THE AMBIGUITIES OF COHABITATION: RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES BETWEEN
TOLERANCE AND FUNDAMENTALISM IN CHAD

HELGA DICKOW

ABI Working Paper No. 13

Freiburg, Germany

October 2019

_____

THE AMBIGUITIES OF COHABITATION: RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES BETWEEN TOLERANCE AND FUNDAMENTALISM IN CHAD*

Helga Dickow

Abstract

Chad belongs to the few countries of the Sahel with a substantial Christian minority in a predominantly Muslim society. It is situated next to states affected by Islamist violence or terrorism and is also touched by terrorist attacks. However, despite a devastating civil war after independence between Muslim and respectively Christian dominated ethnic groups, thus far Chadians have demonstrated a positive attitude toward religious cohabitation. Survey data from a unique dataset of five Chadian cities confirm the population's willingness to accept peaceful coexistence as well as a high level of religiosity. However, the data reveal Islamist fundamentalist attitudes among wealthier respondents who received either an Islamic-based primary education or have a first university degree. This combination is an unusual result. These respondents also show the highest support for authoritarian structures and the Chadian leadership. This leads to the conclusion that Islamist fundamentalism is most prominent among those persons who benefit most from the present authoritarian regime.

President Idriss Déby Itno at the National Day of Prayer 2016, © Helga Dickow

Introduction

Recent studies on Sahelian states affected by Islamist terrorism reveal that bad governance, injustice and perceived discrimination can reinforce the willingness of people to join radical movements. Economic factors such as poverty and unemployment also play an important role. However, Chad – a country run for thirty years by an authoritarian regime and classified as one of the poorest in the world[1] – has not (yet) faced the emergence of radical Islamist or terrorist movements as a crucial threat. In Mali, Niger and Nigeria "religious violence" and motivations for joining Islamist or Salafist movements have been studied extensively, but not in Chad. Despite similar religious and ethnic factors and especially problems such as poverty and bad governance, Chad has been comparatively under-researched and is often mentioned only in footnotes. On the other hand, with the instability in the Sahel – the threat of Boko Haram and Al-Qaïda au Maghreb –Chad's military-backed policy has gained far more geopolitical influence than ever before. Nonetheless, this prominent status is not reflected in peace and conflict studies.

In the following I would like to illustrate why radical political violence, namely Islamist terrorism, has not (yet) found a foothold in Chad, in contrast to its neighbouring countries. Muslims and Christians co-exist mostly peacefully. To demonstrate these findings I will use original data from a quantitative survey conducted in five major cities and qualitative interviews with opinion leaders. These data also allow the identification of groups who tend to show Islamist attitudes and who might become a threat to peaceful cohabitation in the long term.

The research questions are the following: How strong is the acceptance of peaceful cohabitation among Chadian Muslims and Christians? Can we distinguish groups within Chadian society who are less or more prone to religious fundamentalism or even show Islamist fundamentalist attitudes? What prevents Chadian Muslims, in particular, from taking the side of Islamist movements?

To begin with I will give a short outline of existing research on the attractiveness of Islamist movements in the Sahel and then on politics and religion in Chad. The description of my own research and research methods in Chad is followed by the empirical section. This focuses on the results of a survey on attitudes towards politics and cohabitation with special regard to identified religious, fundamentalist and Islamist respondents.

[1] Chad was listed second to last in the UN Human Development Index 2017, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/138806> (17 June 2019).

Religious radicalisation and its consequences in the Sahel

Since the beginning of the 21st century the Sahel has faced a so-called religious radicalisation with far-reaching political consequences for the different countries – not to mention the appalling misery of the local populations affected by terror and violence. The emergence of Boko Haram in Nigeria transformed the social and political life in Northern Nigeria and influenced the results of presidential elections. Mali feared the conquest of the capital by the Salafist Al-Qaida au Maghreb after the failed coup d'état in 2012 and sought the support of French forces. Terrorist attacks on civilians as well as on state representatives, as well as the taking of hostages, are the order of the day in Mali, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria and the Lake Chad region. To address the jihadist insurgency Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria agreed to fight Boko Haram in a joint effort. Other responses to combat terrorism in the Sahel were the French "Operation Barkhane" (since 2014) and the creation of the Joint Force of the Group of Five of the Sahel (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania and Chad) in 2017.[2]

