



Chad — Va-PoReg Country Report

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[Chad, in this form, only existed from this point onward. Due to the brief timeframe between 01/01/1900 and 09/05/1900, we have omitted additional entries for the Kanem-Bornu Empire, the Wadai Sultanate, and the Bagirmi Kingdom during this period.]

09/05/1900 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of France]: Before 09/05/1900, the territory of present-day Chad was composed of several precolonial political entities. The Kanem-Bornu Empire, one of the oldest Sahelian states, had dominated the region for centuries but had significantly weakened by the 19th century. The Wadai Sultanate (Ouaddaï) emerged as a powerful Islamic state in the 17th century and actively resisted French expansion. The Bagirmi Kingdom, once independent, had fallen under Wadai's influence. Additionally, various Arab and Fulani groups controlled trade networks, including the trans-Saharan slave trade. In the late 19th century, French colonial forces advanced into Central Africa, encountering resistance from local rulers. A decisive moment came on 04/22/1900, when French troops under Amédée-François Lamy defeated Rabih az-Zubayr, a Sudanese warlord who had established dominion over much of the region. With Rabih's death, France formally claimed Chad, on 09/05/1900 the Military Territory of the Lands and Protectorates of Chad as a protectorate (Paxton 1986). In July 1908, the occupied territory was incorporated as a French possession in Middle Africa and administered as a part of French Equatorial Africa together with three other French colonies to the south – Oubangui-Chari, Middle Congo (present-day Congo-Brazzaville), and Gabon (Paxton 1986). French Equatorial Africa was put under the direction of a governor general stationed in Brazzaville. The governor general had wide-ranging control over the federation, including authority of external and internal security, economic and financial affairs, and all communications with the French minister of the colonies. During this period, Chad was not ruled by civilians, nor did it have separate colonial status.¹ On 03/01/1920 Chad became a separate colony when governance was transferred from military to civilian rule. Administration remained in the hands of the governor general in Brazzaville while lieutenant governors were expected to follow his orders.² In the framework of Overseas Reform Act passed by the French National Assembly in 1956, electoral reforms were made which expanded the pool of eligible voters and thus conceded a larger measure of autonomy.³ Both LIED and V-Dem's PCLI classify political liberties as absent but their dataset only treat Chad since 1920. From 1920 to 1946, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are absent. Simultaneously, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. During the rest of the regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent. According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period.

03/31/1957 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of France, Liberal Democracy]/Start Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of France, Liberal Democracy]: In 1957, the Chadian Territorial Assembly elections were held. They were contested by a variety of Chadian parties and resulted in the establishment of the first African government in Chad under Gabriel Lisette. Although Chad received its first African government, Lisette himself was of African descent, who became a French colonial administrator and posted to Chad in 1946.⁴ Lisette's coalition government was questioned by factions representing traditional rulers. He was deserted by

a motion of no confidence prior to independence.⁵ Chad remained part of French Equatorial Africa (EAF) until a constitutional referendum was held in 1958, across the French Union. The constitution that saw Chad becoming an autonomous republic within the French Union, was widely supported by Chad's political groups, and approved by 98.29% of voters. According to LIED, only multiparty legislative elections were held during this period. No executive elections were present. Political liberties were absent according to LIED and V-Dem's PCLI. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent.

11/28/1958 End Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of France, Liberal Democracy]/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: On this date French Equatorial Africa was terminated as a result of a referendum.⁶ Also in 1958 universal suffrage was introduced.⁷ LIED identifies political liberties as absent and V-Dem's PCLI is also classified by us as indicating that political liberties are absent. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited.

