Chad: Between Ambition and Fragility

Translation from French
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**Executive Summary**

Chad has become an important partner of the West in the fight against jihadism in the Sahel, but the regime’s stress points are quickly growing and 2016 is proving to be a challenging year. In addition to mounting tensions ahead of the 10 April presidential election and growing social discontent, the country is facing a major economic crisis, growing intra-religious tensions and deadly Boko Haram attacks, even as the movement weakens. The government’s predominantly military approach, pursued at the expense of political and social engagement in areas affected by jihadist violence, risks exacerbating tensions. Meanwhile, as an election approaches that is likely to see President Idriss Déby win a fifth term, many Chadians believe that the absence of democratic change or a viable succession plan could lead to a violent crisis. It is imperative to open political space and create sustainable state institutions capable of gaining the people’s support. This will require a shift in strategy by both national authorities and their international partners.

Until recently, Chad was considered a poor country, lacking in influence and facing the constant threat of its rebellions. But this has changed: Chad normalised relations with Sudan in 2010, began producing oil and became a critical military power in the Sahel-Saharan strip in particular, but also further south, in the Central African Republic (CAR). By deploying its soldiers on multiple fronts, including in a heavily-criticised intervention in CAR, as well as in Mali and more recently in the Lake Chad basin to fight Boko Haram, the regime is pursuing a strategy of military diplomacy, hoping to lead the fight against terrorism in the region. In so doing, Chad has consolidated its alliances with Western countries founded on fighting a common enemy, but which some Chadians view as an insurance policy for a regime that lacks legitimacy. The nature of this partnership, rooted in a long history of close relations with the West, carries significant political and democratic risks.

Chad remains domestically fragile and is facing an unprecedented security threat. The country, which has traditionally experienced ethno-regional rebellions, is today engaged in a new kind of fight: an asymmetric battle against the violent jihadist movement Boko Haram. Even though the group has not built a constituency in Chadian society, there are undeniably Chadian nationals in Boko Haram’s ranks. After suffering a first attack at the beginning of 2015, Chad’s security apparatus must both prevent terrorist attacks in the capital and tackle a guerrilla-style insurgency in the Lake Chad area. Those living in the Lake Chad region are facing deadly Boko Haram suicide attacks and frequent raids, resulting in deaths and massive population displacements. Though military operations by the countries of the region have weakened the group, it remains a serious threat. Meanwhile, instability in Libya continues to be of great concern in N’Djamena.

The government, fearing further attacks on Chadian soil including in N’Djamena, has adopted a series of measures to strengthen security, adapt the laws at its disposal to address the new threats and further police religious space. While many Chadians, especially in the capital, support these counter-terrorism policies, voices denouncing abuses by security forces during routine checks, as well as arbitrary arrests and summons, are growing louder.
The country is also facing a major economic crisis due to both the regional spread of Boko Haram attacks, which have hindered trade with Nigeria and Cameroon, and the drop in oil price, particularly damaging given the economy’s strong dependence on oil revenue. As a result, the government has been forced to make budget cuts. Social discontent is growing as the election nears, and many issues have the potential to mobilise the population, including the cost of living, budgetary austerity, corruption and impunity. Protests have taken a more political hue with protesters denouncing President Déby’s candidacy for a fifth term. The political and social climate remains very tense and the state’s repression of demonstrations and harassment of civil society could aggravate it further.

Finally, the government’s desire to police and control religious space, including banning the burqa and promoting a “Chadian” Sufi Islam, is widely supported but has also met some resistance. This resistance has revealed the strong antagonism between mainstream Sufi currents and fundamentalist minorities against a backdrop of a significant Wahhabi expansion, especially among the youth. While these intra-Muslim tensions are not an immediate threat, in the medium-term they could weaken the country’s social fabric.

In the face of these accumulating challenges, Chadian authorities must avoid the politics of religious or geographic exclusion. The greatest threat to stability in Chad in the long-term is not Boko Haram – though the determined fight against the group must continue – but a national political crisis, which would create fertile ground for all sorts of violent actors, including jihadists. To avoid this, the Chadian state must open political space and build legitimate and sustainable institutions, capable of outlasting the current regime.

Nairobi/Brussels, 30 March 2016
Chad: Between Ambition and Fragility

I.  Introduction

After a long period of unrest and conflict, Chad is now often seen as a relatively stable country in a troubled region. On the day after Chad’s election to the United Nations Security Council in 2013,1 its foreign affairs minister declared: “Chad, which has been a subject on the Security Council’s agenda for decades, has become a principal actor”; “Chad, which was described as a failed state a few years ago, is not only present here, it is playing an active role”.2 However, this stability is clearly an illusion.

Although few doubts remain about the outcome of the presidential election scheduled to take place on 10 April, the opposition parties have decided not to boycott the election as they did in 2011. This ballot will take place in a very tense atmosphere. Beyond the electoral competition and the early disputes, especially on the time allotted to candidates on public media, the campaign has highlighted intense social frustration and anger.

The growth of social movements, which are attracting young people in particular, reflects a deep discontent within society. This stems from an accumulation of crises that could generate further conflicts. The country faces a political crisis resulting from 26 years without a democratic change in leadership, the government’s failure to keep its promises to fight corruption and impunity, a major economic and financial crisis that has hit employment and finally, the new security challenge posed by the jihadist group Boko Haram’s attacks since January 2015.3

International Crisis Group published several reports on Chad between 2006 and 2011, the last being Africa Without Qaddafi: The Case of Chad.4 This new report shows that the regime’s regional ambitions, which have led President Idriss Déby to become the head of the African Union (AU), risk being frustrated by the country’s political and economic vulnerabilities, the absence of a social contract and the divisive effects of growing fragility in its religious model. This report is part of a series on the threat posed by jihadist terrorism in the Sahel and the Lake Chad region and the response by affected states and the international community.5 It is based on interviews in N’Djamena and Baga Sola on the shore of Lake Chad at the end of 2015 and in

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3 The name “Boko Haram” was not chosen by the movement itself but by non-violent Salafi groups that wanted to distance themselves from it. For simplicity’s sake and because of its widespread use, we nevertheless use this name in the report.
2016, as well as in North Cameroon in March 2016. It also draws on discussions with nationals of neighbouring countries and foreign partners.

The report briefly describes how Chad has strengthened its position in the region and renewed its partnership with the West through the fight against terrorism. It goes on to explore in more detail several factors that could generate internal instability in the medium-term. To that end, it describes the economic and financial crisis facing the country, the dangers associated with terrorism and the government’s response to it, and finally the growth of intra-religious tensions that do not pose an immediate threat to stability but may be problematic in the medium term.
II. Linchpin in the Fight Against Terrorism

In an unstable and violent part of the world, Chad is seeking to position itself as the subregional policeman. Its intervention alongside French forces in Mali in 2013, its major involvement in combating the terrorist group Boko Haram, and its presence in the coalition formed by Saudi Arabia in Yemen, confirm its ambition to become a military power and thereby increase its influence in the region.

A. Subregional Policeman

1. At the heart of a conflict-ridden region

Chad is surrounded by areas of instability. To the east, the crisis in Darfur continues to rage, as shown by the displacement of tens of thousands of Sudanese in February 2016 following clashes between government forces and rebels belonging to Abdelwahid Mohammed Ahmed Nur’s faction of the Sudan Liberation Army; to the south, despite a lull during the presidential and legislative elections, the conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR) is far from over and has highlighted strong identity-based tensions; to the north, the Libyan civil war continues; and to the west, Boko Haram which, though weakened in terms of fire-power, still poses a major threat.

In the north of neighbouring Niger, Islamist groups such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) have exploited the state’s absence in desert areas to conduct all kinds of illegal cross-border activities. To the west, Boko Haram, which has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) and now calls itself Islamic State’s West Africa Province, is firmly established in northern Nigeria and in Cameroon. It is also trying to get a foothold in Chad, as indicated by the many armed attacks along the Chadian shore of Lake Chad, and the suicide bombings in N’Djamena in June and July 2015.


9 Boko Haram’s first armed attacks on Chadian soil took place on the night of 12-13 February 2015 at Ngouboua, leaving five residents dead, including the canton chief. Since then, the frequency of attacks has increased. At the end of 2015, Boko Haram struck the Lake Chad area with an unprecedented number of attacks, including suicide bombings. On 5 December 2015, a triple suicide bombing in a market killed about twenty people and injured about 100 on Lake Chad’s island Loulou Fou. “Tchad: triple attentat meurtrier sur un marché”, Le Monde, 5 December 2015. After the double suicide bombing in the villages of Guié and Miterine on 31 January 2016, the situation improved and the number of attacks diminished in February and March 2016. However, this may only be a reprieve.

