



# Chad

## Chad: Introduction

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Chart 1: Political map of Chad

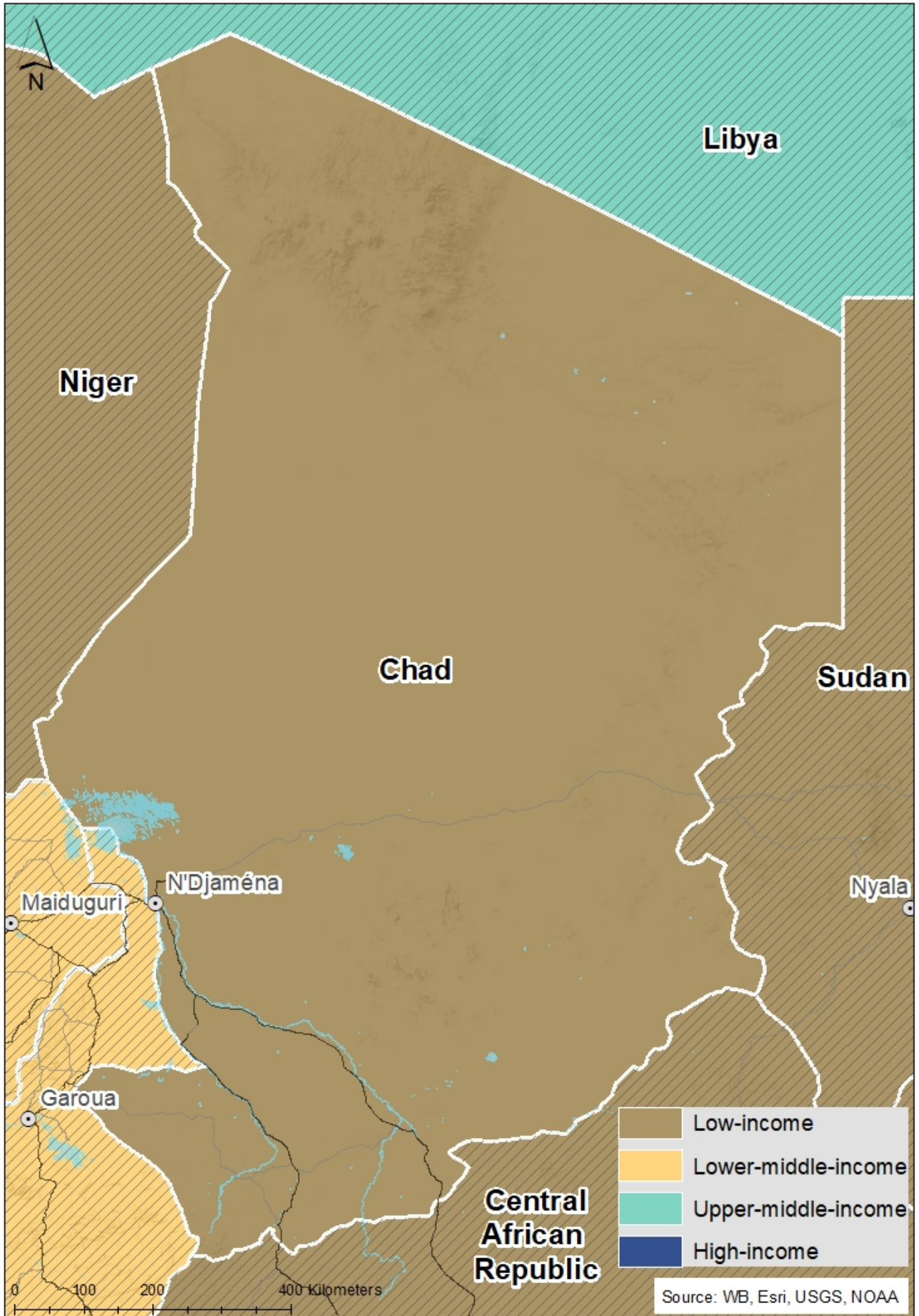




Chart 1 is a political map of Chad.

The Republic of Chad is a landlocked former French colony that borders Libya, Sudan, Central African Republic (CAR), Cameroon, Nigeria and Niger. It is the sixth-largest country in Africa by land area at approximately 1 284 000 km<sup>2</sup>, and it is a member of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

Chad is home to [Lake Chad](#), the largest water body in the Sahel. It provides freshwater and sustains the livelihood of millions of people across the Chad basin. Cycles of drought, land degradation and a shifting climate have resulted in large numbers of herders migrating southwards, encroaching on settlements and farmlands, sparking farmer-herder conflicts, particularly in the country's south. The conflict between herders and farmers has spread in neighbouring Nigeria as well and has become the largest source of such conflict deaths, even surpassing fatalities from Boko Haram.

