Chad

Geography

Chad is a landlocked country in north central Africa measuring 496,000 sq. miles. Chad has 3,708 miles of border with the Central African Republic, Libya, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan. Lake Chad, which is in Chad and Cameroon, was once the second-largest lake in Africa but has shrunk dramatically during the last few decades to less than 10% of its former size.

Climate

Chad has four climatic zones: it has broad, arid plains in center, desert in north, dry mountains in northwest, and tropical lowlands in south. Only 3% of Chad is arable land and none of it has permanent crops. Environmental hazards in Chad include hot, dry, dusty harmattan winds which occur in the, periodic droughts, and locust plagues.

History

The area that today is Chad was once inhabited by a group of politically disconnected tribes. Humanoid skulls and cave paintings of great antiquity have been found there. Gradually, weak local kingdoms developed; these were later overtaken by the larger but still completely African Kanem-Bornu Empire.

Later, foreigners came to have more influence in Chad. Beginning in the Middle ages, Chad became a crossroads for Muslim traders and indigenous tribes. In 1891, Ch became a part of France’s colonial system.
In WW II, Chad was the first French colony to join the Free French and the Allies under the leadership of its Governor, Felix Eboué. In 1960, Chad became an independent country, with François Tombalbaye as its first president.

In 1969 Muslim dissatisfaction with President Tombalbaye - a Christian southerner - developed into a guerrilla war. This, combined with a severe drought, undermined his rule and, in 1975, President Tombalbaye was killed in a coup led by another southerner, Felix Malloum. Malloum, too, failed to end the war, and in 1979, he was replaced by a Libyan-backed northerner, Goukouni Oueddei.

Libya invaded Chad in July 1975, theoretically to drive Habré from power. They occupied a narrow strip of land known as the Aouzou Strip. France and the United States responded by aiding Habré in an attempt to contain Libya’s regional ambitions under Muammer al-Qaddafi. Civil war deepened. In December, 1980, Libya occupied all of northern Chad, but Habré defeated Libyan troops and drove them out in November, 1981. In 1983, Qaddafi’s troops occupied all of the country north of Koro Toro. The United States used a clandestine base in Chad to train captured Libyan soldiers, whom it tried to organize into an anti-Qaddafi force. Habré’s aid from the USA and France helped him to win the war against Libya. The Libyan occupation of the north of Koro Toro ended when Habré defeated Qaddafi in 1987.

On December 23, 2005, Chad announced that it was in a “state of war” with Sudan. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has urged Sudan and Chad to exercise self-restraint to defuse growing tension between the two neighboring countries.

On February 8, 2006, Chad and Sudan signed the Tripoli Agreement, ending the Chad-Sudan conflict. This agreement prohibits either country from beginning media campaigns against the other and also from interfering with the other’s internal affairs.
**Important Dates**


**Population**

The population of Chad is roughly 9.8 million, ranking 82nd in the world. More than three-quarters of the Chadian population is rural.

**Religion**

There are more than 200 ethnic groups in Chad. Those in the north and east are generally Muslim; most southerners are Christians or animists. Through their long religious and commercial relationships with Sudan and Egypt, many of the peoples in Chad’s eastern and central regions have become more or less Arabized, speaking Chadian Arabic and engaging in many other Arab cultural practices as well.

**Economy/Agriculture**

Chad’s primarily agricultural economy is being boosted by major oilfield and pipeline developments that began in 2000. Over 75% of Chad’s population continues to rely on subsistence farming and stock raising for its livelihood. Cotton, cattle, and gum Arabic have, until recently, provided the bulk of Chad’s export earnings, but Chad began to export oil in 2003. It has been estimated that income from oil may increase Chad’s per capita GDP by 200% in 2005. This figure has not yet been calculated.
Chad’s economy has long been handicapped by its landlocked position, poor internal communications, high energy costs, scarce water resources and a history of instability. Until now, Chad has relied on foreign assistance and foreign capital for most public and private sector investment projects but oil income will transform government finances.

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Provided stability is maintained, the possibilities for Chad’s economy are much higher for success than would have been several years ago. It is known that more reserves of oil exist in Chad, in addition to what is already being exploited.

**Currency**

The official currency of Chad is the CFA Franc.

**Education**

Government schools are about the only educational services in Chad. These schools teach French and Arabic, the two official languages, as well as other basic educational needs.

**Language**

In Chad there are well over 40 different languages, most coming from the different dialects as well as being French. French is the primary language of Chad and gained this from being governed by France. Arabic is the other official language.

**Food**

Traditionally, as in almost all cultures, the cuisine of Africa uses a combination of locally available fruits, grains, milk and meats. In some parts of Africa, the traditional African diet has a
predominance of milk, curd, and whey — naturally, the Old Testament has described Ethiopia as the land of milk and honey. In much of tropical Africa cow’s milk is rare and cannot be produced locally (owing it to various diseases that affect livestock).

**Landmarks**

The biggest landmark in Chad is Lake Chad. It spans between Chad and Cameroon.

Chad Epley