Long before the emergence of religiously driven terror, the countries of the Sahel experienced different waves of Islamic renewal in the late 20th and early 21st century. Adherents of such movements consider them as a purification of a syncretic Islam, a way of purging what Sufi Islam had added to "pure" Islam. The intra-Islamic dispute over the "real" Islam, about the sovereignty of its interpretation, and the emergence of Jihad movements with only a limited religious knowledge of Islam – as was demonstrated by radical groups in Northern Mali and also by Boko Haram[3] – were seen by the Global North as two sides of the same coin and perceived as a threat. It was feared, also by traditional Muslims and members of the Sufi brotherhoods, that the more syncretistic Sahelian Islam, which is connected to local traditions and languages, would be subjugated to Saudi Arabian-influenced Wahhabi Islam. The reforms and the return to the traditions of early Islam were read as signs of radicalisation.[4] Admittedly, the Gulf States, especially Saudi Arabia, invested substantial capital in the Sahel for social work, student grants and also for missionary work, such as for the construction of mosques and the provision of religious teachers and Qur'ans. But it is also obvious that the Islamic reform was promoted by local Muslims themselves – often young men who had studied in the Gulf States, who had been on the pilgrimage journey to Mecca or who had simply lived and worked there for a while. Their longing for moral renewal went along with their loss of confidence in state institutions in the Sahel.[5]

---

[2] International Crisis Group, 'Speaking with the "Bad Guys": Toward Dialogue with Central Mali's Jihadists', *Africa Report 276*, 28 May 2019, Brussels, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/276-speaking-with-the-bad-guys%20.pdf> (28 May 2019).

[3] Mathieu Pellerin, 'Les trajectoires de radicalisation religieuse au Sahel', Notes de l'Ifri, February 2017.

[4] Olawale Ismail, 'Radicalisation and violent extremism in West Africa: implications for African and international security', *Conflict, Security & Development* 12, 2 (2013), pp. 209–230.

[5] Abdoulaye Sounaye, 'Salafi revolution in West Africa' (Working papers ZMO 2017) <https://www.zmo.de/publikationen/WorkingPapers/sounaye_2017.pdf> (25 May 2019).

Renewal or reformist movements as well as Islamist terror have led repeatedly to intra-Islamic confrontations. These cover a broad spectrum, ranging from the war in Mali to the introduction of Sharia law in some Nigerian federal states to attempts by Muslim actors to Islamize public life in Niger.[6] Research has focused primarily on reasons for joining Islamist or terrorist movements. Research on the local level, on young people and on different actors or deserters[7] of the terrorist/Wahhabi/Islamist organisations reveals quite clearly that religion is used by the leaders as a driving factor in mobilising allies and fighters. However, the main goal of such mobilisation is not Jihad or religious extremism. Studies emphasize that the root causes of the mobilisations lie elsewhere. Religion is used to lure supporters who wish to manifest protest, also against the political leadership. Thus, it is not a growing religiosity that fuels the increase in the number of radical religious fundamentalists. Rather it is abusive governments, bad governance, poverty, neglect of border regions, frustration, corruption, injustice, deprivation – in short the lack of a self-determined future – that drives young men in particular into the arms of radical movements.[8] Individual biographies highlight deprivation and poverty as the decisive factors in radicalisation.[9] Research additionally emphasizes that a lack of either basic education or of profound religious education facilitates the recruitment of Islamist fighters.[10] In other words, those with more education – secular or religious – are less likely to be tempted by Islamist extremism.

Religious coexistence in Chad

There have not been many studies on religion in Chad over the past few decades. A conference publication from 1992 illustrates the history of Islam in the country in the historical context and in connection with local traditions.[11] The first analysis of Muslim-Christian coexistence as well as different currents of Islam was written the same year by a Catholic priest who consequently invested himself profoundly in interreligious dialogue in Chad.[12] In the 1990s the Centre Al Mouna for interreligious dialogue organized conferences

---

[6] Abdoulaye Sounaye, 'Ambiguous Secularism. Islam, Laïcité and the State in Niger', *Revue international d'anthropologie et sciences humaines* 58, 2 (2009). pp. 86–115.

[7] PNUD, 'Journey to Extremism in Africa', <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/journey-to-extremism.html> (20 September 2017).

[8] UNDP, Le Centre pour le dialogue humanitaire, 'Radicalisation, violence et (in)sécurité. Ce que disent 800 sahéliens', <https://f-origin.hypotheses.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/2725/files/2017/06/I_Etude_PNUD-HD_perceptions_Sahel_Resume_ex%C3%A9cutif.pdf> (14 December 2017); Ismail, 'Radicalisation and violent extremism in West Africa'.

