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THE CIVIL WAR IN CHAD

For a brief moment this summer, world attention was focused on Chad. The country, which gained independence from France on August 11, 1960, is a vast, landlocked nation in the northeastern corner of West Africa. It is huge, but sparsely populated with a land mass which is more than twice the size of France and with a population of only 4.9 million, which is forty-five percent Muslim, forty-five percent indigenous, and fifteen percent Christian. Eighty-five percent of the population is illiterate. Only seventeen percent of the land is arable. Although mineral wealth (uranium, gold, and other minerals) may be present, no means exists to exploit it. The country has one of the least developed industrial bases in Africa, and there are no railways and virtually no roads. With a GNP of \$109 per capita, Chad is perhaps the poorest nation on the world's poorest continent.

Why, then, all the attention? More specifically, why was the Reagan administration so concerned? The June-August fighting in Chad was merely the latest battle in Africa's longest-running civil war. For eighteen years, as many as eleven factions have fought for control of the impoverished nation. Each faction has its foreign supporters, arms suppliers, and financiers who have helped prolong the war. Chief among these "outside agitators" are Libya historically and the United States currently. Despite the absence of a discernable ideological difference between the principal combatants, Hissene Habre and Goukouni Woddeye, the Reagan administration views Chad's civil war in the East-West context. Because of Libyan involvement, they see the war as a fight between pro-Libyan and anti-Libyan forces. Chad itself is not important to them; the "real problem" is Libya, which is involved in Chad at the behest of the Soviet Union.

Since 1979, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has been actively involved in finding a solution to this seemingly unsolvable conflict. This ISSUE BRIEF presents the views of Oumarou Youssoufou, OAU Ambassador to the United Nations, describes the background and causes of the conflict, and examines the Reagan administration's policy toward Chad. □

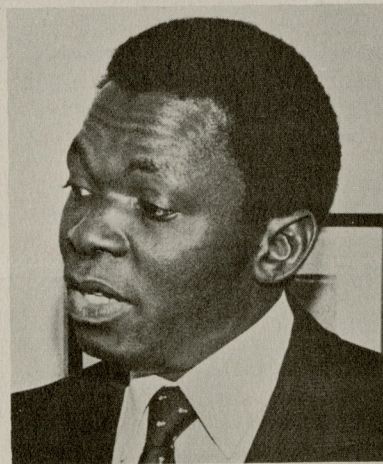
How would you characterize the situation in Chad? What are the principal factors that led to the current outbreak of fighting?

YOUSOUFOU: The situation in Chad today is basically the same as it has been for the past twenty years with very little variation. Since its independence in 1960, Chad has had only about three or four years of peace. It has gone from crisis to crisis and from war to war. One fundamental problem is that the country, which has a great deal of potential, has not been able to attract foreign investment or to bring about economic development.

The situation in Chad is clearly a civil war—with foreign involvement. Officially, eleven different factions or political entities are struggling for some sort of control of different parts of the country. No faction in the Chad conflict has ever claimed any foreign ideology as the *raison d'être* of its struggle. Most of the divisions are from the northern part of Chad. Most of them are of the Moslem religion, and they are from the same areas. Therefore, neither religion nor ethnicity is a problem in Chad.

What role has Libya played in this conflict? What are the causes of Libyan intervention?

YOUSOUFOU: That question should not be directed to me; it should be directed to the Libyan diplomatic delegation. Libya is a neighbor of Chad; and like all of Chad's neighbors, it has some interest in the current situation and in the OAU attempts to find a peaceful solution. Indeed, all of the neighboring countries are involved in finding some kind of solution to the conflict.



His Excellency Oumarou Youssoufou

NONE OF THE PARTIES IN THE CONFLICT HAS THE CAPACITY TO CONTINUE A SUSTAINED WAR. . . . WE FEEL THAT FOREIGN WITHDRAWAL WOULD FORCE THE CHADIAN POLITICAL FACTIONS TO ACCEPT A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM.

As to the particular position or the involvement of Libya, I cannot comment. I would have been in a better position to comment if the OAU had been able to send a fact-finding mission. We were supposed to send a mission to Libya; but for all kinds of reasons, the mission could not go into the area. Consequently, the OAU has had to depend only on what we have read in the press. If the OAU had been able to send a delegation or a fact-finding mission in the field, then we would have been able to assess the situation. All we know now is that Libya is one of the parties involved in finding some kind of peaceful solution to the Chad conflict.

