NASTY NEIGHBORS

Resolving the Chad–Sudan Proxy War

By Colin Thomas-Jensen

It's bad enough that the international community has failed, five years in, to end the genocide in Darfur, and worse still that it reacted with no urgency when the Darfur crisis bled into neighboring Chad. With the root causes of conflict in each country still untended, this regional crisis is poised to deepen.

The agreement signed on March 13 in Dakar, Senegal, between Chadian President Idriss Déby and Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir might have appeared a spot of good news for a part of the world that has been on a steady slide toward chaos. It wasn't. Relations between Chad and Sudan are so volatile and international diplomacy so feeble that a non-aggression pact between the two countries is a warning sign for more conflict to come. These quarrelsome neighbors have signed four peace accords in the past two years, and in each instance fighting broke out shortly thereafter. This time, it took less than a week for the regimes to accuse one another of violating the Dakar Agreement, and just over two weeks for Darfur-based Chadian rebels backed by Khartoum to attack Chadian government forces in the strategic border town of Adé, where pitched gun battles left seven civilians dead and 47 wounded.

Civilians living near the volatile border—including hundreds of thousands of refugees and millions of displaced persons—are not the only ones at risk. Hundreds were killed and tens of thousands displaced 400 miles away in N'Djamena, Chad's capital, during a failed rebel coup attempt in early February. Intense fighting drove tens of thousands of Chadian civilians into Cameroon and Nigeria. Meanwhile, conflict and organized banditry is engulfing northern Central African Republic and the Chadian rebels, armed with heavy weapons provided by the Sudanese government, are expected back in N'Djamena before the start of the rainy season in June. The international community must finally demonstrate coordinated leadership in pursuing the 3Ps of crisis response:

Peacemaking: The United States and key partners—such as France, the United Kingdom, China, the European Union, the United Nations, and the African Union—must commit adequate diplomatic and financial resources to a major peace initiative for Sudan and Chad. A full-court diplomatic press to resolve the conflict in Darfur must be matched with efforts to bring about profound political changes inside Chad and, ultimately, end the proxy war between Sudan and Chad.[1]

Protection: The international community must take steps to protect civilians by expediting the full deployment of the joint U.N./EU hybrid mission to Chad and the hybrid U.N./AU mission to Darfur. The U.N. Security Council and the European Union should revise the U.N./EU force's mandate to include monitoring of an eventual ceasefire between the Chadian government and Chadian rebels.

Punishment: As ENOUGH called for in a February 11 joint statement with the Save Darfur Coalition and the Genocide Intervention Network, the U.N. Security Council must respond with targeted sanctions against senior Sudanese officials responsible for sponsoring the overthrow of a neighboring sovereign government, committing atrocities against civilians, blocking the deployment of peacekeeping forces, and failing to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, or CPA. Moreover, Chad's continuing support for rebels in Darfur, and increasingly brazen operations by its own troops against Chadian rebel groups based there, should be met by sanctions. Finally, the Security Council must enforce the arms embargo for Darfur, which is routinely violated, and consider an international arms embargo on Chad.

INTERLOCKING CONFLICT SYSTEMS: A DOWNWARD SPIRAL

As outlined in a recent ENOUGH report, Chad's internal conflict is the outgrowth of an exclusion-

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1 For more on the internal conflicts in Sudan and Chad, and recommendations for international mediation, go to www.enoughproject.org.

ary and militarized political system which has seen political power won through the barrel of a gun and maintained through repression. Meanwhile, President Déby's masterful ability to engender factionalism has helped make him Chad's longest serving head of state. His fortunes began to change in 2003, however, when Khartoum realized that members of Déby's Zaghawa clan were arming Sudanese Zaghawa rebels in Darfur. Fearing that Chad's involvement could strengthen the hand of Darfur's growing armed opposition, the Sudanese government gradually aligned itself with armed factions seeking regime change in Chad.

Darfur's rebels started as village self-defense forces engaged in local, small-scale conflicts related to land tenure. As they evolved into organized insurgent groups fighting against broader political marginalization and neglect, they found themselves confronting lethal Janjaweed militias backed by heavily armed, mechanized units of the Sudanese military. In the face of this larger and more powerful force, Chadian sponsorship—including safe harbor and material and logistical support—became a matter of military survival for the rebels. Covert Chadian government support for Darfur rebels, including the Sudanese Liberation Army, or SLA, and the Justice and Equality Movement, or JEM, went overt in December 2005 after Chadian rebels backed by Khartoum hit the strategic border outpost of Adré—and thus began the proxy war between Chad and Sudan.[2]

With time, Darfur's rebels went from somewhat ambiguous allies to the indispensable agents of the Chadian government's strategy, repelling attacks on Chadian soil (including the early February siege of N'Djamena) and engaging Chadian rebels within Darfur. The Chadian government's embrace of the JEM is especially intimate. President Déby's older brother, Daoussa Déby, is related by birth to JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim, and many JEM soldiers have been incorporated into units of the Chadian army. This increasingly close alignment between JEM and the Chadian government has muddied the waters of war, and impeded regional and international efforts to unify the various Darfur rebel groups, thus prolonging that conflict.