[9] Djimet Seli, 'Trajectoires et processus de radicalisation à l'ouest du Tchad', in Mirjam de Bruijn (ed.), *Biographies de la Radicalisation. Des messages cachés du changement social* (Langaa Research & Publishing CIG, Bamenda, 2018), pp. 115–129.

[10] Mathieu Pellerin, 'Les trajectoires de radicalisation religieuse au Sahel, *Notes de l'Ifri*, February 2017, p. 16; (8 July 2018); PNUD, 'Journey to Extremism in Africa', 2017, <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/journey-to-extremism.html> (20.9.2017).

[11] Jean-Pierre Magnant (ed.), *L'islam au Tchad* (Centre d'Etudes de l'Afrique Noire, Bordeaux, 1992).

[12] Henri Coudray, 'Chrétiens et Musulmans au Tchad', *Islamochristiana* 18 (1992), pp. 175–234.

on coexistence to enable Chadians to reflect about the civil war and their common future.[13] An analysis from 2011 of the emergence of Islamic NGOs and intra-Islamic disputes argues that the state's primary objective is political stability and therefore sees the need to suppress Islamic NGOs.[14] A recent study investigates the growing role of religion in higher education and points out that it could lead to violent extremism.[15]

The history and composition of its population play an important role in present-day Chad. With regard to both religious and ethnic affiliation the population is highly stratified. Beginning in the 14th century, different waves of migration from the Arabian peninsula to the Sahel, chiefly trading and herding activities, paved the way for Islamization – mainly in the North and centre; later, missionary activities and French colonisation furthered Christianisation, initially in the South. Today the territorial distribution of the two main religions reflects the different migration routes that have shaped Chadian society: the North, East and Centre are Muslim, the South mainly Christian-dominated. Not surprisingly, ethnic and religious affiliations usually overlap: some ethnic groups are predominately or totally Muslim, others predominantly Christian. This distinction has led to the binary juxtaposition of "Northerners" and "Southerners". It draws a rather superficial line and therefore is not accepted among all Chadians. Nevertheless, in daily life this is often the first classification of the religious and ethnic belonging of any person.

Religious affiliation and proximity to political power played a decisive role after the French colonisation and in the aftermath of the civil war. The newly independent state and its administration was originally controlled by Christians from the South; after the end of the civil war in 1979 power shifted to different predominantly Muslim ethnic groups. Since then, conflicts over political and economic power have occurred within the mainly Muslim-dominated groups or even within the ruling clan. Open conflicts between Muslims and Christians have not been evident since the civil war, although relations are not free of tensions. A rather fragile equilibrium prevails. People speak of "conflictive relations" and also of "living together".[16] Especially the generation that experienced the civil war prefers peaceful coexistence.[17]

Since independence the Constitution enshrined laicism and thereby laid the legal foundation for religious coexistence. At closer inspection and while laicism was not abandoned in the new Constitution of 2018, new paragraphs contradict the principle of laicism and risk driving a wedge between Muslims and Christians. Newly included swearing-in ceremonies for ministers and other high administrative posts provide a public space for religion. However, in

[13] Centre Al-Mouna, "Conflit Sud-Nord". Mythe ou réalité? (Sépia, Saint Maur. 1996); Centre Al-Mouna, Quelle laïcité pour un Tchad pluriel? (CAM, N'Djamena 2000).

[14] Gondeu Ladiba, L'émergence des organisations islamiques aux Tchad. Enjeux, acteurs et territoires (L'Harmattan, Paris, 2011).

[15] Remadji Hoinathy and Daniel Eizenga, 'The state of secularism in Chadian higher educations. Testing perceived ties to violent extremism', Resolve Network Research Brief 2, February 2019, <https://www.resolvenet.org/system/files/2019-03/RSVE_02LCBBrief_Chad2019.pdf> (23 July 2019).

[16] Gondeu Ladiba, L'émergence des organisations islamiques aux Tchad.

