remain President during the transition, Dr Fidèle Abdelkérime Mounkar as Prime Minister and Lol Mahamat Choua as President of the Conseil Supérieur de la Transition (CST), a legislative body. However, repeated confrontations between Prime Minister Mounkar and President Deby led to a motion of no confidence against his Government, which was adopted by the CST in October 1993. In early November the Government resigned and Mounkar

was replaced as Prime Minister by Nourredine Delwa Kassiré Koumakoye.

Perhaps the Conference's greatest resolution remains the adoption of the Transitional Charter, which paved the way for the redaction of a new constitution which would later be adopted by referendum and promulgated on 31 March 1996. The new Constitution re-established the post of Prime Minister, which was abolished during the Habré era. Individual and collective public liberties were also enshrined in the new Constitution, which additionally ushered in the return of multi-party rule, and thus allowed for the holding of free and transparent elections, which took place later in 1996.

### **The Transitional Elections and Hopes for a Multi-party System**

On 2 and 23 June 1996 Chadians took part in the most democratic and competitive elections in the country's history. The plethora of registered presidential candidates, with 20 overall applications but only 15 authorized to compete, was testimony to the enchantment around the event. During the campaign, candidates were prohibited from using state resources or religious slogans and from campaigning in places of worship. Regionalist and tribalist discourses were also prohibited. The High Council of Communication granted equal airtime to all candidates. In a sign that the elections were genuinely contested, a second round was required to decide the winner between the two candidates, Idriss Deby and Abdelkader Kamougué, who came first and second, respectively, according to the results of the first round. Deby was declared the winner of the second round and he thus began the first ever presidential term of the democratic era in Chad.

The competitive character of these first democratic elections was also confirmed in the legislative elections of January and February 1997. A total of 656 candidates, drawn from more than 30 political parties, contested the 125 seats in the National Assembly. President Deby's Mouvement Patriotique du Salut (MPS) won only 65 of the 125 seats, with the rest being won by various parties, including 29 seats by Kamougué's Union pour le Renouveau et la Démocratie.

The popular enthusiasm surrounding the elections, the number of registered candidates, the peaceful campaigns and the more or less balanced results between the ruling party and opposition groups gave hope for a nascent democratic process, in a state whose contemporary history has been marked by 30 years of conflict and armed violence. These presidential and legislative elections thus closed the transition and opened a new chapter into the normalization and pacification of political life in Chad. However, the process of state decentralization announced in the 1996 Constitution was yet to be achieved, and the establishment of regional councils elected by universal suffrage was postponed *sine die*.

### **The Disenchanted Hopes for Democracy**

Despite the holding of a National Sovereign Conference, which was intended as a forum in which Chadians could iron out their differences, a fresh rebellion was brewing in the northern parts of the country, in the Borkou-Ennedi-Tibesti region. This revolt was originally led by members of the Tubu ethnic group, who were protesting against the preponderant role of the Zaghawa, President Deby's ethnic group, in Chad's various administrative and economic levers. In October 1998 the Minister of the Interior, Youssouf Togoimi, fled the capital to join the insurgency. Himself a member of the Tubu ethnic group, he had been briefly arrested on suspicion of complicity with the rebellion. Togoimi organized the insurgents into a group called the Mouvement pour la Démocratie et la Justice au Tchad.

For more than three years the rebel movement undertook successful military offensives against government positions in the north of Chad, but after the mediation of the Libyan leader, Col Muammar al-Qaddafi, the Government reached a ceasefire agreement with the rebellion in January 2002. In August of that year Togoimi was seriously injured after his car ran over a mine and exploded. Having been transferred to Libya for medical care, he died in Tripoli on 24 September. Togoimi's movement then faced a crisis of succession that would pit different factions against each other, including a wing led by Adoum Togoï. The latter signed a peace agreement with the

Chadian Government in September 2003, an agreement that was contested by the military command of the movement led by Youssouf Barkai and Hassan Abdallah Mardigue. However, the latter eventually signed a separate peace agreement with the Government in August 2005.

