

Amandine Gnanguênon

Chad in its Regional Environment: Political Alliances and ad hoc Military Coalitions



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Mr Philipp Manfred Goldberg

Director of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
Peace and Security Centre of
Competence Sub-Saharan Africa

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABN/NBA	Niger Basin Authority
ACIRC	African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
ARP	Regional police academy (Académie régionale de Police)
AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
CEMAC	Central African Economic and Monetary Community
CEN-SAD	Community of Sahel-Saharan States
CILSS	Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel
CONOPS	Concept of operations
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FC-G5S	G5 Sahel Joint Force
FMTS	Joint Border Force
FOMUC	Central African Multinational Force
FROLINAT	National Liberation Front of Chad
HDI	Human Development Index
LCBC	Lake Chad Basin Commission
MICOPAX	Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in Central African Republic
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MISCA	African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic
MISMA/AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission to Mali
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
PSC	Peace and Security Council
REC	Regional Economic Community

SUMMARY

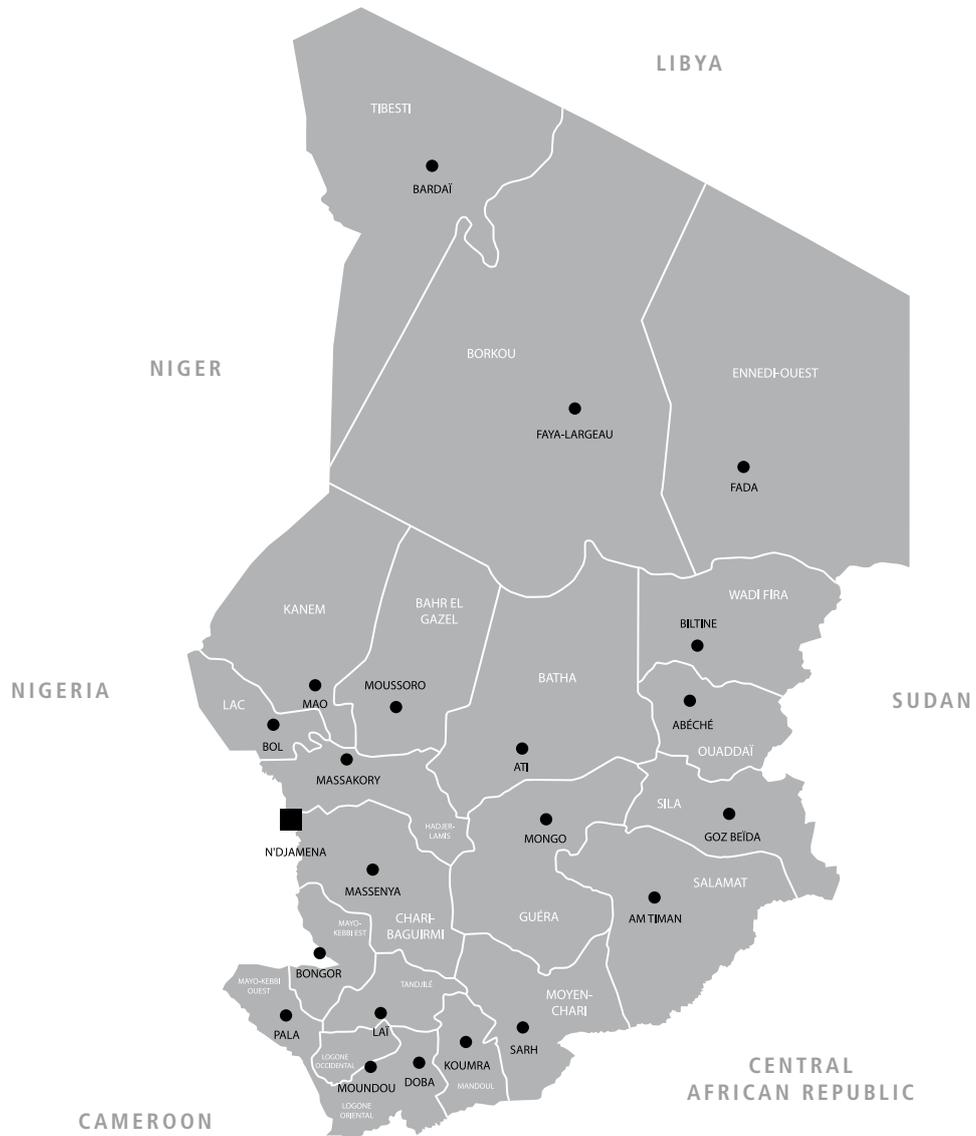
Chad is faced with an unstable regional security environment. The chaos in Libya post-2011, the fall of President Omar al-Bashir in Sudan in 2019, the ongoing instability in the Central African Republic (CAR) and the presence of Boko Haram and its affiliates in the Lake Chad Basin are among the uncertainties Chad is grappling with. However, in the space of a decade, Idriss Déby has managed to turn the insecurity at his borders into an asset.

The deployments of the Chadian army in the Central African Republic (2012-2014), Mali (since 2013) and the Lake Chad Basin (since 2015) are perhaps the best examples of how international military operations have served the personal ambitions of the Chadian president and his international stature. In the eyes of its overseas partners, the country is in a “*strategic position*” at the crossroads of North Africa, Central Africa and the Sahel. Its image as a poor, underpopulated and landlocked country has been replaced by that of an indispensable ally in the fight against the spread of the jihadist threat in West and Central Africa. Chad’s military interventions and diplomatic positioning stem from Idriss Déby’s ability to take advantage of the support of his foreign partners, and especially his French ally. However, this military diplomacy is inseparable from the changes that have taken place in the institutional security landscape over the last ten years. Like other countries with regional ambitions, Chad bases its policy of influence on two levers: the ability to deploy its army in a multinational framework and the use of proactive diplomacy to position itself in regional and international forums.

Consequently, this study focuses on a subject that has not been widely addressed, namely the way Chad has positioned itself as a regional player through a combination of political alliances and ad hoc military coalitions. Indeed, to tackle the security challenges at its borders, Chad has a wide range of options to choose from, including the collective security systems of the United Nations, the African Union (AU), regional organisations and ad hoc coalitions. One of the questions this study aims to answer is what factors have influenced Chad’s choice to become systematically involved in regional military operations.

Chad’s interest in ad hoc coalitions, such as the Multinational Joint Task Force and the G5 Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5 Sahel), can be explained by three motivations: a supply-and-demand approach to security, a will to secure the country’s peripheral areas, and a wish to garner international recognition and support. Idriss Déby has thus been able to capitalise on a changing regional environment to achieve his objectives: to protect his regime, block his political opponents and create alliances with neighbouring countries to make sure that a rear base is not set up for Chadian rebels.

Although ad hoc coalitions are its preferred tool, Chad also continues to rely on regional organisations as tools for implementing its military diplomacy. This “*forum shopping*” approach has met with little criticism, particularly as the five organisations analysed in this study (LCBC, ECCAS, G5 Sahel, CEN-SAD and CEMAC) cover different geographical areas corresponding to Chad’s strategic interests at the crossroads of North, West, and Central Africa. Ultimately,



the conflicts and insecurity in Chad and its neighbouring countries have strengthened its political, diplomatic and military position. In the long term, the main threat to the stability of the Chadian regime remains a national political

crisis, as decades of armed conflict, a focus on the military and inadequate governance have done nothing to reduce the risk of internal instability.

INTRODUCTION

On 11 August 2020, when Chad celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of its independence, Idriss Déby was promoted to the rank of Marshal, highlighting the fact that his military achievements outside the country gave him the domestic political legitimacy that he lacked after 30 years in power.

