Situation Report

Resolving the Chadian Political Epilepsy: An Assessment of Intervention Efforts

Introduction

Chad's political economy is littered with the wreckage of failed attempts at resolving the country's intractable political crisis. Since independence, Chad has not witnessed any constitutional transfer of power. Its political history is a story of drawn-out conflicts with incidental cessation of hostilities, peace agreements and national elections.[2] In reality, these events have merely provided an opportunity for alignment, realignment and, in the process, preparation for the next battle. The attack on N'Djamena in February 2008 might not be the last of these.[3]

As Chad's belligerents flex their muscle for yet another round of a violent contest for the soul of the Chadian state, the stage seems set for renewed violence. Hopefully they are grandstanding for potential negotiation. Against this backdrop, it is imperative to interrogate whether the international community so far has been right about Chad, and, if not, why and what could be done to improve the situation? Considering the present international response to the crisis, is there any political incentive for President Déby's regime to accommodate a robust political solution that will usher in peace; is the regime prepared to pay the political cost of peace – at least from a human security perspective?

This situation report analyses and presents an update on the domestic and international responses to the Chadian crisis. It concludes that though the current policy approach is certainly not a panacea to the Chadian crisis, it is a good starting point. Whilst the present policy approach suffers from some content and design flaws, the principal challenges and problems facing the current peace efforts are piecemeal implementation and the absence of a coordinated and integrated mechanism to ensure implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Moreover, one cannot discount the near absence of political will from the international community (African Union – AU, US, France, China, Libya and Sudan) to pressure Déby and the rebels to address *les questions qui fâchent*.

The report begins by examining the competing policy debate; then it examines the actors and their interest; the policy interventions and political negotiations undertaken so far, and finally, it explores possible scenarios and proposes some policy options to resolve the Chadian crisis.

Policy debate on resolving the Chadian crisis

The February 2008 conflict is the latest in a series of epileptic fits that has gripped Chad since 1965.[4] Thus, making sense of the causes of the Chadian crisis and attempts at resolving it must be viewed in terms of the power struggles that date back to the dawn of Chad's independence. Interrogating the origins of the crisis

and proposing policy options to resolve it is an exercise that has so far been informed by analytical and theoretical insights, but also by policy expediency and political rationalities.

The Chadian crisis raises a critical policy dilemma that policymakers face in trying to stem conflicts, viz: Is there an inherent trade-off between stability and peace? How can one balance the imperative of stability without jeopardising peace and human security? Moreover, how does one ensure that humanitarian intervention does not skew the balance of power in a domestic conflict in favour of one party? Lastly, how can the international community ensure that in treating the regional ramifications of a conflict, domestic grievances that underline the conflict are not neglected? These questions provide a sound point of departure to understand the policy complexities in trying to resolve the Chadian crisis.

Proponents of regional security complex, humanitarian organisations and the mainstream media have been quick to describe and appreciate the Chadian conflict as a spillover of the Darfur crisis and those of the north eastern and western Central African Republic.[5] Déby accuses the rebels of being a proxy of Sudan to destabilise Chad.[6] This seems to be the policy line adopted so far by the international community. The United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (CAR) and Chad (Minurcat), European Union Force Chad (CAR Eufor) and the Dakar Agreement could be seen as attempts at operationalising this policy approach. In pursuing this policy approach, stability and urgency in resolving the Darfur crisis has gained currency. As a result, 'Darfur had more mobilising power in the European Union (EU) and US, and the argument of stationing Eufor across the border to prevent the spillover and escalating violence, and support the humanitarian effort was a better and more effective argument to use in the EU and in the UN'.[7]

Whilst there is some credence to this policy approach, it is based on faulty premises. As Haile Menkerios aptly points out, 'The problems in Darfur, Chad and Sudan exist because of governance issues in the two countries.'[8]The source of the Chadian conflict lies in its internal politics – Darfur has merely become an extension of Chad's political theatre because of ethnic and cultural linkages. Thus, the internal political decay and grievances of the Chadian people must not be discounted in favour of the regional dimension of the conflict. However, by deploying Minurcat and Eufor without any proportional pressure on Déby to make some painful political concession as a measure to resolve Chad's internal problem, the international community sided with Déby. Consequently, members of the international community have, albeit in varying degrees, been sucked into the crisis, thereby becoming critical players.

Borrowing theoretical and analytical insights from the greed and grievance thesis,[9] some argue that Chad's crisis is the result of greed informed by the country's oil wealth. The greed argument further opines that succession crisis provided the spark to violence.[10] There is some truism to this analysis. There is no doubt that Déby's management of the oil wealth and his decision to succeed himself after failed attempts to impose his son Brahim Déby, angered some ambitious Zaghawa political elite who felt they were overlooked.[11] As Handy argues, the militarisation of a significant part of the opposition can be traced back partly to lack of political opening and the concentration of all powers by Déby and his allies.[12] As a consequence, in the absence of a viable political process to engender elite production, circulation and political change, armed rebellion seems the only available tool to certain Chadian social and political actors to bring about political change.

As a policy response, power sharing is seen as the most viable policy to resolve the crisis, as it would give the various belligerents a slice of the oil wealth. Also, a free and fair electoral process and an electoral system that will accommodate the interests of the political elites should be taken into consideration. This seems to be the logic behind the 13 August 2007 agreement with the political opposition and the various peace deals with the rebels (for example the Sirte Agreement of 25 October 2007).

Though laudable, the greed thesis and its policy response is a quick-fix, short-term strategy that does not take into account the context of Chad's socioeconomic and political configuration. Before the discovery of oil, Chad had known conflict, and the present crisis can be traced to a sequence of violence that truncated the country's history. Thus, whilst oil abundance might be a factor in informing the strategies and objectives of Chad's political actors, institutional configuration is important in understanding the structural causes of the conflict. No matter how tempting oil might be and how they may exacerbate political instability and conflict in Chad, they are unlikely to have stimulated the conflict on their own without regards to the political and social context. In the context of acute poverty, social fragmentation and the absence of strong democratic institutions to overcome the problem of time consistency (respect of the rule of the game overtime) in negotiating elite struggles over control of the Chadian state as the principal mode of wealth creation and accumulation, military adventures have become the only viable option to further the economic and political objective of the Chadian political and economic elites aided by foreign interests. The Chadian crisis is the residue of a symbiotic and self-reinforcing relationship of a vicious web of poverty, greed, local conflict,[13] elite contestation and weak democratic institutions.