[17] Journalist, Christian, 22 November 2016.

practice, Muslims and Christians are free to perform their religious duties and rites; Friday afternoons and Sunday mornings are considered as the time to go to the mosque or church, respectively. The high holidays of both religions are public holidays. Until the declaration of the Fourth Republic in 2018 certain unwritten rules backed the requirements of the Chadian "géopolitique" to maintain a certain equilibrium between the religious groups: the Prime minister (this office was abolished by the new constitution) originated in most cases from the South and was a Christian, the President a Muslim. The President scrupulously watches over religious affairs in order to avoid any destabilising tendencies. Since taking power in 1990 Idriss Déby Itno, from the minority ethnic group Zaghawa, whose members are 100 per cent Muslim, has controlled the mostly Tijaniyya-orientated Committee for Higher Islamic Affairs (CHIA). He nominates the Committee's head by presidential decree. The more Salafist-orientated association Ansar al Sunna Al Mohammidya was (once more) dissolved under the pretext of combatting Islamist terrorism in 2015.[18] Christian religious leaders are also well advised to respect the earthy authorities: in 2012 an Italian Catholic bishop was expelled after voicing disapproval of bad governance.

Cohabitation is not free of tensions, especially at the local level when economic competition or perceived or actual deprivation occur, threatening the centuries-old well-defined and accepted economic roles of the different ethnic groups.[19] Conflicts between Muslim nomadic herders and Christian peasants are sometimes described as conflicts between people of different religions but the underlying causes are competition over scarce resources, namely water and land, and for political power: more and more cattle-owners belong to the (Muslim) ruling elite. Muslim-Christian marriages take place occasionally, but are exceptional. Friendships across religious borders exist, however more in intellectual circles in the cities, where people have greater opportunities to mix, than among the rural population. Since the end of the civil war, neighbourhoods in the capital, N'Djamena, tend to be either Muslim or Christian. Nonetheless, Muslim and Christian leaders seek dialogue with the political leadership and – together with President Déby – publically preach cohabitation: "Everybody is free to choose his religion; you cannot curtail the liberty of other religions; you also must have the liberty to belong or to practice no religion."[20]

On the other hand, political power is clearly considered by Chadians to lie with ethnic groups from the North that are closer to Islam than to Christianity. In addition, the political nomination of Muslims into high local government positions in the South enrages local Christians. The power circle is dominated by Muslims; corruption inside the power circle enables the ruling elite to profit from state resources. Therefore, Christians repeatedly express a feeling of alienation and claim that they have access neither to political power nor to the riches of the country. In short, Chad could be described as a pragmatic, tolerant

---

[18] Arrêté Nr. 014/PR/PM/MATSP/SG/DGAT/DAPEC/SAC/2015, portant dissolution de l'Association Ansar Assounna Al-Mouhamadiya, 31 March 2015.
[19] Martin Wiese, *Health-vulnerability in a complex crisis situation. Implications for providing health care to nomadic people in Chad* (Verlag für Entwicklung, Saarbrücken 2004).
[20] Religious leader, Muslim, 11 March 2017.

religious society in which religion nonetheless plays a decisive role in defining the social order and the individual's status within it.

Islam and Politics in Chad

For several decades Chad, like the Sahel as a whole, has experienced the penetration of Saudi Arabian-influenced Wahhabi Islam, via Sudan and also via different waves of migrants (workers, students, pilgrims) who practise it. Saudi Arabian assistance for social work and mosques has helped to spread the "new" Islam. Saudi-financed mosques are easy to distinguish from the "traditional" mosques and are to be found not only in the predominately Muslim North but also in the South.

Confrontations about the "real" Islam took and still take place. Leaders of the traditional Sufi Islam, the Islam of the marabouts and brotherhoods (Tijaniyya, Qadiriyya, Senussi and others), consider this "modern" current incompatible with the Islam they are practising: "Yes, the Tijaniyya has adapted itself to the local context. The Wahhabis want to practise Islam word by word."[21] Hence, also in Chad tensions within the Islamic community about the question of who represents Islam and whose Islam is too Africanised are the order of the day. The political power, be it the French colonial administration or the post-colonial regimes, has favoured the brotherhood Tijaniyya.[22] Today, reformist movements are closely controlled by the authorities, by a department in the Ministry of the Interior (Direction des affaires religieuses et coutumières du ministère de l'intérieur), but nevertheless have also penetrated Chadian Islam.[23]

Ordinary Chadian Muslims themselves perceive the renewal movement rather as a generational conflict, as a conflict between tradition and modernity, than as a religious conflict.[24] The more modern they are, the less the Sunna[25] – as Islamic reformers prefer to call themselves – want to have in common with the Islam of their own forefathers: they regard it as out-of-date, obsolete and in contradiction to real Islam. They follow their prophet in the way they live and dress. Thus, adherents of the more Wahhabi-influenced Islam and traditional Sufi Islam can easily be distinguished. In addition to their slightly different religious practices, the reformists reproach the adherents of Sufi Islam for needing

---

[21] Tijaniyya Cheik, 12 February 2016.