Is there any validity to the Reagan administration's conceptualization of the conflict in East-West terms?

YOUSOUFOU: Clearly, African national and regional problems cannot be understood in the context of the East-West conflict. Africa's problems have nothing to do with ideology. The issue for our continent is neither capitalism nor communism or socialism. Africa's problem today is economic development, and that is our major concern. Some of us attempt to achieve this goal through a socialist system, others through the free economic system.

There is a conflict in Chad. The OAU is involved in finding a solution to that problem; but we do not look at the situation in Chad in terms of left or right, radical or moderate, nor East or West.

In 1979 the OAU met to seek a resolution to the conflict in Chad. What conditions did the OAU set and how were these conditions observed by the parties to the dispute? How has the OAU position changed over time?

YOUSOUFOU: At the OAU conference in Lagos, Nigeria, the eleven Chadian factions met with the participation of neighboring countries. After about ten days of very difficult and tedious negotiations, we were able to create the transitional government of national unity, which had as its President Goukouni Woddeye. Part of the cabinet also was formed: the Foreign Ministry was given to Acyl Ahmat, who died in an airplane accident a few months ago, and the Ministry of Defense was given to Hissene Habre, who is one of the leaders of that country today.

Once that transitional government went back to Ndjamena, other problems evolved. Eventually, the OAU sent a peacekeeping force to Chad. They encountered the same problems that peacekeeping forces in the Middle East now are facing. That is, what do you do? What is your role? Do you fight or do you just separate the factions? In spite of the presence of this OAU peacekeeping force, which was not to be involved in any war in Chad, there was a conflict within the government. The government broke up, and the Minister of Defense was able to organize his own army and to assume power through a coup.

The OAU, as an organization, has faced coups in many countries throughout the Continent during the last twenty-three years. Therefore, we have a consistent policy: we do not interfere in the internal affairs of any nation in Africa. When there is a coup, if the country's people are against the government, they will oppose it. It is not up to the OAU to accept or reject; we remain neutral. As a result, there has been no real change in the OAU position with respect to Chad. Whoever is in control of the government is considered the head of state of that country. This is the case in Chad.

The OAU has sent a delegation—headed by the current Chairman, the President of Ethiopia—to France, Libya, and other neighboring countries to find a way in which we can get the warring parties to sit around a table and negotiate. This is the only way out. Sending more arms, more guns, and more destructive materiel will not solve the problem.

Are you hopeful in the short-term?

YOUSOUFOU: Yes, we are hopeful in the short-term because we feel that if those countries, either African or non-African, that are involved in the Chadian situation were to withdraw or at least stop any active support, then that would force the Chadians to negotiate. None of the parties in the conflict has the capacity to continue a sustained war. Therefore, we feel that foreign withdrawal would force the Chadian political factions to accept a peaceful settlement to the conflict.

But the Western powers are not going to disengage until Libya disengages. Is there to be a simultaneous reduction in force?

YOUSOUFOU: I cannot answer that question in any intelligible way because the process of negotiations is going on right now between different parties in Chad, but I am hopeful that a solution can be found. I do not believe that

SENDING MORE ARMS, MORE GUNS, AND MORE DESTRUCTIVE MATERIEL WILL NOT SOLVE THE PROBLEM [IN CHAD].

any of the foreign countries involved in Chad wants to continue that war indefinitely. The stakes are such that no country that is involved today wants to stay in Chad over the long-run. All of them would like to find some sort of a solution.

But what kind of a solution would be necessary? Would that solution be acceptable to the Chadian people or would it only be acceptable to those foreign countries that are involved in the Chad conflict? That to me is the issue.

Right now we are at an impasse. We have more or less a *de facto* ceasefire situation which I hope will eventually result in a declared ceasefire and then in negotiations.

Would partitioning the country be a viable solution? Would an OAU peacekeeping force be either feasible or desirable at some point?

YOUSOUFOU: We, as a continent, do not believe in the partition of Chad or any other country. We have to be consistent with our past decisions and resolutions. In 1964 at the first OAU Summit in Cairo, Egypt, we agreed that the borders which were created by the colonial governments would be accepted and respected. We do not like them. They do not take into account our realities, our culture, or our well-being, but we have no choice but to keep them. We would be opening a Pandora's box if we started changing the borders. In the spirit of that resolution, we cannot support the partition of Chad. Some other solution must be found through negotiations among the differing parties.