Despite this interdependence, however, the proxy war between Chad and Sudan is radically asymmetrical. Sudan-backed Chadian rebels represent a credible threat to the Déby regime, but the Chad-backed Darfur rebels do not directly threaten Khartoum. The Sudanese government sponsored a coup attempt in April 2006, just prior to the signing of the failed Darfur Peace Agreement in Abuja. Since then, Sudanese government support for the Chad rebels has kept President Déby busy defending his turf, but Khartoum only recently embarked on an earnest attempt at regime change. The Sudanese government's Chad policy grew significantly more aggressive in late 2007 after a JEM offensive forced Khartoum to move Chadian rebel units into blocking positions around Geneina, the capital of West Darfur. During the same offensive, Chadian rebel positions in the area were bombarded by Chadian government military aircraft.[3]

With hawks in Khartoum ascendant, support for the Chadian rebels increased dramatically. Gen. Salah Abdallah Gosh, Sudan's Director of National Intelligence, personally oversaw efforts to organize and unify the Chadian factions into an army capable of toppling the Déby regime.[4] Moreover, as noted by the *New York Times'* Lydia Polgreen in

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2   As of January 2008, the JEM and the SLA had fragmented into five main rebel factions or factional alliances: the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdel Shafie (SLA/Abdelshafie), an alliance of five factions that attended consultations in Juba, South Sudan, late last year; the SLA/Unity, an alliance led by Suliman Jamous and Sharif Harir; SLA/Abdelwahid, which remains mostly a political actor with minimal military impact in Darfur; the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), led by Khalil Ibrahim; and a JEM splinter called JEM Collective Leadership, led by Ibrahim's former confidant, Bahar Abu Garda.

3   The Sudanese government issued a formal complaint to the UN Security Council. See http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article25366.

4   The three Chadian rebel groups involved in the February fighting in N'Djamena included the Union of Forces for Democracy, or UFDD, militarily the strongest rebel faction, led Déby's former ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Mahamat Nouri; the Rally of Forces for Change, or RFC, a faction that has been depleted by defections to the government side since late 2007 but which remains politically potent, led by Timane Erdimi, Déby's nephew and former chief of staff; and the UFDD-Fundamental, a UFDD splinter led by Abdelwahid Aboud Makaye.

a recent article, "fears that a pro-Sudanese government could seize power in…Ndjamena have led much of the world to stick by Mr. Déby, despite the increasing repressiveness of his rule."[5]

DEFUSING THE PROXY WAR

Although the rebellions in Chad and Darfur have unique histories, peace cannot be achieved in Darfur without reserving a place at the negotiating table for the Chadian government. Nor can peace be achieved in Chad without a buy-in from the Sudanese government. Further, diplomatic efforts to defuse the proxy war between Chad and Sudan thus far have been ad-hoc and the agreements reached between Presidents Deby and Bashir have been empty theatrics. Moreover, these efforts have been detached from ongoing, though feeble, peacemaking efforts for Chad's and Sudan's internal conflicts (see recent ENOUGH Reports "Is Anyone Serious about Ending the Political Crisis in Chad" and "Creating a Peace to Keep in Darfur)."

This is not surprising. The international response to the crisis in Sudan and Chad is consistently half-measured. The international community calls for mediation and then devotes limited resources to peace processes. It authorizes peacekeeping missions and then fails to fully deploy them. It imposes an arms embargo and then watches as arms flow freely into the region. It calls for accountability and then sanctions four people, over a five-year period of orchestrated atrocities, and the cost of this failure is higher by the day.

The sub-region is increasingly unstable. Chad sits on a knife's edge. The situation in Darfur has degenerated dramatically in recent months. Armed groups from Chad and Sudan, including the Chadian rebels and units of the Chadian army, have further destabilized the bandit-ridden northern reaches of the Central African Republic. Following the Chadian rebel coup attempt in February 2008, 30,000 residents of N'Djamena sought refuge in northern Cameroon; Chadian rebels wounded in the fighting are among them, as are the Chadian intelligence agents who hunt them. Another 3,500 Chadians crossed into Nigeria, prompting officials there to announce that the crisis in Chad posed security risks not only to Nigeria, but to the sub-region as a whole.