Factors contributing to the spread of the threat include Chad’s proximity to the Bornou region, Boko Haram’s epicentre; the porosity of borders in the Lake Chad region, where communities have strong cross-border economic, ethnic and cultural ties; and, in particular, the regionalisation of the security response with the Chadian army’s intervention to support neighbouring countries ending the tacit non-aggression pact between the regime and Boko Haram.11 Although Boko Haram does not appear to have established a genuine constituency among Lake Chad communities, it certainly has supporters there and counts Chadian nationals in its ranks. Several Chadians suspected of belonging to the terrorist group are currently imprisoned in North Cameroon.12

The presence of armed Islamist groups is relatively new to Chad. Islamist terrorism spared the country until February 2015 even though known terrorists coveted the north of the country as a fallback position. For example, the Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad (MDJT) captured Abdelrazak El Para of the Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) in the early 2000s in the Tibesti mountains, on the border with Niger. The MDJT handed him over to the Libyan authorities, who extradited him to Algeria.13 Several GSPC members who accompanied him allegedly said they were looking for arms in northern Chad.14

The collapse of Muammar Qadhafi’s regime in 2011 disrupted the equilibrium in the region and facilitated the emergence of many armed networks and groups that threaten to destabilise northern Chad. As Qadhafi was a traditional ally and had invested heavily in Chad, President Déby explicitly disapproved of the intervention by Western forces.15

After the overthrow of the Libyan “guide”, southern Libya became a “grey” zone harbouring local and foreign Islamist groups, where old tribal rivalries were becoming militarised and arms and human trafficking was expanding.16 Conscious of this the Chadian President advocated an international intervention in Libya and called on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries “to finish the job”.17 At the International Peace and Security Forum held in Dakar in December 2014, he suggested strongly that the West intervene in Libya.18 With his prestige boosted by

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12 Crisis Group interview, prison officials, Maroua, Cameroon, March 2016.
17 At the International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa, held in Dakar in December 2014, Déby strongly criticised the way Western partners had handled the Libyan crisis. He called on them to intervene without delay to end the chaos in the Sahel, saying that “our Western partners should find a solution for Libya and the Libyan people”. “Paix et sécurité : à Dakar, Idriss Déby Itno se lâche sur la crise libyenne”, Jeune Afrique, 17 December 2014. For more on relations between Chad and Libya, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°71, The Libyan Crisis as Seen from N’Djamena, 23 March 2010 and Crisis Group Report, Africa without Qaddafi: The Case of Chad, op. cit.
18 Idem.
his appointment as chairman of the AU, he is now seeking to play a bigger mediating role in Libya. In his inaugural speech, he proposed the creation of a United Nations-supported committee of African heads of state to advise and support the UN special envoy.19

The Chadian government perceives the anarchy in Libya as a major security threat and fears its impact on the control of Saharan routes, economic activities in the north of the country and the proliferation of arms on its territory.20 Southern Libya has also provided a home for Chadian rebels, some of whom joined the opposition against Qaddafi, at the instigation of Sudan.21 Finally, jihadist groups in Libya are unlikely to form an operational alliance with Boko Haram as Chadian and Western politicians fear. However, no eventuality should be ruled out.22 Criminal networks in Libya have reportedly already supplied Boko Haram with arms.23

In addition, while special forces from the U.S. and several European countries are conducting operations against IS in Libya, the Algerian and Tunisian authorities and the intelligence services of several Sahel countries, including Niger, have, to different degrees, expressed their concerns about the possibility of a military intervention in Libya led by an international coalition. Some Sahel countries fear that an intensification of military action on the Libyan coast may lead combatants to disperse toward the south and into the Sahel.24

2. Renewed military interventionism and its limits
The Chadian army was dispatched to Mali in January 2013, stationed in the CAR between the end of 2012 and April 2014, has been deployed against Boko Haram since January 2015 and is involved in a coalition formed by Saudi Arabia to fight Huthi combatants in Yemen (although the size of this contribution is not known). It serves as a showpiece for the regime.25 By sending a large detachment of soldiers to Mali in the wake of the French Operation Serval, the Chadian government showed that it was able to deploy quickly an army capable of fighting in desert terrain.26 Unlike the Chadian intervention in CAR, which received much criticism because of the atrocities committed by Chadian soldiers and their contacts with coup leaders of the ex-Seleka,27 the Chadian army’s intervention in Mali was widely welcomed by African

20 Crisis Group interviews, diplomats, N’Djamena, April 2015.
21 Crisis Group interview, security actor, N’Djamena, November 2015.
25 “Quels sont les pays africains engagés dans le conflit au Yémen”, RFI, 13 March 2016.
27 In addition to President Déby’s unclear role in the overthrow of former CAR President Bozizé, the Chadian forces deployed as part of the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) were accused of supporting the ex-Seleka rebels. Faced with mounting
and Western heads of state, despite allegations of rape and bad conduct by soldiers in Gao.\textsuperscript{28}

Chad is also on the front line in the fight against Boko Haram and plays an important role in the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF).\textsuperscript{29} The country has pledged to provide 3,000 troops, becoming the second largest contributor of soldiers after Nigeria, and hosts the MNJTF headquarters in N’Djamena.\textsuperscript{30} In January and February 2015, Chadian forces’ repeated military successes against Boko Haram in Nigeria contrasted with the initial difficulties encountered by Nigerian, Nigerien and Cameroonian troops.

The involvement of Chad, a poor and under-populated country, in the internal affairs of its giant neighbour Nigeria, whose security expenditure is about $6 billion per year,\textsuperscript{31} seemed to go against the grain of regional geopolitics.\textsuperscript{32} On several occasions and with blatant pride, Déby has mentioned the inability of Nigerian troops to counter the threat posed by Boko Haram: “Everybody is asking why the Nigerian army, which is a very big army […], is unable to deal with untrained kids armed with Kalashnikovs”.\textsuperscript{33}

However, Chadian interventions have also highlighted the army’s weaknesses and the troops’ many abuses. The army has suffered heavy losses, reportedly losing more than 50 soldiers in Mali and more than 100 in clashes with Boko Haram.\textsuperscript{34} These operations also place a heavy financial burden on the state, as the Chadian foreign minister stressed at the Peace and Security Forum in Dakar on 10 November 2015.\textsuperscript{35}

The foreign minister said that Chad had only received “crumbs” to fund its operation in Mali and...
The authorities often bring up the budgetary argument to try to secure international funding, although they are not always successful. The interventions have also revealed serious organisational, administrative and disciplinary problems within the army. In Mali, soldiers mutinied twice, in September 2013 and November 2014, because the government was late in paying their wages and sending reinforcements to relieve them. Since then, these problems have persisted and internal clashes at bases in Tissalit and Aguelhok in northern Mali caused the death of four Chadian blue helmets in March 2016.

Moreover, following operations that greatly weakened its operational capacities Boko Haram has changed its modus operandi. At the end of 2015, it increased raids on villages and suicide bombings, shifting toward an asymmetric war that could last a long time. The mainly military response of the Chadian authorities against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad area has produced results, but recurrent abuses risk provoking opposition from some local communities. In addition, the sometimes brutal methods used by the Chadian army abroad and the atrocities it has committed have been widely criticised by people living in neighbouring countries, particularly in CAR, but also, to a lesser extent, in Nigeria and Cameroon. Although Yaoundé welcomed the presence of Chadian soldiers at its bases in Mora and Fotokol in northern Cameroon, several local traditional leaders reportedly complained about the behaviour of and thefts by Chadian soldiers in these towns.

Most importantly, the army is unpopular in Chad, where it is considered more of a militia working for the regime than a real state army and the main obstacle to democratic change. The army remains very corrupt and is organised along ethnic lines. Members of the Zaghawa ethnic group, sometimes even of the Bilia, the Bideyat ethnic subgroup to which Idriss Déby belongs, are generally at the top of the military hierarchy, have a majority in the General Directorate of Security Services for National Institutions (DGSSIE) and enjoy almost complete impunity, while army officers at the intermediate level are often trained abroad and belong to other ethnic groups.

called on the region’s countries to “share the burden”. “Moussa Faki Mahamat : ’Nous allons lancer des opérations terrestres contre Boko Haram en janvier’”, L’Opinion, 13 November 2015.


39 Chadian troops committed atrocities against civilians in the CAR and for many years have had a hostile reception from most of the population. These poor community relations have only been worsened by the recent crisis and dealings between Chadian soldiers and Seleka rebels. “On ne veut plus de Tchadiens en Centrafrique”, France24, 11 December 2013.

40 Crisis Group interviews, traditional chiefs and military officers, Maroua and Mora, Cameroon, March 2016.

41 Crisis Group interviews, Chadian intellectual, member of civil society, Chadian politician, N’Djamena, August 2015.

In addition, compensations paid to the families of soldiers killed on mission vary greatly depending on their ethnic group.43 In short, the nature of the Chadian army and the homogeneity of the chain of command, which allows rapid deployment abroad, is also the main reason for its lack of legitimacy within the country.

