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**REGIME SECURITY IN CHAD.
HOW THE WESTERN WAR ON TERROR SAVED
THE CHADIAN DICTATORIAL REGIME**

Abstract:

This article discusses how the western war on terror contributed to save the president Déby and his regime in Chad. After a brief look at central security issues in Chad around the 2008 coup d'Etat attempt, the article gives a particular focus to the last few years. The article describes and discusses how President Déby is manoeuvring in the war-against-terror landscape in the Sahel region. International military cooperation and participation is discussed in relation both to fighting terror and to regime survival. Towards the end, the article looks at more domestic safety oriented approaches to regime survival.

Keywords:

Chad, Sahel, Boko Haram, Déby, fight against terror

Introduction

The US department of State launched an updated *Travel advisory* on 10 January 2018 telling US citizens that Chad is a high-risk country and: “We want you to know the danger of travelling to high-risk places and to strongly consider not going to them at all. Travelling to high-risk locations puts your life, and possibly the lives of others, in jeopardy. Travelling to high-risk areas puts you at risk for kidnapping and hostage taking-“². The agency further stated that: “Reconsider travel to Chad due to crime, terrorism, and minefields. Violent crimes [...] have been reported. Terrorists may attack with little or no warning, targeting foreigners, local security forces, and civilians. They can

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² *Travel to High-Risk Areas*, U.S. Department of State – Bureau of Consular Affairs, <<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations/high-risk-travelers.html>> (30.01.2018).

easily cross borders, including Lake Chad region, and borders may close without notice [...]”³.

Half a year earlier, on 24 September 2017, the Trump administration put Chad on the list of non-welcoming citizens. Heavily criticized by the African Union, Chadian authorities and many international embassies, apparently including the US embassy in N’Djamena, the US Homeland Security administration did not repeal the travel ban for Chadian nationals⁴. Hilary Matfess at Stratfor argues that “the travel ban threatens to erode the goodwill built up between Chad and the United States” built up during the last years⁵. Just a few weeks after the travel ban for Chadian citizens, on October 16, the US inaugurated their brand new embassy in Ndjamena, covering a total of 4500 m² within a 12 acre heavily fenced and protected plot close to the former National Assembly, *Palais du 15 Janvier*.

Why this fear and mistrust combined with massive interest? Chad is run by a democratic dictator in power since December 1990⁶. President Déby is famous for his firm grip over the political opposition in Chad, using his various polices and military forces to interrupt political rallies and intimidation his adversaries. The regime is well known for its human rights abuses. Frequently, agents from the *Agence Nationale de Sécurité* (ANS), Chad’s secret police and intelligence, arrests individuals of the political opposition without valid reasons⁷. In their 2016 Human Rights report the US reports that “human rights abuses included arbitrary killings by security forces and use of torture; politically motivated disappearances; arbitrary arrest and detention, incommunicado detention, and lengthy pre-trial detention; denial of fair public trial; and executive influence on the judiciary”⁸. In fact, the bureaucracy functions more on relationships than on rule of law, and merits⁹. At the same time, the US has invested heavily in the oil sector in the country and is the most

³ *Chad Travel Advisory*, U.S. Department of State – Bureau of Consular Affairs, <<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/chad-travel-advisory.html>> (30.01.2018).

⁴ At the time of writing the ban is still valid.

⁵ H. Matfess, *Chad's Inclusion in the 'travel ban' Jeopardizes Stability in the Sahel*, Stratfor.com, <<https://worldview.stratfor.com/horizons/fellows/hilary-matfess/11122017-chad-s-inclusion-travel-ban-jeopardizes-stability-sahel>> (30.01.2018).

⁶ K. F. Hansen, *A democratic dictator's success. How Chad's President Deby defeated the military opposition in three years (2008–2011)*, “Journal of Contemporary African Studies”, Vol. 31, No. 4(2013), pp. 583-599.

⁷ See e.g. *Amnesty International Report Chad 2017/2018*, <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/chad/report-chad/>> (30.01.2018).

⁸ *Chad 2016 Human Rights Report*, <<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265450.pdf>> (30.01.2018).