It was in the evolution of this security context that the presidential election of 2001 was held, but with the hopes raised by the 1996 process dissipating. Seven candidates took part in the election, including four from the 1996 campaign (Deby, Kamougué, Saleh Kebzabo and Dr Jean Bawoyeu Alingué). The list was completed by Ngarlejy Yorongar, Koumakoye and Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh. The official results proclaimed Deby as the winner in the first round, with more than 63% of the votes cast, while Yorongar was placed second, with over 16%. The results were contested by the remaining six candidates.

On 28 May 2001, when the unsuccessful candidates met at the residence of Kebzabo, who came third, the police opened fire on demonstrators, killing Brahim Selguet, a young opposition activist. On 30 May the leaders of the protest were arrested, along with some 30 trade unionists and civil society figures. Chad's political climate was thus darkening, in addition to a security context that was already deleterious.

### **The 2005 Constitutional Amendment and the Breakdown of Political Dialogue**

On 6 June 2005 Chadian voters were called to the polls to vote on a proposal to amend the Constitution, adopted by the National Assembly in May 2004. These amendments heralded important reforms, including the abolition of the Senate and its replacement by the Economic, Social and Cultural Council. However, the most contested reform concerned Article 61 of the 1996 Constitution, which limited to two the number of five-year terms that the President of the Republic could serve. Indeed, after securing a first mandate in 1996 and a second in 2001, President Deby was no longer constitutionally permitted to present contest the 2006 presidential elections. The opposition accused the President of clinging to power by all means, and thus appealed for a boycott of the electoral process, including the electoral census and referendum of June 2005, and also the 2006 presidential elections, (at which Deby was decisively re-elected). The main parties of the democratic opposition also formed a broad political coalition, the Coordination des Partis Politiques pour la Défense de la Constitution (CPDC). The political dialogue between the main actors at the national level was quickly degrading, leading to a climate of mistrust between the democratic opposition and the ruling regime.

At the request of the Government of Chad, in April–August 2007 the European Union (EU) engaged in talks with the two sides, which finally led to a political agreement on 13 August. This made provision for two important changes in the transparency of future elections. The first point of agreement was regarding the control of the electoral registers. To this end, the Government committed to a new general population census, on the basis of which a digital electoral register would be established containing the biometric information of all voters. Second, the ruling party also committed to demilitarize the territorial administration, including the positions of governors which were mostly held by military officials. Other major advances included the establishment of a 31-member joint election commission, the Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI). All parties agreed that the President of the CENI should be drawn from civil society and the other 30 members split equally between the Government and opposition political parties. Subsequently, a joint committee to monitor the political agreement was also set up.

Despite these major agreements, Yorongar decided to boycott the signing of the accord on the grounds that the military vote in the barracks did not offer any guarantee of transparency. Nevertheless, on 16 April 2008, two months after the rebel offensive on the Chadian capital (see *The Return of Violence and the Battles of N'Djamena in 2006 and 2008*), Youssouf Saleh Abbas was appointed Prime Minister. On 23 April 2008, in accordance with the terms of the 13 April 2007 agreement, the Government was reshuffled and four opposition figures from the CPDC were promoted to ministerial positions. Kamougué was appointed to head the Ministry of

Defence, Alingué became the Attorney-General, Naimbaye Lossimian became the Minister of Agriculture, while Hamit Mahamat Dahalob was placed in charge of the Ministry of Land Development, Urbanism and Housing.

### **The Return of Violence and the Battles of N'Djamena in 2006 and 2008**

President Deby's will to cling on to power at all costs pushed the country to reconnect with the old demons of political violence, a dark page in the history of Chad that the 1993 National Sovereign Conference had sought to turn definitively. Since the request by the MPS Congress of November 2003 for a constitutional amendment to allow the President to remain in power, armed movements had begun to emerge in the north and east of the country. In December 2005 Mahamat Nour Abdelkérém succeeded in establishing the Front Uni pour le Changement (FUC), a rebel coalition composed of elements of the Rassemblement pour la Démocratie et les Libertés (RDL), the Socle pour le Changement, l'Unité et la Démocratie (SCUD) and the Conseil National pour le Redressement. The RDL was a rebel movement operating from Darfur in Sudan. Formed in August 2005 and led by Mahamat Nour Abdelkérém, it was made up of deserters from the Chadian army and mainly those from the Tama ethnic group. The SCUD was also composed of deserters from the Chadian national army who took part in the failed *coup d'état* of May 2004. Under the leadership of Yaya Dillo Djerou, the movement had more than 600 armed men. After overrunning several government military positions in the east and centre of the country, the FUC launched a military offensive on N'Djamena during 12–13 April 2006. This was met with fierce resistance from forces supporting the Government and the Chadian national army was declared victorious in the battle, while numerous rebels were captured or killed. On 24 December 2006 in Tripoli, Abdelkérém signed a peace agreement with the Government. He was appointed Minister of Defence in early March 2007, and was joined in government by two other FUC members: Laona Gong Raul and Ismael Idriss Ismael.

