

Echo effects

Chadian instability and the Darfur conflict

On 2 February 2008, a force of around 4,000 fighters from the three main rebel groups in Chad—Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement (UFDD), UFDD–Fondamentale (UFDD/F), and Rassemblement des forces pour le changement (RFC)—reached the Chadian capital, N'Djamena. Supported by Khartoum, they had come from West Darfur less than a week before, crossing the border around Adé, south of El Geneina. They had then driven quickly towards the capital, avoiding the government forces concentrated in the east and finally coming up against them around Massaguett, only 50 kilometres north-east of N'Djamena, on 1 February. After an hour of fighting, the Chadian Army, and President Idriss Déby himself, had to retreat to N'Djamena. After 17 years in power, Déby's regime was thought lost by many people in the rebel and government forces, the civilian population, and the international community. But he and his forces held out, thanks largely to his superior arsenal, including tanks and helicopters.

The attack represented perhaps the lowest point so far in the deepening Chad–Darfur crisis, the root causes of which persist. President Déby has faced insurrections almost since the day he came to power in 1990. But these rebellions have become more organized and stronger in recent years, due in part to assistance from Khartoum. Predictably, Chad has retaliated by becoming increasingly involved in the Darfur conflict. Echoes of Darfur have since

emerged in eastern Chad: following the arrival of more than 200,000 Sudanese refugees, *janjawid* militia similar to those in Darfur contributed to the displacement of a further 170,000 Chadians in 2005 and 2006. An additional 30,000 Chadian refugees have fled back across the border into Darfur.¹

Deepening Chadian instability is connected to complex interlocking factors arising in both Chad and Sudan at local and national levels. These include localized ethnic conflicts exploited by the Déby regime; long-standing Chadian opposition to Déby's repressive administration and the slow pace of democratization; and the use of armed proxies by both Khartoum and N'Djamena.

This *Issue Brief* describes the evolution of the current crisis. Recent developments only make sense when cast against ethnic and political power struggles in Chad and Sudan that date back to the 1990s. The *Brief* also considers in particular the emergence of rebel groups and proxy militias since the end of 2005, and the many challenges facing the deployment of United Nations–African Union and European Union peacekeepers.

The *Issue Brief* finds that:

- Proxy forces supported by both N'Djamena and Khartoum are increasingly beyond the control of their masters, and pose serious risks to both. These militias are integrated into local ethnic and political conflicts, and limit the capacity of Chad, Sudan, or the international community to stabilize the region.

- The on-again, off-again Chadian rebellion has flared up since the failed October 2007 peace deal between Déby's regime and the principle Chadian rebel groups. The Sudan-supported attack on N'Djamena, and the bombing campaign waged by Chadian forces against Chadian rebel bases inside Darfur, have placed further pressure on fragile Khartoum–N'Djamena relations.
- Threats by the main Chadian rebel groups against the deployment of peacekeepers, together with confusion over the peacekeeping mandate and the roles and responsibilities of contributed troops, raises the likelihood of violence and insecurity, and places humanitarian operations in jeopardy.
- Though largely ignored by the international community, bilateral diplomacy and international pressure are essential to restoring security to Chad.

Gradual collapse: bilateral relations 1990–2005

The present instability in Chad has deep roots. President Idriss Déby overthrew his former mentor Hissein Habré in 1990 from a base in Darfur, where he had fled in 1989 after the persecution of his ethnic group, the Beri. Habré was supported there by the Sudanese Beri, and by Omar al-Bashir, who had recently seized power in Sudan. More widely known by their Arabic name of Zaghawa,² the Beri

straddle the Chad–Darfur border. Crucially, Déby and a number of the main Darfur rebel leaders are Beri.³ Since Déby became president, civilian, military, and economic power in Chad has been consolidated within the Beri community, and particularly within his own sub-group, the Bideyat, and his own clan, the Kolyala.⁴

Throughout the 1990s Déby was a loyal ally of the regime in Sudan. He consistently refused to supply aid to Sudanese rebels—whether from Darfur or South Sudan—despite requests to do so since the early 1990s.⁵ But from 2003 he was unable to stop the two rebel movements in Darfur, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), from using Chad as a rear base, recruiting combatants even among the Chadian Republican Guard (a pillar of his regime) and garnering support among the Chadian Beri, including those close to the government. In March and April 2003, Déby sent Chadian troops to fight the SLA and the JEM inside Darfur. Not surprisingly, however, Beri soldiers from Chad showed little inclination to fight against other Beri and gave the Darfuran rebels advance warning.

In March 2004, Déby served Khartoum by creating a dissident group within the JEM (the National Movement for Reform and Development, or NMRD), which secured a short-lived ceasefire agreement with Khartoum in December 2004.⁶ He managed not only to weaken the JEM, but also to recast himself as a mediator for the Darfur conflict. On 8 April 2004, he hosted the Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of Sudan, the SLA, and the JEM. Very quickly, however, the Chadian mediation lost credibility among both the rebels and the Sudanese government due to its perceived partiality, and the agreement was violated by both sides.⁷

Concurrently, Déby's inability to prevent those close to him from supporting the Darfur rebels weakened his credibility among power-brokers in Khartoum. In response, starting in 2003, Khartoum incorporated Darfur-

based Chadian opposition elements into the *janjawid*.⁸ Primary among them were Arabs, themselves former supporters of the Conseil démocratique révolutionnaire (CDR) (the main historical Chadian Arab rebel group), as well as the Tama, traditional enemies of the Beri.⁹ When these groups were not fighting alongside the Sudanese army in Darfur, they launched periodic attacks on Chadian territory.