[22] Mahamat Saleh Yacoub, 'L'islam et l'Etat en République du Tchad', in: Jean-Pierre Magnant (ed.), *L'islam au Tchad* (Centre d'Etudes de l'Afrique Noire, Bordeaux, 1992), pp. 93–98; Bernhard Lanne, 'La politique française à l'égard de l'islam au Tchad', in: Jean-Pierre Magnant (ed.), *L'islam au Tchad* (Centre d'Etudes de l'Afrique Noire, Bordeaux, 1992), pp. 99–126.

[23] Leading figure of Ansar al Sunna, 11 February 2016. He explicitly pointed out that Ansar al Sunna does not pose a danger for the state, and that radical Islamist movements, like Al-Qaïda au Maghreb Islamique or Boko Haram, have nothing in common with Islam.

[24] Muslim researcher, 23 October 2017.

[25] "We are no Wahhabis, we prefer to be called Sunna, and we follow the way of the Prophet and his companions. The West prefers to call us Wahhabis or Salafists and to work only with Sufi Islam. But this is the Islam of the heathens, of the traditionalist Africa. We ask to look for the fundamental Islam, the Islam which was brought to us by the Prophet." Imam, 6 November 2016.

the intermediation of marabouts to understand the Qur'an, as they do not speak Arabic. Sometimes, they even deny that Sufis are Muslims.[26]

Researchers see this divergence more in the context of political influence[27] – even when an NGO-leader in N'Djamena told me that the only crisis is the question of leadership of the Muslims.[28] Harsh disputes between the former president of the CHIA and members of the more Salafist-orientated association Ansar al Sunna al Mohammidya, founded in 1991, provide vivid evidence of this.

The politics and economy of the thirty years of Déby's rule can be characterised by short-lived hopes for democratisation and economic recovery, both of which waned rapidly. The political spring, the introduction of political parties and democratic elections, was quickly curtailed by an authoritarian regime. Déby is in his fifth term as president. He has only survived several military attacks by the political-military opposition with the support of the French military. Since the beginnings of the Islamist threat, Chad has fought side by side with French soldiers in Mali and showed itself as an indispensable military ally.[29]

The long-hoped-for oil production started in 2003 and soon became a curse as in neighbouring Sudan[30] and other countries: high-level corruption enabled the political elite to become rich while the rest of the population struggles to survive. Chad is among the poorest countries in the world.

In short, Chad displays all of the ingredients that have led to the development of Islamist movements in other Sahel countries: high poverty, bad governance and corruption combined with intra-Islamic disputes. What holds Chadian society together? Using insights into attitudes towards religion and coexistence but also towards fundamentalism, this paper will attempt to provide an answer.

Design of the survey

This section reports the results of my own empirical research in Chad on religion and politics. It is based on the quantitative dataset of a survey in five major cities in 2014 and 2015.[31]

---

[26] Different Muslim leaders in 2017.

[27] Vincent Hiribarren, 'Pratiques de l'islam au Tchad', 28 November 2018, *Libération*, <http://libeafrica4blogs.liberation.fr/2018/11/28/pratiques-de-lislam-au-Tchad/> (13 July 2019); Clémentine Racine and Mahamat Mustapha Ali, 'La cité culturelle tchadienne au miroir de la lutte anti-terroriste ou les enjeux de pouvoir d'une labellisation religieuse subversive', *La politique africaine*, 149 (2018), pp. 21–42.

[28] NGO leader, 10 November 2016.

[29] Ketil Fred Hansen, 'Regime security in Chad. How the Western war on terror saved the dictatorial Chadian regime', *Ante Portas - Security Studies* 9, 2 (2017), pp. 55–70.

[30] Luke A. Patey, 'Crude days ahead? Oil and the resource curse in Sudan', *African Affairs* 109 (2010), pp. 617–636.