However, the Government's triumph against the FUC did not seal Chad's return to peace. In early February 2008 N'Djamena was the subject of a second assault by a rebel coalition launched from the east of the country. On 2 February 2008 a column of more than 2,000 rebel elements entered the city of N'Djamena and organized a siege of the capital. The assault was launched by a coalition of three rebel groups: the Union des Forces pour la Démocratie et le Développement (UFDD) of Mahamat Nouri, the Rassemblement des Forces pour le Changement of the twin brothers Tom and Timan Erdimi, and the UFDD-Fondamental led by Abdelwahid Aboud Makaye and Acheikh Ibn Oumar. Departing from Sudan at the end of January 2008, the heavily armed rebels had crossed the border between the two states inflicting military defeats on government positions throughout the eastern front before organizing the military siege of N'Djamena. After three days of battle, the rebels ran out of ammunition and the army regained control largely as a result of its air superiority and to the logistical and intelligence support of the French forces stationed in N'Djamena.

Thus since coming to power in 1990 President Deby had on several occasions narrowly escaped dangerous challenges to his rule. This most recent attempt to remove him was all the more significant because it was orchestrated by individuals who for a long time had made a career under the Deby regime. Nouri, the leader of the UFDD, the coalition's largest rebel movement, and which had provided more than one-half of the combatants, had held numerous ministerial posts under President Deby, including Minister of Defence and Minister of the Interior. He had then served as Chad's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, a position he abandoned in protest against Deby's re-election in May 2006, and in October he founded the UFDD.

In late October 2007 the UFDD and a number of other rebel movements signed the Sirte (Libya) agreements, but the coalition was only short-lived. In addition to their political proximity to Deby, the Erdimi twins were also the President's nephews and from the same ethnic group as him. Timan had held important positions including Chief of Staff to the President and Director-General of CotonTchad, the country's

largest company. The Erdimi brothers broke ranks with the Government in 2005 and founded the SCUD in the same year. In May 2006 they had reportedly plotted to shoot down President Deby's plane after his re-election, but the plan failed after being discovered by French intelligence.

### **The Disappearance of Mahamat Saleh**

On 3 February 2008, during the Battle of N'Djamena, the opposition leader Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh was abducted from his home by unidentified armed men, although his party, the Parti pour les Libertés et le Développement, indicated that it had been carried out by elements of the presidential guard. Since then, he has remained missing. In March Yorongar, who was abducted on the same day, claimed that Mahamat Saleh had died in detention in a cell adjacent to his own. A third political opponent, Lol Mahamat Choua, who was also abducted at the same time, regained his freedom sometime later.

In April 2008, under international pressure, including from the French Parlement, a national commission of inquiry was set up to bring light to the events that occurred between 28 January and 8 February, including crimes committed by government forces and the rebellion. The commission's final report blamed the Chadian army for the disappearance of Mahamat Saleh, while indicating that the capture of the three opposition leaders was the result of an operation under the co-ordination of Chad's highest authorities. Despite all the findings, the Chadian justice system has never formally identified or prosecuted those responsible for Mahamat Saleh's disappearance. During 2016–17 the Government attempted to reconcile with Mahamat Saleh's family by appointing his sons to two national companies: CotonTchad and the Banque de l'Habitat du Tchad. Their passage at the helm of these two institutions was only short-lived, but was sufficient to reduce international pressure on the Chadian authorities. Since then, the disappearance of Mahamat Saleh has remained a political mystery.

### **THE CENTRALITY OF SECURITY ISSUES IN CHADIAN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Security issues remain the cornerstone of Chadian international relations. However, in 60 years there has been a remarkable shift from a country which was the theatre of international interventions by neighbouring states and France, to a country that is driving the international war on terrorism in the Sahel region. Chad has gone from a recipient of intervention to the status of troop provider in the major coalition against terrorism in Mali and the Sahel.

