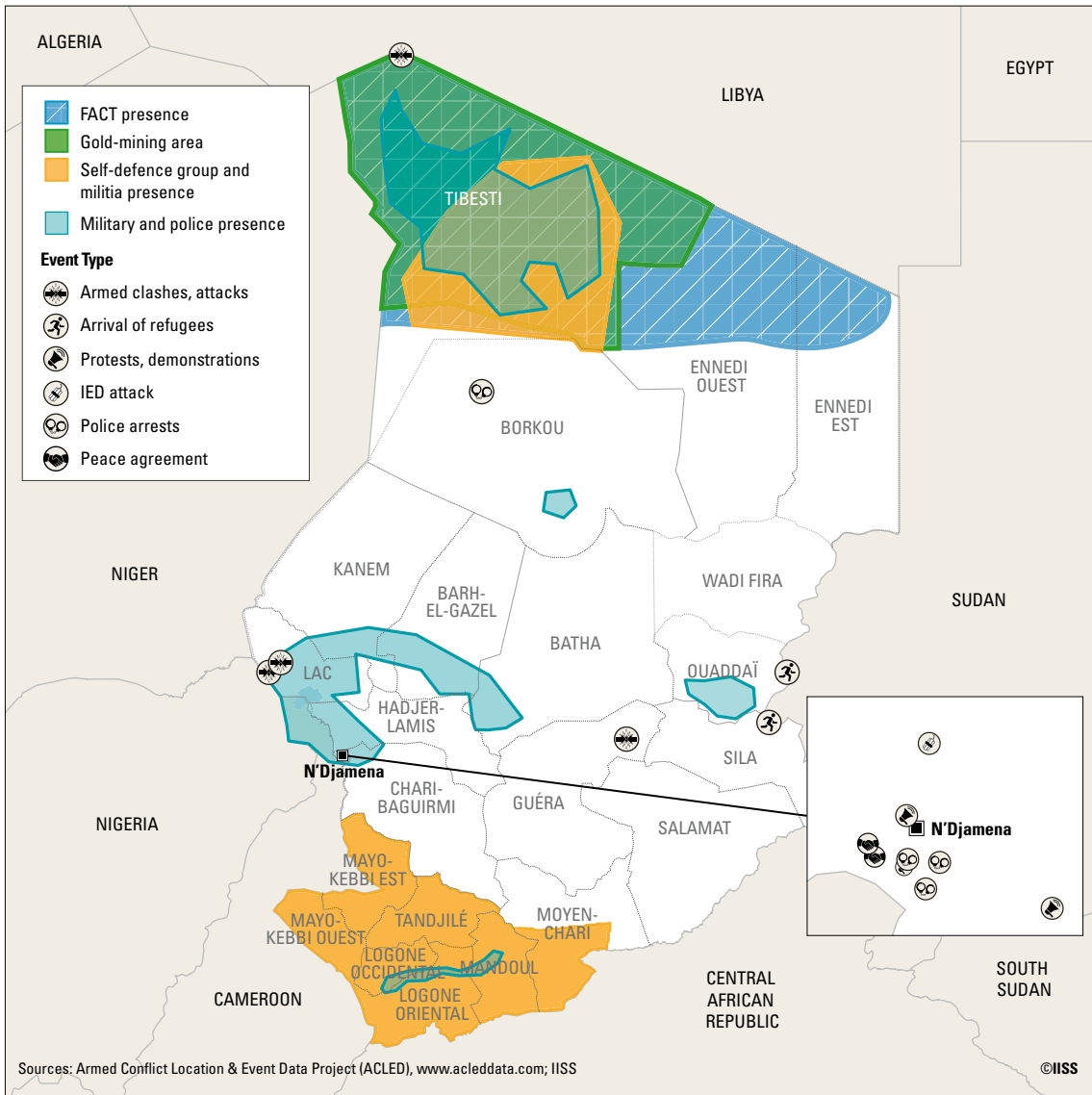


# CHAD

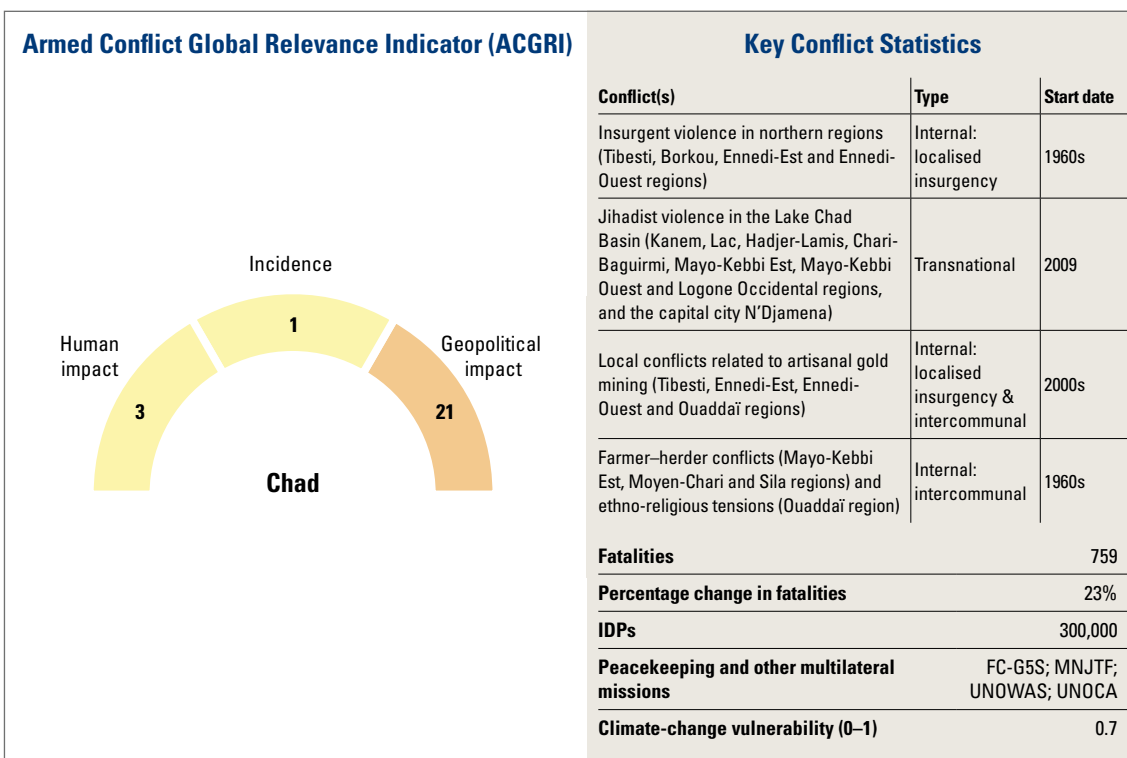


## Conflict Overview

A landlocked country spanning the Sahel and Central Africa, Chad has experienced continued instability since its independence from France in 1960. Enduring grievances over ethnically motivated political exclusion and poor governance of the country's natural resources, including oil and minerals, have fuelled political instability,

powered by generations of armed groups. Multiple military coups have further exposed the fragility of Chad's political system, which remains largely predicated on military might, ethnic divisions and patrimonial government practices.

From 1965–90, the Chadian Civilian War – a complex and protracted conflict – played a critical



ACGRI pillars: IISS calculation based on multiple sources for 2022 and 2023 (scale: 0–100), except for some cases according to data availability. See Notes on Methodology and Data Appendix for all variables and further details on Key Conflict Statistics.

role in shaping the country's political and military landscape. It was characterised by shifting alliances, multiple phases and the involvement of a variety of internal and external actors. In 1990, Idriss Déby Itno, then a young military officer, overthrew the dictator Hissène Habré, but internal divisions persisted. New armed groups formed in the following decades, which continue to fight the government over grievances related to power and resource sharing.