⁹ H. Dickow, *Autoritäre Strukturen im Tshad: macht aus Sicht dere, die sie nicht haben*, “Sociologus”, No. 64(1), 2014, pp. 53-78.

important buyer of oil from Chad¹⁰. In addition, since 11th of September 2001, Chad has been a trusted American ally in the fight against terror. Especially after Khadafy was murdered, Déby has come to play an even more important role in the fight against terror, or Muslim fundamentalism, in the Sahel¹¹. This explains broadly the US's fear and mistrust together with massive interest in Chad.

This article discusses how the western war on terror contributed to save president Déby and his regime in Chad. After a brief look at central security issues in Chad around the 2008 coup d'Etat attempt, the article gives a particular focus to the last few years. How is President Déby manoeuvring in the war-against-terror landscape in the Sahel region? First we look at the increased militarised security put up by the regime after 2008 before we describe and analyze Chad's participation in major military operations in the region. Towards the end we catch a glance of some domestic safety oriented approaches to the regime's survival while indicating some treats President Déby faces.

Fieldwork carried out by the author in Ndjamena in May 2017 and in January/February 2018 informs this article. In addition, the author has read, on a weekly basis since 2008, a large number of blogs and Facebook postings about politics and societal developments in Chad. The article also make good use of the growing, both quantitatively and qualitatively, number of academic texts and advocacy reports concerning politics and security in Chad since 2008.

Securitisation of politics; the February 2008 coup attempt and beyond

Surrounded by upheavals in Libya, warring factions in Darfur, insurgents in the Central African Republic and horrors committed by Boko Haram in Northern Cameroun and Northern Nigeria, Chad may seem like a stable country in a troubled region. In fact, Idriss Déby Itno, president in the country since December 1990, has been re-elected six times, last in April 2016, making some sort of stability. The stability of the president is however, not echoed in the ministries and top governmental positions. In fact, politics in Chad is personalized with the extended family of the president, including his numerous wives, in-laws and children, filling many important public functions and the president rule largely by decree. At the will of the president ministers, top

¹⁰ A. Behrends, *The Devil's Money. A Multi-level Approach to Acceleration and Turbulence in Oil-Producing Southern Chad*, "Social Analysis", No. 61(3), 2017, pp. 57-73; K. F. Hansen, *Oil for Education in Chad*, [in:], *Savoir et Corruption*, L. Holtedahl, R. Djesa (eds.), Paris-Karthala 2017, pp. 59-72; S. Pegg, *Can Policy Intervention Beat the Resource Curse?*, "African Affairs", No. 105(418), 2005, pp. 1-25.

¹¹ M. Debos, N. Powell, *L'autre pays des "guerres sans fins": une histoire de la France militaire au Tchad (1960-2016)*, "Les Temps Modernes", No. (693), 2017, pp. 1-46; K. F. Hansen, *Political and Economic Effects of Qaddafi's Death on Chad*, The Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI), 30.12.2013.

ranking governors, down to sub-prefects, and even university directors are nominated or “released from their function”. Déby has signed more than 2000 presidential decrees annually the last years involving high personnel turnover in governance, bureaucracies and public offices. The so-called “decretées” within bureaucracy, those nominated by decree, are formally loyal to the president and it is difficult for members of civil opposition to gain trustworthy positions within the state system. How, then, does the regime deal with militarised opposition?

In February 2008 Chad’s President Idriss Deby Itno was very close to be ousted by three conjoint rebel movements. The main reason why the coup was not successful was that the leaders of the two most important rebel movements, the Rassemblement des Forces pour le Changement (RFC) led by Timane Erdimi and the Union des Forces pour la Démocratie et le Développement (UFDD) headed by (former) General Nouri, could not agree over who should become Chad’s next president.

General Nouri, a goran former minister and ambassador for Chad, was militarily the strongest. Timan Erdimi, a zaghawa formerly trusted nephew of President Deby, would not live up to the aspirations of his own zaghawa combatants if he gave the power to Nouri. French military asked for a decision. Erdimi and Nouri continued discussing. Without an agreement among the two leaders of the “movement politico-militaire”, as rebel movements are normally called in Chad despite the fact that they have never claimed to support any political ideology nor any other cause except that they always want to get rid of state corruption, despotic governance and mismanagement of the state’s resources, France decided to sustain president Deby militarily. The rebellion was crushed over the first weekend of February 2008¹².