Whether Khartoum wished to destabilize the border region or install a puppet regime in Chad is not clear. From 2004 onwards, opponents of the regime in Chad streamed into Sudan in the hope of winning popular support.¹⁰

For its part, Khartoum received anyone who might hurt the Chadian regime, including the Bideyat (among them close relatives of Déby), who gradually joined the rebellion. In May 2004 Déby escaped an attempted putsch fomented by soldiers from within his own ethnic group. Since then, and particularly since the end of 2005, desertions have multiplied. But, while deserters were leaving to join the rebels in Darfur in 2003, they are now choosing anti-Déby rebel movements within Chad supported directly by Khartoum.

In 2004 Khartoum started asking the numerous rebel Chadian factions to unite. From 2005, Déby began a rap-



prochement with Darfur rebel groups (SLA–Minni Minnawi and JEM), in exchange for their commitment to aid in fighting Chadian rebels on Chadian soil. The situation deteriorated rapidly. An attack on the border town of Adré on 18 December 2005 by the *Rassemblement pour la démocratie et les libertés* (RDL), a Chadian rebel movement made up of Tama led by Captain Mahamat Nour Abdelkarim, marked a turning point. Déby now realised that Sudan was decisively supporting Chadian rebels against him. While the rebels did not manage to take Adré, the raid allowed Mahamat Nour to display his strength and later assume the leadership of the Sudan-supported rebel coalition, the *Front Uni pour le Changement* (FUC).¹¹ From this point onwards Déby actively supported the Darfur rebels.

Intensification of a proxy war: December 2005–October 2006

The strategy in Khartoum was to bring the various Chadian rebel factions into the FUC, placing them all under Mahamat Nour. Like many of the key players in the Darfur conflict, Mahamat Nour has long worked for Khartoum. He served as a Sudanese intelligence officer in Western Upper Nile and as *janjawid* leader in West Darfur, where he recruited troops within his Tama ethnic group for the Sudanese Popular Defence Forces (PDF).¹² In the event, the FUC was short-lived, though its one significant attack came alarmingly close to a major victory. In April 2006 an FUC column moved directly on N'Djamena, where it was only defeated at the last minute on 13 April due to support from the French—and to the FUC's poor preparation. At the same time, the Chadian armed forces and the JEM¹³ pushed other rebel forces back from Adré.¹⁴

Amidst accusations of voter fraud, Déby was re-elected head of state in May 2006.¹⁵ He moved quickly towards a rapprochement with Bashir, using Libyan leader Muammar al-Gadhafi

Khartoum has consistently tried to unite the various Chadian rebel factions, with only limited success.

as a mediator. On 26 July 2006, an agreement was signed in which each government agreed not to give refuge to the others' rebels and by 8 August the two countries had normalized their diplomatic relations. By the end of the month, they agreed to sign a framework agreement recording the normalization of their relations 'as friends and good neighbours', though many close to the process felt the temporary thaw was unlikely to last.

The agreement was indeed short-lived, but it was the first bilateral attempt that yielded any real impact on the ground. Déby requested that the Darfur rebels seeking sanctuary leave Chad, and some complied.¹⁶ Meanwhile, the Chadian rebels based in Darfur returned to Chad, but with the clear intention of rapidly resuming the offensive as soon as possible. By the end of the rainy season (July to September), rebels and *janjawid* independently resumed attacks within Chad, and the bilateral agreement collapsed. As the year drew to a close, Darfurian rebels had reason to expect Chad to support their cause once again.¹⁷ More ominously, the failure of the agreement potentially signalled that both the Sudanese and Chadian regimes were losing control over their proxies.

Military victories by the Darfur rebels served to consolidate their support from N'Djamena. On 7 October 2006, for example, the National Redemption Front—a newly created coalition of rebel groups opposed to the Darfur Peace Agreement—attacked the Sudanese base of Kariyari on the border with Chad, opposite the Sudanese refugee camp of Ouré Cassoni.¹⁸ The dismantling of the base served the interests of N'Djamena. In fact, Darfur rebels were actively supported by being permitted to cross into Chadian territory and remain there before and after the attack.¹⁹

Meanwhile, attacks on Chadian territory by *janjawid* with both Sudanese and Chadian elements resumed in the south-eastern department of Dar Sila. Fighting also erupted between these elements and the Darfur rebels. The *janjawid* operating in Chad had previously been seen only on horseback, but by October 2006 they were also seen riding in cars, most likely supplied by Sudan or by Chadian rebel groups. The *janjawid* also frequently wore Sudanese uniforms, and identity cards of the Sudanese army were found on those killed in the fighting.²⁰

Many of these late 2006 attacks by Sudanese-backed Chadian rebels were a prelude to a much larger offensive. By 22 October, the *Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement* (UFDD), a new coalition formed that same morning, directly attacked Goz Beida, the capital of Dar Sila. On the following day, the UFDD attacked Am Timma, the capital of the neighbouring department, Salamat. These surprise attacks enabled the Sudanese government to make another attempt to form a coalition of all Chadian rebel groups to replace the failing FUC. This second effort to create unity was triggered by the return of two veteran soldiers from the earlier Chadian insurrection: Acheikh Ibn Oumar Saïd, an Arab and former leader of the CDR, who was alternately a minister and a rebel under all regimes since 1979; and Mahamat Nouri, a Goran from the Anakazza sub-group, like Hissein Habré. Nouri had been a minister under both Habré and Déby.²¹

The UFDD incursions were intended as a preparation for Mahamat Nouri to assume the leadership of a wider coalition. A short while later a meeting of the various rebel factions and their Sudanese backers was held in Geneina, West Darfur, with a view to extending

the base of the UFDD. But the UFDD failed to bring many of the most important groups on board, including the Tama core of the FUC, which was faithful to Mahamat Nour. In May 2007, the UFDD also suffered the desertions of Acheikh Ibn Oumar and Abdelwahid Aboud Makaye, who took Arab members with them to found the breakaway UFDD–Fondamentale. Thus, this second unification effort looked likely to dissolve as quickly as the first.