In April 2021, long-term president Déby died while at the front line in the battle against the Fighters of the Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT) rebellion. He was unconstitutionally succeeded by his son Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, who installed a transitional military council (CMT), initially for 18 months. The authoritarian transition regime has since struggled to contain northern rebellions, quell further uprisings in the south, tackle residual violence by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS, commonly known as Boko Haram) in the Lake Chad Basin and address persistent communal violence all at once.

Chad's geographic positioning has historically been an additional cause of its fragility, with Libya and the Central African Republic (CAR) affected

by civil war to its north and south, Sudan facing instability to its east, and JAS/Boko Haram continuing to challenge its southwest borders with Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon. A continuous flow of arms and skilled fighters from these neighbouring countries provides a significant pool of resources for Chadian rebel groups. Such rebellions stem from a long history of civil wars and domestic insurgencies, and they continue to form a major conflict system in the country's north, especially along its porous borders with Libya and Sudan.

A member both of the G5 Sahel, fighting against al-Qaeda's and the Islamic State's presence in the central Sahel, and of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), combating JAS/Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the Lake Chad Basin, Chad also contributes a great number of troops to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Chad's long-standing close cooperation with France (its main military partner) and other foreign forces has earned it the reputation of being a reliable military partner for the West in a troubled region, despite its poor democratic track record.

## Conflict Update

Over the reporting period, Chad's political transition under Mahamat Déby's CMT became increasingly undemocratic. The military transitional government went back on its initial commitment to hand over power to civilians within 18 months, instead extending its rule for another two years.

In October 2022, a popular protest organised by opposition movement *Wakit Tama* was violently repressed by state security forces, leaving at least 50 to potentially over 300 people dead in the capital city N'Djamena.<sup>1</sup> The crackdown was reminiscent of Chad's history of authoritarian rule and state-led abuse of political critics. France's failure to condemn the security sector's brutality further fuelled popular opposition to French involvement in the country – a trend that is ongoing in other Sahelian countries. Meanwhile, the CMT has made little progress on its agenda to reform the constitution and electoral system, suggesting that the country may not return to a constitutional order even in the 24-month extended time frame (by October 2024).

In 2022, the government organised the Inclusive and Sovereign National Dialogue with Qatar's mediation support. The dialogue lasted several months and was supposed to offer a framework for the consensual resolution of long-standing political divides between the military, ruling elite, political and civil-society movements, and non-state armed groups (NSAGs). However, the dialogue did not produce the desired outcomes, primarily because some armed groups were excluded and multiple leading NSAGs, including the FACT, the Union of Resistance Forces (UFR) and the Military Command Council for the Salvation of the Republic (CCMSR), either declined to partake in or withdrew from the process.

Meanwhile, tensions endured throughout the country. The FACT continued its push (began in 2021) from southern Libya towards N'Djamena and clashed with the Chadian army. Rumours of a new rebellion

forming on the Chad–CAR border in 2022, with alleged support from the CAR, strained diplomatic relations between the two countries. And in April 2023, conflict breaking out in Sudan created an additional risk factor in Chad's volatile surrounding regions.

Against this backdrop, Chad signed a defence-cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia in January 2023 and increased defence and security allocations by 20% in its 2023 national budget, suggesting that the government is preparing for war.<sup>2</sup> The country also opened an embassy in Israel in early 2023, a further indication of the government's resolve to tighten ties with countries that have the technical capacity to act as critical security partners and have a track record of supporting authoritarian African states.

Although several rebel NSAGs, including those that boycotted the Inclusive and Sovereign National Dialogue, remain active, direct clashes with government forces slowed down in 2022 and early 2023. The threat they pose to the capital city N'Djamena seems more distant than a year earlier. However, the fact that Chadian forces are overstretched across multiple fronts and enjoy limited popular support suggests that these trends could easily be reversed.