Eventually, we might have to send another OAU peacekeeping force to Chad, but we have not reached that point yet in the negotiations. Other African countries are very concerned about Chad and will do anything they can to help even if it means sending in another peacekeeping force. □

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HISTORICAL PROFILE OF THE CHADIAN CIVIL WAR

The policies of French colonial administration are among the more significant causes of today's civil war in Chad. Over and above the inherently detrimental nature of all colonial administrations, French policies during the sixty years of formal rule over Chad contributed heavily towards the current problems. Arguably, the most damaging of French colonial transgressions in Chad was the widespread denial of education, political, and economic roles to large segments of the population. Prior to the 1940s, the ethnic majority—the Sara in the South—was the most vocal victim of this policy. However, the most disinherited segment of Chad's population had been those who inhabited the northern two-thirds of the country. Indeed, the French referred to the southern third as "le Tchad utile" (useful Chad), implying that the northern sector was useless. Thus, northern resentment of French exclusion forms a potent cause of today's strife. The policies of the post-independence government proved to be the last straw.

The regime of Chad's first President, Ngartha Tombalbaye, lasted fifteen years from independence in 1960 to the April 13, 1975 coup in which he was killed. Tombalbaye, a member of the Sara ethnic group, continued to suppress and exclude the Muslim north. The north's negative reaction to Tombalbaye's rule took many forms, leading ultimately to the formation of FROLINAT, a national liberation movement, and to the start of the armed struggle against the government and its French allies.

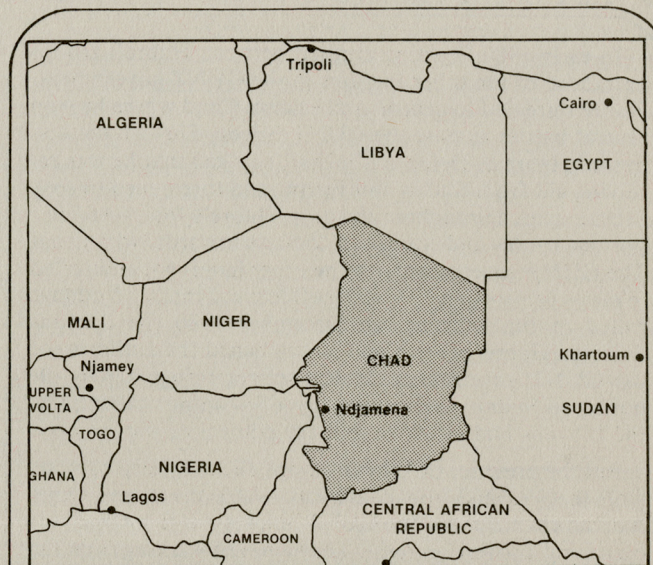
Following Tombalbaye's death, leadership of the Ndjamena government was assumed by General Felix Malloum, another southerner, who was encouraged by France to embark on a policy of reconciliation. Malloum's reconciliation effort was largely unsuccessful; and FROLINAT won important battles. Malloum attempted to negotiate a ceasefire, but FROLINAT hardened its position and demanded stiff concessions.

In an attempt to weaken FROLINAT, Malloum made overtures to Hissene Habre, who recently had been expelled as leader of the main FROLINAT army. In 1978 in the Sudan, Malloum and Habre reached an agreement: Habre joined the government and was made its Prime Minister. Months later, the Malloum-Habre rapprochement fell apart allegedly as a result of Habre's power grab. Fighting ensued between Habre's northern troops and the largely southern government troops.

Meanwhile, Goukouni Woddeye was enjoying considerable success leading FROLINAT armies against French troops in northern Chad. Consequently, he was in control of large portions of the country. The French, under political pressure at home, scaled down their military objectives in Chad, refused to intervene in the Malloum-Habre fighting, and looked for a way to withdraw.

Alarmed by the spreading fighting, Nigeria mounted a diplomatic offensive in 1979 that has affected profoundly the controlling power in Ndjamena ever since. The Nigerians organized four meetings involving the armed factions and neighboring countries. The first meeting was attended by the leaders of the major armed factions—Malloum, Habre, and Woddeye, among others—and resulted in a ceasefire, the resignation of both Malloum and Habre, and the introduction of a Nigerian peacekeeping force.

A second conference was scheduled to determine the composition of a transitional national government after the resignation of Malloum and Habre. When the conference



reached no agreement, it ended in disarray. Habre and Woddeye accused neighboring countries (primarily Nigeria) of heavy-handed manipulation aimed at installing a pliant, puppet government in Ndjamena.

