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Stabilizing Chad: Security, Governance and Development Challenges

Summary

- On May 20, 2010, USIP and the International Peace Institute brought together some of Chad's national, regional and international stakeholders to discuss Chad's democratization, the regional security dynamics and the management of the oil sector.
- Electoral reform, as called for in Chad's 2007 "August 13 Political Agreement," has been poorly implemented, endangering the credibility of the upcoming February legislative elections.
- Improvements in regional security prompted the Chadian government to request the departure of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), which was charged with securing and providing humanitarian relief along the Chad-Central African Republic border. However, many question if Chadian forces can fill the security gap.
- Oil exports have significantly increased Chad's budget, with most of these gains being invested in the military. The improved regional security provides an opportunity to invest in sectors such as education, health care, and development, which have been neglected.

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Chad's Internal Dynamics Must be Addressed

Understanding the dynamics of internal political strife and division in Chad have been under-analyzed by policy makers, who concentrate mainly on Chad's relationship with Sudan. Indeed, the February 2011 legislative elections, the withdrawal the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), and Chad's urgent development challenges, underscore the need for a focus on Chad. Moreover, while the Darfur connection points to Chad's external dynamics, the conflict in Darfur has impacted Chad's internal politics beyond the immediate humanitarian crisis at the border, with consequences for civil society and basic liberties.

In light of these issues, USIP and the International Peace Institute (IPI) organized a meeting of representatives of Chadian civil society and the diaspora; representatives from the governments of Chad, Sudan, and South Sudan; and nongovernmental organizations that work on Chad in Washington, D.C. on May 20, 2010.¹ The conference examined Chad's democratization process, the regional security dynamics, and its management of the oil sector. This Peace Brief summarizes the main points discussed at the conference, which operated under Chatham House rules.

Chad's Democracy: Setbacks and Opposition

Since Chad's 1993 National Sovereign Conference, which served as the catalyst for Chad's democratic transition led by President Idriss Déby, there has been a steady rollback and disregard for democratic principles. Most significantly, the 2005 constitutional referendum lifted the two-term and 70-year age limits for presidential contenders, granting Déby the opportunity to run for (and win) a third term.

The Déby regime has routinely faced opposition. According to one conference participant, Déby's Zaghawa heritage compelled other ethnic groups to resent that the small Zaghawa minority controlled the country's natural resources and wealth. Indeed, in 2004 and 2005, there were many army desertions, and the United Front for Change (FUC)—a group of eight armed movements—formed in 2005. Another armed group, the Rally of the Forces for Change, formed in 2007. At the same time, other armed opposition groups also organized to protest the lack of development in Chad and against Déby's pursuit of a third term. The Darfur conflict, which, in part, pits Sudanese Zaghawa against the Sudanese government, also motivated political opposition in Chad; Chadian Zaghawa criticized Déby's slow response to defending fellow Zaghawa in the Darfur conflict.

The many peace accords between the government and both armed and unarmed opposition movements have largely failed. The latest effort, regarded by donors as a viable framework for peace, was the 2007 "August 13 Political Agreement," which emphasizes the need for electoral reform, as well as an independent electoral commission, a permanent voters' bureau, a revised census, and the demilitarization of governance. Some implementation has occurred, but it has been insufficient, as noted at the conference, and will not resolve the political crisis. In particular, there are questions about the true independence of the electoral commission, the validity of the census, and the funding available for the permanent voters' bureau. Moreover, the demilitarization and depoliticization of the administration's governing institutions—meant to remove the influence of the Déby administration on the provision of basic goods and services—has not been started.

The Darfur Conflict: Impact on Internal Politics

The escalation of the Darfur conflict threatened the consolidation of democracy in Chad. As noted above, Déby was heavily criticized by other Zaghawa for his response to the crisis in Darfur, which commenced in 2003. Mindful of the important role Sudan played in his successful coup d'état against Hissène Habré in 1990, Déby was reluctant to take a stand. But, as one conference participant noted, his silence drove the formation of armed opposition groups and the hosting of Darfur rebels by local communities in Chad. By 2005, internal pressure pushed Déby to support the Darfur rebels. In response, Sudan supported anti-Déby armed groups. In fact, Sudan was behind FUC's nearly successful attempts to oust Déby in April 2006 and February 2008.² In retaliation for the April 2006 attack, Chad supported the May 2008 attack in Omdurman by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) against the Sudanese government.

The Darfur conflict also had consequences for press freedom in Chad. A number of journalists were jailed, harassed or penalized for chronicling the Darfur conflict and the anger felt by many Zaghawa loyalists. As one participant noted, the space for media became increasingly restrictive, most notably in 2008, when the government enacted Decree No. 5, which increased penalties nearly ten-fold on a number of existing infringements and introduced new ones. Chadians could be jailed or fined for insulting the president or foreign dignitaries or inciting ethnic animosity. These measures were in place until June 2010, when Decree No. 5 failed to receive sufficient support in the legislature to be enacted into law, coinciding with the Chad-Sudan rapprochement.

The Chad–Sudan Rapprochement

Since the January 15, 2010, “N’Djamena Accord,” in which Chad and Sudan pledged to cease support of each other’s rebel groups, they have had a less contentious relationship. So far this year, a number of high-level visits, as well as some significant symbolic gestures have occurred: On February 8 and May 26, Déby visited Khartoum; on May 19, Chad turned away JEM founder, Khalil Ibrahim, upon arrival in N’Djamena; and on July 21, Chad welcomed Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir to N’Djamena, defying the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC), which would have required the Chadian authorities to arrest him. Unlike past agreements, this one seems to be holding. According to some, its sustainability is due to the high cost of waging the proxy wars, as well as the heavy pressure by the international community to end the Darfur conflict. The ICC’s arrest warrant for Bashir, which involves war crimes in Darfur, has also served as a warning to Déby.