B. The Advantages of Military Diplomacy for the Regime

“Diplomacy without weapons is music without instruments”, said Bismarck. Indeed, much of Chad’s influence depends on the use of weapons. Its military diplomacy has made it an important partner for France and the U.S., which are concerned about the increasing strength of terrorist groups in the Sahel-Saharan region. A detailed examination of recent decades shows that the country has long been a priority partner for Western powers. The nationalist and anti-Libyan position of former President Hissène Habré in the 1980s and Déby’s posture as the last defence against the Sudanese regime’s alleged attempts at Arabisation and Islamic proselytism in the 2000s gave Chad a special position in the region.44

Sharing common enemies, Chad, France and the U.S. revived their security partnership to meet the jihadist threat. Deployment of Chadian troops in Mali brought Chad closer to France and silenced the French authorities’ criticisms of Déby’s regime. On taking office in 2012, President Hollande had intended to break with the realpolitik of his predecessors and shed light on the disappearance of opposition leader Idriss Mahamat Saleh in 2008. At the Elysée, he surrounded himself with advisers like Thomas Mélonio, who had strongly criticised all aspects of French relations with Chad in previous writings.45 At a time when relations between Déby and Hollande were at low ebb and several meetings between the two presidents had been postponed or cancelled, the fight against terrorism finally enabled a new deal and dispelled the threat of political isolation that hung over the Chadian government.46 As proof of this renewed alliance, France set up the headquarters of Operation Barkhane in N’Djamena in 2014.47

Meanwhile, military relations between Chad and the U.S. have strengthened: contacts increased, the Americans sent 80 military personnel to Chad to carry out intelligence activities and Chadian forces received a series of training courses on how to fight terrorism as part of the American “light footprint” intervention strategy, which

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43 Crisis Group interviews, politician, university professor, civil society actor, N’Djamena, August 2015.
46 Although the French defence minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, has visited N’Djamena several times since June 2012, the French president went there for the first time and reluctantly in July 2014 for the launch of Operation Barkhane. “Francois Hollande aime-t-il Idriss Deby?”, Journal du Dimanche (JDD), 20 July 2014.
47 Launched on 1 August 2014, Barkhane is a French military operation in the Sahel-Saharan region conducted in partnership with Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad. Its mission is to support the armed forces of partner countries in the fight against terrorist groups and prevent terrorists from creating safe havens in the region. See the French defence ministry’s website: www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/sahel/dossier-de-presentation-de-l-operation-barkhane/operation-barkhane.
consists of providing logistical, financial and intelligence support to African troops.48 Many Chadians, especially in the south of the country, believe this partnership with the West provides an insurance policy for the regime. The silence of international partners during the repression of recent demonstrations only reinforced these perceptions (see section III.A.3).49

Chad’s military interventionism in the region has gone hand-in-hand with an all-out diplomatic offensive. President Déby’s appointment, in January 2016, as AU chairman, which the opposition severely criticised as it seemed to endorse Déby on the eve of presidential elections,50 is only the most recent move in Déby’s campaign for regional leadership that has seen Chad obtain strategic positions in many regional and international bodies during the last two years (see appendix D).

The regime continues to pursue certain elements of a long-standing political strategy. First, although the Chadian government is right to point to neighbours’ instability as a real threat, the president uses the fear of terrorism to justify his strong regime and cast himself as the guarantor of the country’s security, just as in the past he used the fear of Sudan’s threats to destabilise Chad. Second, the regime considers its partnership and close relations with the West as an essential element in its survival strategy. International partners focus on short-term security imperatives and, to many Chadians, are objectively the regime’s allies.

In this context, political space is shrinking, a trend which could eventually lead to a political crisis and create fertile ground for the emergence of all kinds of violent actors, including jihadists. In order to avoid such a scenario, the international community should redesign its cooperation policies with Chad so that they do not only focus on security, but also require the regime to make significant political concessions and launch long-term development initiatives, especially in areas affected by terrorism.

48 In November 2002, the U.S. started the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI) to train the troops of Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad for the fight against terrorism. The Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCI), broadened to include Algeria, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal and Tunisia, has replaced the PSI. The emergence of Boko Haram around Lake Chad and the Nigerian army’s inability to deal with it strengthened the partnership between Chad and the U.S. The latter announced it would send 80 American military personnel to Chad to carry out intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations in north-eastern Nigeria, while Chad hosted the multinational military exercise “Flintlock” in February 2015. See Jennifer G. Cooke, “De Clinton à Obama, les Etats-Unis et l’Afrique”, *Politique Étrangère*, n°2 (2013), pp. 67-79 and J. Peter Pham, “U.S. Interests in Promoting Security across the Sahara”, *American Foreign Policy Interests: The Journal of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy*, vol. 32, n°4 (2010), pp. 242-252.

49 Crisis Group interviews, members of civil society, N’Djamena, November 2015.

50 “Présidentielle au Tchad : Dadnadji s’en prend à l’Union africaine”, RFI, 13 February 2016.
III. An Illusory Stability

Chad’s new stature in the region does not hide its internal fragility. The country still ranks among the poorest in the world. It has a 75 per cent illiteracy rate and a rapidly growing population that could double in the next 20 to 30 years.51 The regime has been in place for 26 years and has no plan for President Déby’s succession.52 Many Chadians believe that this situation could lead to a violent crisis,53 especially because of the president’s fragile health. As the presidential election approaches, public demonstrations are on the rise, revealing a deep social malaise. Meanwhile, new citizen groups are emerging, denouncing Déby’s candidacy for a fifth term. While the atmosphere during the presidential election campaign is oppressive, it looks like the period before the hypothetical second round and the post-electoral period will be very tense. Repression of youth movements by the security forces could lead to outbreaks of violence, especially in the capital.

When he came to power in 1990, Idriss Déby said, “I do not promise you either gold or money, but I do promise you freedom”.54 Since the mid-1990s and especially after oil production began in the south of the country, the political contract has changed: regime promises have focused less on freedom and more on development and security.55 However, the government has not delivered on these commitments either. The terrorist attacks carried out by Boko Haram in June and July 2015 in the capital and the economic crisis are further undermining this contract. Social and political discontent is intensifying and it is uncertain whether the government can maintain the current war expenditure. Moreover, the apparent consensus around the government’s anti-terrorism policy is much more precarious than it seems and it would be dangerous to ignore criticism and emerging pockets of resistance. Finally, if the government does not keep its promises of development, especially in the Lake Chad area, it will find it difficult to build trust with the local population.

A. The Economic and Budgetary Crisis: A Great Leap Backwards

Since the end of 2014, the Chadian economy has been hit hard by two different phenomena. First, the regionalisation of the terrorist threat posed by Boko Haram has badly disrupted Chad’s trade with its neighbours. Second, falling oil prices have exposed

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51 According to the World Bank, in 2011, 46.7 per cent of the Chadian population lived under the poverty line. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), this figure rises to 87 per cent in rural areas. See World Bank data, op. cit. and UNDP information on Chad at www.td.undp.org/content/chad/fr/home/countryinfo.html. For more information on the demographic dynamics of Chad, see Jean-Pierre Guengant and Manasset Guealbaye, “Population, développement et dividende démographique au Tchad”, Agence Française de Développement, Institut de Recherche et Développement, 2012.


54 Roland Marchal, op. cit.

55 See Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°65, Chad: Escaping from the Oil Trap, 26 August 2009.
the weakness of an economy that is far too dependent on oil revenues. These two problems have created a tense social climate.

1. Strangling a landlocked economy

The capital under pressure

The conflicts along Chad’s borders are an economic as well as a security problem. By undermining security on the roads between N’Djamena and Maiduguri in Nigeria, Maroua in Cameroon and, further afield, the Cameroonian port of Douala, Chad’s main access to the sea, Boko Haram has to some extent economically asphyxiated the area around the capital and the south of the country. The threat posed by Boko Haram to Cameroon’s Far North region and its attacks on Lake Chad, combined since January 2015 with Chad’s temporary closure of its border with Nigeria, have hindered the supply of goods to the landlocked country.

Boko Haram’s presence has reduced Chadian exports, notably of livestock, and increased the cost of importing food and manufactured products to the capital. In 2015, traders importing goods from Cameroon, who were already complaining of the slowness of transport through the usual Douala-Maroua-N’Djamena route, had to start using a longer route through southern Chad (Ngaoundéré-Moundou-N’Djamena). Other imported products, such as cooking oil from Algeria and Tunisia and sugar imported through the port of Cotonou, Benin, are now imported through Niger, significantly increasing transport costs.

Chad has the second highest malnutrition rate in the world, with 4.4 million people, a third of the population, undernourished, and the deterioration in trading activities, especially on the lake, is aggravating food insecurity. In this context, the main objective of Chad’s intervention against Boko Haram at the start of 2015 was to avoid the economic strangulation of N’Djamena by freeing up the two trade routes that are crucial to the supply of the Chadian capital and the south west of the country.

Lake Chad: an economic hub under threat

The area around Lake Chad has traditionally been a magnet for diverse populations and a strategic commercial crossroads for four countries (Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria...
and Chad), but it has been hit hard by the Boko Haram conflict. Economic activity on the lake, on which 15 to 30 million people directly depend, is flagging. Communities are now being forced to leave the area that was once a trade hub.

The state of emergency in the area, which the Chadian government declared in November 2015 and extended until the end of March 2016, and military operations conducted by the countries around the lake following Boko Haram attacks impose severe constraints on movements on the lake and have a major impact on fishing. Motorboats are forbidden. The ban on dugout canoes has recently been lifted but they remain subject to many security checks. This makes cross-border trade more difficult and Chadian traders now transport many goods that they previously carried in canoes by road through Niger to Nigeria, at greater cost. While annual fish production on the lake used to reach 50,000 to 150,000 tonnes, previously well-stocked market stalls are now running low, especially in the town of Baga Sola in Chad, which in 2015 became a site for many refugees and internally displaced persons.

