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Chad (1965 -)

Violent conflict in Chad dates from 1965. Although control of the government has not changed hands since 1990, rebel groups continue to challenge its authority. The causes of the conflict are intertwined with the interests of neighboring Libya and Sudan and the former colonial power, France. France ruled Chad with a relatively light hand, enlisting tribal leaders from its 200 different ethnic groups to provide security. When Chad gained independence in 1960, there were only a handful of trained Chadian civil servants and the country had weak government structures.

The civil war that began in the mid-1960s has been fraught with shifting alliances: rebel leaders became legitimate government leaders, and government leaders were exiled or defected to become rebels. Who won battles amongst the rivals for power often depended more on backing from force Libya, Sudan, or France than on popular support in Chad.

The first rebel movements emerged in opposition to president Tombalbaye, a southern Christian who alienated the mostly Arabic and Muslim northerners. The Sudanese and Libyan governments supported the armed Chadian National Liberation Front (Frolinat). Tombalbaye, with help from the French military, managed to withstand Frolinat advances until he was killed in a military coup in 1975. Over the next decade, Libya and France backed rival forces. The troops of French-backed Hissene Habre took control of the capital, N'Djamena, in 1982, and Habre retained control of the central government until 1990 when he was ousted by rebels led by a former ally, Idriss Déby, who was backed by Sudan and Libya.

Déby garnered support from African and Western countries and from the World Bank. In the early 1990s he trimmed the military, and agreed to oil explorations financed by Western oil companies and the Bank. Despite five coup attempts in the first three years of his rule, Déby maintained power. In 1996 he was elected President in Chad's first multi-party elections. A new armed rebellion, led by his former defense minister Youssouf Togoimi, erupted in 1998. Déby won re-election in 2001 in a poll marked by large-scale irregularities. In 2004, as refugees from the Sudanese province of Darfur poured into Chad, fighting broke out between the Chadian army and pro-Sudanese militias, and the fighting reached the outskirts of the capital in 2006, when Déby won a third presidential election.

Print Resources

Thompson, Virginia and Adloff, Richard (1981) *Conflict in Chad*. Berkeley: Institute of International Studies.

Kelley, Michael P. (1986) *A State in Disarray: Conditions of Chad's Survival*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Nolutshungu, Sam C. (1996) *Limits of Anarchy: Intervention and State Formation in Chad*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia. .

Azevedo, Mario Joaquim (1998) *Roots of Violence: A history of war in Chad*. Australia: Gordon and Breach.

Online Resources

BBC News. *Country Profile: Chad*

Reuters Alertnet. *Country Profile: Chad*

Timeline

1960 - Chad gains independence from France

1962 - President Tombalbaye bans opposition parties and starts "Africanization"

1965 - tax riots break out, spread through north

1966 - Chad Liberation Front (Frolinat) established

1969 - French give military support to Tombalbaye

1971 - Libya arms Frolinat

1975 - Tombalbaye assassinated

1979 - National Unity Government established with Goukouni Oueddei as President and Habre as Minister of Defense

1980 - Libya sends troops to back Oueddei; Habre flees to Sudan

1982 - Habre's troops take capital

1983 - Libya invades Chad; France assists Habre

1986 - Libyans retreat

1989 - Déby ousts Habre

1990 - Déby signs oil agreement with the World Bank and Western oil companies

1996 - Déby elected President with 44% of the vote

2001 - Déby re-elected

2003 - MDJT (Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad), led by Togoimi, and the government sign peace accord, opposed by hardliners within MDJT

2004 - thousands of Sudanese refugees arrive in Chad; fighting between Chadian troops and pro-Sudanese militias.

2006 - fighting with Sudanese-backed militias reaches outskirts of N'Djamena; Déby re-elected to third term