This longevity was primarily due to his authoritarianism and governance practices, whose primary objective was to remain in power. Idriss Déby has been elected four times (in 1996, 2001, 2006 and 2016) and the Constitution has been amended twice in the space of two years (2018 and 2020). The outgoing President is now travelling around the country to campaign for the presidential elections set for April 2021, while civil society and opposition parties are banned from holding rallies due to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹

Déby has also managed to stay in power through his almost daily management of domestic and foreign tensions and by playing on alliances. The way he uses his army is probably the best example of how he uses international operations serve his personal ambitions and enhance his international stature. These deployments are also a means of reducing political and social tensions within the military apparatus that could jeopardise the survival of his regime.

The Chadian President seeks to prevent his political opponents from finding refuge in neighbouring countries, which is why he fights Chadian rebels in neighbouring countries and has not hesitated to support foreign rebels, some of whom have found refuge on his territory. Since the signing of the peace agreement

with Sudan in 2010, while the *modus operandi* has remained unchanged, military interventions against armed groups (rebels, criminals or jihadists) have taken the form of joint multi-national operations.

Because the economic, political and social stability of Idriss Déby's regime is directly linked to the regional environment, it is particularly important for him to capitalise on the image of a strong regime and a seasoned army. The chaos in Libya after 2011, the fall of President Omar al-Bashir in Sudan in 2019, the instability in the Central African Republic (CAR) and the presence of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin are among the uncertainties Chad is grappling with. The Chadian President has nevertheless managed to turn his geographical isolation and the insecurity on his borders into an asset. He maintains that his foreign partners have a vested interest in keeping him in power because he is the guarantor of stability in a country that is a "*strategic pillar*" for North Africa, Central Africa and the Sahel.

Consequently, the deployment of the Chadian army in the CAR (2012-2014), Mali (since 2013) and the Lake Chad Basin (since 2015) has transformed the image of Chad, from a poor, underpopulated country to a major player on the regional and international scene. Chad's military interventions and diplomatic positioning are, however, inseparable from the changes that have taken place in the African security landscape over the past ten years. To tackle

¹ <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/latest/news/2020/12/tchad-les-atteintes-aux-libertes-fondamentales-se-multiplient/>

the security challenges at its borders, Chad has a wide range of options to choose from, including the collective security systems of the United Nations, the African Union (AU), and the regional organisations and ad hoc coalitions in which it is a member.

This study focuses on a subject that has not been widely addressed, namely, Chad's contribution to regional coalitions. Often described as ad hoc coalitions, they are defined as, "*a temporary group of actors that agree to solve a particular security problem at a given time and location*" (Karlsruud, Reykers, 2020, p. 2). The question that arises, however, is what factors have influenced Chad's decision to participate in the deployment of such coalitions.

This study is divided into five parts with a view to answering this question. The first part reviews Chad's regional environment and examines the country's geographical position at the crossroads of various regional security complexes (Libya, Sudan, CAR, Cameroon, and Nigeria).

This position is indeed one of the main factors influencing Idriss Déby's decision to intervene with and among his neighbours. The second part of this paper presents two key characteristics of Chad's foreign policy: opportunism and pragmatism. Thirdly, while ad hoc cooperation is a favoured tool, the country also continues to rely on regional organisations as levers of action in the implementation of its military diplomacy. Fourthly, the interest in ad hoc coalitions is linked to the fact that they emerge in the gaps of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), as in the case of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and the G5 Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S). Mainly focused on the military aspect, they fill certain capacity gaps (such as financial, logistical and human resources gaps) while at the same time promoting national interests. Finally, while Chad has managed to take advantage of its unstable regional environment, the survival of President Déby's regime remains linked to the domestic benefits of his regional military diplomacy in political, economic and social terms.

I. A COUNTRY AT THE INTERSECTION OF VARIOUS SECURITY COMPLEXES

Chad's diplomatic and military posture cannot be analysed without considering the regional environment in which the country is located, at the junction of several regional security complexes: the Libyan hot spot on the northern border, the Sahel-Saharan strip to the west, Sudan to the east, the CAR to the south, as well as the area adjacent to Nigeria and northern Cameroon, which is the epicentre of Boko Haram's activities and its dissidence in the southwest. Based on this observation, this section provides a brief overview of the historical context in which relations between Chad and its neighbouring countries have evolved.

Chad, a Regional Space of Influence for Libya

For 42 years, from the time he came to power in 1969, Muammar Gaddafi conducted a policy of influence towards Chad. Under the presidency of Hissène Habré (1982-1990), the relationship between the two countries was hostile. Indeed, following the Libyan invasion, the struggle for control of the Aouzou strip gave rise to recurring military confrontations between 1973 and 1987, when a ceasefire was signed (Gautron, 1989). Libya abandoned all claims to Chadian territory after Idriss Déby took office in 1990. However, although the Libyan president officially supported Déby, he also regularly financed rebel movements. Idriss Déby tolerated the situation, knowing that it would be strategically unwise to carry on hostile relations with Tripoli, which would result

in the destabilisation of northern Chad. The Darfur crisis, which began in February 2003, and the resurgence of armed struggle in Chad offered the Libyan president the opportunity to position himself as a regional peacemaker. It was particularly easy for Muammar Gaddafi to play an active role as mediator, given that he had both the financial means and the authority to persuade the protagonists to negotiate (International Crisis Group, 2010).

As both an actor and a mediator in the conflicts affecting Chad, Libya also viewed its neighbour as a testing ground for its regional ambitions. From the end of the 1990s, the relationship between the two countries became part of a Libyan foreign policy focused on enhanced co-operation with sub-Saharan Africa: the creation of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) in 1998 and the adoption of the Sirte Declaration on 9 December 1999, which laid down the principle of the transformation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU) after Gaddafi renounced his pan-Arab ambitions (Huliaras, 2001).

While Chad was opposed to any form of intervention in Libya, the collapse of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in 2011 disrupted regional stability along its northern border. Southern Libya became a grey zone conducive to the establishment of local and foreign armed groups, the reactivation of old tribal rivalries and the development of all kinds of trafficking, including in arms and human beings (Tubiana, 2016). The Chadian government viewed anarchy in Libya as a major security threat, fearing its repercussions on the control of roads through the Sahara, economic exchanges in the north of the country and the proliferation of arms on its territory. Concerned about the possibility of a front opening on Chad's northern border, Idriss Déby supported Marshal Khalifa Haftar,

whom he regarded as the strongman of eastern Libya and a key ally in the fight against Chadian rebels in Libya².

Sudan, a Rear Base for Chadian Rebels

The history of the relationship between Sudan and Chad has been strongly linked to Darfur since the creation of the National Liberation Front of Chad (Front de libération national du Tchad - FROLINAT) in 1966 (Burr, Collins, 1999). The presence of FROLINAT in western Sudan turned the province into a sanctuary for opponents of the Chadian regimes (Goukouni Weddei, Hissène Habré, and Idriss Déby). The successive takeovers by Chadian rebels were made possible by support from Libya and Sudan. When Idriss Déby, then Chadian advisor for defence and security, arrived in Sudan in 1989 following his failed coup attempt against President Hissène Habré, the triangular Chadian-Libyan-Sudanese conflict intensified. His efforts to build up a military force to take over N'Djamena led to social and military polarisation throughout Darfur province (Marchal, 2006).