What are the interests at stake?

At stake in the Chadian crisis are three critical issues, whose importance varies to each player. Support for any peace process is contingent on how each player perceives it as accommodating its political interest weighted against other actors' perceived strength and weaknesses.

Control of the Chadian state: The first critical issue is the struggle for the soul of the Chadian state (power). Control of the Chadian state is not an end in itself. Rather in a country where the private sector is almost absent, it is a means of wealth creation and accumulation; a measure for the control of rents from alluvial diamonds (reported from the Quaddai, Biltine, Guera and Baibokoum areas; bauxite (identified at Koro, located northeast of Moundou in the south of Chad); and other important commodities such as ore, silver and wolframite (at the Yedri Massif in Tibesti), uranium (at Mayo Kebbi and Tibesti) and titanium (at the Guera Massif).[14] However, the most important resources are cotton and oil situated in the south. The Doba reserves are estimated at one billion proven barrels but are projected to be substantially reduced by 2025.[15] Since oil rents accrue directly to the state,[16] oil plays and will continue to play a critical role in the country's political economy. Oil accounts for 90% of Chad's total exports.[17]

Regional stability: The second critical issue at stake is regional stability, which needs to be properly deciphered. Is it about regime security/survival or human security? There is little doubt that chaos in Chad would encourage the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which would compound the humanitarian situation in the region, considering the high level of armed banditry (Zaraguinas).[18] However, in the lexicon of regional stability, humanitarianism plays second fiddle to geostrategic reasons. Chad is of immense geostrategic importance, being the boundary between Arabs and sub-Saharan Africa, Africa's cultural and climatic divide. Lake Chad is the second largest wetland in Africa and sustains 20 million people in the four countries that surround it (Cameroon, Nigeria, Chad and Niger). Though Chad is not an important player in the oil market in Africa, its contribution to energy security in the eyes of China and the US cannot be understated – every drop counts. Most importantly, political instability makes Chad a potentially weak negotiating partner. For example, Chad, with a consortium led by ExxonMobil, signed a 'convention agreement' in 1988 with neighbouring Cameroon– this was a broad contract covering both production-sharing terms on Chad's Doba oilfields and a pipeline through Cameroon to the coast. Though it was originally perceived that Chad had the better deal, it soon realised that its revenue was lower.[19] Also, the fact that Chad negotiated with Exxon at a time when the market was relatively unfavourable to producer countries because of the low prices[20] attests to the fact that political instability has made Chad a weak negotiating partner.

Strategically, control of Chad and by extension influence on the central region – the heartbeat of the Gulf of Guinea – is critical. The Gulf of Guinea, which accounts

for 45% of Africa's total oil reserve, is considered the next big thing in the oil industry, and has become of critical importance to western countries and other global players like China, Russia and India.[21] Unlike other global players, the US has openly asserted that it views the Gulf of Guinea as a zone of vital interest to its national energy plan and that it aims to import 25% of its energy needs from the region by 2015.[22] CAR's uranium deposits provide alternative sources for countries such as France to enhance their energy and nuclear capabilities. Russia is also becoming increasingly interested in the region as it tries to dilute Europe's attempt at reducing its dependence on Russian gas.[23]

Against this backdrop, regional stability is synonymous with regime stability as a measure to ensure continuous control and influence in the Central Africa region and the Gulf of Guinea. From the US perspective, chaos in Chad will aid and abet the spread of terrorism in the Sahel region. The official policy line, at least from the French military, is that if President Déby falls, Chad will descend into chaos and drag the Central Africa region into the abyss. A French diplomat with responsibility for Chad describes Déby as 'a natural ally and the only guarantee against the 'Somalisation' of the country and a possible domino effect that would see other French allies such as François Bozizé in CAR forced from power'.[24] Though this might be too mechanical an argument, there is some truth in it, but it should be read in the context of how much France is enmeshed in the domestic politics of countries in the region. The degree to which other regimes in the region will crumble, depends on their interconnectedness to the regime in Chad, how much influence France will have on a subsequent regime in Chad and how much countries in the region depend on France's patronage and military support. In a nutshell, the question is to what length will France invest in its allies and prop them up financially, diplomatically and politically to save them from disintegrating?

Darfur crisis: Considering that eastern Chad and Darfur have become extensions of the domestic political theatre of Khartoum and N'Djamena, there is a genuine fear that a new regime in Chad, if aided by Sudan, would be much more sympathetic to Khartoum – at least in the short term. There is no doubt that fixing Chad will have a tempering effect on the crisis in Darfur in the short run, at least in reducing the political risk of not providing refuge to the Darfurian rebels.

Thus it seems that, in some policy circles in the West, there is a growing consensus that, the best short-term strategy to enhance and consolidate their interest in Chad and Central Africa is to ensure stability. The policy instrument for this strategy has been military and diplomatic support to the regime in N'Djamena. They have conveniently neglected the more difficult questions of democratic institutional building and economic growth – long-term measures for conflict prevention and management. Of course, the West has made the symbolic gesture of resource mobilisation to enhance the democratic process, But the sad truth is the West owes Chad no favours, for it is the political elite who have really let it down. However, resource mobilisation matched with sustained political pressure will certainly make a difference, given the influence that the West has on some of the principal players in the crisis.

Actors, their interests and strategies

Whilst it might be easy to accuse Déby of not being a democrat nor an advocate of good governance, it takes two or more democratic players to play the game. Who are the actors involved in the Chadian crisis, what are their interest and strategies? Identifying the main actors is not a clearly cut exercise. Their principal objectives, at least in the long run, are influence and control of the state, but the strategies and tactics they pursue are fluid and change with the political exigencies of the day. That said, key actors include:

Political opposition: To deter Déby from changing the constitution to stand for a third term, and to bolster their negotiation power, Chad's political opposition parties have formed an alliance called Coordination for the Defence of the Constitution (CPDC). The group is not entirely representative of the political opposition as some parties, notably Front des Forces d'Action pour la République (FAR) refused to join.[25]

Objective: *Best alternative to a negotiated agreement (Batna):* The long-term objective of the political opposition is control of the state and the short-term priority is influencing any transitional political process. It is for this reason that the parties have focused their energy on trying to influence the electoral process or at least deny Déby total control over it. In a political system grounded in the logic of 'winner takes all', and against a background of limited political space and the near absence of the private sector, Chad's opposition parties face the twin problem of staying relevant in the political game and ensuring their own survival. As such, in any negotiations with Déby, the political opposition's Batna is either joining the government or remaining in the political wilderness, which, in Chad, can be very cold.