### **The Tumultuous Relationship with Neighbouring Sudan**

During the two rebel offensives that led to the battles of N'Djamena in April 2006 and February 2008, the Government of Chad repeatedly accused Sudan of colluding with the rebels. After the attack by FUC rebels on the Adre garrison on 18 December 2005, Chad officially declared itself in a state of belligerence with Sudan. This episode marked the lowest point in the deterioration of official relations between the two states.

However, to understand how the two states reached this level of such execrable relations, it is necessary to go back to the beginning of the Darfur conflict in 2003. When the war began in February 2003, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) was allied with the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) as two armed groups that were fighting the forces of the Sudanese Government, which they accused of oppressing the non-Arab black communities of Darfur. The JEM was predominantly made up of Zaghawa fighters, an ethnic group whose communities live on horseback between the two states and to which President Deby belonged. Furthermore, the JEM was led by Khalil Ibrahim, a nephew of the Chadian President. Sudan accused the Chadian authorities of supporting the rebel movement and JEM fighters took part in the 2008 Battle of N'Djamena on the side of the government forces. The Chadian authorities accused the Sudanese of giving *carte blanche* to Chadian rebel movements that were using Sudanese territory as back bases to launch offensives against Chadian govern-

ment positions. Thus, on 18 December 2005, when the rebel forces of SCUD and the RDL violently attacked the town of Adre, near the Sudanese border, damaging one helicopter and destroying another of the Chadian army, the Chadian Government saw the logistical and material support that Sudan was providing to rebel forces. Chad declared a state of belligerence with Sudan.

In April 2007 Chadian armed forces entered Sudanese territory in pursuit of a rebel column of more than 200 vehicles that had just carried out attacks on Chadian territory. Sudan declared the loss of more than 17 members of its defence forces during the pursuit and pledged to retaliate, while the Government of Chad claimed an international right to pursue its aggressors on Sudanese territory. However, in early May President Deby and his Sudanese counterpart, Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, reached an agreement in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. According to the text both sides agreed 'to work with the African Union and the UN to end the conflict in Darfur and eastern Chad, in order to achieve stability and peace for all'. Yet this agreement had little effect, since in February 2008 the Government of Chad once again accused Sudan of supporting the rebels.

In March 2008, one month after the rebels' incursion into N'Djamena, Presidents Deby and al-Bashir signed a new agreement in Dakar, in which the two states pledged not to support rebel groups against each other. On 3 May 2009 the two men signed another agreement in Doha, Qatar, in which they pledged to abide by the terms of the previous agreements. Finally, on 15 January 2010 the two states signed the Agreement on the Normalization of Relations between Chad and Sudan in N'Djamena. This aimed to end hostilities between the two countries and to restore a climate of mutual trust. In particular, it created the Force Mixte Tchado-Soudanaise, a military detachment of 3,000 men supplied equally by the two states and stationed along the border with a right of pursuit for 100 km inside the territory of each state. To show good faith in the outcome of this agreement, in mid-May Chadian authorities arrested and expelled JEM leader Ibrahim. In a sign of reciprocity, in July the Sudanese authorities arrested the three leaders of the Chadian rebellion, Timan Erdimi, Mahamat Nouri and Adouma Hassaballah, who were also expelled from Sudan. The following day President al-Bashir made an official visit to N'Djamena, after a similar visit by President Deby to Khartoum in February. Relations between the two states were thus gradually normalized after several years of high tensions at the borders.

### **The Humanitarian Crisis in Darfur, Central African Refugees and International Forces**

The diplomatic and security conflict between Chad and Sudan has also played out against a background of humanitarian crisis. Since the Darfur conflict in 2003, more than 240,000 Sudanese refugees have found refuge in camps run by the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in eastern Chad, mainly in the Ouaddaï, Wadi Fira and Ennedi regions. In an area where environmental degradation makes it difficult to access survival resources, the presence of these Sudanese refugees brings to nearly 1m. the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance, of whom at least one-third live in a state of severe food insecurity. This massive influx of refugees also leads to tensions with local populations, who find themselves competing for scarce resources while they are also excluded from the international aid. Repeated incursions by the *Janjaweed*, the Sudanese pro-Government militia, as well as the activities of the Chadian and Sudanese rebels in this region, have contributed to the deterioration of the security climate at the border of the three states, Chad, Sudan and the Central African Republic (CAR).