The trade and distribution of fish to local markets and further afield to N’Djamen and Maiduguri is now jeopardised and traders have had to find new routes. For example, smoked fish now goes through Cameroon. While this is a blow to Boko Haram, which probably profited from fishing activities, it destroys jobs and puts entire communities in disarray. The disruption of trade is affecting communities that live along the lake shore and those in Kanem, in western Chad, which traditionally source some of their food from the lake, and malnutrition rates are rising.

Besides fishing, insecurity has also affected market gardening and livestock farming, which are important on the southern shores of the lake in Chad. For many years, Sahelian livestock farmers from the countries around the lake have altered their seasonal herding routes to converge on the lake and let their animals feed on the abundant pasture that appears as the lake water gradually recedes. Thus, in addition to local livestock farmers, such as the Boudouma and the Kouri, major herding groups like the Kreda, Arabs, Fulani and Tebu from Niger are also present during the dry season. However, it is increasingly difficult for livestock farmers to access the lake shores and the pastoral economy suffers as a result. Moreover, closure of the Chad-Nigeria border hinders traditional trade in live animals and forces farmers to take longer routes through Niger to reach Nigeria, causing the loss of animals. Redu-

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65 Crisis Group telephone interview, humanitarian worker in Chad, February 2016.
66 Crisis Group interview, trader, Baga Sola, August 2015. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), at the start of 2016 there were about 110,000 internally displaced Chadians, 11,000 Chadian returnees and 6,200 refugees gathered on the Chadian shore of Lake Chad. See “Chad: Situation in the Lake region and the impact of the Nigerian crisis”, Situation Report N°11, OCHA, 11 February 2016. Moreover, one of the terrorist attacks carried out by Boko Haram in October 2015 in the town of Baga Sola targeted the fish market.
67 Smoked fish is sold at markets like those in Doro Léléwa and Gadira in Niger, Darak and Blangoa in Cameroon, Baga Kawa in Nigeria and Kinasserom and Fitiné in Chad. Géraud Magrin, Jacques Lemoalle, Roland Pourtier, op. cit.
68 Crisis Group interviews, internally displaced persons and refugees, Baga Sola, August 2015.
69 Crisis Group interview, humanitarian worker, N’Djamena, April 2015.
70 Géraud Magrin, Jacques Lemoalle, Roland Pourtier, op. cit.
Secondly, ced exports means that pastoralists sell more of their stock in Chad for a lower price and suffer a major drop in income.

Finally, Boko Haram’s activities and reduced trade on the lake have led to significant increases in the price of food at the most affected markets, such as those in Bol, Baga Sola, Ngouboua, Tchoukoutalia, Mao, Moussoro and Massakory. For example, the price of corn at Bol, Mao and Moussoro markets increased by 23 per cent, 18 per cent and 11 per cent respectively in December 2015 compared to the five-year average.71

This downturn in the lake economy risks, in turn, aggravating the security situation in the region. Young people without prospects are drawn toward Boko Haram and the crisis is contributing to the gradual collapse of communities around the lake. The restrictions on free movement enforced under the state of emergency threaten lake-based livelihoods and could encourage people to enlist.72

In this context, more and more actors are emphasising the need to develop the Lake Chad region. However, there is a yawning gap between the announcements of both the Chadian government73 and international community and action on the ground.74 The lake region’s infrastructure remains undeveloped, school enrolment is low and access to healthcare is very limited.75 In addition, large numbers of people are continuing to leave home and move elsewhere. For example, 56,000 displaced people were recently registered in the Liwa and Daboua sub-prefectures on the lake’s northern shore. Humanitarian organisations find it very difficult to reach these areas and fear that the funds available are well short of what is required.76

After the European Union (EU) launched a new “Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa” at the Valletta summit on 12 November 2015, donors and development actors should seize the opportunity to prioritise development projects in the Lake Chad basin.77 The discussions between European donors and the Chadian planning minister seem to focus mainly on security problems; they should also focus on strength-
ening social services at reception centres and in the slightly larger towns such as Tchoukoutalia and Ngouboua, where displaced people have also found refuge, in order to improve the conditions in which communities host displaced populations. It is also urgent to propose a major program of income generating activities and in this way reduce the financial attraction of joining Boko Haram.

2. Repercussions of the oil shock

The sharp drop in oil price, which fell to $30 in January 2016, has been another shock to Chad’s economy. The subsequent massive fall in state revenues and contraction in public procurement has had even more important consequences for the economy.\(^{78}\)

Seen by many Chadians as “a great leap backwards”,\(^{79}\) this crisis highlights the country’s dependence on oil and raises questions about the regime’s use of oil revenues.\(^{80}\)

Chad’s entry into the club of oil producing countries has turned it into a rentier state. The national budget quadrupled from about $670 million to more than $2.8 billion between 2004 and 2014.\(^{81}\) The regime initially used this new income to ensure its survival by recruiting more army personnel and buying military equipment.\(^{82}\) A second phase started in 2007, when a surge in oil prices and the renegotiation of tax agreements with the oil consortium\(^{83}\) enabled the government to recruit more civil servants and launch major infrastructure projects.\(^{84}\)

Many Chadian companies in the construction, fuel distribution and service sectors have benefited from the proceeds of the oil industry during the last decade. These contracts, often awarded following far from transparent procedures, supposedly enabled the regime to channel income to supporters.\(^{85}\) The government allegedly awarded public contracts and import licences to individuals, not only Zaghawa,\(^{86}\) close to the Itno family and the governing party, enabling them to make large for-

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\(^{78}\) Oil production in Chad is profitable at $70 per barrel. Crisis Group interview, economist, N’Djamena, August 2015. Several companies, including Glencore, announced a reduction in their investments in Chad in August 2015. “Glencore réduit sa production et revoit ses dépenses à la baisse”, Jeune Afrique, 13 August 2015.

\(^{79}\) Crisis Group interview, economist, N’Djamena, August 2015.


\(^{82}\) Crisis Group interview, researcher, Nairobi, September 2015. Roland Marchal, op. cit.

\(^{83}\) For more details on the oil consortium, see “La victoire facile d’un Etat fragile contre les institutions internationales”, International Crisis Group, 2 September 2010.

\(^{84}\) These projects included administrative buildings, hotels and roads. The biggest projects, which have either been completed or are under construction, are new buildings for the National Assembly, the foreign affairs ministry, the finance ministry, the Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) political party, the Chad National Radio and Television Office (ONRTV) and the International Business City. See also the Chad National Development Plan (2013-2015), www.inseedtchad.com/IMG/pdf/plan_national_de_developpement_2013-2015.pdf. For more on infrastructure projects, see Crisis Group Briefing, Chad: Escaping from the Oil Trap, op. cit.

\(^{85}\) Crisis Group Africa Briefing, Escaping from the Oil Trap, op. cit.

\(^{86}\) When Idriss Déby took power, there was no “witch hunt” against the Gorane entrepreneurs who had made their fortune under Habré. Crisis Group interview, researcher, Nairobi, September 2015.
tunes.\textsuperscript{87} As a consequence, given that for several years the government’s political base has shrunk with the departure of many Zaghawa from President Déby’s inner circle, the present economic shock is not politically painless and could weaken the regime whose alliances in part depend on the redistribution of oil income.\textsuperscript{88}

Public finances under threat

At the end of 2014, the government had to abandon the organisation of an AU summit, scheduled for June 2015, following a drop in oil production in the Doba fields and delays in extracting oil from newly found deposits.\textsuperscript{89} The situation has worsened since then. International agencies estimate that oil income fell from 607 billion CFA Francs in 2014 (about $1.02 billion) to 270 billion CFA Francs in 2015 (about $450 million), a reduction of more than 50 per cent.\textsuperscript{90} The government has accumulated debts to national and foreign companies and has often been late in paying scholarships, pensions and civil servants’ salaries in recent months.

Having recently reached the completion point under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, a far more political than economic decision by the Bretton Woods institutions, Chad has benefited from debt relief.\textsuperscript{91} The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Executive Board in December 2015 endorsed budgetary aid announced by the country’s main donors.\textsuperscript{92} In addition to this helping hand, largely facilitated by French diplomatic pressure, the government has received loans from the Bank of Central African States (BEAC) worth 230 billion CFA Francs (around $380 million), rescheduled repayments on a Glencore company loan to the “Société des Hydrocarbures du Tchad” for 2015 and issued treasury bonds. Despite all this, the budget deadlock has forced the government to reduce expenditure drastically.\textsuperscript{93}

Government expenditure was about 30 per cent less in 2015 than in 2014. This affected the budgets of almost all ministries, including those for education and health, which the government had promised to prioritise.\textsuperscript{94} The initial budget law


\textsuperscript{88} Crisis Group interview, researcher, Nairobi, September 2015.

\textsuperscript{89} “Le Tchad renonce à organiser le prochain sommet de l’Union africaine”, Tchadinfos.com, 11 January 2015.

\textsuperscript{90} Crisis Group telephone interview, economist, N’Djamena, March 2016.