Ethnic divisions

Since the beginning of his rule, Déby has dealt with rebellions through a combination of repression and selective incentives. He rewards those who return to him with money and status: countless former rebels in Chad have become ministers from Abbas Koty (Zaghawa) to Moise Ketté (Southerner) and Mahamat Garfa (Tama). (Though the first two were later killed by the regime.²²) Even before the emergence of the UFDD, rumours were circulating that Mahamat Nour, in disgrace in Khartoum over the failure of the FUC, might return to Déby's fold. In February 2006, with Libyan support, he did precisely that and was rewarded with an unusually important gift—the position of minister of defence.

Mahamat Nour came with considerable leverage in the form of 4,000–6,000 fully armed men.²³ They were supposed to be assimilated into the Chadian Army, but they refused to mix with Beri soldiers or to be disarmed. Concentrated in their homeland of Dar Tama, they operated as a Tama militia there, carrying out acts of violence against civilians from other ethnic groups, particularly the Beri. They attacked Sudanese Beri who had taken refuge in the Kounoungou camp in Dar Tama,²⁴ and also invaded Beri and

Goran communities that had settled in Dar Tama over the previous 30 years following successive droughts.²⁵ Beri militia responded with acts of violence against Tama civilians.

Déby's generous rewarding of Mahamat Nour, a Tama whose men were killing Beri, initially alienated his own people. More Beri began to join the Chadian opposition. By mid-2007, relations between Déby and Mahamat Nour cooled when rumours circulated that he might attempt a coup d'état. On 1 December, after ex-FUC forces in Dar Tama resisted government efforts to disarm them, Déby dismissed him and arrested the Tama sultan Haroun Mahamat, one of the most respected traditional leaders in eastern Chad. Mahamat Nour took refuge in the Libyan embassy in N'Djamena. Within just a few months, then, Déby had given up his risky alliance with the Tama.

Playing further on ethnic rivalries, Déby also vilified Chadian Arabs by expelling certain Arab ministers from the government—in particular Rakhis Mannani, a former CDR leader—and, more importantly, launching a campaign denouncing them as *janjawid* and 'mercenaries' in the pay of Khartoum.²⁶ His strategy has apparently been to present himself as a pro-Western bulwark against a Sudan that seeks to 'Arabize' and 'Islamize' the whole region. But denouncing Chadian Arabs in this way has increased the risk that the existing gulf in Darfur between Arabs and non-Arabs will be replicated in Chad.²⁷

So far, this has not happened, partly due to Arab dynamics. In Darfur, the many Chadian Arabs who left for Sudan several decades ago were given or promised local power, wealth, land, and development assistance by Khartoum, in exchange for forming the bulk of the *janjawid*. But since the

Abuja agreement in May 2006, the Chadian Arabs, like many Darfurian ones, have increasingly lost confidence in Khartoum.²⁸ Prominent Arab personalities in the Chadian regime, such as the former minister of defence and now governor of the Ouaddaï region, Bichara Issa Jadalla, are encouraging Chadian Arabs in Darfur to leave Khartoum's side. As a Mahariya Awlad Mansur Arab, Bichara is in touch with prominent *janjawid* leaders in Darfur, beginning with members of his tribe such as Mohamed Hamdan Dogolo 'Hemeti', another Mahariya Awlad Mansur of Chadian origin, who recently turned against Khartoum.²⁹

Thus N'Djamena and Khartoum are competing for Chadian Arabs, and not only those who left Chad decades ago. Throughout 2007, Déby called back the Arabs to his regime, promising them amnesty for any crimes they had committed and offering the same incentives as Khartoum.³⁰ This policy began to have an effect when the main Arab rebel group, the Concorde nationale du Tchad (CNT), rallied to support N'Djamena in December 2007. Among the CNT's reasons for changing sides was the fact that Khartoum had made clear it did not want an Arab to rule Chad: first because Chadian Arabs could then support Darfurian Arabs opposed to Khartoum, and second because it would strengthen the arguments of international activists denouncing Khartoum's supposed plans to 'Arabize' the region.³¹ Since 2005, Khartoum's preference for Chadian leadership has thus been a non-Arab—first Mahamat Nour, then Mahamat Nouri—in spite of the inability of either to unite the Chadian rebels.

Splintering coalitions: October 2006–present

Unable to bring the rebels together under one banner, Khartoum appeared to ease off its proxy support of Chadian armed groups in early 2007. Even after an incident in April by pro-Chadian forces in Foro Boranga, just across the

Khartoum's reluctance to support Chadian Arab rebels in their struggle has caused some to return to Déby.

border in Sudan, which resulted in the deaths of Sudanese policemen,³² Khartoum resisted retaliation. In May, Chad and Sudan signed a new agreement in Saudi Arabia, very similar to that of July 2006, once again making a commitment to expel their neighbour's rebels. As before, the rainy season marked an uneasy truce.

Under pressure from Khartoum, the Chadian rebels accepted negotiations with Déby under the aegis of Libya. By 3 October, N'Djamena had signed an agreement in Tripoli with the four largest rebel movements: the UFDD, the UFDD-Fondamentale, the RFC, and the CNT. All had previously benefited from Sudanese support. Crucially, most of the factions remaining outside these negotiations have had less manpower, and received little backing from Sudan.

During the course of the negotiations, the Chadian government accepted about a third of the rebel demands, including the reintegration of deserters into the army. But Déby's administration firmly rejected many decisive requests, such as the appointment of a

transitional prime minister chosen by the rebel movements, and the organization of a round table that would include the official opposition with a view to holding new elections.³³ These open grievances and the ongoing lack of trust in Déby proved to be serious enough—and the Libyan and Sudanese commitment to peace weak enough—for the rebels to withdraw from the agreement, expressed through a chain-reaction of attacks starting on 24 November 2007.