The major Chadian leaders decided to go their own way in filling the Ndjamena power vacuum. The provisional council, headed by Woddeye, was dissolved; and a provisional government, headed by Mahamat Shawa, was formed. Habre became Defense Minister and Woddeye became Interior Minister. Col. Kamougue, who was in Ndjamena during the formation of the government, left for the south ostensibly to quell secessionist threats. Once he got there, however, he assumed leadership of the secessionist faction and denounced the Shawa government.

The Shawa government received a very hostile reaction from Chad's neighbors, especially Libya and Nigeria. Comparing it to the Muzorewa regime in Rhodesia, they threatened to withdraw their support from any further reconciliation effort. Nigeria cut off oil supplies to Chad, and Libya backed Ahmat Acyl's attempt to take over large portions of the north and financed and armed Kamougue's secessionist movement.

At the 1979 OAU summit, Nigeria and Libya vehemently opposed the seating of the Chad delegation, which was consequently barred from participating. The Shawa government originally tried fighting back. It battled the Libya-supported armies in the north with considerable success.

Eventually, however, the Shawa government gave in and attended a second Lagos conference along with representatives of eleven Chadian factions and neighboring countries. It agreed on an elaborate set of conditions, including: a ceasefire, demilitarization of Ndjamena, a peacekeeping force drawn from countries not sharing a border with Chad, withdrawal of French troops, disbandment of factional armies, formation of a new national armed force, formation of a government of national unity with Woddeye as President, and elections within eighteen months.

Upon return to Chad, the factions formed the Government of National Unity (GUNT). Key cabinet positions included: Woddeye, President; Kamougue, Vice-President; Habre, Defense Minister; and Ahmat Acyl, Foreign Minister.

HISTORICAL PROFILE (Continued)

In early 1980, fighting erupted between Habre's troops and those of the other factions in the GUNT government. Habre retreated to central and eastern Chad where he won several battles against the GUNT forces. The cabinet dismissed Habre as Defense Minister, charged that he was receiving aid from Sudan and Egypt, and threatened to seek Libyan help. Throughout the year, Habre's forces won important battles and continued to press towards Ndjamen. The GUNT government, on the other hand, got embroiled in disagreements and proved ineffective. Finally, Woddeye called in the Libyans. In December 1980 the Libyans defeated Habre's forces and strengthened the authority of the GUNT government. Habre sought refuge across the border in Sudan; and except for a few minor skirmishes, the Libyans had effective military control of the country.

But the presence of Libyan troops elicited sharp protests from the West and from conservative African regimes. Other African countries and the GUNT pointed out that Chad was exercising a sovereign right. They ignored warnings that the intervention constituted the first step in the building of a Libyan empire through armed conquest and subversion. However, when Libya and Chad announced a merger in January 1981, the warnings became more ominous. The anti-Qaddafi forces stepped up their campaign to get rid of Libyan troops in Chad. Libya declared that the troops would leave when asked to do so by the legitimate government. The Woddeye government, on the other hand, said it would retain the troops so long as Habre's insurgency remained a threat. In response, the U.S. and France prodded the OAU and Chad and promised support for the OAU peacekeeping force and for Chad should the Libyans leave.

In November Woddeye gave in to the pressure and asked the Libyan troops to leave. Warning that the Habre insurgency would rear up again, Libya pulled out its entire force in a matter of days. The OAU dispatched a 3,500-man peacekeeping force drawn from Zaire, Nigeria, and Senegal. The Habre forces moved in from Sudan and gained control over large sections of eastern and northern Chad. Woddeye charged that the Habre forces were being armed by Egypt and Sudan and threatened to seek external help. In February the OAU invited Woddeye to a Nairobi meeting of its *ad hoc* committee on Chad to discuss maintenance of the peacekeeping force. Faced with Habre's strength and the lack of funding for the peacekeeping force, the committee members decided to cut their losses. They asked Woddeye to call a ceasefire within weeks, negotiate with Habre, and hold elections. Woddeye, insisting that the OAU force should fight the insurgency as the Libyans had, branded the OAU decision a betrayal and left the meeting. In Chad the peacekeeping force refused to fight Habre, who subsequently defeated the GUNT forces in several battles and captured Ndjamen in June 1982. The government broke into its factions and headed south. Woddeye vowed ". . . to march on Ndjamen . . ." and sought asylum in Algeria.