Although it was initially unconnected with the internal crises in Sudan (Tubiana, 2008), the political crisis in Chad eventually became interwoven with them, creating a system of conflicts in Darfur (Marchal, 2006). Idriss Déby was re-elected on 3 May 2006, in a widely boycotted election following a hasty and contested constitutional revision. His political base shrank considerably at a time when the country, an oil exporter since October 2003, was experiencing a serious economic and social crisis. The crisis of legitimacy surrounding the Chadian president made it impossible for him to contain the ethnic solidarity of his entourage with the Zaghawa people involved

in the Sudanese rebellion. The conflict in Darfur was a real boon for disaffected Chadian politico-military groups (Debos, 2007, Marchal 2016). Relations between Chad and Sudan gradually deteriorated. The political instrumentalisation of events by each country had a catalytic effect on their respective internal crises. Two factors in the Sudanese crisis accentuated the regionalisation of the conflict: the arrival of numerous Sudanese refugees in Chad and incursions into Chadian territory by Janjaweed militias pursuing rebels who had taken refuge in the camps. Violence escalated on both sides of the Chad-Sudan border, with population displacements, the destruction of villages, clashes within insurgent groups and attacks on refugee camps. It was difficult to reach a political agreement between the two countries due to their respective double dealings. On the one hand, the Chadian regime supported the Sudanese rebellion, which recruited operatives in refugee camps in Chad. On the other hand, the government in Khartoum took advantage of the internal divisions within the Zaghawa, Idriss Déby's ethnic group, and supported Chadian opponents in Sudan.

After five years of proxy war, Chad and Sudan signed a definitive peace agreement on 15 January 2010. In order to restore confidence in practical terms, the agreement provided for the setting up of a joint civil-military surveillance and security mechanism for the two-thousand-kilometre-long border shared by the two countries, the first elements of which were deployed in February.³ Consisting of a dozen posts on each side of the border and 3000

² <https://www.voafrique.com/a/le-mar%C3%A9chal-haftar-re%C3%A7u-au-tchad-par-le-pr%C3%A9sident-%C3%A9by/4617858.html>

³ <https://afriquedecryptages.wordpress.com/2018/01/16/genese-de-la-force-conjointe-du-g5-sahel/>

men, the force's mission was to police the border, prohibit hostile activities, conduct joint patrols, and combat smuggling and kidnapping (Desgrais, 2018, p.72). The force helped to make political relations between Chad and Sudan healthier by making hidden agendas more difficult. In 2011, a similar initiative was implemented between Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic, which announced the establishment of a tripartite force to protect their borders. The two forces merged in 2017 to form a Joint Border Force (FMTS).

Since the signing of the agreement in 2010, relations with Zaghawa rebels, close to the president, seem to have improved considerably and Idriss Déby continues to capitalise on his image as a regional peacemaker. Since the fall of Omar al-Bashir in 2019, Idriss Déby has managed to establish good relations with Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, nicknamed "*Hemetti*", taking advantage of their common international alignment with the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, as well as local connections.⁴

Chadian Intervention in the Central African Republic

N'Djamena has played a decisive role in the rise and subsequent ousting of the various heads of state who have succeeded one another in the Central African Republic since the 1980s, and the country has not hesitated to interfere in the affairs of its neighbour to help allied regimes come to power. Under the presidency of Ange-Félix Patassé (1993-2003), General François Bozizé, Chief of Staff of the army, found refuge in Chad when he was accused of an attempted coup d'état in 2001. In a context where Idriss Déby and Ange-Félix Patassé accused each other of supporting each other's opponents, relations between the two presi-

dents deteriorated (International Crisis Group, 2011, p. 7). François Bozizé took power in 2003 with support from Chad. In an area already beset by highway robbery, the CAR was destabilised by the crisis in Darfur, where Chadian and Sudanese armed groups took refuge.

As in the neighbouring countries, the crisis in the CAR has internal roots: a "*rebel nexus*" bringing together opponents of President Bozizé, forgotten by their former warlord, with followers of former President Ange Félix Patassé, launched attacks in the north of the country beginning in October 2006 (Debos, 2007, p. 4). The social and political turbulence in Chad, Sudan and the Central African Republic in 2007 was interconnected (Marchal, 2009). Each conflict impacted on the other due to the influx of refugees, the circulation of small arms, and the utilisation of neighbouring territories by rebel groups and government troops (Handy, 2007, p. 7).

During President Bozizé's decade in office, every year was marked by a risk of rebellion in the Central African Republic. Following years of strained relations with Idriss Déby, the sudden withdrawal of all Chadian elements from Bozizé's presidential guard in October 2012 confirmed the rift. In 2013, Séléka came to power thanks in particular to the passivity of the Chadian forces involved in the peacebuilding mission in the Central African Republic (MICOPAX), which allowed the rebels to advance towards Bangui without interception, even though such action was provided for under their mandate (Luntumbue, Massock, 2014, p. 3). This coup de force strongly contributed to the impression that Chad was biased, particularly as Séléka included many fighters of Chadian origin (Handy, 2020, p.11).

⁴ Telephone interview, researcher, October 2020.

Chad's image in the CAR therefore remained that of a key player, but one that lacked neutrality due to its plays on local influence and alliances. Following accusations of interference in the Central African crisis, Chad withdrew its troops from the African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA) in 2014 and the border between the two countries has been closed ever since.⁵

Chad's presence and influence in the CAR owes much to the fragility of the Central African government and its lack of leadership, which fuels chronic instability. As his relations with his counterparts in Sudan and Libya have shown, President Déby needs allies who are strong enough to control their borderlands. Chad needs to protect its southern region, which is endowed with agricultural capacity and oil production, and is the main source of foreign revenue for the government (Handy, 2020, p. 13). On the other side of the border, northern CAR is a sparsely populated area that has regularly served as a haven for criminal and rebel gangs. As the central government in Bangui lacks the capacity to regulate this territory, Chad offers its services, even if it means supporting non-state armed groups against the existing leadership (Handy, 2020, p. 13).

Quelling the Threat from Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin

Unlike the capital cities of its neighbouring countries, N'Djamena does not view the Lake Chad area as geographically remote. And yet, although more than half of the lake's surface area lies within Chad's territorial borders, it remains a peripheral area in the sense that it is culturally and politically distant from the centres of decision-making and power. It was not until October 2015 and the Baga Sola attacks, on

the edge of the lake, that the Chadian president visited the lake for the first time in his life (International Crisis Group, 2017, p. 6).

The emergence of the Boko Haram phenomenon in Chad is often dated to 12 February 2015, the day of the first attack perpetrated by the terrorist group in Ngouboua on the shores of Lake Chad. However, this statement should be qualified. Although Chad was not targeted until the country decided to go to war alongside its neighbours in January 2015, ending a tacit non-aggression pact with Boko Haram⁶, as far back as 2013, Boko Haram fighters used Baga Kawa as a base and sailed the lake with the complicity of local indigenous speedboat drivers who were familiar with the lake environment (International Crisis Group, 2017, p. 11).

Initially, Chad, like Niger and Cameroon, reacted with a mixture of caution and denial to the threat posed by Boko Haram, which it thought of as primarily a Nigerian problem. Until the end of 2014, Chad therefore remained an observer of the situation in Nigeria. Its participation in the fight was eventually justified for security, economic and political reasons.⁷ First of all, the capture of Baga Kawa by Boko Haram in October 2014 brought home the geographical proximity of the threat to the Chadian border.