Some of the rebel leaders negotiated positions within Déby’s regime, others returned to Sudan to prepare for new coups. After another unsuccessful attempt to take power later in 2008, Khartoum lost trust in Nouri and Erdimi was selected to lead a new union of rebels, “*Union des forces de la résistance tchadienne*” (UFR) on 24 January 2009. However, political rapprochement between Chad’s Déby and Sudan’s El-Bashir in the course of 2009, ending with a signed and lasting peace agreement on 15 January 2010, stopped Sudanese support for UFR and Erdimi who, together with other Chadian rebel leaders until then supported by Khartoum, were now expelled from Sudan. Nouri, Erdimi and other military rebels installed themselves in Qatar on the invitation

¹² M. Debos, *Living by the gun in Chad*, London 2016; K. F. Hansen, *A democratic dictator’s success...*; A. Koulamallah, *La bataille de N’Djamena*. Paris 2014; J. Tubiana, M. Debos, *Déby’s Chad. Political Manipulation at Home, Military Intervention Abroad, Challenging Times Ahead*, “Peaceworks”, No. 136, 2017.

of the regime¹³. For ten years now, Nouri and Erdimi and their collaborators and/or politico-military competitors have prepared another coup, just waiting for the perfect timing. Yet, as long as both the US and France support President Déby, there will never be a perfect timing.

At the time of writing, both Erdimi and Nouri are believed to train troops, or rather armed civilians, in Southern Libya/North-Eastern Chad. In addition, Mahamat Mahdi Ali, a 53 year-old-always-rebel-leader, heads the 1500 strong *Front pour l'Alternance et la Concorde au Tchad* (FACT) which trains in about the same region. The Islamic State, apparently, backs Chadian rebel movements with money and weapons. Believing that Qatar also funds the rebels, on 23 August 2017 President Déby ordered the Qatari embassy in N'Djamena to close down and staff to leave Chad within ten days. However, in February 2018, the diplomatic ties were restored.

Re-arming Chad

After the close-to-successful Coup in February 2008, President Déby decided to re-arm Chad. Using the massive amounts of money poured into the state coffers due to the high oil price at the time, Chad spend 773\$ million (all sums here in constant \$ in 2014 value) on military equipment in 2008. Three years earlier, in 2005, military spending in Chad was only 10% of the 2008 spending, 77\$ million. After 2008, Chad's military budgets are always high, both compared to earlier budgets and compared to Chad's GNI, while never reaching the 2008 spending¹⁴.

In addition to increase substantially the military budget, Déby has re-organised the security apparatus in Chad. When he came to power in the successful coup d'Etat in December 1990, his rebel group, MPS, contained mostly young zaghawa fighters from villages in Eastern Chad or North-Western Sudan. Today many of them have retired or opted for a civilian life. The security apparatus now is professionalised and divided and Chad's military is considered one of the best in Africa¹⁵. The National Army of Chad (ANT) consists of some 15.000-25.000 troops¹⁶. An even more important part of the security apparatus is the *Direction Générale des Services de Sécurité des Institutions de l'Etat* (DGSSIE), until 2005 known as the Republican Guard. The DGSSIE receives its budget directly from the president himself and reports

¹³ K. F. Hansen, *A democratic dictator's success...*; R. Marchal, *An emerging military power in central Africa? Chad under Idriss Déby*, "Societes Politiques Comparees", No. 40, 2016, pp. 1-20.

¹⁴ *Military expenditure by country*, <<https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/Milex-constant-USD.pdf>> (30.01.2018).

¹⁵ C. Griffin, *Operation Barkhane and Boko Haram: French Counterterrorism and Military Cooperation in the Sahel*, "Small Wars & Insurgencies", No. 27(5), 2016, pp. 896-913.

¹⁶ This section draws heavily on J. Tubiana, M. Debos, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-15.

directly to the president. Its troops are as numerous as the regular army, the ANT, but is better equipped, better trained and better paid. This army is characterized by a US Air Force employee as one of the “best performers in countering terrorism and violent extremist organizations (VEOs) in Africa”¹⁷. In N’Djamena ordinary people seems to have a hate/love attitude towards their soldiers. They fear the soldiers since they are brutal and cruel and the regime may use the soldiers against them, but they are proud of them as well because the Chadian soldiers have a reputation of not fearing anything and never give up let alone surrender¹⁸. That is may be why Roland Marchal claims “Chadian military are more warriors than soldiers [...]. They obey their leaders, not always the officers”¹⁹.