Habre established a provisional government and sought negotiations with other factions. He succeeded in winning over a section of the Kamougue forces who had split over the question of joining the Habre government. Kamougue himself eventually joined Woddeye as did the forces originally headed by the GUNT Foreign Minister, the late Ahmat Acyl. Woddeye has established his own provisional government as well as an "Army for National Liberation."

At the 1982 abortive OAU summit in Tripoli, Habre and

Woddeye both sent delegations. The Habre delegation was seen as having more support, a situation that was confirmed at the 1983 OAU summit in Addis Ababa. Woddeye has since attempted to fulfill his threat ". . . to march on

Ndjamen . . ." using strong Libyan backing. Pro-Habre governments have charged that Woddeye's forces are largely, if not wholly, Libyan. However, in June both the UN and the French Foreign Minister stated that no evidence of regular Libyan troops has been found. The Woddeye forces attacked from the north and by July controlled Faya-Largeau and Abeche.

The 1983 fighting brought forth an enormous amount of international outcry, largely led by the U.S., and generated considerable overt support for Habre. This massive support of Ndjamen has stopped the Woddeye forces (who are receiving large quantities of Libyan arms) and resulted in the current stalemate. Since late August, Chad has been divided into two north and south sections, controlled by two heavily-armed and hostile armies.

Although most Western observers have tended to see the Chadian problem as resulting from "the unbridgeable ethnic/religious gap" between the Muslim north and the non-Muslim south, ethnic diversity in and of itself is not a sufficient cause for civil war in Chad or any other country. Chad, with at least 192 ethnic groups, is typical of other African nations in being ethnically diverse. After all, Tanzania, ranked on the basis of ethnicity as the most heterogeneous nation in the world, has not had a notable civil disturbance in its sovereign history while the two Koreas, ranked together as the most homogeneous, are today divided into two armed and hostile camps. In Chad, however, ethnic diversity has provided a conducive climate in which other causal factors have resulted in armed insurrection and civil war.

Personal animosity between Chad's leaders is accepted today as one of the major reasons why the conflict has not been solved. As Rene LeMarchand has said, "personalities are all important . . ." in the Chadian civil war. Indeed, some observers see this factor, especially between leaders of the same northern origins, as having eclipsed, if only for now, the north's resentment of southern domination of political power. It is widely believed that animosity between Habre and Kamougue and between Habre and Woddeye has contributed significantly to the breakup of previous attempted solutions. Indeed, despite his acknowledged strengths, Habre, reportedly, is seen by his colleagues and observers as being a ruthlessly ambitious, intransigent leader who has managed to make more important enemies than all other Chadian leaders. Many observers, therefore, believe that the animosity and distrust between Habre and Woddeye is likely to be one of the major obstacles to a new reconciliation.

Finally, that external patrons have prolonged Chad's civil war should be rather obvious. An underdeveloped country that is one of the poorest in the world with no military production capacity is simply not capable of fighting a modern civil war for eighteen years if outside sources had not been pouring in arms, money, training, and troops. Until outside intervention of all kinds is stopped, a political solution to Chad's seemingly endless civil war is not likely to be found. □

REAGAN WATCH: FIGHTING THE COLD WAR IN CHAD

"We have to bear in mind that there is an ongoing hot war, and the two contending parties [are] the government of Chad and the government of Libya . . . It is basically a Libyan-Chadian conflict."

Chester Crocker

Publicly, the Reagan administration asserts that its policy toward Chad is to remain neutral in the civil war, express no preference among the various factional leaders, and encourage work towards political reconciliation. It also opposes external involvement and aggression in Chad. The State Department offers evidence in support of this statement: the U.S. provided \$12 million to support the OAU's peacekeeping force and \$4 million in emergency (food) assistance to the Chad government in 1982. The Department justifies U.S. recognition of the Hissene Habre government on the grounds that the Goukouni Woddeye government was too weak and intransigent and that the overwhelming majority of OAU members also recognize Habre.

An examination of what evidence is available, however, reveals that the policy that actually has been prosecuted—covertly and overtly—in Chad, may not be as fair-minded or balanced as the public statements would imply.

Upon assumption of office and throughout 1981, the Reagan administration expressed serious concern about the "Libyan occupation of Chad" and called for Libyan withdrawal. It assured both the OAU and Chad President Woddeye that it would support the GUNT government and contribute financially towards the upkeep of the OAU peacekeeping force.