In addition, from an economic standpoint, the group's activities have been highly disruptive to the country's trade with Nigeria and Cameroon. Most of Chad's imports depend on one of two

⁵ <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/163846/politique/le-tchad-va-fermer-sa-fronti-re-avec-la-centrafrique-jusqu-ce-que-la-crise-soit-r-solue/>

⁶ <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/international/160215/dans-la-lutte-contre-boko-haram-le-tchad-est-juge-trop-ambigu?onglet=full>

⁷ Châtelot, Le Monde, 2015 https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2015/02/06/pourquoi-le-tchad-s-engage-dans-la-lutte-contre-boko-haram_4571142_3212.html

trade routes: one carrying goods from Cotonou and Lagos via Maiduguri to N'Djamena, and the other supplying Chad via Douala (Marchal, Fasopo, p. 13). If its access routes to the sea were cut off, Chad would no longer be able to export goods, such as its livestock, but above all it would be unable to import food and manufactured goods (International Crisis Group, 2020, p. 3).

Finally, in political terms, this intervention allows it to continue to play the military diplomacy card by consolidating its alliances with Western countries and securing international funding (International Crisis Group, 2017, p. 17). Faced with Nigeria's inability to contain the threat on its own, Chad stepped in to take up the vacant military leadership position. While observers believed that Chad was rewarded by Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan for its military intervention, Idriss Déby acted mainly due to domestic concerns. While the terrorist group does not seem to have built up a real social base among the local populations of Lake Chad, it undoubtedly has sympathisers and counts Chadians in its ranks.

Chad's interventions against Boko Haram in neighbouring territories, at the request of the governments of Cameroon, Nigeria and Niger, have reinforced its status as the region's policeman. While the other countries only contain Boko Haram on their borders, Chad has a right of hot pursuit in Nigeria. The first offensive by Chadian soldiers on Nigerian territory took place in late January 2015. A few days later, other Chadian troops headed for Bosso, Niger. They confronted Boko Haram there before crossing into Nigerian territory, this time accompanied by Nigerian forces, for an operation in northern Borno. Following an appeal by Cameroonian President Paul Biya, Chadian troops also entered Cameroon. While

President Issoufou was viewed as an ally, the Cameroonian president did not appreciate Chad's intervention in the CAR. In addition, although relations between Goodluck Jonathan and Déby were difficult, the situation improved markedly after the election of Muhammadu Buhari in May 2015.

Chad's engagement against Boko Haram was ultimately the game changer that improved the country's image in the region (International Crisis Group, 2017, p. 18). In light of developments in recent years, Chad has sought to maintain good neighbourly relations through the use of its diplomatic and military tools, with the aim of containing armed dissidents and depriving them of operational sanctuaries, including by securing the right to pursue them on neighbouring territories (Colovic, 2019).

II. A FOREIGN POLICY SHAPED BY PRESIDENTIAL OPPORTUNISM

Chad's foreign policy appears to be the product of the situation in West and Central Africa on the one hand, and of President Idriss Déby's opportunism on the other, owing to his ability to take advantage of the support of his overseas partners, and particularly that of his French ally.

The political, economic and security situation over the past decade has given Chad an opportunity to strengthen its military capacity and reputation. Chad has been playing the diplomatic and military card at regional level to gain recognition for its leadership and reduce its vulnerability to upheaval in neighbouring countries as compared to the situation in the 2000s.

Idriss Déby has skilfully taken advantage of the changing regional environment, shifting his support from one actor to another when events allowed and as necessary to achieve his objectives, namely: protecting his regime, blocking his opponents and creating alliances with neighbouring countries to prevent his political opponents from setting up a rear base on their territory. The lack of institutionalisation in the foreign policy design process has undoubtedly facilitated the ability of the Chadian president's regime to shape that policy to suit his personal ambitions (Tubiana, Debos, 2017).

Like other countries with regional ambitions, Chad has based its policy of influence on two levers: the power projection capability

of its army and the deployment of proactive diplomacy to position itself as a key player in regional and international forums.

2010–2020: A Decade of Proactive Diplomacy

Over the past decade, Chad has developed a strategy to serve its proven leadership ambitions. A diplomatic network and resources have been deployed to enable the country to position itself as a key player in Central Africa and the Sahel.

According to Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Mali and head of the UN Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the end of the Darfur crisis provided Chad with an opportunity for international visibility. Since its rapprochement with Sudan in 2010, the country has been viewed as a key player within the AU and the UN (Tubiana, Debos, 2017, p. 20). The appointment of former foreign minister Moussa Faki as chair of the AU Commission in 2017⁸ was one of the most significant diplomatic gains stemming from Chad's involvement in the fight against terrorism around Lake Chad and elsewhere in the region (International Crisis Group 2017, Desgrais 2018, p. 65). The Chadian president personally undertook to defend his candidate to the heads of state.⁹ In 2014-2015, Chad sat as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

As shown in the timeline below, Chad's military interventionism has been combined with a full-fledged diplomatic offensive at the regional and international levels.

⁸ <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/who-is-moussa-faki-and-his-president>

⁹ Telephone interview, researchers, November 2020.

Chronology of Chad's diplomatic influence after 2010

2013: Appointment of Ahmad Allam-Mi, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chad (2005 to 2008) and Permanent Representative to the United Nations (2008 to 2013), to the position of Secretary General of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). He succeeded Nassour Guelendouksia Ouaido, who had been in office since 2012, and left the position in 2020, following the restructuring of the Secretary General's office, which was replaced by a Commission.

2013: Appointment of Fatima Haram Acyl, AU Commissioner for Trade and Industry. On her departure in 2017, she became vice-president of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) Commission.

2013-2020: Djimé Adoum, former Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, was the Executive Secretary of the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS).

2015: Appointment of Mahamat Saleh Annadif, former Foreign Minister (1997-2003), as Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Mali and head of MINUSMA.

2017: Moussa Faki, former Prime Minister (2003-2005) and Foreign Minister (2008-2017) became Chairperson of the AU Commission.

2020: Appointment of Mangaral Banté to the position of Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of ECCAS. He was previously advisor to the former ECCAS Secretary-General in charge of institutional reform.

2020: Appointment of Hissein Brahim Taha as Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

While the fact of the diplomatic offensive is undeniable, its analysis varies according to the observers. For some, it demonstrated a clear strategy to participate in international forums and weigh in on the decision-making process. Foreign policy was symbolically represented by the figures of the soldier and the diplomat, to paraphrase Raymond Aron. Chad's representation in certain high-level positions facilitated rapid access to the issues and allowed it to position itself diplomatically and make its voice heard in talks with other member states. According to other observers, behind the clear will to pull strings at the multilateral level to legitimise its military engagements, there was also a form of improvisation, precisely linked to the president's opportunism. In their view, not all of his actions and decisions were nec-

essarily calculated.¹⁰ In addition, the influence of Chadian diplomats varied from one organisation to another, depending on the flexibility of their internal structures (Commission, Secretariat, political body) in relation to the Conference of Heads of State, which remained the primary decision-making body. In the absence of a clear diplomatic strategy, the involvement of the Chadian army in foreign operations at least has the merit of being unambiguous about the country's ambition to gain recognition as a regional military power.

¹⁰ Entretien téléphonique avec un fonctionnaire national, décembre 2020.

Claiming Regional Military Power Status

Initially, Chad's interventions abroad were low profile, often conducted with the support of allies such as France, Libya and Sudan and in the service of partner regimes. The first operation in Central Africa took place in Congo between 1998 and 1999: 2000 soldiers were sent to help Joseph Kabila against rebels supported by Rwanda and Uganda (Lecoutre, 2016). In 2003, Chadian soldiers supported François Bozizé's coup d'état in the CAR. The same year, they entered Sudan for the first time, alongside the Sudanese army, to fight against the Darfur rebels. In November 2010, Chadian troops launched a combined ground and air attack to dislodge rebels occupying the Central African town of Birao (International Crisis Group, 2011, p. 19).