1. Peacemaking: Step-up regional diplomacy

The March 13 Dakar Agreement differs from four previous peace deals between Chad and Sudan in that it created a Contact Group to oversee its implementation, comprised of Libya, Congo-Brazzaville, Eritrea, Gabon, and Senegal.[6] The Contact Group is a welcome innovation, but it will be crucial to include other actors—particularly the United States, France, United Kingdom, China, the European Union and the United Nations—in efforts to secure and police a ceasefire between Chad and Sudan. The U.S. State Department should send additional political officers to N'Djamena to support this initiative, and base a full-time political-military affairs officer in eastern Chad to deal directly with the warring factions. France, the United Kingdom, China, the European Union and the United Nations should also devote more diplomatic resources to the process.

U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon told the parties at the Dakar Agreement signing ceremony this March that the United Nations is ready to do everything within its capacity to assist them in stabilizing the border region, and has taken the position that the conflicts in Chad and Sudan (and the Central African Republic) should be addressed in a coordinated effort that takes into account

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5   Lydia Polgreen, "Rebels' Border War Prolongs Darfur's Misery and Engulfs Chad in the Conflict," *New York Times*, April 13, 2008. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/13/world/africa/13chad.html?ref=africa.

6   The contact group is charged with follow-up on the implementation of the Dakar Agreement and the monitoring of possible violations. It is co-chaired by Libya and the Congo.

the root causes of the internal conflicts as well as their regional dimensions. Consistent with his statements, the Secretary General should direct his Special Representative in Chad, Victor Angelo, to coordinate with his U.N. counterpart in Darfur, Ashraf Qazi, toward achieving a lasting détente between Chad and Sudan through concerted and comprehensive diplomatic efforts.

2. Protection: Deploy effective peacekeeping forces

The asymmetrical nature of the Chad-Sudan proxy war presents President Déby with a conundrum: Cutting ties with the Darfur rebels is both a prerequisite for peace with Sudan and tantamount to capitulation in his war with the Chadian rebels. Rebels from both Chad and Sudan would face a similarly impossible choice in the event of a cease-fire: Disarmament and demobilization could be suicide politically (and perhaps literally).[7] Any agreements therefore require close monitoring by international peacekeeping forces to keep the warring factions apart and prevent reprisals.

Last year, the international community finally authorized and began to dispatch forces to both sides of the Chad-Sudan border. In July 2007, the Security Council authorized the hybrid United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur, or UNAMID, which took over from its African Union predecessor on January 1. Less than two months later, in September, the Security Council authorized a joint E.U. and U.N. "multidimensional presence" called

EUFOR and MINURCAT respectively, to protect civilians in Chad and the Central African Republic. However, both UNAMID and EUFOR are struggling to reach full deployment. Former U.N. Secretary General (and former head of U.N. peacekeeping) Kofi Annan recently noted, "We have these conflicts where no one really wants to get involved, powerful countries with means will not touch it with a barge pole, they will support weak, ineffectual initiatives by others, sometimes by a sub-regional or regional organization, to create the impression of action."[8]

In Darfur, U.N. member states must immediately contribute the forces, civilian components, and heavy equipment needed to render UNAMID fully capable. In Chad, E.U. member states must help EUFOR reach full operating capacity as quickly as possible. At the same time, the United States, France, the United Kingdom and China should immediately begin consultations within the Security Council and with the European Union to revise EUFOR's mandate to include monitoring an eventual ceasefire.[9] At present, the mandate is to protect civilians and humanitarian workers, but, in the event of a ceasefire, the EU force must be able to assume a more traditional peacekeeping role. Further, it is time to prepare the ground in Chad and the Security Council for an eventual handover to the United Nations at the end of EUFOR's one-year mandate in March 2009. In the event of a peace agreement, the U.N. successor force must be mandated to carry out demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration activities, or DDR.

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7 President Déby has a somewhat imperfect record of respecting amnesty provisions. Abbas Koty, a former member of Déby's government who went into insurgency under the banner of the National Committee for Recovery, or CNR, was assassinated by Déby's security forces days after he signed a 1993 peace accord providing for the integration of CNR soldiers into the Chadian army and for the group's eventual establishment as a political party. More recently, Mahamat Nour, founder of the Front Uni pour la Changement, or FUC, signed a December 2006 peace accord that made him Chad's minister of defense, only to find himself facing arrest and forced to take refuge at the Libyan embassy in N'Djamena less than a year later. In March 2008, Nour slipped out of the embassy compound and crossed into Niger, and made his way from there to the United Arab Emirates.