\textsuperscript{91} On 29 April 2015, the IMF and the World Bank announced debt relief of $1.1 billion after Chad reached the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. Following this decision, creditor countries in the Paris Club and the Chad government reached an agreement on 24 June 2015 to cancel 100 per cent of the debt due to creditors ($62.6 million). See “IMF and World Bank Announce US$1.1 Billion Debt Relief for Chad”, press release 15/183, IMF, 29 April 2015. Crisis Group interview, economist, N’Djamena, August 2015.

\textsuperscript{92} This debt relief was followed by budgetary aid from the African Development Bank (ADB), the World Bank, the IMF and the EU. On 10 December 2015, the World Bank announced $50 million in aid for a budgetary consolidation program and the ADB donated $18.34 million to fund a public financial management reform project. On 14 December, the IMF approved the release of $28.7 million from a package worth $148.4 million. See “Le FMI accorde 28,7 millions de dollars au Tchad”, \textit{Jeune Afrique}, 17 December 2015; “Tchad : 18,34 millions $ de la BAD pour la réforme des finances publiques”, Agence Ecofin, 11 December 2015; “Tchad : 50 millions $ de la Banque mondiale pour un programme de consolidation budgétaire”, Agence Ecofin, 14 December 2015.

\textsuperscript{93} Crisis Group interview, economist, N’Djamena, August 2015.

\textsuperscript{94} Crisis Group interview, economist, N’Djamena, November 2015.
(Loi de finances initiale, LFI) 2016, adopted in December 2015, provided for another reduction in expenditure and a civil service recruitment freeze.\(^95\) However, the external and internal fight against terrorism has led to an increase in military and security expenditure, with the government announcing in June 2015 that it planned to recruit several thousand soldiers.\(^96\) The country’s capacity to sustain the war effort against Boko Haram is therefore questionable, despite international support, which the government believes to be insufficient.\(^97\) Conscious that 2016 will be a difficult year for the economy, the president has increased the number of his trips abroad in search of financial support.\(^98\) He travelled to India, China and Saudi Arabia at the end of October and start of November 2015 but reportedly returned empty-handed.\(^99\) He is also said to be considering the sale of the state’s 10 per cent stake in the Chadian subsidiary of the China National Petroleum Corporation International Chad (CNPCIC).\(^100\)

3. From social discontent to political unrest: a tense pre-election period

On the eve of the presidential election, the regime faces growing public protest that is rallying the population, especially the youth. The lack of robust structures through which to manage or channel social discontent, the regime’s strategy of co-opting opposition and civil society leaders, and the fear of opposing the government and its military apparatus have long inhibited collective resistance. However, public anger remains widespread and is becoming politicised as the election nears.

Demonstrations have become more frequent since the end of 2015 and have focused on a number of issues: the cost of living, budgetary austerity, corruption, impunity and President Déby’s candidacy for a fifth term. Although these demonstrations are led by Chadians from specific social and professional categories (students, young unemployed graduates, teachers, civil servants), it has been a long time since social protest gained such momentum. The general strike held in several cities on 24 February 2016 was an unprecedented success. Civil servants organised a “go-slow” in public administration and traders, markets and schools closed for the day in N’Djamena, Moundou and, to a lesser extent, in Mao, Sahr, Abéché and Mongo.\(^101\) Thus, this wave of social unrest is not exclusive to the south, and, in a country where more than two-


\(^96\) Crisis Group interview, economist, N’Djamena, August 2015.

\(^97\) It is difficult to know how much international partners are contributing to Chad’s war effort because of the lack of transparency of its military budget. However, the first three months of the campaign against Boko Haram at the start of 2015 reportedly cost about CFA7 billion ($11 million).

\(^98\) Crisis Group interview, economist, N’Djamena, April 2015.

\(^99\) In his end-of-year message in December 2015, President Idriss Déby said: “I invite you therefore to some degree of parsimony because the situation will be even more difficult in 2016”. “Tchad : les salaires versés ‘sans retard criant’ en 2016 promet Déby”, RFI, 2 January 2016.

\(^100\) The budget bill for fiscal year 2016 includes 300 billion CFA Francs income from the sale of 10 per cent of the shares, acquired upon settlement of a disagreement with the CNPCIC in 2014. “Le projet de loi portant budget général de l’Etat pour l’exercice 2016 adopté”, Journal du Tchad (journaldutchad.com), 31 December 2015.

thirds of the population is under 25, new actors, less influenced by the Chadian civil wars of the 1980s, are taking part.\footnote{Jean-Pierre Guengant and Manasset Guealbaye, op. cit.}

The latest social protests have followed from the many demonstrations organised over the last two years. Since the end of 2014, waves of unrest have begun in the capital and have spread to the south. The increase in the price of petrol and fuel shortages led to a general strike in October 2014, which did not, however, attract such widespread support as the one in February 2016.\footnote{In October 2014 civil society organisations called on Chadians to take part in the general strike \textit{(journée ville morte)} and said, “the country has been taken hostage by a handful of Chadians whose undeclared aim is to enslave you. Once again, the authorities have shown that they have no respect for your welfare and are ready to risk your future to enrich themselves at your expense”.' \textit{Tchad : la société civile appelle à une journée ville morte}, Jeunes Tchad (jeunestchad.mondoblog.org), 7 October 2014.} In November 2014, school students organised demonstrations in the capital and several towns. They were soon joined by teachers, court employees, lawyers and notaries, while about a dozen civil society organisations created the “Too Much means Too Much” \textit{(Trop c’est Trop)} coalition to protest the increase in the cost of living, the lack of public infrastructure and the freeze on civil servants’ bonuses.\footnote{“Tchad : naissance de trop c’est trop”, BBC Afrique, 21 November 2014. The repeated intimidation of members has, however, undermined the coalition, which split in August 2015 with the departure of the Union of Trade Unions of Chad (UST), the Chadian League for Human Rights (LTDH) and the Chad Teachers’ Trade Union (SET). For more on the demonstrations, see \textit{“Tchad : manifestations à N’Djamena, Moundou et Sarh”}, RFI, 11 November 2014.} Between March and December 2015, there were many clashes between young people, including students, and security forces, especially in N’Djamena, Pala and Abéché, which led to many arrests.\footnote{There was a series of demonstrations in 2015. In March, young people took to the streets to protest the government’s requirement that motorbike riders wear helmets. In April, nurses demonstrated in the capital to demand a pay rise, followed by N’Djamena science faculty students, who were again violently repressed by police. In July, security forces violently repressed student demonstrations against the late payment of scholarships and arrested about twenty students. In November, teachers went on strike for several days to protest delays in salary payments. Finally, in December, students demonstrated following the non-payment of scholarship arrears, in N’Djamena, Pala in the south west and Abéché in the east. \textit{“Tchad : la protestation des élèves de N’Djaména contre le port obligatoire du casque tourne à la contestation populaire contre le régime de Déby”}, Tchad Pages (tchadpages.com), 4 March 2015; \textit{“Tchad : les syndicats se mobilisent contre les coupes budgétaires”}, 	extit{Jeune Afrique}, 30 September 2015 and \textit{“Tchad : les enseignants sont en grève”}, BBC, 19 November 2015; \textit{“Tchad, des manifestations dans plusieurs villes du pays”}, Tchad Pages (tchadpages.com), 11 December 2015.} The trade unions have responded to rising inflation and budgetary austerity by organising an increasing number of strikes throughout the country since the end of 2015 to oppose wage freezes.\footnote{The government also announced measures to improve tax collection, reduce or suspend customs exemptions and increase the number of items subject to VAT. \textit{“Tchad : crise financière oblige, l’État adopte une série de mesures pour se tirer d’affaire”}, Xinhua, 9 October 2015.} The Union of Trade Unions of Chad (UST) raised governance issues, saying, “Workers should not be made to pay for poor management of oil revenues”.\footnote{“Le gouvernement tchadien en plein marasme financier”, RFI, 7 October 2015.} They denounced “the outright pillaging of state resources”.\footnote{“Tchad : les syndicats se mobilisent contre les coupes budgétaires”, \textit{Jeune Afrique}, op. cit.} In this respect, the failure of the fight against corruption (which the president has been claiming is a priority since 2009) and the generalised impunity of those close to the

\textit{Trop c’est Trop}
government have crystallised resentment and had the knock-on effect of fuelling a simplistic and dangerous “anti-Zaghawa” popular discourse that is currently widespread. At the start of 2016, the question of impunity came to the fore when a young girl was raped in N’Djamena. The incident, in which the sons of several regime dignitaries were involved, acted as a catalyst and led to demonstrations calling for justice.109

Those involved in protests, which are becoming more political as the election approaches, are mostly school students, university students and young unemployed graduates. Several groups have formed to call for democratisation and a change in power and the expression “civic whistle” (sifflet citoyen) has become a slogan for action. “That’s Enough” (ça suffit) was created with the support of organisations such as the Chadian League for Human Rights (LTDH), the UST and the Chadian Convention for the Defence of Human Rights (CTDDH). The latter had earlier left the Trop c’est Trop coalition, which suffered an internal crisis. The Iyina Platform (Iyina means “we are tired” in Chadian Arabic dialect) also brought together several youth movements. Finally, although opposition parties and civil society organisations sometimes see each other as rivals, they often agree and have jointly called for a change in power.