President Déby is certainly important for US anti-terror initiatives. According to Burgess, Déby “has been doing what is necessary to maintain regime stability and attack external and internal adversaries that threaten his hold on power”²⁰. At least half of the troops and most of the leaders in the DGSSIE are ethnic zaghawas from president Déby’s own sub-clan beri and thus supposedly 100% loyal to him²¹. In addition, one of Déby’s sons, Mahamat Kaka, commands the DGSSIE, making an internal mutiny against Déby implausible.

To complement these two different structures, well-equipped and well-trained 3.000-4.000 men strong National Nomadic Guard (GNT) is also directly under the president’s control, and headed by one of his cousins²², Mahamat Saleh Brahim. The GNT takes part in international peacekeeping operations, as do the DGSSIE, gaining both experience and training compared to the regular army the ANT. A 5.000-strong gendarmerie and a police force of some 10.000, unarmed due to the president’s lack of trust in their degree of loyalty, supplements the security apparatus in Chad²³.

A secret police, the *Agence Nationale de Sécurité* (ANS), makes the security apparatus complete. The ANS functions also as an intelligence together with the regular polices intelligence services (les RG, renseignements généraux) and a newly established intelligence called B2 (Bureau numéro 2).

¹⁷ S. F. Burgess, *UN and AU counterterrorism norm acceptance: Comparative security policies of Uganda and Chad*, “Comparative Strategy”, No. 35(4), 2016, p. 316.

¹⁸ Numerous conversations in N’Djamena, May 2017, January/February 2018.

¹⁹ R. Marchal, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

²⁰ S. F. Burgess, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

²¹ N. Powell, *Battling Instability? The Recurring Logic of French Military Interventions in Africa*, “African Security”, 2016, p. 19.

²² *TCHAD: Le Népotisme et le clientélisme érigé en mode de gouvernance au Tchad*, <<http://www.letchadanthropus-tribune.com/tchad-le-nepotisme-et-le-clientelisme-erige-en-mode-de-gouvernance-au-tchad/>> (30.01.2018).

²³ J. Tubiana, M. Debos, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-15.

Participation in international military operations

In addition to re-arm and restructure the security apparatus, President Déby has strengthened his more or less private regime by engaging in various international militarised security arrangements. Déby gains global recognition by taking part in UN organised peacekeeping missions and regional military operations to fight terror. Some include active participation from parts of the Chadian army (G5 Sahel, MNJTF, MINUSMA) while others implies especially political deals concerning militarised security including armament and training (AFRICOM, Operation *Barkhane*). I will here look briefly into these engagements analysing them in relation to the fight against terror and regime survival in Chad.

G5 Sahel

Five Sahelian countries, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, regrouped in February 2014 to form the G5 Sahel, a mean to increase development and trade as well as combat Islamic insurgents and get hold of trans-border smuggling in the aftermath of the fall of Colonel Khadafy in October 2011. The establishment of the G5 Sahel was instrumental in Chad's acquiring a more central position in global and regional initiatives in the Sahel security architecture after being previously somewhat sidelined. For example, Chad had been excluded from the EU Sahel initiatives (because the EU prioritised Mauritania, Mali and Niger), and from the regional Joint Military Staff Committee of the Sahel Region (which included only Algeria, Mauritania, Mali and Niger).

Supported politically and to a lesser degree financially by the African Union, the G5 Sahel has become an important regional security factor²⁴. Lack of funding has numerous times post-phoned the G5 Sahel November 2015 decision to create its own standing counter terror force. However, in December 2017, Saudi Arabia pledged \$100 million and the US pledged \$60 million to support the creation of a 5000 strong force. Together with financial support from others, most importantly the EU, the AU and France, the planned force has, as of end February 2018, a pledged budget of some 400 \$ million. An estimated 500\$ million is necessary for the first year of operation.

The active membership in the G5 Sahel gives president Déby a global stage to express his security concerns in addition to external funding to pay his specially selected troops.

²⁴ N. Desgrais, *La Force Conjointe du G5 Sahel (FC-G5S), Ou l'émergence d'une architecture de défense collective propre au Sahel*, <https://www.csfrs.fr/sites/default/files/nicolas_desgrais_v2.pdf> (30.01.2018).

Multinational Joint Taskforce – MNJTF

Created in Nigeria in 2014 to fight Boko Haram in Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad, Chad sent early January 2015, 1.500-2.000 troops supported by 400 military vehicles and a few combat helicopters to the *Multinational Joint Taskforce* in northern Cameroon²⁵. On 17 January 2015, the AU authorised the transfer of the headquarters of the 8,700-strong force from Northern Nigeria to N'Djamena and on 6 March the same year, approved an increase of up to 10.000 troops.

