Chad

Overview

Chad, a landlocked country twice the size of Texas, has had a turbulent history marked by conflict since independence from France in 1960. The country lies in a politically unstable region, bordered by Libya, Sudan, the Central African Republic (CAR), Cameroon Niger, and Nigeria. Its diverse population includes predominantly Muslim Arab and other semi-nomadic ethnic groups in the arid north and east, and mostly agrarian groups practicing Christianity and traditional beliefs in the south. President Idriss Déby, who seized power in an armed rebellion in 1990, was reelected to a fifth term in April 2016. Chad is among the world's poorest countries, despite significant oil reserves. Instability and poor governance have hindered development.

A 2010 agreement between Chad and Sudan, which had for years engaged in a proxy war by backing rebel groups in each other's territory, has reduced conflict in Chad, but former rebel groups periodically threaten to resume their armed struggle against Déby. Without the support of Sudan or the former Qadhafi regime in Libya, the rebels' capacity to challenge the government may be limited.
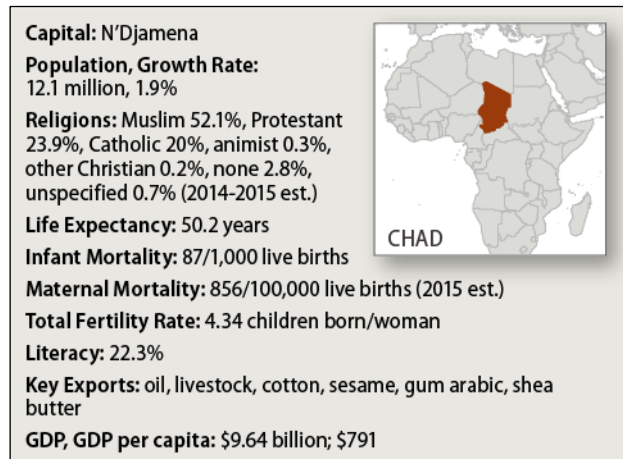
Chad has been increasingly active in regional stabilization efforts as internal threats have decreased, with support from countries like France and the United States. Since 2013, its military has played a key role in countering regional terrorist groups in Mali and Nigeria. As a result, and in line with broader trends, U.S. security assistance to Chad has risen. The French and U.S. military presence there has grown. Spillover from conflicts in Sudan and CAR (where Chadian troops participated in a regional stabilization mission in 2012-2014) pose challenges. Threats from Libya and reported links between elements of the Islamic State (IS) in Libya and IS-aligned Boko Haram in Nigeria are of concern to the Déby government and its Western partners.

On September 24, 2017, the Trump Administration listed Chad among eight counties whose citizens are indefinitely barred from receiving certain types of visas to enter the United States. A Presidential Proclamation states that while "Chad is an important and valuable counterterrorism partner," it "does not adequately share public-safety and terrorism-related information" and fails to meet at least one other significant but undefined security standard.

Political Situation

Chad has been politically unstable since 1965, when northern, largely Muslim tribes rebelled against the southern, Christian-dominated government. Years of authoritarian rule and civil war followed. President Déby, a former general, took power by force in a rebellion launched from Sudan against then-President Hissène Habré. Déby's forces, reportedly aided by Libya and Sudan, seized the capital in 1990 and forced Habré into exile. Previously,

Figure 1. Chad

Capital: N'Djamena
Population, Growth Rate: 12.1 million, 1.9%
Religions: Muslim 52.1%, Protestant 23.9%, Catholic 20%, animist 0.3%, other Christian 0.2%, none 2.8%, unspecified 0.7% (2014-2015 est.)
Life Expectancy: 50.2 years
Infant Mortality: 87/1,000 live births
Maternal Mortality: 856/100,000 live births (2015 est.)
Total Fertility Rate: 4.34 children born/woman
Literacy: 22.3%
Key Exports: oil, livestock, cotton, sesame, gum arabic, shea butter
GDP, GDP per capita: $9.64 billion; $791

Source: CIA World Factbook, IMF

Déby was Habré's military chief of staff and special security advisor during a period of violent state counterinsurgency in 1984 known as "Black September." Déby denies responsibility for massacres committed during that time, although in 2016, a special court in Senegal found Habré guilty of crimes against humanity.

Déby has pledged to create a democratic multi-party political system, but after more than 25 years in office his governance record is generally seen as poor. He and his party continue to dominate elections against a weak and fractured opposition. Parliament amended the constitution in 2005 to abolish presidential term limits. Déby's ethnic group, the Zaghawa, a non-Arab, predominantly Muslim group, constitutes a small minority of the population but its members hold many government positions.

In the 2016 elections, several opposition figures ran against Déby, and African Union (AU) election observers reported that the polls took place in "a relatively more consensual climate than the previous elections." However, the government suppressed pre-election protests and blocked internet access and text messaging on polling day. Several activists were arrested for organizing rallies and some members of the security forces allegedly disappeared, purportedly after supporting the opposition. Freedom House classifies Chad as "not free" in its *Freedom in the World* index. Déby completed a one-year term as AU president in 2016, and then-foreign minister Moussa Faki Mahamat was elected as AU Commission Chairperson in January 2017.