While Déby's forces were busy containing and disarming the ex-FUC forces in Dar Tama and Dar Sila, the RFC and the UFDD launched a series of attacks all along eastern Chad, between the Central African Republic (CAR) border in the south and the town of Kalaït in the north, catching the military off-guard and inflicting heavy casualties. Ex-FUC forces also attacked the army. Estimates put the number of government forces killed and wounded in November and early December in the hundreds, and rebel losses were likely as high.³⁴ As the Chadian Army moved its forces to the area in response to these attacks, the Front populaire

pour la renaissance nationale (FPRN) of Adoum Yacoub, one of the smaller rebel groups not party to the Tripoli agreement, attacked the area of Tissi on the border with Darfur and the CAR.

Armed violence persisted into January 2008, and the Chadian Army responded with the aerial bombing of Chadian rebel bases south of Geneina, in Darfur. Khartoum interpreted these actions as 'attacks on Sudan' and threatened to bring its army to the border.³⁵

Khartoum had good reason to worry. The JEM³⁶ had just succeeded in launching a major offensive in West Darfur, controlling important territories north of Geneina for the first time, and was now seriously threatening the state capital. Having contained the Chadian rebels east of the Goz Beida-Abéché-Kalaït line, N'Djamena's strategy now seemed to be extending the war into Sudanese territory, thanks to JEM activities. Khartoum, meanwhile, seemed to be relying mostly on the Chadian rebels to defend Geneina.³⁷ Thus, in spite of their limited success they were rearmed once again: according to Chad-

Some 30,000 Chadian refugees returning to N'Djamena on 8 February 2008, following failed attacks on the capital by the UFDD, UFDD-F, and RFC. © AP Photos/Sunday



ian officials, Khartoum likely donated several hundred new vehicles prior to their raid on N'Djamena the following month.³⁸

But unlike their backers, Darfuri and Chadian rebel groups both preferred not to fight against each other directly. The JEM's strategy was to leave open the south of Geneina, thereby allowing Chadian rebels to return to south-eastern Chad where the Chadian Army was waiting for them. This is exactly what the rebels did at the end of January, but this time they continued on towards N'Djamena—leaving the JEM fearful that a change of power in Chad could bring an end to its strategy in Darfur. JEM forces thus went back to Chad to support Déby, which allowed the Sudanese Army to attack JEM areas north of Geneina, pushing several thousand new refugees into Chad.³⁹

It is difficult to determine whether and how Khartoum will maintain its support for Chadian groups after the failure of the latest raid on N'Djamena, and given the international condemnation of the rebels. Even while attacking N'Djamena, the Chadian rebels seemed to consider a return to Sudan impossible, not so much for practical reasons as for the fact that Khartoum is not willing to receive them back. 'The next battle will be the last one, but no matter what will happen, we can't go back to Sudan,' one of the main rebel leaders said the day before they entered N'Djamena.⁴⁰ A few days later, the remaining rebel forces—in some 200 vehicles—had to retreat to Mongo, in the Guéra Mountains of central Chad.

Even if the rebels had succeeded in N'Djamena, their lack of unity would have proven difficult to overcome. A short time before their attack on N'Djamena, the RFC, UFDD, and UFDD–Fondamentale established a Joint Military Command, but political divisions between them—such as the terms of possible negotiations with the government—as well as ethnic divisions, remain strong. The two main groups involved in recent fighting, the UFDD (Goran) and the RFC (Bideyat), are unable to build a real alliance because

Box 1 Returned to sender: arms flows between Chad and Sudan

Both Chad and Sudan have armed one another's opponents throughout various phases of the rebellions in both countries. However, this process of militarization has never been constant, symmetric, or uniform. Indeed, the uneven arming of various factions has shifted the power dynamics between competing rebel groups and fostered dissent. A second notable aspect of weapons transfers and flows in the region is recycling, whereby weapons captured from one rebel group are subsequently turned over to other groups.

Until mid-2004, the flow of Sudanese-supplied arms to Darfur was intended primarily for the *janjawid*. At the time, some Chadian rebels who recruited Chadian combatants or combatants of Chadian origin for the *janjawid*, such as Mahamat Nour Abdelkarim, benefited from this support. In 2005, when fewer arms were flowing to the *janjawid*, Khartoum began to arm Chadian rebel groups, in some cases with Chinese-made weapons, some of which were produced in Sudan itself.⁴¹ Arms were funnelled primarily to the FUC, and in particular to Mahamat Nour's Tama faction, causing disputes within the rebel coalition.⁴²

Much of what is known about arms flows comes from weapons recovered during clashes. For example, weapons captured from the FUC by Chadian forces during the battle of N'Djamena in April 2006 included Chinese MBRL, recoilless rifles (Chinese B-10s or Russian SPG-9s), and RPG rocket launchers.⁴³

An FUC 'head of section' based in Harara (south of Geneina) and captured in N'Djamena in April 2006 told the Chadian police that: 'We were visited three times by the president of Sudan, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, in person. Each time he came, he talked at length with our leaders. The last time he brought us food, uniforms, and weapons overland. The leaders left by air and the vehicles returned empty.'⁴⁴ Many FUC combatants, including the prisoners taken by the Chadian authorities, have been observed wearing Sudanese uniforms. Some of these prisoners claimed that they were Sudanese soldiers or police officers.⁴⁵ Significantly, weapons taken from Mahamat Nour's men in April 2006, such as those taken at Adré in December 2005, were subsequently given to Darfur rebels by the Chadian government. A source close to Idriss Déby admitted to this gift, describing it as a 'return to sender'.⁴⁶

After the failure of the FUC raid on N'Djamena, Khartoum shifted its transfers of weapons to the UFDD. The new coalition received RPG rocket launchers, anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, as well as SAM-7 missiles.⁴⁷ Mahamat Nouri told Radio France Internationale (RFI) that 'most' of these missiles had been taken from Chadian Army stocks during the raid on Abéché in November 2006. However, it seems that the SAM-7 missiles were also supplied to the UFDD by Khartoum. An RFI journalist noted that there was 'Chinese script . . . on the UFDD's batteries of anti-aircraft missiles'.⁴⁸ Deliveries of arms from Khartoum to Chadian rebel factions, particularly the UFDD, appear to have continued in the first months of 2007, and more significantly after September 2007.⁴⁹

