



ΕΒΡΟΠΕΪΣΚΙ ΠΑΡΛΑΜΕΝΤ ΠΑΡΛΑΜΕΝΤΟ ΕΥΡΟΠΕΟ ΕΥΡΟΠΣΚΪ ΠΑΡΛΑΜΕΝΤ ΕΥΡΟΠΑ-ΠΑΡΛΑΜΕΝΤΕΤ  
ΕΥΡΟΠΆΙΣΧΕΣ ΠΑΡΛΑΜΕΝΤ ΕΥΡΟΟΡΑ ΠΑΡΛΑΜΕΝΤ ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΟ ΚΟΙΝΟΒΟΥΛΙΟ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT  
PARLEMENT EUROPEEN PARLAIMINT NA HEORPA PARLAMENTO EUROPEO EIROPAS PARLAMENTS  
EUROPOS PARLAMENTAS EURÓPAI PARLAMENT IL-PARLAMENT EWROPEW EUROPEES PARLEMENT  
PARLAMENT EUROPEJSKI PARLAMENTO EUROPEU PARLAMENTUL EUROPEAN  
EURÓPSKY PARLAMENT EVROPSKI PARLAMENT EUROOPAN PARLAMENTTI EUROPAPARLAMENTET

Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union  
Directorate for Interparliamentary Delegations and Policy Support  
Policy Department for External Relations

## NOTE

### **on the recent political situation in Chad**

Any opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of the European Parliament.

**FOR EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT INTERNAL USE ONLY**

This note was requested by the European Parliament's Sub-Committee on Security and Defence.

This paper is published in the following languages: English

Author: Armelle Douaud  
Directorate-General External Policies  
Policy Department  
[armelle.douaud@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:armelle.douaud@europarl.europa.eu)

Manuscript completed in November 2008.

This note is available on the [intranet](#) of the Policy Department of the Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union.

This note is also available in the catalogue of the European Parliament's [Library](#).

Copies can be obtained through: E-mail: [xp-poldep@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:xp-poldep@europarl.europa.eu)

Brussels, European Parliament, 21 November 2008.

Since Idriss Déby took power in 1990, Chad has been undergoing a very slow process of democratisation. One of the poorest countries in the world, it has recently joined the club of oil-producing states. But it has also just been ranked the most corrupt country in the world. Chad is suffering the consequences of instability in its neighbourhood and having to take in refugees from Darfur and the Central African Republic. The crisis in Darfur has had major internal repercussions for President Déby. When the conflict began, some members of his ethnic group have not forgiven his refusal to join the conflict in support of the rebels in Darfur, who belong to the same ethnic group. But actually troubles in Chad are not only a spill over from Darfur; they are also caused by the absence of the rule of law.

#### *The Zaghawa power in N'Djamena*

When Idriss Déby came to power the way seemed to have been opened for a gradual democratisation of the country. However, Chad gained only the formal apparatus of democracy. But while a multiparty system has been established, elections are held regularly and the judiciary has recently been completed with the establishment of a court of cassation and a constitutional court, in practice however President Déby wields executive and legislative power through his party, he controls the judiciary, which is widely corrupt, and the army is controlled by members of his ethnic group, the Zaghawas. The northern ethnic groups hold the country since 1980.

Tensions became even more exacerbated once oil revenues came on stream. This partly created serious dissensions within the President's clan. As early as 2005 Delphine Kenneloum Djiraibé, a Chadian lawyer and coordinator of the Committee for Peace (a forum bringing together several civil society associations) foresaw that "*the war of succession could turn into a civil war*" because "*when democratic avenues are closed, people take up arms*".

#### *Darfur refugees and the crisis in the Déby clan*

The crisis in Darfur has had serious repercussions in Chad. More than 300.000 refugees have crossed the border since 2003. The refugees and the local population are haggling over scarce drinking water, food and wood. Growing tensions with rebel groups have also pushed 200.000 Chadians to leave their home and become Internally Displaced People (IDPs). Civilian population, locals as well as refugees, also had to deal with frequent incursions into Chad by armed Sudanese groups, resulting in violence, livestock theft and the killing of civilians. There again the things became more complicated after the rebellion started its actions.