Strength: Chad's political opposition parties are very weak. Though multipartism was allowed in Chad in 1991, political parties soon found out the true meaning of constitution without constitutionalism.[26] The political space was liberalised, but political parties had little manoeuvring space and few resources to influence and shape the political transition. Déby considered them merely a functionalist partner to enhance his legitimacy. Most of Chad's opposition leaders were reduced to mere political opportunists, most ethnically based and not able to move beyond this.

Thus their relative weakness and the nature of Chad's political regime have forced them to adopt different strategies at different times. One thing opposition parties are aware of is their added value in enhancing Déby's legitimacy. In fact, they have refused to participate in certain political processes to deny Déby the legitimacy he desperately needs. However, this strategy is influenced mostly by their own weakness. Other opposition parties never shy away from joining the government as a means of escaping the cruelty of the political wilderness.

Armed groups (from Debycratie to L'Erdimirate): Chad has had about 33 rebel groups since independence. On 18 January 2009, seven rebel groups established an alliance called Union des Forces de la Résistance (UFR).[27] The alliance is led by Timan Erdimi, with Adouma Hassaballah Djadarab first vice-president, Adelwahid Aboud Makkaye second vice-president and Abakar Tollimi secretary seneral. Unlike the first alliance that merely unified the structure of command, the new structure goes beyond unity of military command. On 23 February 2009, the UFR formed a shadow cabinet[28] and on 20 March 2009 appointed its military command with General Tahir Odji as chief of staff. It therefore could be seen as not only addressing the issue of leadership in the rebellion, but having a political strategy and plan if Déby is overthrown.[29] Considering how divergent and divided the rebellion is, there is little doubt that the political strategy is aimed at an international audience. The message is simple: the rebellion seems to be telling the international community that it is ready and fit to govern, thus undercutting the argument that after Déby, there will be chaos.

Objective: Batna: The one thing unifying the rebellion is the desire to see the back of Déby. However, whilst the long-term objective is to grab power, it would not miss the chance of sharing power with him if it can be guaranteed and if it does not vitiate its long-term goal. It must be stated here that the regime seems to have a record of allegedly killing rebels who decided to align with the government.[30] Thus, in the eyes of the rebels, power sharing or peace agreements are perceived as mechanisms to influence the transitional process and position themselves for an eventual takeover. During the Sirte negotiations, by demanding the appointment of a transitional Prime Minister from the rebellion and the organisation of a roundtable including the political opposition, with a view of holding elections,[31] the rebels clearly attempted to shape and influence any transitional process.

Strategy: The armed rebellion poses the most credible threat to Déby, considering that twice the rebels came close to the gates of the presidential palace. It would be naïve to identify the armed rebellion with its leadership, as it is not a unit of analysis. Whilst the leadership is important, the interests of the rank-and-file cannot be discounted. As the case of the United Front for Change (FUC) would suggest, the rank-and-file would desert a rebellion perceived not to accommodate their interests.

Recent estimates suggest that there are about 15 000 armed rebels,[32] and Chadian Arabs are fast proving the kingmakers of the conflict in both Chad and Darfur.[33] For this reason, there has been intense lobbying by Sudan and Chad to win them over.[34] For example, by appointing Hassan Saleh Al Gadam Aldjinedi[35] over his nephew Général Abderahim Bahar Itno to lead his offensive against the rebels in early May, Déby seems to be leaving the door open for Chadian Arabs to defect from the rebellion. However, it is difficult to estimate the number of rebels, as their membership is cyclical and most rebels are recruited for particular military operations. This could in part be because there are not enough resources to pay them on a regular basis. Though Sudan is their principal external backer and supplier of weapons, some of their weapons actually come from the national army (Armee National Tchadienne – ANT). When officers of the ANT defect, their men and weapons go with them.[36] Also, the rebels have been able to sustain themselves by robbery and attacks on humanitarian aid.[37] As the rebellion is in need of international credibility, it is difficult to ascertain if the latter is a deliberate rebel tactic or the result of desperation among the rank-and-file of the rebellion. Though it is easy to advance greed as the rebels' principal motivation, their grievances cannot be discounted. Marginalisation and local conflicts, especially in the east, explain why some people joined the rebellion.[38] Whilst Sudan is certainly the godfather of the armed rebellion, it would be simplistic to view the rebellion as merely a means by Sudan to destabilise Chad. Whilst very reliant on Sudan, it does have some space to maneuver. It is not a question of who needs whom – there is some convergence of the interests of the rebellion and of Sudan.

Like the political opposition, the rebels are mostly ethnically based. Their political strategy seems based on rhetorical criticism of Déby for authoritarianism, nepotism, tribalism, corruption and human rights abuse. However, the fact that almost all of the rebel leaders have at one point worked with Déby makes one wonder if they are not merely instrumentalising the plight of ordinary Chadians to pursue their political agenda. If there is one thing the rebellion does not have, it is time. As the fighting continues, its wear-and-tear effect on the rebellion will be enormous. Continuous fighting without positive results will test their strength to the limit and threaten their resolve for unity.

Government: The regime's principal objective is survival and, by extension, control of the Chadian state. There is no doubt, though, that a peaceful retirement for Déby, to enjoy the largesse of his struggle will be a tempting option if it can be guaranteed. However, such a proposition would suggest that the regime is free from the shackles of his close collaborators, who, there is little doubt, have constraints on him.