Renouncing bilateral – and sometimes clandestine – operations, since the 2010s, Chad has prioritised official, multilateral interventions as part of international peacekeeping forces or counter-terrorism coalitions. These various deployments are hardly random, and this aspect of Chad's foreign policy is notably

underpinned by its alliance with Paris (Tubiana, Debos, 2017, p. 16).

In the Central African Republic, Chadian troops have formed the backbone of the successive regional forces mandated to consolidate peace and security, while helping to demobilise armed groups: Central African Multinational Force - FOMUC (2002-2008), MICOPAX (2008-2013), and MISCA (2013-2014) (Marchal, 2016, p. 11). However, the partiality of Chadian troops in the CAR undermined the efforts undertaken to pacify the country, leading to Chad's withdrawal from MISCA in 2014.

About-Turn on the Sahel and Positioning in West Africa

By positioning itself in Mali, Chad has established itself as a continental military power, capable of operating simultaneously in multiple theatres of operation, including outside its regional zone of influence. The impact of Chad's engagements goes far beyond the need to fight terrorism in the Sahel. On 17 January 2012, a Tuareg rebellion – the fifth since 1963 – broke out in the wake of the Libyan conflict, followed soon after by a military coup in Bamako – the third since 1968 – and the defeat of the Malian army, upon which rebel forces declared the independence of Azawad (Holder, 2013). Following this series of events, as the situation continued to deteriorate, France decided on 13 January 2013 to engage in Mali within the framework of Operation Serval, to reconquer the territory lost by the national army. Even before the launch of the French operation, Alpha Condé and Mohamedou Issoufou advocated with Paris for Chad to play a role in Mali (Marchal, 2016, p. 17). On 16 January 2013, President Déby addressed the National Assembly and announced that Chadian troops would be sent to Mali. In his speech,

Review of Chadian contingents engaged in peace operations (in 2020)

- United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO) since 2010: 7 soldiers
- MICOPAX: 850 soldiers
- MISCA replaces MICOPAX (in 2013): 850 soldiers
- African-led International Support Mission to Mali (MISMA/AFISMA): 2000 men
- United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) replaces (MISMA/AFISMA): 1434 soldiers

he stressed Chad's "reputation interest": "*The Chadian army is not only seasoned and professional, but it is also and above all highly respected for its military achievements. The current theatre of operations, the Sahel, holds no secrets for it.*" (Maoundonodji, 2013)

While France's support in 2006 and 2008 saved the Chadian government, which was threatened by rebellions, in extremis, the Chadian intervention in Mali provided an opportunity to redeem another "blood debt" to France (Magrin, 2013, p. 2). François Hollande's victory in 2012 left Idriss Déby fearing ostracism by his historical ally. The Sahelian crisis provided an unprecedented opportunity to forge links with the new president, with the support of certain French officers, and recover its diplomatic umbrella at the international level.¹¹ Chad has created an income for itself that allows it to justify its domestic policy choices in the name of its commitment to the fight against terrorism (Handy, 2020, p. 9). This requires particular skill on the part of the Chadian president, since the financial and human costs of his deployments undermine the efforts undertaken on the domestic front since the return to peace in 2009.

Chad's deployment of troops to Mali was unanimously welcomed by the international community, at a time when West African countries were hesitant about forming a military coalition to confront armed jihadist groups. Idriss Déby took the unprecedented step of sending 2000 soldiers to Mali via Niger to fight activists in northern Mali. Chad's intervention was also an opportunity to reaffirm its closeness with West Africa. In the address announcing the intervention in 2013, President Déby stressed the fact that Chad and Mali both belonged to the Sahelian region as well as to joint cooperation bodies such as CILSS, CEN-SAD and the Niger Basin Authority (ABN/NBA).

Already, in the early 2010s, Idriss Déby expressed a desire to join the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), because it was more dynamic than its French-speaking counterpart in Central Africa, ECCAS, which he regarded as one of the weakest organisations on the continent. In 2011, Chad was granted observer status in ECOWAS and engaged as an AU mediator alongside four other countries (South Africa, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Tanzania) to resolve the electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire (Lecoutre, 2016). Under the Chadian president's strategy, the country's membership in multiple regional organisations was key to highlighting its military diplomacy and served as a lever of action for its foreign policy.

¹¹ Telephone interview, researcher, December 2020.

III. REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS: DRIVERS FOR ACTION IN CHAD

To overcome the rigidity of the legal frameworks of African regional organisations, the Chadian president appealed to individual institutions on a case-by-case basis, depending on their capacity for influence and the opportunities they provided to attract donor attention (Gnanguénon, 2020). This diplomatic and military engagement was rarely criticised, as

the organisations covered different geographical areas corresponding to Chad's strategic interests, at the crossroads of North, West and Central Africa. Regional organisations were used as levers of action to deal with transnational and cross-border conflicts, and in some cases even served as intermediaries for the creation of coalitions, as in the case of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC). This brief review highlights the fact that the organisations in which Chad is a member do not share the same history, nor the same objectives, and even less the same capacity for action.

Key dates regarding Chad's participation in regional organisations

1964 : Establishment of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) of which Chad is a founding member and whose headquarters are in N'Djamena

1983: Creation of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), of which Chad is a founding member – the organisation in charge of the African Standby Force

1994: Creation of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States (CEMAC), of which Chad is a founding member – deployment of FOMAC (2002-2008)

1998: Creation of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), of which Chad is a founding member and whose headquarters was transferred to N'Djamena in 2019

2006-2007: Chad held the chair of CEMAC

2009-2015: Chad held the chair of ECCAS for the first time

2011: Observer status with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

2013: The African Union set up the Nouakchott Process, of which Chad was a founding member – Chad participated in the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC)

2014: Creation of the G5 Sahel, of which Chad was a founding member and also participated in the deployment of its joint force

2015: Transfer of the headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to N'Djamena

2016: Chairmanship of the AU

2016: Chairmanship of the G5 Sahel

2017: Chairmanship of ECCAS

2017-2019: Chad held the chair of CEMAC

2019: CEN-SAD headquarters was moved to N'Djamena

2021: Chairmanship of the G5 Sahel

The Lake Chad Basin Commission

The LCBC was in 1964 for the purpose of regulating and controlling the use of water and other natural resources in the area. With the recession of the waters of Lake Chad and the emergence of Boko Haram beginning in 2009, the LCBC reactivated in 2012 its Multinational Joint Security Force (MNJSF), which was originally created in 1998, and renamed it the Multinational Joint Task Force. The LCBC acts as a cooperative intermediary between the four founding member states (Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria), which were subsequently joined by Benin, to deal with cross-border security issues and military cooperation. It provides comprehensive geographic coverage to bridge the cooperation gap between ECOWAS and ECCAS.

From 2015 onwards, Chad, which positioned itself at the forefront of the fight against Boko Haram and its dissidences, played a leading role in the revival and deployment of the MNJTF (Döring, 2019, p. 60). President Idriss Déby has voiced growing frustration that Chadian troops have been shouldering the bulk of the fighting compared to the meagre support proffered by neighbouring countries, notably Nigeria (International Crisis Group, 2020, p. ii). Most observers interpret these statements as an attempt to pressure donors to pay more for Chadian deployments.