For their part, the Darfur rebels had the benefit of Chadian support (money, gifts, and sales of vehicles and weapons) from 2003, particularly from the Beri community, and even from the family of Déby, without his consent. The JEM and above all the Zaghawa branch of the SLA benefited, thanks especially to the good contacts of Abdallah Abbakar Bashir with the Beri community in Chad.⁵⁰ Apparently Chadian financial aid also enabled the SLA to purchase anti-aircraft weapons in Chad, in particular about 15 or 20 SAM missiles that were taken from SLA-Minni Minnawi by the G19 in the summer of 2006.⁵¹

After the Darfur Peace Agreement of May 2006,⁵² the non-signatory G19 rapidly acquired arms during clashes with the Sudanese army and SLA-Minni Minnawi. In autumn 2006, the new National Redemption Front alliance (which included the JEM and the G19) also enabled the G19 to benefit from N'Djamena's aid. But the rapid split in the coalition meant that the Chadian arms and vehicles were mainly concentrated in the hands of one faction, namely that of Adam Bakhit and Abdallah Abbakar.

The arms market in N'Djamena has also been a source of supply. Russian Kalashnikovs, Libyan handguns, and other weapons can be bought for USD 200–USD 600. These small arms appear to come from various sources, particularly the Democratic Republic of Congo via the Central African Republic.

of persistent Goran–Bideyat rivalries following the eviction of Hissein Habré (a Goran) by Déby (a Bideyat). Many Arabs who suffered a great deal under Habré are also reluctant to bring the Goran back to power. These divisions mean that Déby's two-pronged strategy of fighting combined with negotiations remains effective, while concurrently frustrating Sudanese attempts to unify the Chadian rebels. Another factor

working in Déby's favor, and which helps explain the timing of the February attacks, is the planned deployment of the international peacekeeping forces in eastern Chad.

The international response

The international community's response to the crisis in Darfur and Chad has been a push for peacekeeping opera-

Box 2 Chadian rebel groups and coalitions

The following groups represent the most significant of the rebel groups and coalitions from 2005 to the present.

Front uni pour le changement (démocratique) (United Front for Democratic Change) or FUC/FUCD. Coalition founded in December 2005 and expected (by Khartoum) to unify all of the Chadian rebel factions against Déby under the Sudanese protégé Mahamat Nour Abdelkarim, a Tama. At its peak in April 2006 the FUC had 5,000–7,000 men but went into decline after its failed attack on N'Djamena on 13 April. In March 2007, the Tama section of the FUC rallied to the Chadian regime and became a pro-government militia operating in Dar Tama.

Rassemblement pour la démocratie et les libertés (Rally for Democracy and Freedom) or RDL. The main component of the FUC, which recruited principally among the Tama (from Chad and Sudan), Chadian Arabs (particularly the Eregat of Dar Tama), and the Ouaddaïans.

Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement (Union of Forces for Democracy and Development) or UFDD. The second significant Sudanese-supported coalition of groups, founded on 22 October 2006, led primarily by Mahamat Nouri (a Goran). The UFDD has 2,000–3,000 men including Ouaddaïans, Arabs, and Gorans. Khartoum intended for the UFDD to replace the failed FUC and unify all the major Chadian rebels against Déby. The UFDD has operated mostly in south-eastern Chad, Adré, Abéché, and west of Ennedi (Goran area). It was party to the Tripoli agreement of October 2007. Following several splits, the UFDD was reduced to two main factions:

(i) **Union des forces pour le progrès et la démocratie (Union of Forces for Progress and Democracy) or UFPD.** Founded in July 2006 by Mahamat Nouri, a Goran from the Anakazza sub-group, like Hissein Habré. Nouri was formerly Chadian ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

(ii) **Rassemblement national démocratique (National Democratic Rally) or RND.** Founded by Adouma Hassaballah Jedareb (Arab with an Ouaddaïan mother), ex-member of the FPRN (see below) and of the FUC, who took numerous Ouaddaïan combatants with him in the wake of the failed FUC attack on N'Djamena.

Rassemblement populaire pour la justice (Popular Rally for Justice) or RPJ. A Bideyat component of the FUC, headed by Abakar Tollie and made up of deserters from the Borogat sub-group, a Bideyat group very close to the Goran. After the fall of the FUC, it joined the UFDD.

UFDD-Fondamentale. An Arab breakaway group from the UFDD, founded in May 2007 by Acheikh Ibn Oumar Saïd and Abdelwahid Aboud Makaye. Party to the Tripoli agreement of October 2007.

Conseil démocratique révolutionnaire (Revolutionary Democratic Council) or CDR. One of the oldest Chadian rebel movements, founded in 1978. Until 1982 it was led by Acyl Ahmat Agbash and since then by Acheikh Ibn Oumar Saïd—both Awlad Rashid Arabs. Acheikh Ibn Oumar retained the CDR name when he left France, where he was a political refugee, to rejoin the rebellion in Sudan and found the UFDD alongside Mahamat Nouri in 2006. He broke away in May 2007 and formed the UFDD-Fondamentale.

Rassemblement des forces pour le changement (Rally of Forces for Change)–Rassemblement des forces démocratiques (Rally of Democratic Forces) or RFC-RAFD. Founded in February 2006, this is a coalition of several Bideyat deserter groups, the principal one being the Socle pour le Changement, l'Unité et la Démocratie (Platform for Change, Unity and Democracy) or SCUD. Initially known as the RAFD, it took the name RFC during a brief alliance with the Ouaddaïan Rassemblement National Démocratique Populaire (RNDP), a splinter group of the RND (see above). The RAFD is led by Tom and Timan Erdimi, Bideyat twin brothers and cousins of Idriss Déby. Because of these family links, both the Sudanese government and other rebel factions remain suspicious of the movement. The force consists of approximately 800 men. They have been based mainly in the area of Hadjer Morfaï, at the Sudanese border east of Guéréda.