Strategy: Déby completely dominates the political and economic scene. Whilst the regime has tried to be inclusive, power is still concentrated in the hands of the Zaghawas.[39] The judiciary, public administration, public parastatals and the security apparatus of the state are in his firm grip. The legislature is dominated by the Mouvement Patriotique de Salut (MPS), which is controlled by Déby through the party structures. The regime's strategy has been largely informed by how its uses carrots and sticks (repression and co-optation) coupled with the renowned tactics of divide and rule. Déby certainly has the money to buy his way out of the present crisis and he intends doing so. According to ExxonMobil, in the first half of 2008, project payments for various royalties, taxes, fees, permits and duties added up to $782 million, for a total of $1,244 million paid in the last four quarters. Chad's total revenue since the project began has exceeded $3 billion.[40] The February 2008 attacks on the capital and the desire to pre-empt further attacks led to additional troops hiring, wage increases for the military and additional exceptional security spending (mainly military equipment purchases) of six percentage points of non-oil GDP in additional current spending.[41] Chad has spent more of the increase in oil revenues it experienced than most oil producers in the recent oil price boom. By 2006, it had spent about 70% of the total accumulated oil revenues earned between 2000 and 2006.[42] This is more than most oil producers in the region, with the exception of Sudan. Déby has virtually unrestrained control over oil

rents.[43] These oil rents have increased the manoeuvring space of the regime and play a critical role in his survival strategy. He uses them to buy arms and to sustain patronage, and they have allowed him to carry out some infrastructural projects in N'Djamena. According to a Chadian official, 60 billion CFA has been spent on roads, bridges, buildings and water systems.[44] While this should be applauded, closer examination reveals that they seem to have a political rationale, in that they enhance Déby's legitimacy. Also they have become a measure to dispense patronage.[45] As a result, the ministry of infrastructure and now acting Minister of Defence headed by one of the president's close allies (Adoum Younousmi)[46] has become the most powerful ministry in the country.

Déby has also used the democratic process to his advantage. By liberating the political space, he has sponsored the creation of many political parties and created confusion and division within the political opposition. He has co-opted anybody who is willing to be co-opted into the army and the government. For the time being, most of the prominent political opposition parties and their leaders are part of the government. As the examples of Yaya Dillo and Mohammed Nour Abdelkerim would suggest, the degree to which one is being co-opted is a function of how much threat and political risk one poses to the regime. After FUC attacked N'Djamena it was rewarded with the ministry of defence, but since the troops refused to be disarmed and join the national army, FUC was fired. Also, the appointment of Youssouf Saleh Abbas, a former rebel from the east (the usual practice has been to appoint a southerner) seems to suggest that Déby's priority is to pacify the east. However, the appointment of Wadal Abdelkader Kamougue could be seen as an attempt at tempering the secessionist sentiments of the south, which feels marginalised.

Another element of the regime's survival tactics has been to portray the conflict as an attempt by Sudan to destabilise Chad. In pursuing this tactic, the regime seems to discount the rebellion as mere mercenaries being used by Sudan. Clearly this message is aimed at the international audience and it is also an attempt to rally Chadians against Sudanese 'aggression'. This tactic seems to be working. The international community (UN) seems not to grasp the need for Déby to negotiate with the rebels. The ICC warrants against President Bashir have put Sudan on the back foot and in the process made the tactic more useful. This has enabled Déby to strike the rebels in Sudanese territory. This was clearly a gamble by Déby based on the premise that Sudan would not retaliate. It paid off.

Déby's strategy has both domestic and international logic. Trying to balance these audiences is difficult at times. For example, playing on ethnic rivalries, Déby vilified Chadian Arabs by expelling certain Arab ministers from the government -in particular Rakhis Mannani, a former Democratic Revolutionery Council (CDR) leader – and, more importantly, launching a campaign denouncing them as *janjaweed* and 'mercenaries' in the pay of Khartoum.[47] His strategy has apparently been to present himself as a pro-Western bulwark against a Sudan that seeks to 'Arabise' and 'Islamise' the whole region. But by denouncing Chadian Arabs, he risks compounding the existing gulf in Darfur between Arabs and non-Arabs, which might be replicated in Chad.[48] By attempting to accommodate FUC, Déby alienated his own tribe, which felt that the Zaghawas were being killed by the Temas in local conflicts in the east.

Though Déby might have the wind on his wings, his regime possesses some weaknesses. The almost unconditional military and diplomatic support given to him by the international community provides him with a false sense of comfort. Whilst support from France is crucial, history shows that it is a short-term policy instrument that the regime cannot entirely count on. For this reason the regime has gone on a shopping spree to bolster its arsenal and has tried to diversify its external support base.

Another weakness of the regime is infighting and possible fragmentation. Though over time, rebels have been defecting back to the government, cohesion in the regime, particularly among the Zaghawas will be tested if there is a perception

that the regime is nearing collapse. Even within the ruling party, there are some progressive elements that see their political future beyond Déby's regime. For example, in the last parliamentary session, some MPs from the ruling party were extremely critical of the president of the national assembly for his authoritarian tendencies. One of them even alleged that the president cannot remove him from the assembly because he was put there by the electorate.[49] Though this assertiveness could be a reflection of the potential of improved governance, it certainly points to the existence of a moderate and progressive element within the ruling party, which sees its political future beyond Déby's regime.

External actors

France

Interest: What is the financial cost of France's presence in Chad? Though France maintains some small economic footprints in the country, especially in the construction sector, there is little doubt that Chad is a financial liability for French taxpayers. Consequently, France's presence in Chad could be explained by something else and probably beyond the borders of Chad. France's continuous involvement in the Chadian conflict is largely informed by its geostrategic interest. Chad is perceived as 'French aircraft carrier of the desert'. France's geostrategic interest in the country is underlined by the presence of three military bases in the country, Camp Adji Kossei in N'Djaména, Camp Croci at Abéché and a base at Faya-Largeau, involving 1 100 troops with airlift capacity.[50] France has, however, expressed its intention to withdraw 1 000 soldiers of its 1 650-strong force in Chad.[51] Is this a signal of France's resolve to lessen its military footprint in Africa? Or is it just a change in tactics without any real change in its long-term strategic objectives?