The Economic Community of Central African States

ECCAS is an REC whose objective is to develop capacities to maintain peace, security and stability, which are recognised as essential preconditions for the economic and social development of its member states. In keeping

with the principle of subsidiarity and the historical involvement of neighbouring countries in the Central African Republic crisis, the ECCAS states deployed MICOPAX in 2008. This mission, which took over from the Central African Multinational Force (FOMUC), comprised 2700 troops from Cameroon, Chad, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. Despite the presence of MICOPAX, President Bozizé was overthrown by Séléka rebels in March 2013, highlighting the contradictions of a force made up of troops from neighbouring countries whose strategic choices were dictated by their own national interests.

The transition from MICOPAX to the African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA) in August 2013 confirmed that the AU had recovered its leadership role in handling the issue of the Central African Republic against the backdrop of its rivalry with ECCAS, which would have liked to have kept control (Handy, 2020, p. 11). In January 2014, following the failure of the transition and the departure of Michel Djotodia, an extraordinary ECCAS summit was convened on the initiative of Idriss Déby. Déby took advantage of Chad's chairmanship to reaffirm ECCAS's pre-eminence in the management of the Central African crisis (Luntumbue, Massock, 2014). In a climate of growing hostility towards the Chadian contingent, which was regularly accused by the population of having ties with the former Séléka rebellion, Chad withdrew its MISCA troops in April 2014. MINUSCA, created by Security Council Resolution 2149 (2014), was deployed without a Chadian contingent, against the backdrop of a deepening Central African crisis that previous missions had had difficulty containing (Handy, 2020, p. 9).

The G5 Sahel

Between February 2014 and December 2015, the G5 Sahel transitioned from a group of states aiming to coordinate their development and security policies to an international organisation with legal status, whose member countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) stated their readiness to deploy a force to jointly fight insecurity on their borders. As early as the summer of 2013, there was a consensus among the chiefs of staff of all five countries on the need to develop greater regional cooperation to control cross-border territories and prevent the spread of jihadist groups beyond Mali's borders (Desgrais, 2018, p. 27). The creation of the G5 Sahel appeared to be an opportunity to formalise this cross-border cooperation.

During the creation of the G5 Sahel and the setting up of its joint force, it was undeniable that the voice of President Déby carried weight with his Nigerian, Malian, Mauritanian and Burkinabe counterparts thanks to his seniority in power.¹² In November 2014, the Chadian authorities shared their experience with the FMTS (the Joint Border Force between Chad and Sudan). This experience was viewed as a good practice, which could inspire the institutionalisation of military cooperation in the three border areas of the Sahel-Saharan strip (the border between Mali and Mauritania in the West; the border between Chad and Niger in the East; and the so-called three borders zone in the Centre, between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger).¹³

While Chad was particularly active in the process of developing the G5 Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S), it was less prominent during its G5 Sahel chairmanship in 2015. Some observers explain this by the country's difficult domestic situation caused by the drop in oil prices and political tensions linked to the 2016 presidential election. In

January 2017, the election of Chadian Moussa Faki Mahamat, who possessed in-depth knowledge of the Sahel area, helped spur a change in the AU's policy on the G5 Sahel. In March, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) approved the Concept of Operations (CONOPS) for the FC-G5S, authorised the deployment of the Joint Force, and forwarded the CONOPS to the UN Security Council. The AU Guide recognises the G5 Sahel Joint Force as a sub-regional security arrangement (AU Handbook, 2020, p. 91).

Whereas Chad had already deployed an initial contingent of 750 troops under the G5 Sahel, a second military contingent of around 1000 troops was planned for October 2020, to reinforce the G5's action in the three borders region. Announced at the close of the Pau Summit in March 2019, the deployment of this battalion was the focus of negotiations between Paris and N'Djamena, particularly with regard to its cost.¹⁴ While questions remain as to the likely extent of Chad's involvement during its upcoming chairmanship of the G5 Sahel in 2021, Chad has reiterated its willingness to set up a Regional Police Academy (RPA), an institution that forms part of the G5 Sahel architecture.

The Community of Sahel-Saharan States

CEN-SAD was created in Tripoli on 4 February 1998 to strengthen economic, social and cultural ties between its six member countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, Libya and Sudan). The organisation, which has had REC status since 2000, now includes 25 states

¹² Telephone interview with a national official, December 2020.

¹³ <http://ultimaratio-blog.org/archives/8650>

¹⁴ Telephone interview with a national official, November 2020.

spread across North, West, Central and East Africa. In December 2001, it deployed an operation of some 300 soldiers from Libya, Sudan and Djibouti to secure Bangui, at the request of President Ange-Félix Patassé, following an attempted coup d'état attributed to General Bozizé (International Crisis Group, 2011, p. 6).

In 2013, Chad re-launched CEN-SAD, bringing together more than 20 member countries, and asked them to pay their dues. Following his appointment as chairperson of the AU in 2016, the Chadian president had the ambition of taking on a more important role in Libyan mediation and considered using CEN-SAD. He decided against the idea due to a combination of a lack of financial resources and insufficient political capital. More symbolically, the headquarters of the organisation was transferred from Tripoli to N'Djamena in 2019.

The Central African Economic and Monetary Community

CEMAC was created on 16 March 1994 with the objective of promoting peace and harmonious development in its member states, through the creation of an economic and monetary union. In October 2002, the member states decided to send a regional peacekeeping force to Bangui to replace the force deployed by CEN-SAD. At the time, peace and security were not part of CEMAC's mandate, which was strictly economic, but ECCAS, which was then in the process of being set in place as the regional structure dedicated to promoting peace and security, was neither politically nor institutionally ready to take on the role (International Crisis Group, 2011, p. 7). FOMUC was deployed to Bangui from December 2002 to July 2008.

Ultimately, Chad, like other policymakers, prioritised bilateral agreements, without forgoing the possibility of calling on regional organisations depending on the national interests at stake. In addition to the country's contribution to MINUSMA and its FMTS troops, President Déby wanted the Chadian armed forces to play a central role in the establishment of credible African forces recognised by the AU. The Sahel was a good example of the paradoxical effects of a situation whereby AU activism, by urging states to increase cooperation, led to the emergence of ad hoc security mechanisms concluded outside the APSA framework (Desgrais, 2018, p. 44).

IV. DRIVING FORCES BEHIND CHAD'S PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL MILITARY COALITIONS

African coalitions, which are an integral part of the security landscape, involve state representatives deploying joint forces to stabilise areas threatened by non-state armed groups, with the support of foreign partners (Williams, 2019). Regional coalitions are preferred alternatives because they are more flexible in adapting to ever-changing security threats (armed groups, crime and jihadism, and piracy, inter alia). They allow Chad to engage with allies capable of providing military capacity with a sufficiently high level of reactivity to deploy rapidly to theatres of operation.

From an institutional point of view, the cumbersome decision-making process of regional organisations is replaced by less stringent decision-making processes. Another advantage of regional coalitions is that they allow countries to choose their allies and cooperate with their neighbours according to the affinities of the moment, rather than being obliged to act within the framework of regional organisations created long ago, where members are bound by a past history, sometimes fraught with rivalries, as is the case with ECCAS.

In order to reduce constraints on the engagement of troops, other than the rights of pursuit granted in the framework of the Multinational Joint Task Force and FC-G5 Sahel, the principle remains that of each to his own country and every man for himself. The added value of regional coalitions is linked to the leeway they give the allies to assert their sovereignty

and act unilaterally, without risk of sanctions, such as Chad's unilateral offensives in 2020 outside the MNJTF. Distrust between the four contributing countries of the MNJTF, which is partly due to historical antagonisms (Nigeria/Cameroon), different perceptions of the threats and disagreements on how to deal with them, are all obstacles in their ability to develop closer cooperation, especially between their armies (International Crisis Group, 2020, p.4).

Beyond the abovementioned points, three parameters appear to have influenced Chad's choice to participate in ad hoc military coalitions.