Methods used by Chadian authorities and security forces to contain these protests also exacerbate tension. In addition to putting pressure on traders who joined the strike, the authorities have tried to regain control of some social media networks and security forces have violently repressed several demonstrations. For example, in February 2016, Amnesty International denounced the security forces for the arrest and ill-treatment of seventeen peaceful protesters at a gathering organised by the Collective of Youth Associations and Movements in Chad (Camojet) and other civil society organisations on 5 and 6 February to demand jobs in the civil service.111 At the end of March 2016, several influential civil society members, including Mahamat Nour Ibedou, secretary general of the Chadian Convention for the Defence of Human Rights, were arrested and charged with public order offences.112 Attempts by civil society to negotiate with the government to secure their release failed and the tension is high now that further demonstrations have been planned.113

In particular, the many arrests during demonstrations and the death of two students in Faya Largeau in the north and in N’Djamena have provoked fierce public reaction.114 As the election approaches, the security forces’ repressive habits, especially those of the anti-riot police, could also lead to unrest among young people.115

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109 Crisis Group interviews, teachers, civil servants, traders, taxi drivers, students, members of civil society organisations, N’Djamena, August 2015.
115 As a former Chadian minister recently said, “the social climate is so tense that the slightest spark could trigger a big explosion”. See “Tchad : les enjeux électoraux, analyse”, Afrique-Asie, 16 February 2015.
B. The Counter-terrorism Policy: Not as Consensual as It Initially Appeared

Terrorist attacks on Chadian soil have led the government to police religious space more closely and introduce legislation to counter new threats and strengthen security. Counter-terrorism measures in Chad, which are similar to those in neighbouring countries like Cameroon and Niger, include a ban on wearing the burqa, restrictions on begging, surveillance of religious buildings (Quranic schools and mosques), more frequent identity checks and the use of informants.

Many Chadians initially welcomed this vigorous counter-terrorism policy, but civil society actors, opposition politicians and religious minorities have also criticised and resisted it. Tight security measures, counter-terrorism legislation and attempts to control religious space have provoked discontent that is expressed privately, on social media or at places of worship.

1. The dangers of an intrusive security response

The terrorist attacks in June and July 2015 in N’Djamena revealed flaws in the security system and encouraged the government to intensify its military activities, including the deployment of 5,000 troops in the Lake Chad region. The authorities also increased checks on “at risk” communities and places likely to be targeted, expanding police presence and resorting to community-based security measures.

Since 2015, the government has increased surveillance of N’Djamena districts with high concentrations of foreigners, expelled illegal migrants, arrested people who do not have the required documents and street children, and banned large family reunions in public places. Residents of the capital have become used to vehicle searches at major junctions, on main roads and at entrances to the city. This major deployment has seen the police uncover several arms caches, but also harass disadvantaged groups and put subsistence practices, such as begging, in jeopardy.

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118 Several prominent figures have opposed the government’s counter-terrorism measures. For example, in July 2015, the politician Mahamat Djarma Khatir wrote on the opposition blog run by Makaila Nguebla, a voice from the Chadian diaspora, that “the measures that followed these distressing events have completely discredited the authorities, revealing the dictatorship’s secret intentions […]. Kemnelou, Massalbaye, Ibedou, Maky, Gali, Ngarledji Kebzabo and other activists will soon be lumped together with Boko Haram”, “Le terrorisme au Tchad”, Blog de Makaila, 6 July 2015. Following the suicide bombing in N’Djamena in June 2015, opposition leader Djarma Acheikh Ahmat Attidjani wrote on his blog, “The terrorist attack that took place on the morning of 15 June proves once again that the police, intelligence and security services are focused on repressing opponents and activists rather than on public security and the preservation of supreme national interests”, “Attentats : les Tchadiens frappés par le terrorisme”, Jeunes Tchad (jeunestchad.mondo blog.org), 16 June 2015.
119 Crisis Group interview, Chadian intellectual, N’Djamena, August 2015.
120 “Le Tchad s’est adapté face à la menace terroriste”, Jeune Afrique, 30 December 2015.
121 The government has created a specialised intervention unit (USIP), a nautical security unit (CSN) and a dog brigade and is planning to build new police stations. It will probably reorganise the mobile police intervention group. “Tchad: Ahmat Bachir en visite chez les policiers”, Tchad Infos (tchadinfos.com), 16 September 2015.
over, groups of young people now organise searches at the entrances to places of worship (mosques, churches and other prayer rooms) and the authorities have asked for prayers to take place in mosques and not on pavements during Ramadan 2015.123

This surveillance has been accompanied by community-based security mechanisms that seek to build a close-knit intelligence network. District chiefs in N’Djamena and traditional and religious leaders in the Lake Chad region have become informants.124

As in Niger and Nigeria, the medium-term risk is to turn the traditional chiefs on the lake into Boko Haram targets if security forces are incapable of protecting them.125

Accepted by a large section of the population, the increase in checks has, nevertheless, caused fierce discontent. The brutality of security forces during searches has led to many altercations.126 As in Maroua and Yaoundé, in neighbouring Cameroon, police operations in July and August in N’Djamena provided opportunities for extortion, the settling of accounts between neighbours and the provision of information in exchange for financial rewards.127 A climate of suspicion has developed in some districts. Ethnic Buduma and Kanouri128 traders, teachers and imams feel stigmatised by police practices and government discourse.129

Finally, in the Lake Chad region, where a state of emergency was declared in November 2015 and extended by parliament until the end of March 2016, authorities have increased the number of spot checks and arrests.130 Some communities have come under close scrutiny131 and economic activity has ground to a halt. These anti-terror strategies risk causing a breakdown in the relationship between local communities and the government.

2. New counter-terror legislation: legal necessity or political tool?

Like many other African countries confronted with terrorism,132 Chad added to its legal arsenal a counter-terrorism law at the end of July 2015.133 Although a large majority of parliamentarians voted for it, some of its provisions worry many intellectu-

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123 Crisis Group interview, religious leader, N’Djamena, August 2015.
124 When President Déby visited Baga Sola in the Lake Chad region following the terrorist attacks of 10 October 2015, which killed 40 people, he called on the region’s traditional and religious leaders to play an active role in the fight against Boko Haram and report any suspect persons. “Tchad : un triple attentat meurtrier attribué à Boko Haram”, Le Monde, 10 October 2015.
126 Crisis Group interview, Chadian politician, N’Djamena, August 2015.
127 Crisis Group interviews, humanitarian worker and researcher, N’Djamena, August 2015.
128 The Buduma and Kanouri are two ethnic groups that mainly live close to Lake Chad (in Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria, especially in Borno state, and in Chad).
129 Crisis Group interviews, refugees, Baga Sola, August 2015 and Crisis Group interview, humanitarian worker, N’Djamena, November 2015.
131 Crisis Group interviews, refugees, Baga Sola, August 2015 and Crisis Group interview, humanitarian worker, N’Djamena, November 2015.
132 “Comprendre les lois antiterroristes de 15 pays africains en deux infographies”, Jeune Afrique, 20 August 2015.
For example, articles that maintain the death penalty, which was due to be repealed, and that concentrate all powers in terrorism-related cases in the hands of the public prosecutor have raised fears among many that the fight against terrorism could be used for political manoeuvring.

With this in mind, the opposition has denounced the police for summoning many political party leaders and journalists for questioning. Media and human rights organisations have also complained about the law’s implications. In this context, the UN fiercely criticised the swift trial at the end of August 2015 of ten suspected Boko Haram members, who were unable to use their right to appeal, and their execution the day after their conviction.

3. Failed attempts to control religious space

The government’s determination to strengthen its control over Islamic religious space after the terrorist attacks has revealed divisions within the Chadian Muslim community. Counter-terror measures have been accompanied by attempts by the authorities and the Higher Council of Islamic Affairs (CSAI) to promote “Chadian Islam”, that is Sufism in its various forms. This tendency is not unique to Chad: the Senegalese president recently called for the promotion of an African Islam. However, in Chad, the imposition of an official brand of Islam is meeting serious resistance.