Strategy: Within policy circles in France, it is perceived that France's interest in Chad and the region could be ensured only by regime stability. France has been able to effectively influence Chad's domestic politics through military intervention, either by omission or action. This has been possible because armed rebellion has become the principal mode of regime change. As a consequence, French military remains at the heart of Chad's political entanglements and its artillery, armour and especially air power remain the tipping point for regime change in Chad.[52] In the words of Goukouni Weddeye (former president): 'President Déby came to power with the support of Paris for economic and geo-strategic reasons, and remains, for the same reasons, "France's man".'[53] Rebel leader Mahamat Nouri notes that Chad and France share a 'community of interests in history, religion, blood and culture', and adds that the French government – and not the people of France – has befriended Déby against the people of Chad.[54] A careful reading of the above statement would suggest Nouri's statement is aimed at inciting the French public to exercise some pressure on the way France conducts itself in Chad. This raises the questions: Who decides French foreign policy on Chad and Darfur and what is the role of the French military? Are the French prepared to support Déby all the way? Why did the French military wait for the rebels to be at the gate of the presidential palace before they came to Déby's help? Is Minurcat II France's exit strategy as France seeks more important players on the continent based on economics?

France seems to prefer working within multilateral channels against the backdrop of attempts at an EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). However, the European Commission is not a pawn to execute French interests in Chad. The European Union is the country's largest donor. It's past and present contributions have been focused – under the ninth European Development Fund (EDF) – on transport and infrastructure, as well as providing budgetary aid and support for institution-building.[55]. Nevertheless, commonality or convergence of interests does not necessarily amount to coherence in policy. There are strong incentives for France to Europeanise its foreign policy engagement, particularly with Africa talking of France putting behind the days of France Afrique. Europeanisation of France's African adventure is a change of tactics, not a change in strategic objective – at least in the short run. Europeanisation is perceived as a measure to give more legitimacy and legality to its African adventures. Thus, France had

interest in arguing for a stronger engagement of the European Union. Eufor was conceived and implemented as a bridge mission to MINURCAT II. In the process, it was a good strategy for France to have many others involved to stabilise Chad. Furthermore, France would not find many willing partners among other EU member states to share the burden of its policies on and engagement in Chad. Thus, humanitarianism was instrumentalised as a reality call for Eufor.[56] Nevetherless, though humanitarianism is important in certain EU capitals, the support by certain EU members for Eufor must be contextualised in the broader debate in Nato about sharing responsibility in Afghanistan. Certain countries joined Eufor as it provided them with a strong argument to shy away from Afghanistan.[57] The geostrategic importance over humanitarianism is evidenced by the fact that Eufor is estimated to have cost about €119,6 million based on the Athena mechanism.[58] France is estimated to have contributed €260. This is in contrast to the €30 million that the EU has apportioned for humanitarian aid for 2008/9.[59] In a nutshell, though Eufor is a commendable effort, it represents a commonality of interests of some EU members and pays lip service to the roots causes of the crisis.

United States

Interest: President Obama has described the situation in Darfur as genocide.[60] Logically, is he suggesting that the Chadian government, in supporting the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), is doing the right thing? How would he describe the situation in Chad? Per the 2008 Transparency International corruption index, Chad is one of most corrupt countries, its governance record is poor per the World Bank Governance Indicator, climate for business is poor, and its human rights record is pathetic. However, the US enjoys cordial relations with the Déby government.[61] What informs this cordial relationship and what are its terms? American principal interests in Chad are terrorism and energy security.[62] Two US companies, ExxonMobil and Chevron, are part of the consortium that has invested in and is operating the Doba oilfields.[63] The US's quest for energy security and its implication for the Central Africa region are well documented.[64]

Chad is considered a strategically important ally in containing Islamic fundamentalism.[65] The US has provided security assistance and training to the Chadian army with International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds. Chad is a part of the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), an interagency effort that aims to increase Chad's border protection and regional counterterrorism capabilities, as well as 'to promote democratic governance as a means to discredit terrorist ideology'.[66] The US supplies weapons to Chad and also contributes to the humanitarian effort in the east of the country.[67]

Strategy: Unlike France, which has to an extent advertised its support for the regime, the US has been more docile and rather chooses to work within multilateral institutions – UN Security Council. In a nutshell, the US has been free-riding on French assertive posture with the country.

Sudan

Interest: Sudan would love to have a regime in Chad that is more amenable to it or at least that can be influenced by Khartoum. In the short term Khartoum wants the cessation of support to Darfur rebels and normalisation of relations.[68]

Strategy: As a Sudanese diplomat pointed out, to solve the Chadian crisis, there should be a place on the negotiation table for Sudan and there should be a place for Chad in any attempt to solve the Darfur crisis. This is a clear indication of not only how much the two crises have become intertwined, but of how much leverage each country has in the other's rebellions. This support has been well documented.[69]

China

Objective: China's principal objective is energy security to fuel its growing economy. The China National Petroleum Corporation (CNCP) entered Chad's oil and gas businesses in 2003 and now has oil and gas assets and interests,

whilst providing oilfield services. On 20 September 2007, CNPC and the Chadian Ministry of Petroleum signed an agreement that requested CNPC to build a joint venture refinery using Chinese design specifications, manufacturing standards and machinery.[70]

Strategy: Reports suggest China have become involved, albeit possibly indirectly, in supporting rebels. It is reported that arms captured during the FUC attack on N'Djaména in April were Chinese and new, and that the Toyota vehicles that ferried the FUC to N'Djaména were bought by a Chinese oil company based in Sudan for which Mahamat Nour Abdelkerim used to work.[71] To court Chinese support Déby dumped Taiwan for China.

Libya

Objective: Libya sees the present crisis between Chad and Sudan as an opportunity to enhance its influence in the region.[72] Libya is not comfortable with the presence of France and the US in the region, and it played a critical role in ensuring Déby's survival in February 2008. Further, Libya provided the air corridor through which France supplied weapons to Chad.[73] As one diplomat pointed out, Déby is increasingly relying on Libya as a partner in times of crisis. A Sudanese diplomat noted that Sudan does not really know what Libya is up to, considering it supports both sides. Thus, whilst the recent visit of President Bashir to Libya could be seen as soliciting Libyan support in the face of the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment, Libyan support to Sudan is not assured.