Beyond political rebel groups, Chad also continues to face extensive communal violence, mostly powered by a combination of ethnic rivalries and opposing economic interests. In the country's north, an ill-regulated artisanal-gold-mining industry and the widespread use of uncontrolled drugs such as tramadol have led to frequent deadly clashes and fuelled a criminal economy that partly relies on human trafficking and slavery. Elsewhere, especially but not limited to the regions of Sila, Ouaddaï and Wadi Fira, long-standing farmer–herder competition regularly results in violent clashes with high civilian death tolls.

## Conflict Parties

### Chadian armed forces

**Strength:** 33,250 active military personnel (air force: 350; army: approximately 27,500; state security service: 5,400), as well as 11,900 active gendarmerie and paramilitary personnel.

**Areas of operation:** Primarily active in counter-insurgency efforts in the Lake Chad Basin but also involved in nationwide securitisation operations.

### Chadian armed forces

**Leadership:** President Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, Bichara Issa Djadallah (minister of defence) and Azem Bermendoua Agouna (chief of the general staff).

**Structure:** Comprised of the army, the air force, the state security service, and gendarmerie and paramilitary forces.

**History:** Founded in 1960, following the country's independence from France. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Chad's military was heavily influenced by France, which continued to provide training, equipment and military advisers. In the 1980s, the armed forces were reorganised and re-equipped with support from the United States, which sought to counter Libyan influence in the region. The armed forces

have a long history of being politicised, with most presidents since independence coming from a military background.

**Objectives:** Maintain national security and territorial integrity and counter violent extremism.

**Opponents:** FACT, UFR, CCMSR, other NSAGs, JAS/Boko Haram and ISWAP.

**Affiliates/allies:** French armed forces, MNJTF, G5 Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S).

**Resources/capabilities:** Chad's defence budget for 2022 was US\$319 million (2.7% of GDP) and is US\$339m (2.8% of GDP) for 2023.

### Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT)

**Strength:** 1,000–1,500 fighters in 2021 (most recent data available).<sup>3</sup>

**Areas of operation:** Primarily in northern Chad and southern Libya.

**Leadership:** Mahamat Mahadi Ali.

**Structure:** Unknown.

**History:** Founded by Mahamat Mahadi Ali, FACT emerged in 2016 as a splinter group from the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development rebel group. Since Idriss Déby's death in 2021, FACT has gained increasing popular support

among smaller rebel factions and local ethnic groups such as the Goran (of which Mahadi is a member), Zaghawa and Tebu.

**Objectives:** Overthrow the Chadian government, deemed illegitimate by FACT.

**Opponents:** Chadian armed forces.

**Affiliates/allies:** Unclear.

**Resources/capabilities:** Light and heavy weaponry, armed vehicles and improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

### Union of Resistance Forces (UFR)

**Strength:** Unclear.

**Areas of operation:** Northern regions of Chad.

**Leadership:** Timane Erdimi.

**Structure:** UFR is an alliance of eight separate Chadian rebel groups.

**History:** Established in 2009, the main goal of the coalition was initially to overthrow the regime of Idriss Déby. Erdimi, a

relative of Idriss Déby, was allegedly picked to lead the insurgency the same year.

**Objectives:** Overthrow the Chadian government and 'liberate' the Chadian people.

**Opponents:** Chadian armed forces and France.

**Affiliates/allies:** Unclear.

**Resources/capabilities:** Light weaponry and IEDs.

### Military Command Council for the Salvation of the Republic (CCMSR)

**Strength:** Unclear.

**Areas of operation:** Operates primarily in the northern Chadian region of Tibesti but originated in southern Libya. CCMSR is marginally active in eastern Niger and western Sudan.

**Leadership:** Rachid Mahamat Tahir.

**Structure:** Unknown.

**History:** In 2016, following a dispute among members of the FACT coalition, a faction of primarily Kreda clansmen decided to split from the group and form the CCMSR.