Since gaining independence from France in 1960, Chad's journey has been marked by a tumultuous blend of religious and ethnic strife, punctuated by periods of civil unrest. The nation's political landscape turned volatile in 1965, triggered by a tax revolt that incited rebellion among the predominantly Islamic tribes in the north against the Christian-dominated government in the south. This uprising set the stage for years of authoritarian governance and internal conflict. Idriss Déby Itno, the late president and a former general, seized power by force when he launched a rebellion against President Hissein Habré from Sudan in 1989<sup>[1]</sup>. Déby's forces, reportedly aided by Libya and Sudan and largely unopposed by French troops stationed in Chad, seized the capital, N'Djamena, in 1990, forcing Habré into exile. Déby, became president in 1991 and pledged to create a democratic multi-party-political system.

Chad's first multi-party presidential elections were held in 1996; legislative elections followed in 1997. Déby won reelection in 2001, and his party won a majority of seats in the 2002 legislative elections. According to observers, the elections were all marked by irregularities and fraud.

President Déby's perceived lack of legitimacy among the opposition contributed to political tensions throughout his rule. As a result, he faced challenges from various politicised military movements that sought to overthrow his regime. French military support prevented major attacks by coalitions such as the Military Command Council for the Salvation of the Republic (CCMSR) and the Union des forces de la résistance (UFR). Deby who had just been elected for his sixth term, and ruled the country for 30 years, passed away in April 2021 under unclear circumstances while visiting troops fighting against the Front for Change and Concord in [Chad](#) (Front pour l'Alternance et la Concorde au Tchad), which was advancing toward the capital.

The Transitional Military Council, led by Déby's son Mahamat, seized power immediately, despite the constitution allowing the president of parliament to serve as interim president and organise new elections within 90 days, raising concerns about a potential dynastic power grab by the [Déby clan](#). General Mahamat Déby initially pledged to remain interim leader for 18 months and would not run for president. However, in October 2022, a National Dialogue Forum extended the transition period to two years instead of the initially planned 18 months, and he was inaugurated as president for the transition.

The opposition protested against extending the transition period; the resulting violence led to an estimated 128 deaths, according to the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) of [Chad](#). A constitutional referendum took place on December 17, 2023. The new constitution was approved by 86% of voters, with a 63.75% turnout, though opposition leaders disputed these figures.

After spending a year in exile, the main opposition leader, Succès Masra, returned to N'Djaména following the reconciliation agreement reached through the "Kinshasa Agreement" on November 3, 2023. On January 1, 2024, he was appointed as Prime Minister by the Transitional President.

In May 2024, Chad's military leader Mahamat Idriss Déby won the country's presidency with 61% of the vote, compared to opposition leader Succès Masra's 18.5% in an election that international observers described as highly stage-managed.

Rich in gold and uranium, Chad also became an oil-producing nation in 2003, with the completion of a US\$4 billion pipeline linking its oilfields to terminals on the Atlantic coast through neighbouring Cameroon. Chadians had high expectations that oil revenues might serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development, but corruption, poor governance, weak state institutions, and chronic instability have made Chad one of the top five countries with the lowest [Human Development Index \(HDI\)](#) and one of the poorest countries in the world. According to the 2023/2024 Human Development Report, Chad ranked 189th among 193 nations on the Human Development Index (HDI). It is also ranked 165<sup>th</sup> among 167 countries on the 2024 [SDG Index](#), which ranks countries based on their performance across 17 goals.

Low life expectancy, low levels of education (expected years of schooling at birth and mean years of schooling) and low standards of life all contribute to the stagnation of socioeconomic growth within the country.

## Endnotes

1. L Ploch, Instability in Chad, CRS Report for Congress, June 2009

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Dr Kouassi Yeboua currently is a senior research consultant to the African Futures and Innovation programme in Pretoria. In his prior role as staff senior researcher, he recently served as lead author on ISS studies on the long-term development prospects of the DR Congo, the Horn of Africa, Nigeria and Malawi. Kouassi has published on various issues relating to foreign direct investment in Africa and is interested in development economics, macroeconomics, international economics, and economic modelling. He has a PhD in Economics.

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