Strategy: Libya's strategy has been to support Chad and Sudan, thus positing itself as the kingmaker. Also it tries to exert its influence (with money and diplomatic pressure) through control of the various peace processes. As one member of the contact group pointed out, Libya wants to control everything and everybody. Evidence of this is the fact that some members of the contact group were never consulted on attempts by Libya to restore diplomatic relations between Chad and Sudan. Some members were informed only after a Libyan plane had done the rounds of ferrying the ambassadors to the various headquarters.[74]

Addressing the internal dimension of the crisis

Political accord to re-enforce the democratic process (13 August 2007)

After months of negotiations, with enormous pressure, technical and financial support from the international community, especially the EU (others included Francophonie, US), the 13 August political accord aimed to re-enforce the democratic process in the country. In total, 95 political parties signed the accord.[75] The accord is grounded on two principal pillars: electoral process and political/ security environment. The accord calls for an electoral census, improved electoral register, and an independent electoral commission to organise and supervise the electoral process. It also provides for the use of single ballots, for the security forces to vote one day before the rest of the population and for nomads to vote on the day of the election instead of beforehand, as in the past.

To provide a suitable climate for elections, the accord calls for depoliticisation and demilitarisation of administration; freedom of expression; independence of the judiciary; social pact and security of person.

To allow time for the agreement to be implemented, parliamentary elections will be delayed until 2009 and the mandate of the current national assembly will be extended until then.

The accord created a monitoring and evaluation committee called the La comité de suivi et d'appui, whose mandate is to ensure strict application of the accord. In practice, the work of the committee is to formulate stipulations in the accord into law for consideration by the national assembly. It is important to point out that the committee's opinion or observations are merely persuasive. The national assembly has the duty and mandate to make laws. The committee is made up of

five members from the presidential majority and five from the political opposition. Resource persons from the presidency, general assembly and government are also represented, but they cannot deliberate. Members of the international community (AU, EU, UN and Francophonie – OIF) are observers. The committee's decisions are taken by consensus preferably but, failing that, by is a two-thirds majority.. Failing that, a simple majority will decide.

How important is the accord to the players? By concentrating almost entirely on elections, the accord seems to have conveniently left out some of the most vexing issues in the conflict, such as management of oil rents, public administration and security sector reform. Whilst Déby described the agreement as a step towards peace, Ngarlejy Yorongar criticised it as inadequate and argued that since it will be subjugated to the constitutional court, which is firmly in Déby's grip, it is a 'waste of time'.[76] He reiterated calls for a more comprehensive dialogue including the armed opposition. The question then is why did the political opposition, which has been calling for such a comprehensive dialogue, choose to sign the accord considering some of its perceived weakness? Would postponing the legislative elections give the current parliament, dominated by Déby, a chance to manipulate implementation of the accord? Why did Déby sign it, considering it provided a risk, albeit minimum, of him losing his grip on power? Why did the international community support such a limited venture when some EU countries had advocated a comprehensive approach and France had supported such an approach (eg, the Linas Marcoussis Accord)?

The political opposition is cognisant of the fact that its alignment with either belligerent will enhance the belligerent's legitimacy and negotiation power. The political opposition has not clearly defined its relationship with the armed opposition. This is partly because they have not been able to identify a winning horse on which to bet. Against this backdrop, the accord provided the political opposition the chance to solicit more concessions from Déby, which would be more difficult in a comprehensive dialogue inclusive of the armed rebellion. The opposition understands that Déby's preoccupation is survival and that the armed opposition provides the greatest threat to that. By accepting the accord, the political opposition groups were attempting to preempt their marginalisation in the eventuality of comprehensive dialogue. Also, the accord provides a mobilising ground on which the political opposition can rally in criticising Déby; and most importantly, a point of reference for the international community to pressure him for more democratic concession. Thus, the accord was perceived by the political opposition as taking care of its short-term objective – survival and influence of the transitional process and the possibility of achieving its long-term goal – the control of the state.

The accord gave Déby the chance to portray himself to the international community as a willing partner in Chad's democratisation process. After all, he is the initiator. However, the accord is part of his strategy to torpedo any attempt at a comprehensive political dialogue. A comprehensive dialogue would reduce his manoeuvring space as he would be outnumbered. It should be noted, he was able to control the sovereign national conference only by appointing one of his close allies, Ahmat Mahamat Bachir, its head. Thus, the accord is perceived by Déby as a measure to control and shape the transition process, enhance his international standing, and marginalise and isolate the arm rebellion.

For France, the accord was a relief, as it portrayed its client Déby as a willing reformer. For the EU, the accord seems to speak to it's democracy agenda on the continent. But on closer examination, one cannot help but argue that the accord is also a reflection of the EU's weakness as it fell short of the comprehensive dialogue that the EU advocated.[77]

Status of implementation (August 2007 to March 2009)

Implementation of the accord has been piecemeal. At operational level, some important strides have been made, with a view to operationalising the committee

and its work plan. Despite repeated calls, the committee has not been able to meet with the prime minister, nor with certain ministers who are concerned with the implementation of the accord. On 2 July 2008, the ministry of economy and planning launched a cartographic census, which, if completed, will be followed by a demographic census.

The government has put at the committee's disposal 224 million CFA francs.[78] The EU has put in place a budget of €5 million for the different aspects of the accord: €2 million for the electoral register, €1 million for reinforcing the capacity of structures engaged in the electoral process (independent electoral commission,, permanent bureau of elections and ministry of interior), and €500 000 each for election observation, civic and media education, and for re-enforcing the capacity of political parties. The OIF has given five computers, one telephone and one photocopier.[79]

Substantively, four important laws have been adopted by the national assembly: the law establishing the Independent Electoral Commission, organic laws relating to the constitutional court and to the electoral code, and an amendment of organic law relating to the Supreme Court. Using the examples of the law establishing the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and the new electoral code, one can only conclude that implementation of the accord is going to be a hard-fought battle. A closer look at both laws reveals a gap between the spirit or letter of the accord and the laws implementing it. The regime has used its majority in the national assembly to control and manipulate implementation of the accord in its favour. The government put in place an inter-ministerial committee charged with following up the application of the accord, but in reality, it is nothing but a night watchman to dilute the draft proposal of the committee, thus ensuring that the regime remains in control and influences the accord's implementation. The final text of both laws adopted is a replica of the inter-ministerial committee's proposal, which in many instances is not a reflection of what the committee proposed. French Prime Minister Kouchner met with the bureau of the committee and proposed the mediation of two legal experts from the OIF. Is the problem a legal one or lack of political will?