Prior to these decisions, no attacks by Boko Haram had materialized on Chadian territory. However, during the course of 2015, numerous attacks with significant fatalities took place in Chad. The most severe were two simultaneous attacks on 15 June 2015 in N'Djamena, when assaults on a police station and a police school killed 38 and wounded around 100. A month later, on 11 July, a male Boko Haram suicide bomber dressed as a woman, killed 15 and wounded around 80 people at the entrance of “Le Grand Marché” in N'Djamena. These incidents made a good excuse for the Chadian regime to increase security, searching at random people and places, and imposing state of emergency in parts of the country. Additionally, strong police and military surveillance have proved effective to stop attacks by Boko Haram on Chadian territory. Indeed, no deadly incident resulting from terror attacks took place on the Chadian territory during the year.

The military contribution to peace in the Sahel is costly for Chad. An estimated 10 – 16,5 \$ million per month is used only to combat Boko Haram²⁶. For the time being, no international donor has taken up Chad's bill for fighting Boko Haram. President Déby uses all occasions to remind France, the EU, the US and others that Chad is impoverished after the fall in the oil price and as Boko Haram is posing a global threat to security, it is unfair that Chad should bear the costs²⁷. Still, the fight against Boko Haram gives Déby's regime both international acclaim and excuses to tighten the control over its populace.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)

Early 2013, the Malian state asked for international support against Islamic militias approaching the capital and threatening to take over the state. France deployed rapidly but needed assistance. Déby quickly sent 2.250 of his troops to Mali where they swiftly gained international acclaim for their brave

²⁵ J. Tubiana, M. Debos, *op. cit.*; *Le Tchad menace de retirer ses troupes des opérations de la Minusma et du G5 Sahel*, <<http://www.jeuneafrique.com/451131/politique/tchad-menace-de-retirer-troupes-operations-de-minusma-g5-sahel/>> (30.01.2018).

²⁶ J. Tubiana, M. Debos, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

²⁷ See *Le Tchad menace...*

operational courage against the Islamist insurgents²⁸. The UN Security Council passed resolution 2100 on 25 April 2013 allowing the establishment of a stabilising force to support the political transition in Mali²⁹. Troops from France and Chad made up the most important contingents in the military force from the very beginning. Rewarded for Chad's important role in Mali, former Chadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mahamat Saleh Annadif, assumed the leadership of the 11.000 troops string MINUSMA operations from January 2016. By the end of 2016, some 1.550 Chadian troops participated in the UN security forces MINUSMA³⁰.

The UN peacekeeping mission in Mali, MINUSMA, has become one of the most dangerous peace operations in the Organization's history. From 2013 to 2017, 155 peacekeepers have lost their lives in the West African nation. Forty-seven of them were from Chad. On a UN official webpage the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, states that "We pay tribute to the Chadians who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of peace"³¹. Indeed, in 2017 Chad held one of the best-equipped and best-trained armies in Africa. One important reason for this was the practical training the troops receive in Mali.

The U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM)

After the "War on Terror" launched by the US after the terror attacks on September 11, 2001, President Déby Itno has also become a US protégé. In 2007, the United States Congress approved 500\$ million for the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) over six years to support countries involved in counterterrorism against threats of Al Qaeda operating in African Sahel countries, making it one of the most important anti-terror programs in Africa. A year later TSCTP transforms into the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM). Two of its main goals is to degrade violent extremist organizations in the Sahel and fight Boko Haram.

The US offers advice, training, intelligence and equipment to Chad's military forces. In total, Pentagon has proposed spending \$200 million this year to help train and equip the armies and security forces of North, Central and West African countries³². An important part of this training is the annual

²⁸ See e.g. J. Irish, D. Flynn, *Chad emerges as African power broker as France steps back*, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-chad/chad-emerges-as-african-power-broker-as-france-steps-back-idUSBRE94707C20130508>> (30.01.2018); *Hollande's Franco-African farewell*, <<http://www.dw.com/en/hollandes-franco-african-farewell/a-37110365>> (30.01.2018).

²⁹ *About MINUSMA*, <<https://minusma.unmissions.org/en/about-minusma>> (30.01.2018).