It was in this context that on 25 September 2007 the UN Security Council addressed the situation by adopting Resolution 1778, which established the UN Mission in the CAR and Chad (MINURCAT). The peacekeeping mission's mandate included the protection of civilians, the promotion of regional peace, the facilitation of the delivery of humanitarian aid and the movement of humanitarian personnel. Initially, it was anticipated that more than 5,200 military personnel and 300 police officers would be deployed to carry out the mission's

mandate, but this goal was never to be achieved. In February 2010 the Government of Chad referred the matter to the Security Council, asking it not to renew the mandate of MINURCAT. Chadian President Deby denounced the operation as having never succeeded in providing protection for refugees and displaced persons in the east of the country. The Chadian Government was committed to ensuring the safety of these people on its territory. It should be noted that this assurance from the Chadian Government came in a context of diplomatic rapprochement between Chad and Sudan. On 31 December 2010 the mandate of MINURCAT ended at Chad's request and in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1923.

Meanwhile, on 15 October 2007 the EU Council decided on a joint military operation in Chad (EUFOR Tchad/RCA). Responding to the UN Resolution 1778 quoted above, the force's objective was to ensure the safety of refugee camps and humanitarian personnel operating in the eastern areas of Chad. The operational force was not deployed until 2008. On 15 March 2009 the military component of MINURCAT succeeded EUFOR, the mandate of which was terminated.

Since 2013, and mainly in the south of the country, Chad has received a new influx of refugees fleeing conflict in the CAR. The International Organization for Migration estimated that 113,000 people living in the CAR are Central African refugees and Chadian returnees. Although this new influx has less serious security consequences than those observed in the eastern regions, the risk of conflict with local communities, induced by a new competition for access to natural resources, has been pointed out by humanitarian organizations. By highlighting the humanitarian consequences of the Central African crisis in this section, it allows us to better understand the role played by the Chadian Government in the political instability affecting the CAR since 2003.

### **Terrorism and Military Interventions**

Since January 2013 Chad has embarked on a series of costly military interventions against terrorism in the Sahel. On 16 January a message from President Deby was read to the National Assembly, informing people that Chadian armed forces were being sent to Mali as the Forces Armées Tchadiennes d'Intervention au Mali (FATIM). This decision, which followed an official request by the Malian transitional Government and at the insistence of France, came shortly after France had launched Operation Serval. (On 11 January 2013 the French Government had decided to deploy a military operation in Mali with the aim of stemming the advance of the Islamist fighters of al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb—AQIM—who were advancing towards Bamako.)

The context of the intervention in Mali begins a year earlier, on 17 January 2012. Northern Mali was facing two rebellions: one led by Ansar Dine, a Salafist armed group, and another by the Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad (MNLA), an independent group. The repeated offensives of these two rebellions, also known as the Fifth Tuareg rebellion, allowed them to take the towns of Aguel'hoc, Menaka and Tessalit. The repeated failures in the face of the rebels' advance caused dissatisfaction within the Malian army. These dissensions inside the Malian army culminated in the *coup d'état* of 21–22 March 2012, which toppled President Amadou Toumani Touré. On 6 April the MNLA declared the independence of the Azawad region, after taking the cities of Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao. However, there were also major discordances between the independentists and Salafists, the latter turning their guns against the MNLA and chasing them out from the cities of Gao and Timbuktu.

In January 2013, joined by AQIM and other terrorist movements, the jihadists of Ansar Dine launched an offensive on Segou and Mopti. It was at this point that the French Government decided to carry out Operation Serval, with the stated mission of preventing the progress of terrorist movements. Just one week after the start of operations, 1,400 Chadian soldiers were present in Mali after entering through Niger, as Chad responded to a promise to deploy a contingent of 2,000 men. (The Chadian army is admired and valued for the effectiveness of its actions against terrorist groups in desert battlegrounds.) With the support of the French army, the

FATIM managed to regain control of the Malian cities that had fallen into the hands of terrorist groups. In March 2013 Chadian soldiers in Mali joined the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (MISMA), the operational force of ECOWAS, authorized on 20 December 2012 by UN Security Council Resolution 2085. MISMA was later replaced by the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), a peacekeeping operation created in April 2013 by Security Council Resolution 2100, of which the Chadian contingent was to represent one of the main military components.