05/31/1959 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start Electoral Autocracy: On this date, parliamentary elections were held. The result was a victory for the Chadian Progressive Party (Parti Progressiste Tchadien, PPT).⁸ The PPT was a regional branch of the African Democratic Rally (RDA). François Tombalbaye was elected prime minister in March 1959. Swiftly, he reshaped the political system into a hierarchical, top-down structure centered around the president (Römer 1999: 221), which became formalized after independence. For example he initiated a campaign to assimilate members of the opposition into the PPT (Decalo 1980: 498-499, Collier 1990). On 08/11/1960 the country was granted independence with the PPT's leader, François Tombalbaye, an ethnic Sara, as its first president.⁹ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. During this period, LIED categorizes elections as not competitive. V-Dem's EF&FI scores them as freed and fair. Their CEI, however, rates them as only somewhat clean. LIED classifies political liberties as absent for this period. According to V-Dem's PCLI political liberties were absent in 1958, not really present in 1959 and 1960 and became absent again in 1961. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited.

04/14/1962 End Electoral Autocracy/Start One-Party Autocracy: Tombalbaye launched a purge of the ruling PPT party a week before independence to remove potential rivals and their followers (Decalo 1980: 498-499, Collier 1990). The constitution, enacted on 04/14/1962,¹⁰ established a single-party state with Tombalbaye's Parti Progressiste du Tchad – Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (PPP-RDA; Chadian Progressive Party – African Democratic Rally) as the only legal party. Other political parties were dissolved. The Bureau Politique National (BPN) emerged as Chad's paramount political body. Despite its equal representation of Muslims and southerners, the BPN was notably controlled by the President (Römer 1999: 221). In order to garner support, Tombalbaye introduced direct presidential elections in 1969 and transformed the PPP-RDA into the Mouvement National pour la Révolution Culturelle et Sociale (MNRCS) in 1973 (Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 53). According to LIED, both executive and legislative elections were held, but they were not categorized as multiparty. In 1962 and 1963, as per Polity5's categorization, the executive experienced minimal limitations on decision-making, placing it in the first intermediate category. From 1964 to 1968, As per Polity5's classification, the executive wielded unrestricted authority without any formal limitations. Between 1969 and 1972, based on Polity5's assessment, the executive faced slight limitations on power during this period. In 1973 and 1974, the executive experienced minimal limitations on decision-making, placing it in the first intermediate category. From 1963 to 1965, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited. For the rest of the regime

period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. According to FH's classification for the assessed regime period since 1972, a score between 11 and 14 makes the country not free, which we also place in the not free category. Political liberties are indicated as absent by both LIED and V-Dem's PCLI.

04/13/1975 End One-Party Autocracy/Start Military Autocracy: President Tombalbaye was overthrown in a military coup and subsequently assassinated. Following his removal, a military junta known as the Conseil Supérieur Militaire, led by former chief of staff Felix Malloum, assumed power (Römer 1999: 222, Collier 1990, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 53-54).¹¹ Malloum's inability to effectively handle the Front de libération nationale du Tchad (FROLINAT) led him to believe that his best option was to incorporate some of the rebels into his administration. In 1978, he formed an alliance with the rebel leader Hissène Habré, who assumed the role of prime minister within the government.¹² According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive held unlimited authority with no institutionalized constraints on decision-making power. For the relevant period, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are limited. At the same time, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. Per FH, for this regime period, the country scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free. Besides, LIED and V-Dem's PCLI indicate that political liberties were absent.

03/23/1979 End Military Autocracy/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: Nigeria intervened in the civil conflict in Chad and arranged a new peace agreement. We code this regime change event as a negotiated transition. The agreement stipulated Malloum's resignation, which was carried out, and Goukouni Oueddei assumed power in a transitional regime. Rebel forces seized control of the capital (Collier 1990, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 54). On 04/29/1979 the Transitional Government of National Unity (GUNT), a peace-making body made up of four or more armed factions moved to remove Oueddei as its interim head and installed Shawa in his place. On 08/22/1979, there happened to be further peacemaking troubles and conflict led to the GUNT replacing Shawa with Oueddei as its interim leader. Oueddei proved to be an ineffective leader and peacemaker and on 06/07/1982 Habré-led FAN rebels drove him out of power. (Ali 1984:29, Byrnes 1988, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 54). According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. Per FH, for this regime period, the country scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free. In addition, for this transitional period, political liberties were absent (LIED, V-Dem PCLI). For the years 1980 and 1981, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are absent. Simultaneously, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. For 1982, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent.