³⁰ *MINUSMA Personnel*, <<https://minusma.unmissions.org/en/personnel>> (30.01.2018).

³¹ *Service and Sacrifice: Chadian peacekeepers on a UN mission for peace in Mali*, <<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/01/1003031>> (30.01.2018).

³² H. Cooper, *Boko Haram and ISIS Are Collaborating More, U.S. Military Says*,

Exercise Flintlock. Both in 2015 and in 2017 this massive, three week long military exercise, including some 1300 troops from more than 20 countries, took place in Chad. Troops trained in combat patrols and practiced real-world counter-terrorism missions, supposedly aimed against Boko Haram.

Operation Barkhane

France regards Chad and Déby's regime as important to support to keep stability in a troubled region. France share intelligence with Deby's regime. In addition, N'Djamena is the home of France's *Operation Barkham*, by the end of 2017 containing some 4000 troops, 5 drones, 8 jetfighters, 17 helicopters in addition to some six hundreds logistical vehicles and armoured cars³³. *Operation Barkham* took over when *Operation Serval* in Mali and *Operation Epervier* (established 1986) in Chad merged on 1 August 2014. The goal is to protect French interests in the region as well as to contribute to combat terrorism in the Sahel. Based in the Chadian capital N'Djamena, the operation has also liaison offices with forces in Niamey (Niger) and in Gao (Mali), but also bases in the Chadian town Abeché and Faya. One should, however, not be lead to think that this French military interest in Chad is of recent date connected to fight Islamic terror in the Sahel. In fact, since 1976 France has a valid military agreement with Chad stating that France will "ensure the sovereignty of the Chadian state"³⁴. The fact that French Minister of Defence, Jean-Yves Le Drian, made four official visits to Chad in 2016, indicates the importance of Chad for French military engagements in Africa³⁵.

By their military presence and cooperation, France contributes substantially to increase the effectiveness of the Chadian army³⁶. However, some analysis focuses on the mutual military dependency between France and Chad. Powell even argues that Chad is such an important ally in the war against terror that "French security policy has become dangerously dependent on Déby's continued survival"³⁷.

The fact that Chad participates actively in the war against terror, by supporting UN military missions, AU missions and fighting actively other regional Islamic insurgents, increases seriously the Chadian troops quality and

<<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/21/world/africa/boko-haram-and-isis-are-collaborating-more-us-military-says.html>> (30.01.2018).

³³ *Opération Barkhane. Dossier de presse*, Ministère des armées, France, Paris 2017.

³⁴ K. F. Hansen, *Chad*, [in:] *Africa Yearbook. Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara in 2014*, A. Mehler, H. Melber, K. v. Walraven (Eds.), Vol. 11, Leiden 2015, p. 205.

³⁵ K. F. Hansen, *Chad*, [in:] *Africa Yearbook. Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara in 2016*, A. Mehler, H. Melber, K. v. Walraven (Eds.), Vol. 13, Leiden 2017

³⁶ C. Griffin, *op. cit.*

³⁷ N. Powell, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

effectiveness. In addition, president Déby's global legitimacy proliferates despite his rather loose legitimacy at home. This last point will be addressed in this final section.

President Déby's remarkable international standing

In most international rankings regarding corruption and human rights, Chad scores very low. In 2017, Chad ranked 180/190 on the World Bank's doing business report³⁸. Especially to start a business in Chad is both time consuming and costly and only one country in the world has a more difficult tax regime than Chad. Transparency International ranked Chad 165/180 on their corruption perception index for 2017³⁹. The overall corruption score estimates that corruption gets more and more serious every year. On the Economist's Democracy Index for 2017, Chad figures 165/167 and the least democratic in Africa⁴⁰. On a possible score from 0 to 10, Chad gains zero score on both civil liberties, electoral process and functioning of government, but better on political culture and political participation, giving Chad an overall score of 1,5.

Still, both the US, the EU including France regard Chad under Déby's regime as an important collaborator and partner in international politics and especially in the fight against terror. All French presidents, from Mitterrand, via Chirac, Sarkozy and Holland to Macron, have received Déby numerous times in Paris to discuss both military collaboration and humanitarian aid. Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel invited President Déby to Berlin in October 2016, promising Chad close to 9 million Euro in humanitarian aid. In fact, President Déby accomplished 37 international official visits during 2016, more than any other African president.