Concorde nationale du Tchad (Chad National Concordia / Convention) or CNT. Sometimes called Convention nationale du Tchad (Chad National Convention). The main Chadian Arab rebel group, founded in 2004 by Hassan Saleh Al-Gaddam 'Al-Jineidi', a Chadian Hemat Arab and former member of the CDR in the 1970s who has been in rebellion against Déby since 1994. The CNT made its first incursion on to Chadian territory while attacking Haraz Manguéigne, in southern Salamat, in July 2004. Arrested by the Sudanese government, which disapproved of this early operation, Hassan Saleh was released in 2005 and became the first vice-president of the FUC. He broke away in July 2006. The CNT is the only rebel group to have controlled a part of Chadian territory—the south-eastern areas of Daguessa and Tissi—during several months in 2006 and 2007. The group is said to have had close links with *janjawid* active in Chad and West Darfur. In March 2007, the CNT participated alongside *janjawid* forces in the very violent attack on the villages of Tiero and Marena in Dar Sila, in which 200–400 civilians and militiamen were killed.⁵³ In December 2007, after the failure of the Tripoli agreement (to which the CNT was a party), Al-Jineidi resumed talks directly with the Chadian regime and finally switched allegiance, bringing some 2,000 men with him.

Front populaire pour la renaissance nationale (Popular Front for National Rebirth) or FPRN. Founded in 2001 by Adoum Yacoub, this group of Ouaddaïan (like Adoum Yacoub) and Masalit combatants was first based in West Darfur. When the war in Darfur began in 2003, ethnic solidarity with non-Arab civilians made the FPRN switch from rebelling against N'Djamena to fighting the Sudanese Army and the *janjawid* alongside the newborn SLA. For these reasons, and because of Yacoub's friendship with the late John Garang, the FPRN did not benefit from Sudanese support until the end of 2007 at least. Not party to the Tripoli agreement, it operates mostly in the area of Tiss, on the border between Chad, Sudan, and the CAR.⁵⁴

Front pour la salut de la république (Front for the Salvation of the Republic) or FSR. Led by Ahmat Hassaballah Soubiane, a Chadian Arab from the Mahamid branch and a former minister of Déby. A recently founded group, it was not party to the Tripoli agreement and is not strongly supported by Khartoum. At the end of 2007, the FSR united with the FPRN. Together, the two groups comprise some 500 men.

tions. UN Security Council Resolution 1778 of 25 September 2007 created the UN Mission for the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), which will consist of 350 police and military liaison personnel directly under UN control and will have a mandate to contribute to the 'protection of refugees, displaced persons and civilians in danger, by facilitating the provision of humanitarian assistance in eastern

Chad and the north-eastern Central African Republic and by creating favourable conditions for the reconstruction and economic and social development of those areas'.⁵⁵ It will be focused primarily on the security of refugees and internally displaced people (IDP) camps.

But the most important peacekeeping operation will be the European Union Force (EUFOR) Chad/CAR, expected to include about 3,700 troops

tasked with taking 'all necessary measures, within its capabilities and its area of operation in eastern Chad and the north-eastern Central African Republic to protect civilians, facilitate delivery of humanitarian aid, and ensure the safety of UN personnel'.⁵⁶ 'All necessary measures' is widely interpreted as including engaging armed groups directly. Deployment was delayed over the question of troop contributions



and financial commitments for transport, aircraft, and medical resources but the first EUFOR Italian and Spanish soldiers finally arrived in N'Djamena on 28 January. The rebel attacks on N'Djamena created further deployment delays. Full deployment is expected by mid-2008. Unofficial estimates put the cost of the one-year mission at EUR 500 million (USD 725 million), but it may rise much higher.⁵⁷

There are great differences of opinion within Chad regarding the peacekeeping operations. After initially requesting the force, then rejecting it during the first half of 2007, the government now hopes it will help protect the regime from destabilizing incursions from Sudan. Rebels and many civilians regard the operations as simply an extension of the 1,200-strong French force ('Opéra-

tion Epervier') on the ground since 1986, seeing any international intervention as tainted by French interests. The main Chadian rebel groups/coalitions (the RFC, UFDD, and UFDD-Fondamentale) have explicitly threatened violence against peacekeepers.⁵⁸ This threat places humanitarian staff and their beneficiaries, whom EUFOR will be protecting, in a high-risk position. The rebels reiterated their opposition to EUFOR after their defeat in N'Djamena, asking 'the other European countries [than France]' not to participate in 'an operation whose final aim is to protect Déby's regime'.⁵⁹

The perception that France is proping up Déby is one of EUFOR's primary liabilities.⁶⁰ France is contributing the bulk of the peacekeepers: by January 2008, overall contributions had

reached some 3,440 soldiers, of which 2,000 were French.⁶¹ It is also likely to make a substantial financial contribution, beyond the nearly EUR 120 million (USD 170 million) in the EU budget.⁶² To the dismay of other European countries, including the UK and Germany who have both declined to take part in the force, France is implementing its contributions in the absence of a broader comprehensive process of reform or reciprocal offers from Déby. As explained by a British diplomat, 'We do not understand why France does not ask for anything in exchange [for EUFOR], like a democratic process and a real dialogue with both official and armed oppositions.'⁶³

France's role in defending the capital in February 2008 was limited but significant. French troops fought the

rebels when they attempted to seize N'Djamena airport, which was used not only to evacuate foreign citizens but also to provide a launch pad for Déby's helicopters. Though unconfirmed, French officers may also have coordinated the failed counterattack by Chadian Army forces against the rebels on 1 February, as one news outlet reported. Finally, Paris asked Tripoli—a recent ally after the Bulgarian nurses affair⁶⁴—to deliver Déby ammunitions, in particular for the T-55 tanks that ensured his survival in the following days.⁶⁵

Chadian rebels are not alone in challenging an expanded role for France in Chadian affairs. Anti-French sentiment is also widespread among civilians. France's reputation suffered a serious blow during the Zoe's Ark scandal of October–December 2007,⁶⁶ in which many Chadians believed that Paris was trying to shield from Chadian justice the six French citizens accused of kidnapping local children and presenting them as Darfurian orphans. The fact that on 7 February, only a few days after the attack on N'Djamena, Déby offered to pardon them—their sentence of eight years forced labour has now been converted into a prison sentence of the same length of time in France—has only aggravated this sentiment.