134 Crisis Group interviews, intellectuals and university professors, N’Djamena, August 2015.
135 “L’opposition tchadienne s’allie pour mettre en garde le gouvernement”, RFI, 13 September 2015.
137 Chad executed ten suspected Boko Haram members accused of involvement in the terrorist attacks in N’Djamena in June and July 2015 after a two-day hearing. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed its concern and appealed to the Chadian government to review its counter-terrorism law. “UN human rights office ‘deeply regrets’ resumption of executions in Chad”, UN News Centre, 2 September 2015.
138 According to the U.S. Department of State, about 58 per cent of Chad’s population is Muslim and 34 per cent is Christian. The rest of the population is animist or has no religion. The north is predominantly Muslim, while most southerners are either Christian or animist. This landscape is changing, however, especially in big cities. “International Religious Freedom Report 2012”, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2012.
139 Although most Chadian Muslims practise according to the Tijaniyya Sufi order, to talk of a Chadian Islam is inappropriate as several different Sufi traditions have influenced belief and practice in different areas. The Sanussiyya expanded in Bahr el-Gazhal, part of Kanem, Borkou and Tibesti regions after the Italians expelled its supporters from Libya but the French quickly contained the movement after their arrival in Chad. The Qadiriyya also spread in the Ouaddai but this kingdom was historically islamised by the Fuqara from West Africa linked to the Tijaniyya. The Tijaniyya, part of the Malekite school, received official encouragement and gradually became the basis of the Chadian Ummah (community of believers). Other Islamic traditions were later imported from neighbouring countries. See Ladiba Gondeu, “Note sur la sociologie politique du Tchad: la dynamique d’intégration nationale, dépasser la conflictualité ethnique d’un Etat entre parenthèses”, Sahel Research Group Paper N°006 (2013) and appendix C on the history of Wahhabi expansion in Chad. Crisis Group interview, researcher, Paris, March 2016.
140 “Forum de Dakar: Macky Sall appelle à la promotion d’un islam africain et tolérant”, Jeune Afrique, 10 November 2015.
Government policy toward fundamentalist religious currents

Since the start of 2015, the authorities have been trying to contain the growth of religious fundamentalism. They have banned burqas and turbans, dissolved faith-based associations and introduced checks on some neighbourhood mosques, Friday sermons, certain Quranic teachings and radio broadcasts.\(^{141}\) They have expelled Middle Eastern preachers and rejected visa applications from Pakistanis and Afghans.\(^{142}\) The authorities have also tried to map Quranic schools and have increased surveillance of the activities of foreign sponsors. While the official body representing Islam in Chad, the CSAI, has for several years been supportive of trainings for imams that go beyond memorising the Quran, the authorities now say they want to scrutinise the profile of imams and religious teachers and replace radical imams in certain mosques.\(^{143}\)

This determination to police religious space is not new and echoes fears previously expressed by Déby about the rise of religious radicalism in central Africa.\(^{144}\) In 2015, several associations, such as Ansar al-Sunnah al-Mohamadiya, Jamaat ad Daawawa at tabligh and the Union of Imams were reportedly dissolved or suspended because they could allegedly “pose a threat to public order”.\(^{145}\)

Intra-Muslim divisions and new pockets of resistance

The government’s attempts at greater control come up against religious conservatism and the increasing popularity of Wahhabism, which is creating a battle for influence within Muslim communities in Chad, as in other African countries. Religious communities in Chad do not hesitate to oppose government’s modernising policies. Religious associations, such as the Union of Muslim Officials of Chad (Union des cadres musulmans du Tchad), and Christian religious leaders fiercely criticised attempts to reform the Family Code in 2005 and the first lady’s campaign against forced marriages; they thought that several provisions of the proposed bill were contrary to Sharia and the Bible.\(^{146}\) In a more radical way, several imams have described Idriss Déby in their sermons as “an unbeliever” and threatened him.\(^{147}\)

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141 Crisis Group interviews, Chadian authorities and development worker, N’Djamena, August 2015.
142 Crisis Group interview, member of a faith-based association, N’Djamena, August 2015.
143 Ladiba Gondeu, “Note sur la sociologie politique du Tchad …”, op. cit.
144 Already in March 2013, President Déby stated on national television: “The jihadi threat exists here in Chad. It is hidden and can jump out and hit you in the face at anytime, anywhere on the face of the planet”. “Idriss Déby : la menace jihadiste existe au Tchad”, Afrik.com (afrik.com), 19 March 2013.
145 The government has previously introduced similar measures. In 1997, 30 religious associations were dissolved for the same reasons. In May 2006, Chad banned or suspended the activities of the following associations: Mountada al-Islamia, the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), the Moukarrama de la Mecque Charitable Foundation and the Haramain Charitable Foundation, accusing them of promoting violence for religious purposes. Crisis Group interview, diplomat, N’Djamena, August 2015. See Ladiba Gondeu, L’émergence des organisations islamiques au Tchad. Enjeux, acteurs et territoires (Paris, 2011). Website of the U.S. embassy in Chad, consulted in September 2015, http://french.chad.usembassy.gov/rapport_sur_la_libert_de_religion.html.
147 Crisis Group interviews, university professor, researcher, religious leader, N’Djamena, November 2015.
virulence of the reaction led the government to put the proposed changes to the Family Code on the back burner.

As fundamentalist Protestant and Muslim currents gain momentum, resistance takes other forms. Among Muslims, this includes challenges to the official version of Islam, represented by the CSAI, and acrimonious relations between Wahhabis and Sufis.

The Sufi-led Islamic authorities criticise the expansion of Wahhabism. They argue that it is taking place in secret, and that the CSAI has no control over the construction of some mosques and the funding of some Quranic schools. Many Sufi religious leaders accuse the Wahhabis of religious imperialism and criticise them for imposing an imported version of Islam and denigrating national practices. A critique of Saudi Arabia has quickly taken shape: “Islam did not start in Saudi Arabia”, a Muslim religious leader told Crisis Group in 2015.148 Saudi Arabia has reportedly expressed its dissatisfaction at what it sees as unfair criticism in the press.149 Sometimes, rejection of fundamentalist currents is expressed even more categorically. In many interviews conducted by Crisis Group, Muslim religious leaders have likened certain associations with beliefs close to those of Wahhabism to “terrorist movements”; “if we don’t do anything about it, they will be ten times stronger in ten years”, said one.150

Meanwhile, the fundamentalist Islamic currents in Chad, including the Wahhabis, criticise the Sufis for not being sufficiently critical of reforms that, according to them, are contrary to the principles of Islam. They criticise the official Islamic bodies in Chad and see the CSAI as a Sufi organisation that is trying to stop their expansion.151 Government and CSAI attempts to take control of mosques has caused tension, including, for example, in the region of Guéra.152 Fundamentalist imams have threatened the Imam Hassan Hussein Abakar, head of the CSAI, several times.153 The result of this antagonism is that Sufis and Wahhabis never engage in dialogue and neither Wahhabi nor Salafi associations take part in civil society forums.154

In this context, a large proportion of Chadian Muslims accept the burqa ban that followed the terrorist attacks in N’Djamena in June 2015. But it has also crystallised discontent and provoked fierce reactions on social media and in the sermons of some ulemas.155 Wahhabis and Salafis see it as stigmatisation.

Some attempts by security forces to stop women wearing the burqa have led to violent incidents. For example, a fight broke out in July 2015 when the wife of an

148 Idem.
149 Crisis Group interview, Chadian authorities, N’Djamena, August 2015.
150 Crisis Group interview, religious leader, N’Djamena, August 2015.
151 Crisis Group interview, Wahhabi religious leader, N’Djamena, November 2015.
152 In response to an attempt by the authorities to take control of a mosque in the region of Guéra and replace its imam, the mosque owners, believers and several Wahhabis threatened to take violent action. Crisis Group interviews, Wahhabi religious leader and professor, N’Djamena, November 2015.
153 Fundamentalist Muslims, especially Dr Haggar, leader of the Ansar al-Sunna group, have often criticised the CSAI. In this context, the vindictive statements made by Imam Hassan Hussein against the Wahhabis in February 2015 provoked anger among some religious leaders. An imam in the Ndjaret district of N’Djamena said: “May God destroy him, we are going to defend ourselves”. “Violente riposte verbale à l’Imam Hassan”, Alwihda, 28 February 2015.
154 Crisis Group interviews, Wahhabi religious leader and professor, N’Djamena, November 2015.
155 Ulemas are considered to be Muslim scholars.
officer refused to remove her burqa. Other similar incidents occurred in Sarh, a town in the south, and in N’Djamena market, where women in burqa refused to submit to checks by security forces. “We will respond as vigorously as we are able to anyone resisting the implementation of this law, which is now the law of the land”, said President Déby. “We must not let ourselves be deceived by the enemies of Islam who sully and manipulate religion for iniquitous and sadistic purposes”.

On 15 October 2015, a police spokesman announced that 62 women had been arrested for wearing the burqa in the capital. They had to pay heavy fines in order to be released. He added that these women would be accused of complicity with jihadists if they were arrested again, wrongly conflating the wearing of the burqa with terrorism. Some fear that the public humiliation caused by some spot checks, especially when they involve women, will foster violent religious activism and encourage the use of religion for political ends.

In Chad, neither the political nor the armed opposition have so far sought to exploit or politicise these intra-religious tensions, but this remains a possibility in the medium term. In order to avoid such an outcome, the government should condemn incitement to hate or violence, in particular in sermons, and adopt a measured tone in public statements that avoids the facile and dangerous temptation to associate fundamentalist religious currents with terrorism.

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156 Crisis Group interview, security actor, N’Djamena, August 2015.
159 “Chad police arrest 62 women for wearing burkas”, Associated Press, 15 October 2015.
160 Idem.
IV. Conclusion

Chad finds itself once again on the front line in the region’s political, security and ideological battles. In such a context, the regime in N’Djamena has been clever enough to turn its position in the fight against terrorism into valuable international political capital. International actors are focusing on short-term security objectives and the fight against terrorism, which is certainly a priority. However, they should seek political concessions from the government. If not, they risk seeing state institutions lose more domestic legitimacy and political space shrink further.