The UN General Assembly elected Chad a seat on the UN Security Council from 2015 to 2017. This was controversial in many quarters since the Déby regime had disregarded the UNSC's warrant for the arrest of Sudan's President Omar al Bashir for crimes against humanity. Déby even hosted al-Bashir in Chad in 2015. Critics asked how a state that did not respect the rulings of UNSC could become one of its ten rolling members. Most observers believe that Chad's active engagement in UN peacekeeping operations in Mali and its international collaboration in fighting terrorism probably gave the votes needed to secure its seat.

In most of Africa, President Déby also enjoys a high standing among his peers. He chaired the regional G5 Sahel group the first year after its inception. He was elected Chairman of the African Union for 2016. As a sign of respect

³⁸ *Economy Rankings*, <<http://www.doingbusiness.org/rankings>> (30.01.2018).

³⁹ *Corruption Perceptions Index 2017*, <https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017> (30.01.2018).

⁴⁰ *Democracy Index 2017*, <<http://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>> (30.01.2018).

and importance, 14 African heads of state were present in N'Djamena when Déby was sworn in as president for the sixth time, on 8 August 2016.

President Déby enjoys international goodwill and global legitimacy due to Chad's active and firm participation in fighting Islamic insurgents in the Sahel. In addition, the lack of viable political alternatives to govern Chad makes the international community reluctant to criticize president Déby as they (we) need him to keep at least one part of Central Africa quiet. The civil political opposition at home, however, is not reluctant to criticize the regime.

Internal civil opposition

While the politico-military movements are training in the border region between Chad, Sudan and Libya are awaiting the right moment to attack the regime, youngsters in urban areas are less interested in waiting. For many years civil movements, especially in N'Djamena, have used a variety of strategies to challenge president Déby and his regime; protests, public meetings; encouraging "ville morte" (dead cities), whistle-campaigns. Still, 2016 was a particularly active year. Just to give some examples. Protests against the regime started when "untouchables", sons of high-ranking civil servants and ministers, gang-raped a 17 year-old schoolgirl in February 2016. Demonstrators asked for "Justice for Zouhouira" and posters with "je suis Zouhouira" were frequent both in the streets and on Facebook. Police brutality during the demonstrations killed two.

The protests gained force as Déby prepared for his fifth presidential re-election in April 2016. When Déby launched a tough crackdown on protestors, banned demonstrations and imprisoned the initiators of the demonstrations, the international community remained silent⁴¹. Déby won his fifth presidential election on 10 April 2016 with 60% of the votes, five times more than his closest competitor Saleh Kebzabo (12,8 %). While all political opposition in Chad declared widespread fraud and described the elections as an "electoral hold-up", the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) announced the elections as "free and fair".

On 31 August 2016, the Government introduced sixteen austerity measures to reduce an important state budget deficit. The result was a boost in anti-regime protests organized both by established and newly created civil society organizations. All of them opted for the departure of president Déby and restoration of democracy by non-violent means. Yet, many Chadian urban youth who have distanced themselves from the regime see few alternatives. They protest against the regime but are, in one way or another, still in dialogue with the regime loyal power holders. If they choose to leave Chad and join the Chadian diaspora in France or elsewhere, Mirjam de Bruijn and Jonna Both

⁴¹ *Hollande's Franco-African farewell...*

argue “they become caught up in deferring to actors who reinforce the Chadian state’s legitimacy”⁴².

Conclusion

We may not see any signs of president Déby preparing his own departure. Nevertheless, we can see signs of president Déby preparing for his family when he is no longer there. In January 2017, France granted Hinda Déby, Déby’s favourite wife and Chad’s first lady, and their 5 children French nationality⁴³. Why, this sudden demand for French nationality? Rumours about President Déby’s untreatable cancer flourishes in the Chadian capital. Speculations about who would take power in the case of Déby's death rocketed in N'Djamena, without anyone being able to give a clear answer. For the time being, president Déby represents a stable spot in the midst of a troubled region. Déby has already skilfully managed to stay in power for 27 years. As long as his personal health is good enough and as long as the West needs him in the fight against terror, Déby will stay president in Chad. However, the day when either of these is no longer the case, Chad will turn into a nightmare of violent power struggles.

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⁴³ K. F. Hansen, *Chad’s President Déby was perfectly safe a year ago: Not so today...*, <<https://presidential-power.com/?p=7055>> (30.01.2018).

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