06/19/1982 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start Personalist Autocracy: Habré resumed his fight against the Chadian government and Armed Forces of the North (FAN) won control of the capital N'Djamena.¹³ On this date Habré formed a state council as new national government, further, on 10/21/1982 he nominated a new government and proclaimed himself president.¹⁴ Following intense fighting in 1983-1984, Habré's FAN emerged victorious, with assistance from French troops.¹⁵ Having become the country's new president, Habré created on 06/24/1984 a one-party dictatorship ruled by his National Union for Independence and Revolution (UNIR).¹⁶ On 06/26 during the foundation congress, the delegates elected by acclamation President Hissène Habré chairman of the movement and proceeded to form, on Habré's proposals, a Central Committee composed of 80 members. It was ultimately Habré's personal leadership and authority that characterized this autocratic regime. Since 1985, according to Polity5, during this period, the executive held unlimited authority with no institutionalized constraints on decision-making power. During this regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were

absent, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent. According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. As classified by FH for this regime period, the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. Furthermore, the state of political liberties is classified as absent by both LIED and V-Dem's PCLI for this regime period.

12/02/1990 End Personalist Autocracy/Start Military (Rebel) Autocracy: On this date, the Patriotic Salvation Movement led by former Habré regime official Idriss Déby, a military officer and politician, seized the capital, forcing Habré to flee and Déby ascended to power.¹⁷ Déby was a member of the Bidayat clan of the Zaghawa ethnic group. He was purged by Habré after being suspected of plotting a coup, and was forced into exile in Libya.¹⁸ Déby held the positions of president and commander in chief of the armed forces under the transitional national charter adopted at the conclusion of the CNS on 04/06/1993. The transitional period was extended to 1996. A constitutional referendum was conducted on 03/31/1996 (Lansford 2021: 300).¹⁹ According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. As classified by FH for this regime period, the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. Besides, LIED continues to code political liberties as absent. V-Dem's PCLI decreased a what we interpret as not really present in 1990 and as ambiguous from 1991 onward. From 1990 to 1992, based on Polity5's assessment, the executive faced slight limitations on power during this period. For 1991-1992, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are absent. Simultaneously, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. During the rest of the regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent.

06/02/1996 End Military (Rebel) Autocracy/Start Electoral Autocracy: On this date, presidential elections were held. Although allegations of fraud were brought forward by the opposition, in the first round of the presidential election in June 1996, international observers were satisfied with the results and turnout of the election. Déby won presidential elections again in 2001, in elections described as relatively free and fair. However, observers emphasized alleged progovernment bias of the national electoral commission. In elections marked by previous restrictions of political liberties. Issues of de facto control by the MPS over the electoral commission and bias in the vote registration process were raised by the opposition (Lansford 2021: 300).²⁰ After term constraints were eliminated, Déby won the presidential elections again in 2006, 2011, 2016, and in 2021.²¹ The whole political process in Chad from 12/18/2005 to 01/10/2010 was overshadowed by the second Chadian Civil war. Many rebel leaders were former allies of Déby, who turned against him after he decided to change the constitution to allow him to run for re-election.²² In April 2011, Déby was reelected with 89 percent of the vote, in an election that was boycotted by the three main opposition candidates.²³ The electoral process was assessed as not free by Freedom House.²⁴ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Elections during this time are scored as not competitive by LIED, as not really free and fair by V-Dem's EF&FI and not clean by their CEI. Political liberties were absent in this period according to LIED. V-Dem's PCLI classifies political liberties as ambiguous for this period. According to FH's classification for 1996 and 1997, a score between 11 and 14 makes the country not free, which we also place in the not free category. For 1998 the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. From 1999 onward the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. From 1996 to 2004, according to Polity5, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. From 2005 to 2018, as per Polity5's categorization, the executive experienced minimal limitations on decision-making, placing it in the first intermediate category. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent.