Finally, despite the differing mandates of MINURCAT, EUFOR, and Opération Epervier, the distinctions in the roles and responsibilities of these forces are far from clear for those on the ground. French troops in EUFOR and those of Epervier will have different uniforms, but the European peacekeepers will be stationed in the same areas as the Epervier troops in N'Djamena and Abéché, and will also benefit from Epervier aerial support. These complications bode badly for the reception of these forces.

Closing reflections

The current instability in Chad has precedents extending back as far as 1990, many of them emerging from divisive ethnic policies. Khartoum's arming of some (Arab and non-Arab) *janjawid* in Chad, and Déby's attempt to exploit local conflicts between Arabs and non-Arabs and between Beri and Tama, threaten to expand the conflict from eastern and south-eastern Chad to the rest of the country. These same ethnic divisions are largely responsible for the failure of the rebels in both Sudan and Chad to unite. Alliances are fracturing, local tensions are increasing in severity, and conflicts formerly driven by clear goals and objectives have devolved into violence for its own sake.

The current international peacekeeping solution does not address the root causes of the instability. More alarmingly, it could bring UN and EU forces into direct armed conflict with local forces, and put the lives of humanitarian workers and their civilian beneficiaries at risk. For a peace process to be reignited, a concerted and comprehensive diplomatic initiative is needed. This requires support from the international community for continued dialogue between the Chadian government and both the rebels and the official opposition. Unlike the Libyan process, future negotiations must involve the Chadian political opposition and touch on core issues relating to democratic governance. The rebels agreed several times for such inclusive negotiations before, during, and after their February attack on N'Djamena, but the Chadian president is moving even further in the other direction: after the attack, Déby's forces arrested prominent figures of the official opposition, including Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh, president of the coalition of the opposition parties, and Lol

Mahamat Choua, who was heading a committee overseeing the application of an agreement between the opposition and the government in August 2007 concerning reform of the electoral system.⁶⁷ International pressure for their release is needed.

There are other clear entry points for the international community. Applying pressure on N'Djamena to end its support of local conflicts and arming of ethnic militias, and to support targeted disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programmes for militia and rebel groups, is key. Such activities should begin with the Tama militia—many of them formerly members of the FUC—who recently made peace with the regime. They should then focus on other rebel groups who may be ready to lay down their arms. The Chadian government also needs to be pressured to end its support for Darfurian armed groups.

The perception of Paris as the protector of the Chadian regime militates against the possibility of a genuine dialogue between Déby and his opponents. Critical reflection on French policy could enable other European and international stakeholders to support a meaningful diplomatic process. The selection of an appropriate mediator is also essential: the UN, or more likely the AU, are institutional partners that the Chadian opposition would likely accept.

The international community can also help by providing selective development assistance, in setting up programmes that can deal with fast-changing (and in some cases politically-induced) ecological changes, and in resolving conflicts between settled and nomadic peoples and between long-established populations and newcomers. Aid that enables nomadic Arabs to maintain a way of life appropriate to their environment while minimizing their clashes with other communities could prevent future conflicts in both Chad and Darfur.

Successful diplomatic pressure on both Khartoum and the Darfur rebels to return to the negotiating table after

For a Chadian peace process to take hold, a concerted and comprehensive diplomatic initiative is needed.

successive failures would also have a positive echo effect in eastern Chad. But this alone would be insufficient to improve security. Chadian opposition groups will not unilaterally disarm without systematic changes to the democratic arena in Chad. ■

Notes

This Sudan Issue Brief was authored by Jérôme Tubiana, an independent journalist and researcher. He has carried out field research in Chad over the past 15 years, and in Darfur since 2004. His is co-author, with Victor Tanner, of Divided They Fall: The Fragmentation of Darfur's Rebel Groups, HSBA Working Paper No. 6.