On another front, in January 2015, more than 2,500 Chadian soldiers were deployed to Cameroon at the request of the Cameroonian Government in the fight against Boko Haram. Repeated attacks by the Nigerian Islamist sect on the Nigerian Government and its excursions into Cameroonian territory led to a massive influx of about 8,000 Nigerian refugees onto Chadian soil. In addition, the activities of this sect threatened the main access routes to the sea of Chad, an enclave country, through the ports of Douala (Cameroon), Port Harcourt (Nigeria) and others in West Africa. This intervention first allowed the recapture of the Cameroonian town of Fotokol, which had been seized by the jihadists. In February the Chadian army was stationed in Nigerian territory from Cameroon, where it took over the town of Gambaru, which had been in the hands of Boko Haram for several weeks. The recapture of these two cities allowed the armies of Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria to regain control over a conflict that was in severe danger of spiralling out of control.

However, Chadian civilians would also have to pay the price for these military excursions of the national army outside the country. In June 2015 several concerted suicide bombings by Boko Haram elements were carried out in N'Djamena. The central police station and the National Police Academy were the targets of explosions detonated by Boko Haram suicide bombers, with the death toll rising to 38, including three suicide bombers, while a further 101 people were wounded. On 11 July another suicide bombing hit the central market in N'Djamena, killing 15 people and injuring 80 others.

Outside the capital Boko Haram's attacks on Chadian soldiers and civilians were repeated mainly in the Lake Chad region in the central-western part of the country and at the border of the three neighbouring states of Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon. The deadliest of these attacks occurred on 23 March 2020, when 92 soldiers of the Chadian army were massacred by Boko Haram elements in an attack on Bohoma, a town in the islands of Lake Chad. Following this incident, President Deby moved to the province of Lake Chad, where he launched the military operation 'Bohoma's Anger' on 31 March and which he personally led for more than two weeks. At least 6,000 Chadian soldiers were deployed on the ground along the border with Niger and Nigeria, and operations were carried out far inside the territories of these two countries. On 4 April Deby declared that the area had been completely cleared of terrorists. At the end of the operations, the Chadian army declared the loss of 52 soldiers and claimed the deaths of more than 1,000 jihadists. In recognition of his actions, on 26 June Chadian parliamentarians adopted a resolution to elevate the President to the rank of Field Marshal (Marechal) during a session boycotted by Saleh Kebzabo and other members of the opposition. On 11 August Deby officially received the attributes of his new title at a ceremony that eclipsed the traditional celebration of Independence Day.

### The French Military Presence in Chad

In August 1960, along with the CAR and the Republic of the Congo, Chad signed the four-party defence agreements with France that allowed for the mutual assistance and stationing of their defence forces. Since then, France has continued to maintain a significant armed presence in Chad, at the request of successive Chadian regimes. The region of Borkou-Ennedi-Tibesti, in the far north of the country, remained under French military administration until 1965.

The presence of units of the French army in Chad began in 1965 with the transfer to Fort Lamy (as N'Djamena was then known) of the 6th Overseas Interarms Regiment, which was until then based in Bouar in the CAR. In March 1968 elements

of the Garde Nationale et Nomade du Tchad organized a mutiny and seized the garrison of Aouzou, in the Tibesti region. The post was taken over by the national army. In July 1968 a convoy of the Armées Nationales Tchadiennes (ANT) attempted to recapture the garrison, but was attacked by rebels, who seized its armaments. In August two ANT companies that left to carry out the same mission were also attacked and suffered significant losses that forced them to withdraw. Later that month President Tombalbaye asked for French military assistance to help the ANT restore order and security in the Tibesti, in the face of the threat posed by the FROLINAT rebellion. This first intervention by the French army in Chad lasted until November.