And yet during this same period, the administration allegedly was engaged in activities at variance with its public declarations. These activities amounted to one thing: strong covert support of Habre. Egypt and Sudan, close allies of the U.S. in the region, continued to provide Habre with arms, sanctuary, and, it has been alleged, troops. Most significantly, the CIA is said to have given Habre \$10 million around the time he met U.S. Ambassador-at-Large, General Vernon Walters in Sudan.

After the Libyans withdrew in 1982, the U.S. provided support for the OAU peacekeeping force: \$12 million to provide airlift and non-lethal equipment—less than eight percent of what the OAU had estimated it needed.

As soon as Habre assumed power in June 1982, the U.S. lost no time in recognizing him. As the State Department says, "We enjoy cordial relations with the new Habre provisional government." Shortly thereafter, large amounts of military and lesser amounts of economic aid were extended to Chad.

Although the June-August 1983 fighting in Chad was simply an attempt by Woddeye—with Libyan support—to dislodge Habre, the Reagan administration sees the fighting as an invasion of Chad by Libya on behalf of the Russians. This view has facilitated providing Habre with strong military and diplomatic support. First, Reagan sent two AWACS planes, a complement of fighter and reconnaissance escort planes, Redeye anti-aircraft missiles, and a number of military personnel. American military presence may have reached five hundred men. The President quickly invoked the War Powers Act and informed Congress.

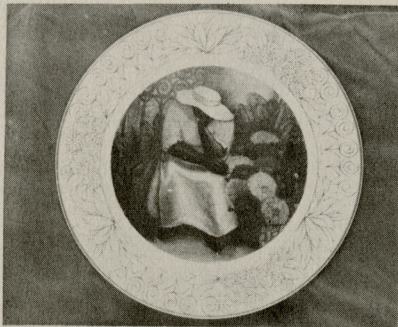
Next, the administration pressured certain of its allies and friends to support Habre. With the President declaring that Chad is within the French "sphere of influence," the administration persuaded France—after initial public protestations—to send arms. By the end of August, France had sent fighter planes, anti-tank helicopters, large amounts of other equipment, and 2,000 troops, headed by a general, to Chad. Also, two Francophone African presidents, Diouf of Senegal and Mobutu of Zaire, visited Washington and called for help for Habre. Days after leaving Washington, Mobutu had dispatched planes and troops and had paid an official visit to Chad—a move Reagan praised as "courageous." Since August, the administration has provided an additional \$25 million in arms directly to Chad. By late September, according to the State Department, \$13 million had been utilized.

U.S. critics of the Reagan administration's actions may be grouped around three positions. One group regards Chad as much too insignificant to warrant the attention and aid it recently has received. The second group of critics argues that the whole problem would have been quickly solved if strong military action had been taken against the Libyans. A final group thinks that the U.S. role should be much more active involvement in finding a political settlement and that the strong military support will only exacerbate the situation.

But Reagan's policy toward Chad emanates from two ideological viewpoints: first, the conflict is a manifestation of U.S.-Soviet, East-West rivalry and second, African nations fall within "spheres of influence" belonging to other nations. Influential critics in both the U.S. and Africa publicly object to both of these attitudes. They point out that the absurdity of the "spheres" argument in particular: if nations are entitled to such "spheres" thanks to their economic and military strength, then why not Libya, which is currently one of the richest and strongest African states? That "spheres of influence" remains a *de facto* operating principle in international relations cannot be denied, however.

Reagan's policy appears to be suffused with an ulterior motive: use Chad to "clip Qaddafi's wings and bloody his nose." Others argue that Reagan favors Habre because he agreed to construction of U.S. bases in Chad. Another "real aim," some suggest, is to protect Israel by preventing Qaddafi from sending Chadian uranium to Pakistan for the manufacture of an Islamic bomb.

But with the large quantities of arms that have been introduced into Chad lately, foreign governments, like the U.S., merely have prolonged and exacerbated Chad's problems. The eighteen year old Chadian civil war has shown that—with one exception—all the ingredients needed for an unwinnable war have been present: a vast territory, impossible to control through armed might; ethnic and religious diversity; extreme poverty; years of economic mismanagement; political repression and injustice; ambitious but weak local leaders; and foreign patronage. What had prevented the conflict from being even more destructive was the absence of large quantities of modern weapons from the major powers. The 1983 fighting has enabled the U.S., Libya, France, and Zaire to provide that missing link. Ironically, the immediate effect has been the current stalemate. However, if advantage is not taken of this *de facto* ceasefire, if a just political solution is not found, Chad is more than likely to become Africa's Lebanon. □



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