Chad has used the rapprochement and the decreased insecurity along the Chad-Sudan border to justify the call to withdraw MINURCAT. Chad also claims that MINURCAT has not fulfilled its mission to improve the security infrastructure and provide protection to civilians, promote and monitor human rights and the rule of law, and support regional peace efforts.³ MINURCAT had been deployed in eastern Chad and northeastern Central African Republic since March 2009, taking over the existing European Force, EUFOR, which had deployed since 2007. Failing to dissuade the Chadian authorities, the U.N. developed a schedule for withdrawing the military component of MINURCAT. In October 2010, MINURCAT military personnel fell from 3,300 to 1,900; all MINURCAT military personnel will depart by December 31, 2010.⁴

The international community worries about the withdrawal of MINURCAT. In particular, it is not clear that the Chadian armed services can adequately provide security to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and communities along the border. As one conference participant explained, much of the daily violence is not due to rebel groups, but generalized banditry. Of particular significance is the *Détachement Intégré de Sécurité* (DIS), created and trained by MINURCAT in 2009 to respond to the indigenous communities’ security needs. Without MINURCAT, many question the capacity of the Chadian security services to continue with the DIS’ work. MINURCAT also provides essential civilian services, such as through the Judicial Advisory Unit, which helped to train the DIS on proper investigation techniques, reporting procedures, and understanding the DIS’ relationship to other security institutions.

Oil’s Unfulfilled Potential

The 665-mile Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline stretches from southern Chad to the Atlantic Ocean in Cameroon. Oil production began in 2004, spearheaded by the World Bank’s support for building the pipeline. According to data of one participant, oil revenues have increased the state’s budget significantly. While Chad had a budget of \$400,000 in 2004, by 2009, the country’s budget rose to \$20,000,000. Originally projected to generate \$2 billion over the next 25 to 30 years, in the first six years of the project, oil revenues have already amounted to nearly \$540 million.

The World Bank required the Chadian government to invest the oil revenues in development projects and priorities. To this end, the 1999 Petroleum Revenue Management Law directed 80 percent of the oil revenues to health, education and rural development and 5 percent to the oil producing regions.⁵ Additionally, a Future Generations Fund (FGF) and an oil resources management and monitoring college were created.⁶ Collectively, these innovative laws and institutions seemed to indicate that Chad may avoid the resource curse and that the government was committed to managing the oil revenues well.⁷

ABOUT THIS BRIEF

This Peace Brief summarizes some of the achievements and challenges facing Chad's democratization, peacebuilding, and development.

However, with Chad's amendment of the Petroleum Revenue Management Law in 2006, resulting in the Bank's withdrawal from the project, the increased investment in the priority areas did not materialize. Much of the revenues for oil were invested in the military and the oil producing regions remain underdeveloped.⁸ The new law expanded the priority areas to include territorial administration and security, removed the FGF, and stipulated that the priority sectors could be changed by presidential decree.⁹ The Chadian government argued that the threats from internal armed opposition groups and the Darfur conflict warranted these changes.¹⁰ Accordingly, data presented at the conference showed that Chad's military expenditures increased from 27 billion Central African Franc (CFA) in 2004 to 147 billion CFA in 2009, while the priority sectors have ranged from 6.5 billion CFA in 2009 to 47 billion CFA in 2006.

With the end of the proxy war between Chad and Sudan and the decrease in rebel activity in the east, the Chadian government claimed that it would be in a position to begin to re-invest in the priority areas. It remains to be seen if indeed it will shift its focus.

Conclusions

The end of the proxy war between Chad and Sudan offers opportunities to move democracy and development forward in Chad. Most concretely, the absence of war frees up revenues for the oil pipeline, which were directed to the military for development. However, the present security situation on the border can only remain stable if Chadian forces are able to adequately fill MINURCAT's role. Equally important, the accepted framework for ending Chad's political crisis—the "August 13 Agreement"—should be carefully examined. While some provisions have been realized, they have been implemented in such an insufficient manner that they will not bestow credibility on the February legislative elections or address the issues undermining Chad's democratic process.

Endotes

1. This was a follow up to an October 2008 conference, organized in collaboration with Caring for Kaela (Sarah Bessell and Kelly Campbell. "Toward Resolving Chad's Interlocking Conflicts." USIP Peace Brief, October 2008 (http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace_briefings/2008/1215_chad_conflicts.html).
2. International Crisis Group, "Chad: A New Conflict Resolution Framework," Africa Report No. 144, September 24, 2008, p. 15.
3. United Nations Mission to the Central African Republic and Chad, "Mandate." (<http://minurcat.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=859>).
4. U.N. Security Council, Resolution 1923, May 25, 2010, p. 4.
5. International Crisis Group, September 24, 2008, p. 4.
6. World Bank. "World Bank Suspends Disbursements to Chad." Press Release No:2006/232/AFR, January 6, 2006 (<http://go.worldbank.org/Q4GUGO07J0>).
7. International Crisis Group, September 24, 2008, p. 4.
8. Ibid.
9. World Bank, January 6, 2006 (<http://go.worldbank.org/Q4GUGO07J0>).
10. Lydia Polgreen. "World Bank Ends Effort to Help Chad Ease Poverty," *The New York Times*, September 10, 2008 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/11/world/africa/11chad.html>).



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