In March 1969 Gen. Charles de Gaulle ordered the sending of French troops to Chad following a new request from President Tombalbaye. This was the very first military operation by the French army since the Algerian war of 1954–62. Operation Limousin began in April 1969, a direct intervention led by the command of French soldiers and which carried out combat actions in place of the Chadian national army. The operation ended in August 1972 with the departure of the Military Delegate in Chad and the cessation of the French army's direct involvement in the conflict.

However, France's withdrawal from the Chadian conflicts would be short-lived. From February 1978 until May 1980 a new operation of the French army was carried out: Operation Tacaud. This followed the capture of the town of Faya-Largeau on 17 February 1978 by elements of the FROLINAT rebellion. It was important because it allowed the rebellion to open and control several axes towards N'Djamena. Operation Tacaud was later followed by Operation Manta (1983–84). In June 1983 the rebel elements of the GUNT, supported by units of the Libyan army, invaded the regions of the far north of Chad, and succeeded in seizing Faya-Largeau at the end of that month. The air bombings by the Libyan army paved the way for GUNT elements to capture the towns of Koro Toro and Oum Chalouba. In July Abéché, the main city in the east of Chad, also fell to the rebels, giving them control over two main offensive routes to N'Djamena. With the help of Zaire's soldiers and the military assistance of the USA, the Chadian armed forces managed to regain control of Abéché later in July. In early August President Habré requested the humanitarian assistance of France, which responded days later with the deployment of a force that would reach almost 3,500 fighters, the largest external commitment of the French army since the Algerian war. The presence of the French army thus allowed the establishment of a 'red zone' corresponding to the 15th parallel and which prevented the advance of the rebels further south to N'Djamena. Following a meeting between French President François Mitterrand and Libyan leader al-Qaddafi in September 1984, the two sides agreed on a gradual withdrawal of their respective weapons, which began in that month and was scheduled to be finalized in November. After the effective withdrawal from France, however, Mitterrand was informed that Qaddafi had concealed about 3,000 of his soldiers in the northern regions of Chad.

In February 1986 the Libyan army, which supported Goukouni Weddeye's forces against Hissène Habré, bombed N'Djamena. The Chadian Government asked for assistance from France, which responded by deploying Operation Epervier. With military numbers growing rapidly (by 1,300) to reach 2,800 men, the presence of the French allowed the Chadian army to retake the towns of Borkou, Ennedi and Tibesti in March 1987. Despite the end of the Libyan threat, the Epervier force remained in Chad, where it intervened to provide logistical and intelligence support to the Chadian army, particularly against the incursions of rebel groups in 2008 and more recently in 2021. The force has also intervened to ensure the protection of French interests and the safety of French nationals residing in Chad.

In August 2014 Operation Epervier was merged with Operation Serval, France's military force in Mali since 2013, to create the Barkhane force, the joint command post of which remains in N'Djamena. With the help of the armies of Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Mauritania, the Barkhane force is a reconfiguration of French troops already present in the Sahel

region in order to ensure France's military strategy against armed Salafist jihadist groups.

### **THE FAILED POLITICAL DIALOGUE AND THE DEMISE OF PRESIDENT DEBY**

Could the cycle of political violence possibly break without an inclusive dialogue? In 2018 and 2019 President Deby missed the opportunity to organize an such discussions which would have brought the major political stakeholders into the same room. Instead, he chose to rely on his political allies and to exclude both the civil and military oppositions. This radical position would trigger yet another cycle of political violence, ultimately leading to Deby's death. He was killed as he ruled the country: countering a violent attempt to remove him from power.

#### **The First and Second National Inclusive Forum**

In late March 2018 about 1,000 participants gathered in N'Djamena to discuss institutional reforms concerning the structure of the state and major institutions such as parliament and the judiciary. The aim of this first National Inclusive Forum was to lay down the structures for peace and political stability through institutional reforms.

While the Government saw the Forum as an opportunity to bring Chadians together, the main opposition parties decided to boycott the process. Indeed, the opposition had been contesting the validity of the 2016 presidential election, which they considered to have been rigged to allow President Deby to win a fifth term in power. For the opposition, the Forum should have been a real opportunity for political dialogue but, instead, they perceived it as denying them any voice, as they believed that the agenda had been set in advance by the Deby regime.