A Supply and Demand Approach to Security

The President's pragmatism is without a doubt one of the most defining features of Chad's foreign policy. Déby has skilfully taken advantage of a context characterised by regional demand and supply. His foreign interventions, notably in the management of the Sahel crisis, have allowed him to tie the security of his regime at home with his response to a strong regional and international demand for military support. The president has capitalised on the firepower of his army and the battle-hardened nature of his troops, projecting them into the CAR, Mali and the Lake Chad region. By positioning himself in this system of supply and demand, Idriss Déby has won on several fronts. Firstly, he has found a way to ease domestic tensions in the country and within his ethnic group by offering people government positions, particularly in security and the armed forces, and then by projecting this military apparatus abroad (Marchal, 2016, p. 17). In addition, the development of the army has drawn attention away from domestic criticisms of the regime and allowed him to gain support from his foreign partners.

Securing Chad's Peripheral Areas

Over the past four decades, Chad has experienced civil wars and rebellions combining both domestic and international dimensions. The country has a long history of military coups in which armed rebel groups, based in poorly governed areas, attack and in some cases overthrow the regime in power. To ensure the survival of his regime, President Déby therefore ensured that the leaders in neighbouring countries were strong enough allies to control their borders. The rift between presidents Déby and Bozizé was sparked when the latter could no longer control the northern part of the CAR. Similarly, Idriss Déby became involved in the Sudanese transition very soon after the fall of Omar al-Bashir's¹⁵ regime to make sure he had an ally in power.

Idriss Déby's main reason for maintaining good neighbourly relations was therefore to ensure that uncontrolled areas in bordering countries would not be used as rear bases for his opponents. The rapprochement with Sudan in 2010 deprived Chad's armed opposition of the support of the Sudanese government and of most of its military capabilities. However, while most fighters returned to Chad and resumed civilian life, the remnants of the Chadian rebellion remain active, particularly in Libya, where armed factions are recruiting fighters. In the west and south, Chad's borders remain insecure due to the presence of Boko Haram and the risks posed by political instability in the CAR.

International Recognition and Support

The close relationship between Chad and its former coloniser, France, has been a defining and enduring feature of the country's foreign

policy since independence (Tubiana, Debos, 2017 p.17, Marchal 2015). The Franco-Chadian intervention in Mali was consistent with the will of both African and European countries to "*Africanise*" crisis management on the continent since the 1990s (Esmenjaud, Franke, 2009). The declarations of the Elysée Summit in 2013¹⁶ confirmed France's position of support for African regional initiatives. France's reversal on the Malian issue, in which Paris requested Chad's participation, was perceived by N'Djamena as an act of legitimisation of its military diplomacy, which it used largely to its advantage. Chad has taken on a more overt leadership role, going beyond military ambitions and beyond Central Africa, the regional space to which it belongs (Luntumbue, Massock, 2014, p. 8).

France and the United States, which are concerned about the rise of jihadist groups in the Sahel-Saharan strip, view Chad as a favoured and reliable partner. Another advantage of the deployment of Chadian soldiers is that it facilitates the training and financing of a national army whose performance and credibility are enhanced. In the case of the MNJTF, donors paid for equipment and training beyond what they would have been prepared to offer on a purely bilateral basis (International Crisis Group, 2020, p. 15). Moreover, while the contributing armies operate mainly on their own territories, the support obtained through the multilateral format has translated into national military successes benefiting the presidents (Döring, 2019 p. 63, Brubacher, 2017). Chad's international engagement has thus provided the country with increased political and financial support.

¹⁵ Telephone interview, researchers, December 2020.

¹⁶ <https://www.vie-publique.fr/discours/189790-declaration-finale-du-sommet-de-elysee-pour-la-paix-et-la-securite-en>

Accordingly, in September 2017, President Idriss Déby attended an international donor conference in Paris to secure €16.5 billion in funding for his country's national development programme.¹⁷ Thus, once again, the Chadian president capitalised on his military engagements beyond national borders to offset their economic and social costs to his domestic policy.

V. THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC COST OF THE REGIONAL SECURITY POLICY

Conflicts and insecurity in Chad and neighbouring countries have strengthened Chad's political, diplomatic and military position, as well as its leadership in Central Africa and the Sahel. However, decades of armed conflict, a focus on the military and weak governance have done nothing to reduce the risks of political, economic and social instability in Chad.

Politically, President Déby and his party, the Patriotic Salvation Movement (*Mouvement patriotique du salut* - MPS), have dominated the Chadian political scene since Déby's accession to power in December 1990. The new constitution, enacted in 2018, allows the President to stand for re-election after his current term in 2021 for two more consecutive six-year terms. Political power in Chad is retained through the threat and use of violence, allowing for no democratic change of government (UNECA, 2018, p. 7). The underlying problems have yet to be resolved: resources are still unevenly distributed; economic and political elites continue to enrich themselves with total impunity; elections are rigged; and power remains concentrated within the President's clan and family, while elites from other regional and ethnic backgrounds are co-opted (Tubiana, Debos, 2017, p. 33)

While his regime is contested, even within his own ethnic group, President Déby capitalises on international interest in his army and the

17 <https://www.afdb.org/fr/news-and-events/afdb-pledges-us-540-million-in-support-of-chad-making-it-one-of-the-largest-donors-at-paris-roundtable-17340>

global threat of terrorism. His close relationship with Western partners is an essential part of his survival strategy and Idriss Déby takes advantage of this situation to strengthen his legitimacy. Chadian civil society and the opposition regularly express their frustration with the unconditional international support afforded to President Déby (International Crisis Group, 2016). To enable Chad to continue to play its role as a regional policeman, Paris and Washington ignore calls from international NGOs to hold the regime accountable for its human rights abuses and anti-democratic practices.¹⁸

In addition, the increase in military expenditure due to the country's counter-terrorism efforts has exacerbated the social and fiscal crisis, leading to budget cuts in priority areas. Cuts in social services have often been ascribed to decreases in oil revenues, whereas the problem actually lies in the continuing high level of military expenditure and the cost of counter-terrorism operations. Between 2000 and 2009, Chad's military expenditure increased by 663% (Marchal, 2016, p. 8). Military spending climbed from 55 million euros in 2005 to 203 million euros in 2006, peaking at 552 million euros in 2009 and reaching 8% of GDP.¹⁹

Oil revenue was used to purchase military equipment, recruit additional military personnel and support client networks to strengthen the power of the Chadian President. It was only after 2009 that income from oil began to be invested in other sectors. In 2016, the defence budget was estimated at 238 million euros, representing 11% of the total state budget and 2.53% of GDP (Desgrais, 2018, p. 88). In 2020, approximately 40% of the country's resources were used for the security sector²⁰ (CCFD, 2012).

Chad's socio-political and economic vulnerability is rooted in decades of neglect of the needs of the majority of the population by the central government. Chad's instability and conflicts are rooted in poor governance at all levels of government. Challenges include corruption, ethnic and religious divisions, impunity, 27 years of undemocratic changes of government, and the fiscal crisis (UNECA, 2018). The socio-political crisis has exacerbated long-standing antagonisms (Handy, 2007, p. 2).

The country ranks low on the governance index, standing at 47th out of 54 African countries on the Ibrahim Index of African Governance.²¹ Decades of conflict and rebellion have heightened this marginalisation. Basic infrastructure and public services such as health and education are barely developed or available in urban areas and largely absent in rural areas. Despite the oil windfall and substantial progress in recent years, Chad remains one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. It has stayed at the bottom of the Human Development Index (HDI), ranking 187 out of 189 countries in 2019.²² The Lake region, where Boko Haram's activities are focused, suffers from severe poverty and has been marginalised by decades of under-investment. Much of the population depends on the informal sector and is vulnerable to exploitation, corruption and extortion. Chad's spending on priority areas such as health is shockingly low, while

¹⁸ Telephone interview, representative of a Chadian NGO, December 2020.