**Objectives:** Overthrow the Chadian government.

**Opponents:** Chadian armed forces.

**Affiliates/allies:** Libyan defence brigades and armed groups.

**Resources/capabilities:** Light weaponry.

### Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)

**Strength:** Approximately 13,000 troops from the armed forces of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria.<sup>4</sup>

**Areas of operation:** Lake Chad Basin.

**Leadership:** Maj.-Gen. Gold Chibuisi (force commander).

**Structure:** Headquartered in N'Djamena (Chad), the MNJTF comprises four geographical sectors, with their own headquarters in Monguno (Nigeria), Baga Sola (Chad), Diffa

(Niger) and Mora (Cameroon). Each sector is led by a commander with wide autonomy, while the MNJTF force commander has coordination powers.

**History:** The MNJTF evolved from a Nigerian initiative in 1994 to a multinational force in 1998 to tackle cross-border crimes and banditry affecting the Lake Chad Basin. After years of inactivity, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU) agreed to revive the MNJTF in 2015 to counter JAS/Boko Haram's growing activity.

### Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)

**Objectives:** Coordinate regional counter-insurgency efforts and restore security in areas affected by JAS/Boko Haram and ISWAP in the Lake Chad Basin. The MNJTF also helps support stabilisation programmes, humanitarian-assistance efforts and the return of forcibly displaced people.

**Opponents:** JAS/Boko Haram and ISWAP.

**Affiliates/allies:** The national armies of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria; international partners (the AU,

Burkina Faso, the European Union, France, Mali, the United Kingdom and the US); FC-G5S; and MINUSMA.

**Resources/capabilities:** Estimated initial operational budget of US\$700m. The EU is the force's main contributor, channelling its funds through the AU. Bureaucratic delays and lack of adequate resources have hampered the MNJTF's ability to fulfil its mandate.

### French armed forces

**Strength:** 1,500 military personnel in Chad.<sup>5</sup>

**Areas of operation:** N/A.

**Leadership:** Sébastien Lecornu (French minister of defence).

**Structure:** Consists of French military personnel stationed in Chad, primarily in the N'Djamena French military base and the Chadian military bases of Faya and Abéché.

**History:** France has provided military assistance to Chadian authorities since Chad's independence in the name of safeguarding the political stability of the region. Between 1986 and 2014, the French military was involved in the Chadian–

Libyan conflict through *Operation Épervier*. The Chadian capital of N'Djamena then hosted the headquarters of French-led *Operation Barkhane* (2014–22), along with a major air-force military base still in use today.

**Objectives:** Assist the Chadian armed forces, MNJTF and FC-G5S in the fight against violent extremism; protect local communities from attacks; and free villages and towns from insurgent control.

**Opponents:** JAS/Boko Haram, CCMSR, FACT and UFR.

**Affiliates/allies:** Chadian armed forces, MNJTF and FC-G5S.

**Resources/capabilities:** Heavy weaponry.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Chad: Scores of Protesters Shot Dead, Wounded', 26 October 2022; and 'Manifestations du 20 octobre au Tchad: la CNDH a rendu son rapport sur le «jeudi noir»' [20 October Protests in Chad: CNDH Delivers Its Report on 'Black Thursday'], Radio France Internationale (RFI), 24 February 2023.
- <sup>2</sup> Remadji Hoinathy, 'Do Those Seeking Peace in Chad Need to Prepare for War?', Institute for Security Studies, 27 March 2023.

- <sup>3</sup> Thomas Howes-Ward, 'Libya's Foreign Militias', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 10 April 2018.
- <sup>4</sup> Freedom Chukwudi Onuoha, Andrew E. Yaw Tchie and Mariana Llorens Zabala, *A Quest to Win the Hearts and Minds: Assessing the Effectiveness of the Multinational Joint Task Force* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2023), p. 37. The MNJTF website puts this number at around 10,000 troops.
- <sup>5</sup> IISS, *The Military Balance 2023* (Abingdon: Routledge for the IISS, 2023), p. 443.