8 Warren Hoge, "Annan Says UN is 'Overstretched' by Global Conflicts," *New York Times*, March 21, 2008. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/21/world/21nations.html?_r=1&ref=world&oref=slogin.

9 The current mandate, as defined by UN Security Council Resolution 1778 is as follows:
   • To contribute to protecting civilians in danger, particularly refugees and displaced persons
   • To facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and the free movement of humanitarian personnel by helping to improve security in the area of operations
   • To contribute to protecting U. N. personnel, facilities, installations, and equipment and to ensuring the freedom of movement of its staff and United Nations and associated personnel

3. Punishment: Impose sanctions and staunch weapons flows

A diplomat involved with Darfur recently told ENOUGH, "If the Chadians want to fight a war, and the Sudanese want to fight a war, there's nothing we can do to stop them." Peace surely starts and ends with the warring parties, but many influential actors could and should be doing much, much more to make the decision to continue to fight as costly as possible, and the peace option more attractive.

Toward that end, the U.N. Security Council must finally impose targeted sanctions on Sudanese government officials responsible for atrocities in Darfur, obstructing the deployment of UNAMID, non-implementation of the CPA, and, last but not least, organizing and arming Chadian rebels for operations against the Chadian government. The Security Council must also sanction individuals within the Chadian government who, in violation of the Darfur arms embargo, are supporting Darfur rebel groups. Indeed, if international partners are to make a sincere effort to change the calculations of the warring parties, they must enforce the existing arms embargo for Darfur and consider similar measures for Chad.

China's weapons sales to Khartoum have gained worldwide notoriety, and the same weapons appear, in violation of the arms embargo, to have found their way into the hands of Chadian rebels based in Darfur.[10] But China is by no means the only country arming the warring parties. France, which has been much more active than China in efforts to resolve the internal conflicts in Chad and Sudan, paradoxically supplies weapons to Chad, which has been carrying out offensive military operations in Darfur and sponsoring JEM's operations there as well. U.S. military assistance to Chad, though non-lethal, is also problematic when considered in this light. Continued violations of Sudan's territorial integrity by the Chadian army, or by way

of support for Sudanese rebels, should result in an international arms embargo on Chad.

And although nations can legally sell arms to Khartoum—the arms embargo only applies to weapons going *into* Darfur—China, Russia, and other nations would be wise to condition future arms sales on ending atrocities and negotiating a peace for Darfur, implementing the CPA, and ceasing support to Chadian rebel proxy forces.

CONCLUSION: DÉBY'S LAST STAND?

After Chadian government forces beat back the Chadian rebel assault on N'Djamena in February, Déby began preparations for the next coup attempt: He dispatched senior aides to Ukraine to purchase weapons, began construction on a huge trench encircling the capital, laid concrete blast barriers at the gates of the presidential palace, and cut down thousands of trees in the capital to prevent rebels from using them as cover. Déby's defensive strategy is obvious: invite the Chadian rebels back for a final showdown in the streets of N'Djamena—home to 700,000 people—and cede the rest of the country by implication. At the same time, a close family member of the president told ENOUGH that Déby is considering alternatives to total war. "Even his children are saying to him, 'Other presidents in other countries pass the power,'" he said. "He's starting to realize that he has to do something different." Whether or not Déby does "something different" depends largely on the international community's response not only to events in Chad, but also to the crisis in Sudan. So long as Darfur bleeds and the CPA falters, the region will remain a humanitarian and human rights catastrophe.

This report was drafted by a regional expert working in the region.

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10 "France Says Finding Too Many Chinese Arms in Africa," Reuters, December 14, 2006. Available at http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L14574602.htm.

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The project to end genocide and crimes against humanity

ENOUGH is a project founded by the International Crisis Group and the Center for American Progress to end genocide and crimes against humanity. With an initial focus on the crises in Darfur, eastern Congo, and northern Uganda, ENOUGH's strategy papers and briefings provide sharp field analysis and targeted policy recommendations based on a "3P" crisis response strategy: promoting durable peace, providing civilian protection, and punishing perpetrators of atrocities. ENOUGH works with concerned citizens, advocates, and policy makers to prevent, mitigate, and resolve these crises. To learn more about ENOUGH and what you can do to help, go to www.enoughproject.org.

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