04/20/2021 End Electoral Autocracy/Start Military Autocracy: Déby was assassinated by rebels from Northern Chad. The Chadian army subsequently dissolved the parliament and formed a military junta, the Transitional Military Council (TMC) led by Mahamat Idriss Déby, which declared that it would take charge of the government.²⁵ On 04/27/2021 the military junta announced the formation of a transitional government headed by the civilian politician Albert Pahimi Padacké as prime minister.²⁶ With Déby's son hereditary succession of power of the presidential office at the same time maintaining as the position of the head of armed forces and 13 other military generals assuming power through the TMC and elections routinely delayed, we code the regime as a military autocracy and not as a non-electoral transitional regime. In June 2021 an 18-month extension of the transition was declared.²⁷ Presidential elections followed a constitutional referendum held on 12/17/2023. The elections took place on 05/06/2024 and marked the end of the military transitional rule. Acting transitional president Mahamat Déby, son of the late president, won the election in the first round with 61.00% of the vote, continuing the Déby family's decades-long rule. His main rival, former Prime Minister Succès Masra of the Les Transformateurs party, won 18.54% of the vote but contested the result on the grounds of alleged massive electoral fraud, a complaint that was rejected by the Constitutional Council. The election was overshadowed by the killing of a prominent opposition leader in the run-up to the vote.²⁸ On 12/29/2024, the first parliamentary elections since 2011 were held. The ruling Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) won a decisive majority in the National Assembly, securing 124 out of 188 seats with 45.18% of the vote. However, the country's largest opposition party, Les Transformateurs, along with 15 other opposition parties, boycotted the election. They cited concerns over a corrupt electoral registry and a lack of transparency. This further casts doubt on the democratic transition process following years of military rule.²⁹ The regime has also, for instance, been characterized by Freedom House as a military regime.³⁰ According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. Per FH, for this regime period, the country scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free. Since 2021, political liberties are coded as absent (LIED) and can be interpreted as not really present per V-Dem's PCLI. During this regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent.

Military Autocracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (Brody 2006, Byrnes 1988, Collelo 1988, Collier 1990, Reyna 2003, Römer 1999)

Notes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Chad

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Chad

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loi-cadre_Defferre#

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriel_Lisette

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriel_Lisette

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Chad#Territorial_assembly_under_France

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1959_Chadian_parliamentary_election

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Chad

¹⁰ <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/72-chad-1960-present/>

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chad_under_F%C3%A9lix_Malloum

¹² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Chad#Military_rule_\(1975%E2%80%931978\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Chad#Military_rule_(1975%E2%80%931978))

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiss%C3%A8ne_Habr%C3%A9; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armed_Forces_of_the_North

¹⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FROLINAT>

¹⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Chad/Independence>

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiss%C3%A8ne_Habr%C3%A9

- ¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiss%C3%A8ne_Habr%C3%A9
- ¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idriss_D%C3%A9by
- ¹⁹ https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Chad_2018?lang=en
- ²⁰ <https://www.africa-confidential.com/home/issue/id/132>
- ²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idriss_D%C3%A9by
- ²² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chadian_Civil_War_\(2005%E2%80%932010\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chadian_Civil_War_(2005%E2%80%932010))
- ²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idriss_D%C3%A9by
- ²⁴ <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4dd21a4bc.html>
- ²⁵ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transitional_Military_Council_\(Chad\);](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transitional_Military_Council_(Chad);)
<https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/101085/BREAKING-Chad-president-assassinated-by-militants-from-North>
- ²⁶ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transitional_Military_Council_\(Chad\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transitional_Military_Council_(Chad))
- ²⁷ <https://www.france24.com/fr/afrique/20220820-au-tchad-ouverture-du-dialogue-national-inclusif-pour-sortir-de-l-impasse-politique>
- ²⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_Chadian_presidential_election
- ²⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_Chadian_parliamentary_election
- ³⁰ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/chad>

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