In appraising the electoral code, the committee has argued that articles 11, 13, 44, 109, 148, 153, 170 and 171 are not a total reflection of the political accord and that they put the electoral process firmly in Déby's hands. For instance, the independence of the IEC has been deeply compromised by the electoral law and regarding the law establishing it, the committee argues that article 1, 6, 9, 12, 14, and 24 are not a true reflection of the spirit of the accord. For example, in stating that the Permanent Bureau of Elections (PBE) will assist the IEC, parliament clearly states that the PBE is not under the authority of the IEC but under the ministry of territorial administration, which is contrary to the political accord.

Sirte Agreement (Allez Suivez le Guide)

Signed on 25 October between the government and the main Chadian armed opposition, the agreement called for respect of the constitution, a ceasefire, general amnesty, and for rebel groups to participate in the running of state affairs, for rebel force integration into the Chadian National Army and for another meeting in Tripoli, including all political parties and relevant civil society organisations, to follow up on the implementation of the agreement. However, the parties have not adhered to the Sirte Agreement. The leader of CNT, for his part, decided to implement the Sirte Agreement, opting on 7 December 2007 to return to N'Djamena.

The agreement encountered many problems before it even took off. Rebels argued that it barely laid out broad principles. In response, Déby warned that it was the last agreement he would negotiate with rebels. The first nail on the agreement's coffin was fighting in November 2007 in Farchana and Biltine and the February attacks on N'Djamena sealed its fate**.**

Addressing the external dimension

The Dakar Agreement (African solution to African problem)[80]

The agreement called for the normalisation of relations and renewal of the commitments of other agreements like Tripoli (February 2006), Khartoum (August 2006), Cannes (February 2007) and Riyadh (May 2007). Unlike these previous agreements, the Dakar Agreement called for the formation of a contact group to monitor implementation of the agreement and document violations. Led by Libya and the Republic of Congo (ROC), the group also includes representatives from the governments of Senegal, Gabon, Chad, Sudan, and Eritrea, the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Minurcat and the AU. The group has met regularly since March.

The contact group is also responsible for establishing a peace and security force, a joint mission called for in the Dakar Agreement to secure the border between Chad and Sudan. The peace and security force concept provides for the deployment of an observation and monitoring force to start in January 2009. In addition to the establishment of observer posts, Chad and the Sudan are to station 1 000 troops each at their respective borders.

Implementation status

The contact group established by the Dakar Agreement of March 2008 met at ministerial level and at the level of defence, security and intelligence experts responsible for studying and planning the rapid establishment of the peace and security force along the border between the two countries. They met in Brazzaville in June 2008, in Dakar in July 2008, and in Asmara in September 2008. Following the restoration of diplomatic relations between Chad and Sudan, formalised by the exchange of their respective ambassadors on 9 November 2008, the sixth contact group meeting took place in N'Djamena on 15 November 2008. After the meeting, a communiqué was issued stating that the group had approved an evaluation mission aimed at finalising the arrangements for the establishment of a peace and security force along the border between Chad and Sudan. This meeting was preceded, from 12 to 14 November, by the fourth defence, security and intelligence experts planning meeting, the conclusions of which were adopted by the contact group. The seventh contact group meeting will be held in Khartoum.

In accordance with the decision on relations between Chad and Sudan adopted by the 138th PSC meeting held in Sharm El Sheikh, on 29 June 2008, the commission sent a delegation to Chad led by the former president of Burundi Pierre Buyoya, from 10 to 16 October and from 25 to 28 November 2008; and to Sudan, from 2 to 9 November 2008. The authorities of both countries reiterated their commitment to normalise their diplomatic relations and to ensure that no hostile action was carried out against their respective territories on either side of their common border.

Thus far, financial resources and equipment for the border force have not materialised, and the contact group has requested international assistance. However, questions have arisen about whether this force will be able to accomplish its mission, given manpower constraints (with African troops already committed in Darfur) and the presence of international missions in both Sudan and Chad that are perhaps better suited to perform this task.

Even if the force is to materialise, what will it serve? What will be its rules of engagement? As pointed out by a member of the contact group, the force will be a paper tiger, an observation mission with no execution mandate. More importantly, how will the mission relate to other peacekeeping missions on the already crowded Darfur Chad border?[81] The slow pace of implementation results from lack of political will and distrust between the two countries. Implementation of the Dakar process will certainly be contingent on progress in resolving the internal crisis in Chad and Sudan. Emphasising implementation of Dakar in the hope that it

will resolve the problem in Chad and Sudan is totally misplaced. Dakar should be seen as a measure to enhance and consolidate the gains made in addressing the internal crisis in Chad and Sudan.

Minurcat II[82]

On 14 January 2009, the UN Security Council passed resolution 1861 extending the mandate of Minurcat until 15 March 2010. It also authorised the deployment of a military component to follow up Eufor in Chad and CAR, and decided that the transfer of authority between Eufor and the military component of Minurcat would take place on 15 March 2009.

Operational implementation of UN resolution 1861 has been impressive. On 14 March 2009, Force Commander Major General Elhadji Mouhamedou Kandji (Senegal) assumed operational control of the UN force of 2 085 troops. The force included 1 877 troops rehatted (a French-engineered intervention) from eight Eufor contributors (Albania, Austria, Croatia, Ireland, Finland, France, Poland and Russia), 140 troops from two new contributors (Ghana and Togo), and 68 new force headquarters staff officers from various countries. Italy will remain in theatre under Eufor command to support Minurcat until the deployment of a Norwegian level II hospital in mid-May.