Following the debate, the Forum instituted a new Constitution, which laid the ground for the Fourth Republic. The most significant change was the suppression of the post of Prime Minister, reinforcing the power of the President, whose term was increased from five to six years. Another major novelty was the introduction of a confessional oath for people serving in high public office. This point was controversial and contested, especially by the Chadian Bishops' Conference, because it breached the constitutional principle of laicity.

The Forum created additional political frustrations rather than solving the existing ones. This state of affairs led to a second National Forum, which took place between 29 October and 1 November 2020. However, this was also boycotted by the major opposition parties. Further amendments were made to the Constitution, most notably the creation of the office of the Vice-President to support the head of the state. The new constitutional amendments also introduced a Senate and a Court of Auditors. Finally, the major controversy raised in 2018 was now solved, with the suppression of the confessional oath. However, held just six months prior to the 11 April 2021 presidential elections, this national forum also failed to provide the foundations for peaceful and inclusive political participation in Chad.

#### **A Last Chance for Democracy? Deby's Death and the Military Transition**

On 20 May 2021 Chadians were stunned to learn of the death of President Deby, who was killed on the battlefield while leading a military offensive against the Front pour l'Alternance et la Concorde au Tchad (FACT) rebels. Through a declaration read on national television, a group of high-ranking officers, subsequently known as the Conseil Militaire de Transition (CMT), took control of the state, promising an 18-month transition before returning power to a civilian authority. While news of the demise of the longest-serving Chadian President came unexpectedly, the end of his rule was confrontational with both the civilian and military opposition.

Civil unrest had erupted in N'Djamena in early February 2021, following appeals from opposition parties and civil society organizations aimed at preventing President Deby from seeking a sixth term in the April 2021 presidential election. The movement progressively gained momentum, with protesters facing police tear gas in the streets of the capital every weekend. On 28 February events took a dramatic turn when military tanks raided the home of Yaya Dillo, an outspoken opposition leader from the same ethnicity as Deby, killing his mother and sparking further public anger. Following this event, a number of leading opposition candidates—namely Saleh Kebzabo (who came second in the 2016 presidential elections), Ngarlely Yorongar and Theophile Bongoro—decided to withdraw from the presidential election, citing security concerns.

President Deby thus ran almost unchallenged against low-key candidates in the April 2021 election, which many observers considered to have no stakes. On the night of 19 April the CENI declared him the victor with more than 77% of the votes. However, as the following events will reveal, Deby was already dead at the point in time when he was declared the winner and when his supporters were celebrating the prospect of many more years in power.

On the day of the presidential election Chadian rebels from the FACT movement who were trained and stationed in Libya decided to cross the border and to launch offensives against military targets in the Tibesti region. During the following week the rebels eschewed any confrontation with governmental forces, choosing instead to rally along the border with Niger towards N'Djamena. With intelligence being gathered by the French army, the presence of the rebels was detected in the region of Kanem, leading to intense fighting on 18 April, led by President Deby himself. Seriously wounded during the battle, he would not survive yet another attempt to remove him from power by force.

On 20 April 2021 the CMT suspended the Constitution, dissolved the National Assembly and declared an 18-month transition period. During the funeral of the late President on 23 April, Emmanuel Macron, the French President, provoked controversy by pledging support to the junta. He was further accused of neo-colonialism by promising that France would not allow any person or group to attack the sovereignty and stability of Chad.

In the following days, the appointment of Gen. Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, a son of the late President, as head of the CMT sparked further protest against what the general public perceived as a dynastic succession within a republic. On 27 April more than a dozen protesters were killed across the country when a coalition of political parties and civil society organizations appealed to people to demonstrate against the military junta.

Meanwhile, on 26 April 2021 Albert Pahimi Padacké, an ally of the late President, was appointed as Prime Minister to lead a civilian transitional Government. While the major opposition leaders decided to join the newly formed civilian Government, another wing of the opposition supported by civil society organizations decided to continue the fight to remove the CMT from power. At the time of writing, Chad was braced for an uncertain future as the politicians and their supporters remained divided over the next course of actions and what action to take against the junta. However, there is a general consensus that a national dialogue should take place, which should decide on a new constitution and the democratic future of the nation. For the first time in more than three decades, Chad has a real opportunity to chart its path towards a democratic transition without the shadow of Idriss Deby Itno.