Security Situation

Chad's ethnic rivalries are complex and fluid, and they have been compounded by conflict over land and limited natural resources. Some opponents of President Déby, including within his own ethnic group, have periodically fomented

armed efforts to oust him. Déby has survived several coup attempts and armed uprisings since the 1990s. Economic and political pressures, along with the deterioration of security conditions in the Lake Chad area bordering Nigeria (near the capital, N'Djamena), have fueled discontent, but armed groups operating in neighboring countries appear to be the more pressing concern for state security. Chad has participated in regional efforts to respond to Islamist terrorism and other transnational security threats, but limited interoperability and mistrust undermine their effectiveness. Some analysts posit that regional actors' overly militarized and often heavy-handed response to such threats has also been counterproductive in some cases.

Boko Haram. Chad's reported interception of a weapons convoy bound from IS-Libya for Boko Haram in 2016 highlighted growing concern with terrorist linkages in the region. The then-commander of U.S. Special Operations in Africa referred to the Lake Chad area as "ground zero" in the fight against extremism in Africa. Déby deployed troops into northeast Nigeria in 2015 to stop Boko Haram's territorial advances, which threatened trade routes on which Chad relies. Chad then became a target for the group, which conducted bombings in N'Djamena in mid-2015 and periodic attacks against villages and military targets near Chad's borders with Nigeria and Niger. A Boko Haram faction reportedly operates from islands in Lake Chad's boundary area. Chad withdrew some of its troops from the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), a regional initiative to counter the group, in October, citing competing security priorities in the north.

Stability Operations in Mali. Chad has had troops in Mali since early 2013, when they deployed in support of French-led operations to oust armed Islamist groups from areas that they controlled. Today, Chad has more than 1,400 troops in the U.N. peacekeeping mission, MINUSMA, which is headed by a Chadian diplomat. MINUSMA has no mandate for offensive counterterrorism operations, despite regular attacks on peacekeepers and other armed forces in Mali. It is one of the world's most dangerous U.N. peacekeeping missions. In mid-2017, a group of five countries—including Chad—known as the G5 Sahel advanced the concept of a joint force to address terrorism and transnational crime emanating from Mali, and appealed for donor support.

Chad-Sudan Relations. Chad's warming relations with the government of Sudanese President Omar al Bashir since their 2010 rapprochement have calmed tensions in Chad, but also cause consternation among human rights advocates and some donors. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has outstanding arrest warrants for Bashir for genocide and other crimes, but Chad—an ICC state party—has declined to arrest him during official visits. Déby is married to the daughter of Musa Hilal, the former head of the Janjaweed militia, who is subject to U.N. and U.S. sanctions.

Chad-Libya Relations. In early 2017, Chad temporarily closed its border with Libya to prevent militant infiltration following the ouster of IS from Sirte in U.S.-backed operations. Déby is viewed as an ally of former Qadhafi-era General Khalifa Haftar, a rival of Libya's U.N.-recognized Government of National Accord. In August 2017, Chad severed ties with Qatar in the context of the Gulf Cooperation Council diplomatic crisis: Qatar reportedly supports Islamist factions in western Libya who have supported Chadian rebels in the past, while the UAE, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia have sided with Haftar.

Humanitarian Situation

Eighty percent of Chad's population is dependent on subsistence farming and herding, and droughts and locusts regularly hinder food production. Chronic food insecurity (currently affecting 3.5 million Chadians) has been exacerbated by large influxes of refugees and security threats that have constrained the movement of Chadian pastoralists who rely on cross-border migration. Chad hosts more than 320,000 refugees from Sudan, over 75,000 refugees from CAR, and more than 9,000 refugees from Nigeria. The Boko Haram crisis has also displaced more than 118,000 Chadians internally. Instability and violence in Libya, Nigeria, and CAR have led over 177,000 Chadians to return home, further straining already limited resources. Refugee inflows have increased tensions linked to contests over local resources. The U.N. maintains refugee camps in eastern and southern Chad, where violence and criminal activity threaten aid operations.

Economic Situation

Oil and agriculture are the mainstays of Chad's economy, with oil providing about 60% of export revenues, and declining oil prices present economic challenges. Landlocked Chad is reliant on its neighbors to facilitate trade—notably Cameroon and Nigeria. Chad's known oil reserves are estimated at 1.5 billion barrels, and oil is exported via the World Bank-financed Chad-Cameroon pipeline. Corruption, weak state institutions, and instability, however, prevent most of the population from benefitting.

U.S. Policy and Foreign Assistance

Stated U.S. priorities in Chad include addressing humanitarian needs, promoting regional stability, and strengthening Chad's counterterrorism abilities. The Trump Administration's FY2018 bilateral aid request totals $1.6 million, all for military training and counterterrorism efforts. That figure is low by regional standards, but Chad generally has received security and humanitarian assistance through regional and global programs that far outweighs bilateral allocations. Chad also receives some development aid through State and USAID regional funds and through multilateral mechanisms. Despite governance and stability concerns, successive Administrations since 2001 have considered the Déby government a partner in the effort to counter violent extremism. Chad is a participant in the U.S. Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, and the United States has provided training, equipment, and logistical support for Chad's deployment to Mali. The Trump Administration's decision to include Chad on its revised list of countries subject to "enhanced vetting" for entry to the United States may have implications for the bilateral relationship and for U.S.-Chad security cooperation.

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