- 1 UNHCR (2007).
- 2 Beri is the term used by the group itself; Zaghawa and Bideyat are the terms used by Arabic speakers.
- 3 Tubiana and Tubiana (1977); Tubiana (2006).
- 4 Lemarchand (2005), p. 121; Marchal (2007), pp. 185–86.
- 5 Tanner and Tubiana (2007), p. 20.
- 6 Tanner and Tubiana (2007), pp. 60–62.
- 7 Nevertheless, N'Djamena remained co-mediator in the Abuja negotiations until the beginning of 2006.
- 8 In the current Darfur conflict, *janjawid* refers to proxy government militias that recruit mostly from the Arab Abbala (camel herders, mostly from North and West Darfur).
- 9 Interviews with Chadian opposition leaders, Paris, January 2004.
- 10 Interviews with Chadian opposition leaders, Paris, January 2004.
- 11 They are sometimes called Front uni pour le changement démocratique (FUCD).
- 12 For an in-depth look at the PDF, see Salmon (2007).
- 13 Crucially, the JEM mobilized approximately 100 combatants on seven vehicles for the attack.
- 14 Interviews conducted with Chadian and Darfurian rebels indicate that since the 2006 N'Djamena attack Darfur rebels, in particular the JEM, have regularly clashed with Chadian rebels.
- 15 Similar accusations were levied against him by rebels and opposition parties in the two previous elections in 1996 and 2001.
- 16 Interviews with the leaders of various rebel groups in Darfur and Chad, September–October 2006 and March 2007, and telephone interview with a Chadian rebel leader, October 2007.
- 17 Interviews with the leaders of various rebel groups in Darfur and Chad, September 2006.
- 18 Tanner and Tubiana (2007), p. 55.
- 19 Interviews with rebel forces, Bahay and Kariyari, October 2006.
- 20 Interviews with Chadian IDPs and JEM rebels, Dar Sila (locations withheld), October 2006.
- 21 In July 2006, Nouri left his post as Chadian ambassador in Saudi Arabia to return to the rebellion and found the Union des Forces pour le Progrès et la Démocratie (UFPD).
- 22 Marchal (2007).
- 23 Interviews with sources close to the Chadian government, N'Djamena, March 2007 and January 2008.
- 24 UNHCR (2007a).
- 25 Interviews with Tama, Beri, and Goran civilians, N'Djamena and eastern Chad, September–October 2006 and March 2007.
- 26 See, for example, President Déby's speech in Goz Beida on 7 January 2007, available at <<http://www.presidencedutchad.org/president/Discours/allocationPRgoz.htm>>.
- 27 Tubiana (2005).
- 28 Tanner and Tubiana (2007), pp. 62–64.
- 29 Interviews with Chadian Arab politicians, N'Djamena and eastern Chad, January 2008.
- 30 Interviews with Chadian Arab traditional leaders, Dar Sila, January 2008.
- 31 Interviews with Hassan Saleh Al-Gaddam 'Al-Jineidi', N'Djamena, January 2008.
- 32 Telephone interview with a Chadian rebel chief, October 2007.
- 33 Telephone interview with a Chadian rebel chief, October 2007.
- 34 Interviews and telephone interviews with humanitarian NGOs present in eastern Chad, Paris, December 2007, and Chad, January 2008.
- 35 Hasni (2008).
- 36 Specifically the faction of its historical leader Dr Khalil Ibrahim and the recent splinter faction of Bahar Idriss Abu Garda, his former vice-president and secretary-general, now based in North Darfur on SLA–Unity territory. Interviews with JEM leaders and representatives, Chad (locations withheld), January 2008.
- 37 Interviews with JEM representatives and Chadian officials, Chad (locations withheld), January 2008.
- 38 Six hundred all in all, according to an important Chadian official. Interviews with Chadian officials, N'Djamena, January 2008.
- 39 Interviews with JEM representatives, Chad (locations withheld), January 2008, and telephone interviews with humanitarian NGOs present in West Darfur and eastern Chad.
- 40 Telephone interview with a Chadian rebel leader, February 2008.
- 41 Amnesty International (2006) and Small Arms Survey (2007), p. 4.
- 42 Correau (2007).
- 43 These weapons were exhibited by the regime after the battle.
- 44 Transcribed interviews with FUC prisoners by the Chadian police, file consulted by the author.
- 45 Transcribed interviews with FUC prisoners by the Chadian police, file consulted by the author.
- 46 Interview with a source close to Idriss Déby, N'Djamena, September 2006.
- 47 Correau (2007).
- 48 Correau (2007).
- 49 UN (2006).
- 50 Abdallah Abbakar Bashir, a Sudanese Zaghawa Wogi, was the first chief of staff of the SLA until his death in December 2004.
- 51 Interview with a rebel leader from the G19, rebel area of North Darfur, March 2007. See also Tanner and Tubiana (2007), p. 42.
- 52 See Small Arms Survey (2006).
- 53 Interviews with eyewitnesses, Dar Sila (locations withheld), January 2008. Hassan Al-Jineidi strongly denies the involvement of his troops. Interviews with Hassan Al-Jineidi, N'Djamena, January 2008.
- 54 Interview with Adoum Yacoub (location withheld), November 2007.
- 55 UNSC (2007), Para 1.
- 56 UNSC (2007), Para 6a.
- 57 Seibert (2007), p. 38.
- 58 CNT, RFC, UFDD, and UFDD–Fondamentale (2007). The FSR did the same in a separate communiqué.
- 59 RFC, UFDD, and UFDD–Fondamentale (2008).
- 60 Ismail and Prendergast (2007).
- 61 IRIN (2008). An independent evaluation published by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has concluded that EUFOR is undersized for the scope of its mission, and that the force should 'range between 5,000–12,500 troops, but more likely closer to the latter than the former' (Seibert, 2007, p. 32).
- 62 See <[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/EDIS-7BAQGC/\\$File/Full_Report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/EDIS-7BAQGC/$File/Full_Report.pdf)>.
- 63 Interview with a British diplomat, November 2007.
- 64 In late July 2007, France was involved in negotiations that led to the release of five medics and a Palestinian doctor accused of infecting Libyan children with HIV. Libya emerged with a deal allowing them to obtain military vehicles, ships, air defence, and space systems (Samuel, 2007).
- 65 D'Ersu and Ploquin (2008).
- 66 Reuters (2007).
- 67 Amnesty International (2008).

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The Sudan Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA) is a three-year research programme (2005–08) administered by the Small Arms Survey.

It has been developed in cooperation with the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the UN Mission in Sudan, the UN Development Programme, and a wide array of international and Sudanese NGO partners. Through the active generation and dissemination of timely empirical research, the HSBA project works to support disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), security sector reform (SSR), and arms control interventions to promote security. The assessment is being carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of regional, security, and public health specialists. It reviews the spatial distribution of armed violence throughout Sudan and offers policy-relevant advice to redress insecurity.

Sudan Issue Briefs are designed to provide periodic snapshots of baseline information. Future briefs will focus on a variety of issues, including the demilitarization of the Other Armed Groups (OAGs), the Joint Integrated Units (JIUs), and local security arrangements governing the use of small arms. The HSBA also generates a series of timely and user-friendly working papers in English and Arabic, available at www.smallarmssurvey.org/sudan.

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