The Darfur conflict had also an impact on the authority of President Déby, who is from the east of the country. His tribe, the Zaghawas, are strongly represented in the army. The Zaghawa community is based in eastern Chad and in the Darfur region of Sudan. From the beginning of the conflict in Darfur, Zaghawas in the Chadian army have criticised President Déby for acting merely as a mediator in the conflict rather than siding with the rebels in Darfur. Déby has also reined in members of the army who were secretly providing assistance to the rebels in Darfur.

Indeed since October 2005 a fresh rebellion by Zaghawa soldiers took shape in the east. Soldiers started to desert. The rebellion also had an impact on the refugee camps as the humanitarian organisations were forced to halve their staff there for a number of days. Still President Déby continued to mediate in the Darfur conflict. But in parallel he began to support some groups in Darfur, especially the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). This shift was certainly provoked by a failed coup against him in 2004. He now uses the JEM to fight the rebel groups in eastern Chad. Thanks to oil resources, money is available to buy arms, especially after Chad emptied the trust fund set up by the World Bank.

### *Supporting the neighbour's rebels*

Chad and Sudan are fighting a proxy war by arming and supporting each other's rebels. The main rebel groups in Chad are gathered in the UFDD (Union of the Forces for Democracy and Development), the Assembly of the Forces for Change (RFC) and the Union of the Forces for Change and Democracy (UFCD). Most of them actually come from inner circles around President Déby. They are also divided into ethnic lines, mainly between the Zaghawas and the Goranes.

The only objective of the rebellion seems to be to overthrow Déby. Alliances between the rebel groups and between some groups and the government are volatile: alliances do not last and some groups regularly enter into negotiations with the government. But none seems to last.

A first massive attack from rebels occurred in April 2006. The Chadian army could stop the rebels thanks to French logistical and intelligence support. However the rebellion was much more successful in February 2008 when it entered N'Djamena. French troops remained more discreet and the Chadian army was backed by the JEM who followed the Chadian rebels. Déby was close to being toppled. According to *International Crisis Group*<sup>1</sup>, the rebel's defeat is due to their internal disagreement and to the tactical advantage held by Déby who knew that they were far from their base and would lack ammunitions. Chad had its revenge on Sudan, who backed the rebel's attack on N'Djamena later in May 2008 when the JEM almost entered Khartoum, with N'Djamena support. It is argued that the February attack was launched before the deployment of the EUFOR. Sudan wanted to take the opportunity to depose Déby before he became "protected" by the European force. After the criticisms for its action in April 2006, France could not back Déby so openly anymore.

### *A tense internal political situation*

Chad's troubles are not only due to the conflict in Sudan. All the State's apparatus is held in the President's hands. After the April 2006 attack the international community pushed Déby to open up the political space. An agreement with the opposition was signed on 13 July 2007. The text was never really implemented though. It is still difficult for the political opposition to keep a high profile when the "debate" is between President Déby and the armed rebels. Déby took advantage of the attacks on the capital in February 2008 to have most of political opponents arrested. One of them, Ibni Oumar, is still missing. The report from the commission of inquiry on the February events set up by the Chadian government was published in September. It concluded that Ibni Oumar was dead and implicated the Chadian army. Again under international pressure Déby accepted to have some opposition members in the government, including the Defence Minister (but the army only obeys the President).

armelle.douaud@europal.europa.eu - [www.europarl.europa.eu](http://www.europarl.europa.eu)  
B-1047 Brussels - Tel +32 2 28 43806 - Fax +32 2 28 3140

---

<sup>1</sup> International Crisis Group - "*Chad: a new conflict resolution framework*". Africa Report n°144 - 24 September 2008.