¹⁹ <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/chad/backing-chad-west-faces-moral-hazards>

²⁰ Telephone interview, researcher, December 2020.

²¹ <https://iiag.online/app.html?loc=TD&meas=GOVERNANCE&view=overview>

²² http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr_2019_overview_-_french.pdf

²³ Telephone interview, representative of a Chadian NGO, December 2020.

60% of the country's expenditure on education is borne by the communities.²³

In this context, the involvement of Chadian soldiers in the sub-region is primarily perceived as a benefit for the regime, as a distraction from its shortcomings in terms of development and as a means of strengthening its power (Tisseron, 2015, p. 11). The Chadian army is unpopular within society and is perceived more as a militia loyal to President Déby's regime than as a true national army. The nature of the Chadian army and the homogeneity of its chain of command, which allows for the rapid deployment of a strike force abroad, is also the main cause of its lack of domestic legitimacy (International Crisis Group, 2016, pp. 7 and 9). The army remains organised along ethnic lines, with President Déby's Zaghawa ethnic group dominating the military hierarchy and enjoying almost total impunity. It is also highly politicised, rife with clientelism and viewed as the main obstacle to democratic change (International

Crisis Group, 2016). Because it is a two-track army, comprising elite troops on the one hand and under-equipped soldiers on the other, the deaths of soldiers in combat create tensions between the families, who demand payment of a pension.

Over and above the fight against Boko Haram, the main threat to Chad's long-term stability is the national political crisis. The political, economic and social exclusion and marginalisation of Chad's peripheral regions has created a breeding ground for the emergence of various politico-military movements that have used violence to challenge the power of the central government. Chad is plagued by numerous risk factors at a time when its political elites have lost all credibility: the revolt of its unemployed youth population, rising inter-community tensions – particularly between herders and farmers²⁴ – and the failure to address the financial and health crisis are deepening inequalities.

24 <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20201212-tchad-les-%C3%A9v%C3%AAsques-alertent-la-pr%C3%A9sidence-sur-les-conflits-entre-%C3%A9leveurs-et-agriculteurs>

CONCLUSION

This study examines Chad's motivations for engaging in multinational joint operations over the past decade and highlights some of the issues underlying the formation of regional coalitions in Africa. Exploring why African states choose to engage in regional arrangements rather than in RECs and the AU entails looking beyond the formal agreements concluded and the stated objectives of military deployments.

Certain states' preference for military coalitions is neither new nor unique to Africa, as demonstrated by the engagements in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. Chad, which is no exception, has also favoured an all-military approach to the current security challenges in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, in line with the approach it adopted in previous conflicts (Sudan, CAR). The protection of Idriss Déby's regime is more than ever inseparable from its ability to influence its regional environment and contain the political, economic, social, health, and environmental consequences of the insecurity at its borders.

In a context where the APSA has become a laboratory for regional cooperation, serving as both the legal framework for the approval of its member states' deployments and as the financial pipeline for foreign funding, the study on Chad has shed light on certain determining factors. Firstly, coalition-building is based on informal interactions, shared interests and an interplay of influences that often precede military interventions. Moreover, a military response can only be circumstantial and time-bound, as it does not address the root causes of conflict. Finally, the nature of cross-border threats and the involvement of neighbouring countries act

as both catalysts for coalition building and obstacles to their implementation. This explains the often uneven and limited results of these agreements. Thus, while Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria and Chad have entered into formal cooperation agreements, they have done so under acute pressure to respond to growing threats and satisfy domestic policy concerns. The MNJTF remains the product of a fragile political consensus between governments, all of which have different views on the nature of the threat and the actions the force should take to counter it (International Crisis Group, 2020).

In this context, what lessons can be learned from "à la carte" regional cooperation?

First of all, there is no denying that while the discourse emphasises multilateral action, its attractiveness to states is linked to the scope it provides them to promote their national agendas. In the case of Chad, the use of diplomacy and the army does not support any regional or pan-African project, and its approach is far from being accepted by all its neighbours. The regional vision of the allies behind the rapid development of new forms of cooperation should therefore not be exaggerated: *"relations between African states continue to be dominated by geopolitics of sovereignty and mistrust."*²⁵

Furthermore, the use of coalitions fosters confusion between the coalition as a means and regional stability as an end. As demonstrated by Chad, participating in a coalition provides an opportunity to act quickly, with minimal constraints (legal, logistical, financial, etc.) on state action, while relying on ad hoc alliances that do not create long-term commitments between allies. Participation in a coalition is

²⁵ <https://theconversation.com/lafrique-a-lheure-du-nouveau-regionalisme-securitaire-72945>

primarily a reflection of the pragmatism of the political and military actors involved, even if it means temporarily setting aside certain differences to counter a common threat (as was the case between Nigeria and Cameroon or between Cameroon and Chad).

Ultimately, the formation of coalitions highlights certain invariants in the practice of collective security in Africa. While this form of “à la carte” regional cooperation may at first appear detrimental to the implementation of the APSA, the opportunistic approach adopted by African states also has paradoxical effects. Thus, while the APSA is criticised for its bureaucratic and political unwieldiness, the heads of state revive the organisations that best serve their interests of the moment (LCBC) or even create new ones (G5 Sahel). Although their effectiveness is contested, the RECs and the AU have never disappeared from the institutional landscape and remain essential mechanisms for raising funds and obtaining support from partners. In this context, Chad has managed to monetise its security services by echoing

the discourse of “*African solutions to African problems*” and responding to donors’ concerns.

Aside from their limited contribution to countries’ domestic stability, the use of coalitions raises further questions as to their effects on national and regional governance. As the case of Chad illustrates, it is difficult to believe, in this day and age, that cooperation based on fragile consensus and ad hoc alliances can have a positive impact on governance. The effectiveness of regional arrangements can only be limited if they are confined to military actions, conducted by states whose sole ambition is to deploy their army with support from international partners. Above all, they highlight the lack of real motivation on the part of the states to set aside their hunger for power to respond to national expectations in terms of justice, redistribution of resources and protection of the people. There is a risk that coalitions will become just another form of ‘window dressing’ for state institutions that suffer from poor governance and a lack of internal legitimacy and are slow to reform.

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About this publication

Chad plays a strategic role in regional cooperation in Central Africa. Since 2013, Ahmad Allam-Mi has been Secretary General of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the country participates in the Multinational Joint Task Force, established in the framework of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) in 2014. Chad also plays a key military role in West Africa and the Sahel, notably in Mali. In 2015, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, former Chadian Foreign Minister (1997-2003), was appointed Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Mali and head of the UN Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The country is also a founding member of the G5-Sahel, launched in 2014, which deployed a joint force across the Sahel in 2017. Chadian diplomacy has become

more active and influential in recent years. After gaining a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council in 2014 and 2015, Chad took over the leadership of the African Union Commission, with Moussa Faki's appointment as its Chairperson in 2017. In 2019, Chad signed an agreement with the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) to transfer the organisation's headquarters from Tripoli to N'Djamena in a bid to revitalise the regional economic community. This raises the question of the factors that have guided Chad's decision to participate in the deployment of such coalitions. The main focus of this study is to analyse and clarify the factors and the consequences of Chad's strategies on developments in regional cooperation.