The principal weakness of Minurcat is that it still suffers from the perception that it is a French policy instrument designed to protect Déby and rehatting without proper analysis of its political ramification entrenches this. Thus, some argue that Eufor and, by extension, Minurcat II is an international policy towards Chad that is a byproduct of Darfur policy, and specifically the push to bring an international protection force to Darfur.[83] Consequently, besides its humanitarian posture, Minurcat could be a tipping point in the crisis in Chad, taking cognisance of its mandate and rules of engagement.[84]

Possible scenarios

Renewed violence: As the rainy season draws near, the possibility of renewed violence is very likely. Renewed violence is going to be bloody, as both belligerents are well armed. For the rebellion, it might just be the last throw of the dice. The rebels point out that it is just as matter of time, once they finish their technical preparation. Recent rebel incursion into Chadian territory could signal the beginning of their bash into N'Djamena.[85] The government has moved a huge chunk of its forces to eastern Chad in anticipation of rebel offences. On 24 March 2009, Moussa Faki (minister of foreign affairs) warned the diplomatic community of an imminent rebel offensive. Two events signal the possibility of violence. First, the ICC warrant of arrest for President Bashir might radicalise him and trigger a rebel attack to force the international community to reconsider. Nevertheless, whilst the ICC arrest warrant might complicate life for the rebellion, Sudan more than ever might be hesitant to overtly support the rebellion as it pursues peace with the Darfur rebels. Renewed attack by the rebels might be informed by an urgency to prevent desertion from the rebellion by smaller rebel factions that perceive alignment with Déby as bringing more rewards than staying with the rebellion. Secondly, the social cost of violence has been reduced considerably since the government introduced measures such as outlawing the charcoal trade, that have increased the cost of living, especially in N'Djamena.

Negotiations. People do negotiate because of weakness, whether perceived or real. Déby's preferred strategy has been to organise elections, win them and then negotiate with anybody who wishes to be co-opted. This strategy strengthens his negotiation power and legitimises the elections. For the time being, there is no pressing need for Déby to negotiate at least a new deal with the rebels, butif he did negotiate now, it would be on his terms.

Elections: Whilst the political opposition is kicking and screaming that elections should not be held in an environment of insecurity, it is very likely there will be parliamentary elections this year. It is of immense political benefit for Déby to hold

an election, as it would enhance his image and legitimacy, and would strengthen his position in any subsequent negotiation.

Reincarnating the Nkunda strategy: The possibility of Sudan arresting rebel leaders and handing them to Chad is remote, but cannot be discounted. The incentive for such a move is very small – if negotiations with the Darfur rebels seem to be bearing some fruit, Sudan is unlikely to sacrifice the rebel leadership for good relations with Chad. However, in the eyes of the international community, President Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir is a much bigger fish to fry.

Palace coup: Some suggest that Déby is very sick and has become a liability. Ambitious people within his internal clique are ready to replace him and there is a move to remobilise the Zaghawas, as by appointing Timan Erdimi as the main rebel leader, the rebels were hoping for and ensured more Zaghawa defections.

Policy consideration and options

What constitutes the success of a peace process in the short- and long-term and how can it be measured? If the current approach is flawed as a result of lack of seriousness, as some would suggest, what then is the alternative and what should it seek to address or achieve? The simple solution, argues one diplomat, would be a total cleanup of Chad's political leadership. This is more an expression of desperation and the sad reality is that the international community is rapidly running out of options. Even with a common strategy shared by the main domestic, regional and international actors, there is limited scope for manoeuvre, and a revolutionary departure from the current approach is a non-starter.

Stabilising Chad

There should be sustained pressure for implementation of the various peace processes, especially those of the 13 August political accord, the Sirte Agreement or for commencement of negotiations with the rebels. The following options or strategies could be adopted to enhance implementation:

Diplomatic pressure: As much as the international community (UN, AU, US and France) has supported the regime diplomatically, it should use these diplomatic channels to pressurise the regime to implement the 13 August political accord and enter negotiations with the rebels. Fine diplomatic language is not enough. Strong language and condemnation such as those used in supporting the regime will signal the intention of the international community not to award the regime unconditional support.

Arms embargo: The international community should explore ways of inflating the cost of violence in eastern Chad. One of these may through the prevention of arms flow into Chad and Sudan. How effective such sanction would be is a matter of debate not limited to this case alone. Getting sanctions right is as important as getting sanctions adopted. This is important considering the AU lack the capacity to implement, monitor, oversee and verify sanctions. Whilst it could be argued that suspension and the threat of sanctions and an arms embargo may be intended to compel compliance with the African peace and security agenda, the international community must walk the tightrope distinguishing between embargo on a legitimate political entity such as the Chadian state and on the rebels. Sanctions should not be designed primarily to express outrage at the gravity of the crisis, but should be anchored on a clear political goal.

Comprehensive approach/enhanced coordination: The various peace efforts in Chad are very far apart, with every accord speaking to different issues as if they are separate. The international community should explore ways of harmonising the various implementation mechanisms, which would have the added value of giving it a much clearer picture of what is happening and ensure a common response.

Normalising Chad/Sudan relations

International support for the Dakar Accord. Recent ranting by Déby about his loss of confidence in the AU and his rebuke of China and Libya for their non-support is an expression of the gravity of the crisis rather than any attempt to ditch them. There seems to be a multiplicity of peace efforts to resolve the

Chad Sudan diplomatic tension. For example, what can the Qatari initiative achieve that the Dakar process cannot? A multiplicity of these efforts seems **little** but a multiplicity of agendas. Whilst the AU might well not have the leverage it much desired, working within the framework set by the AU would certainly enhance ownership and in the process temper on allegations of imperialism. The international community must, therefore, show it support for AU initiative.

Buffer zone/demilitarised zone (DMZ): The impact of the Dakar agreement is contingent on some success in addressing the domestic crisis in Darfur and Chad. However, there is need for the AU to enhance stability in eastern Chad and it should explore the possibility of a demilitarised zone between Chad and Sudan. If there is objection from Sudan, such a space could be created in the east of Chad.

Good neighbourhood process/international conference on the sub-region: United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1778 of 25 September 2007 deemed the situation in the region of the border between the Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic as constituting a threat to international peace and security. The AU has stressed the importance of a coherent and integrated regional approach aimed at identifying and addressing the root causes of the crisis to promote durable peace and stability in the region. Within the framework of post-conflict reconstruction and development, these two international pronouncements echo the need for an integrated regional approach to the crisis.

Such an integrated approach could take the form of an international conference on the sub-region. The conference should not be a once-off event or an attempt to hijack other processes currently going on. Rather it should be the logical outcome of jumpstarting the implementation of the various peace accords. Thus, much like the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, it should be a post-conflict reconstruction strategy grounded in the need for dialogue among people of the region on how to tackle regional crises. Specifically, the purpose of the conference would be to initiate a process.

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