Chad remains a militarised and very poor country. The regime’s failure to give fresh impetus to its development agenda, establish a social contract with the population or create institutions capable of outlasting Déby’s rule undermines its legitimacy. As the presidential election approaches, the fight against terrorism abroad must not obscure the need to take decisive action to reduce internal sources of instability, whether they be political, economic or religious.

Nairobi/Brussels, 30 March 2016
Appendix A: Map of Chad
Appendix B: Map Showing Instability on Chad’s Borders
Appendix C: History of Wahhabi Expansion in Chad

The expansion of fundamentalist Islamist currents in Chad – those that believe in a literal reading of the sacred texts – has changed the religious landscape during the last 30 years. Wahhabism was introduced in Chad through trade with Gulf countries and study trips by young Chadians abroad and spread by religious teaching and the funding of charitable works. It now accounts for between 5 and 20 per cent of Muslims in Chad and is thought to be growing fast. The coexistence of Sufi and Wahhabi currents is far from harmonious.

Sufi Islam, particularly the Tijaniyya current, which still enjoys a large majority, is facing competition from other Muslim currents, especially the Wahhabi-inspired Islam introduced in the 1970s and 1980s. Although some Wahhabi preachers tried to establish a foothold in Chad at the end of the 1960s, they were usually rejected. However, the increase in trade and political ties between central Africa and the Gulf countries has contributed to the more sustained expansion of Wahhabism. Chadian economic operators have become accustomed to travelling to Saudi Arabia and Dubai. Young Chadians, granted scholarships for study trips to the Gulf countries, have also helped to disseminate Wahhabism on their return.

Gulf countries have also been active in the development field and this has contributed to the spread of reformist Muslim currents. Since the 1970s, enriched by oil, Gulf countries have channelled a lot of development aid into Africa. In Chad, Saudi Arabia has funded many development projects and the construction of mosques and Quranic schools. In N’Djamena, the King Faisal University and the central market were built in 1991 and 1998 respectively both with Saudi support.

Islamic organisations in Chad have also promoted the expansion of more literalist currents. Many Islamic NGOs have appeared in Chad since the end of the 1980s.

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161 In Chad, as elsewhere, fundamentalism is not the preserve of Wahhabism. It also includes various other religious currents. Originally Protestant, fundamentalism is defined as any religious movement that preaches the strict observation of the original principles of a religious doctrine and which is based on a literalist interpretation of sacred texts, the Quran in the case of Islam. Wahhabism is a Saudi fundamentalist movement founded in the eighteenth century by Mohammed ben Abd al-Wahhab, which affirms a strict vision of Sunni Islam and a literal interpretation of sacred texts.

162 The U.S. Department of State estimates that the Wahhabi current accounts for between 5 and 10 per cent of the Muslim community in Chad. Some Chadian religious leaders believe it is more than 20 per cent. Crisis Group interview, religious leader, N’Djamena, August 2015.

163 On his visit to the university in November 2014, the Saudi prince Amr Ben Mouhamad Ben FAYÇAL reiterated his support for it and promised to continue Saudi Arabia’s funding. “Le prince saoudien prêt à soutenir l’université roi FAYÇAL”, Agence tchadienne de presse et d’édition, 29 November 2014. Saudi Arabia is still involved in charitable projects: for example, in July 2015, the Saudi kingdom donated $55,000 in food supplies and prayer accessories for widows and orphans for the month of Ramadan. Kuwait and Qatar are also major international donors to Chad. For example, Qatar is funding the asphalting of the road between Abéché and the Sudanese border.

164 The author Mayke Kaag defines the NGOs as Islamic on the grounds that they emphasise the sacred texts of Islam, which form their main source of inspiration and influence their identity, their agenda and the way in which they obtain and redistribute their resources. Islamic NGOs (which appeared at the end of the 1970s during the Afghanistan war) are based on the Islamic understanding of solidarity: the principle of l’ighatha (humanitarian assistance), da’wa (preaching) and to a lesser extent, jihad (support for the spread of Islam). Mayke Kaag, “Transnational Islamic NGOs in Chad: Islamic Solidarity in the Age of Neoliberalism”, Africa today, vol. 54, n°3 (2008), pp. 3-18.
Although they claim to have development objectives, they generally disseminate a hardline version of Islam and their underlying mission is to re-educate African Muslims, who they believe by adhering to the Sufi tradition are practising an “impure” form of Islam. These organisations, which are generally Saudi, Sudanese, Kuwaiti and, to a lesser extent, Libyan,\(^{165}\) combine material support with religious proselytism. They provide aid to disadvantaged communities by building mosques, Quranic schools and health centres, implementing water and sanitation projects, supporting orphans, distributing food during religious festivals, granting student scholarships and supporting the training of preachers.\(^{166}\)

In northern Chad, missionary activities aim to “re-Islamise” the population and improve their “understanding” of Islamic principles. In the south, which is mainly Christian, they concentrate on converting non-Muslims. Saudi Islamic NGOs have conversion centres in the south, where residents interested in converting are fed, housed and attend religious courses for several months.

Generally keeping a low political profile, the expansion of Wahhabism in Chad has unquestionably changed social relations among believers. In urban areas, interviewees said that “people no longer greet each other”, “they [Wahabis] say we [Sufis] are heathens”.\(^{167}\) After initially keeping their distance, Wahhabis have begun to criticise the “impure” practices of Sufis and to claim that the authorities are restricting Islam and that the CSAI is ostracising Wahhabis. Wahhabis criticise Sufis for not opposing strongly enough reforms that conflict with religious teachings. With Wahhabism expanding rapidly, especially among young people, intra-religious tensions are growing and religious discourse is becoming more polarised and radical.

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165 The Qaddafi regime wanted to spread the Green Book ideology and invested massively in the Chadian cultural sector starting in the 1990s. It funded Islamic NGOs, such as the Libyan Islamic Call Association and the Da’wa Islamiya organisation. The latter focused on social-missionary activities, such as constructing Quranic schools and mosques, supplying medical and health materials and awarding scholarships to foreign students attending Libyan Islamic universities.

166 Islamic NGOs maintain Quranic schools including by paying the salaries of teachers. For example, in 2008, the Kuwaiti organisation, the African Muslims Agency (AMA), funded eleven Quranic schools at which more than 2,700 children attended and more than 180 teachers were employed. Ladiba Gondeu, *L'émergence des organisations islamiques au Tchad*, op. cit.

167 Crisis Group interview, religious leader, N’Djamena, August 2015.
Appendix D: Chad’s Growing Dominance in the Region

Chad has accompanied its policy of military intervention in the region with an all-out diplomatic offensive. This was illustrated when N’Djamena hosted an extraordinary summit of the Community of Sahel and Saharan States (CEN-SAD) in February 2013. Chad’s aim was to revive and then control an organisation that had remained moribund since Qaddafi’s death. President Déby also secured the rotating presidency of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) for six years. After being elected a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council in October 2013, during the following year Chad secured the presidency of that body and the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council. Chad also forms part of the subregional G5 Sahel grouping alongside Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, which aims to promote cooperation in combating cross-border terrorism and crime and attract funds. The president of Chad has chaired this group since November 2015.

Although Chad was denied command of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in 2013, former Chadian Foreign Minister Mahamat Saleh Annadif was appointed head of the mission in December 2015. Finally, the appointment of President Déby as AU chairman in January 2016 illustrated Chad’s growing influence on the continent. The aggressive tone of his first speech showed that he intends to use this new position to strengthen his reputation as a man of action: “We meet too often, we always talk too much, but we don’t act often enough and sometimes we do not act at all”. The political opposition in Chad fiercely criticised his appointment, denouncing it as a form of support for Déby, who was then standing for re-election.

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168 Many member states sent delegations to the summit and at the end signed a treaty that refounded and restructured the CEN-SAD and redefined its geographical area. “Tchad : la Cen-Sad est morte, vive le Cen-Sad”, Jeune Afrique, 25 March 2013.
169 In July 2013, Déby used his position to appoint Chad’s former permanent representative at the United Nations, Ahmad Allam-Mi, to the post of ECCAS secretary general.
170 The G5 Sahel, formed in February 2014 by Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, is “an institutional coordination and monitoring framework for regional cooperation” on development and security. Its aims include cooperation on defence and the development of the region through infrastructure, health and education projects. “Naissance du ‘G5 Sahel’ pour le développement et la sécurité”, RFI, 17 February 2015.
172 During the second G5 Sahel summit, which started on 20 November 2015 in N’Djamena while the Radisson Hotel in Bamako was still under attack, the five member countries decided to form a joint military force to fight the terrorist threat in the Sahel. “Terrorisme : le G5 annonce la création d’une force conjointe”, RFI, 21 November 2015.
173 On 23 December 2015, former Chadian foreign minister, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, was appointed to the post of Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of MINUSMA, replacing the Tunisian Mongi Hamdi. “Tchad : Mahamat Saleh Annadif, le diplomate tout-terrain pressenti pour être chef de la Minusma”, Jeune Afrique, 22 December 2015.
175 “Présidentielle au Tchad : Dadnadji s’en prend à l’Union africaine”, RFI, 13 February 2016.