[31] Additionally, between 2013 and 2017 I conducted in-depth interviews (N=189) following a semi-structured interview guideline with Chadian opinion leaders, namely religious leaders, politicians, social scientists and journalists as well as international representatives. The interviewees were initially chosen according to their functions (prominent political and religious representatives and members of the social sciences at the University of N'Djamena) and then through the snowball system according to recommendations of the initial

The survey was conducted in cooperation with the Centre Al Mouna[32] in N'Djamena, which also recruited the interviewers. I trained them in methodology and techniques of conducting interviews and supervised the fieldwork in all sites to ensure the validity of the study.

The core questionnaire of this study is based on earlier research on attitudes towards society, religion and politics developed at the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute and applied to several research projects in fifteen countries. One of these studies was undertaken by me in Chad in 2004 and 2005.[33] For the 2015/16 survey the questionnaire of the 2004/2005 study was adjusted by introducing more specific questions on religious beliefs and fundamentalist attitudes.

The questionnaire includes ca. 130 questions, of which twenty touch the socio-demographic background and characteristics of the respondents. The thematic blocks are covered by individual questions and series of questions (including control questions): psychosocial attitudes, social and economic perceptions, religion, ethnicity and identity, political orientations, perceptions of differences and coexistence, and outlook for the future.

Chad covers 1,284,000 square kilometres, and about 200 ethnic and language groups, including ethnic groups practising nomadic pastoralism, live on its territory. Size and socio-linguistic differences inhibit the collection of country-wide representative survey data. The survey had to be restricted to cities, where all the ethnic and linguistic strata of the estimated population of 14 million could be reached. The selection of the towns was based on the following categories, to allow statistically relevant comparison:

- the capital N'Djamena, where Muslims and Christians are more or less equally represented;
- one town in the predominantly Islamic-dominated North-East (Abéché);
- one town in the predominantly Christian-dominated South (Sarh);
- two "mixed" towns (Mongo in the centre and Moundou more in the South, the economic hub of the country).

The data set and statistical analyses

Between October 2015 and February 2016 the interviewers conducted 1,857 face-to-face interviews in N'Djamena, Moundou, Sarh, Mongo and Abéché. Interviewers (speaking French, Chadian Arabic and one dominant language of the respective region) used

---

interviewees. Most interviews were conducted in French. Some Muslim religious leaders preferred to speak Chadian Arabic, which interpreters translated into French. The interview guideline covered a cross-section of aspects of coexistence, religion, fundamentalism as well as the political situation in Chad. Interlocutors requested to remain anonymous.

[32] I would like to thank the director of Centre Al Mouna and her colleagues for their excellent cooperation and welcoming me as a colleague and friend.
The results were analysed with SPSS. Rainer Hampel analysed the data, developing indexes and more than once extremely helpful advice.

[33] Helga Dickow, *Democrats without democracy? Attitudes and opinions on society, religion and politics in Chad* (Centre International des Sciences de l'Homme, Byblos, 2005).

geographic cluster sampling to identify interviewees. Mainly, the interviews took place in respondents' homes or sometimes at work – but only when anonymity could be ensured. The questions were read out by the interviewer and the respondent had to choose one (sometimes two) option(s). With a few exceptions, most questions were closed.

For the analysis the data of the item pool were grouped into five indexes covering the following thematic issues: democracy, cohabitation, religiosity, fundamentalist religious attitudes and Islamist fundamentalism. For each item belonging to the respective domain, the respondent was given one point for an affirmative and no point for a negative answer. Each index was checked for internal consistency by a reliability analysis.[34] Depending on the number of items, regrouped indexes contained zero to nine points, which were then grouped into three to five categories ranging from none/low to high/very high.

The index "democracy" consisted of seven items/statements related to democratic attitudes and opinions on different forms of government.[35] The index "cohabitation" was based on nine items concerning the attitude towards peaceful coexistence and mutual respect of other groups.[36]

The next three indexes reveal overlaps and differences among categories of respondents, who are religious with respect to their religious practice, fundamentalist in regard to their own religion or show Islamist fundamentalist attitudes. The first two indexes cover the sample as a whole: Muslims and Christians were asked the same questions. The third index – regrouping items that only touch Islamic beliefs – consequently took only Muslims into account.

---

[34] Cronbach's alpha for the index "democracy" is 0.62; for the index "cohabitation" 0.56; for the index "religiosity" 0.66; for the index "fundamentalist religious attitudes" 0.56; and for the index "Islamist fundamentalism" 0.52.

[35] Respondents had to make a choice (either/or) for each of the following three statements: "Judges who follow the directives of the government." vs. "Truly independent judges who apply the law no matter what the government says."; "Only one political party with a single plan for the country's future." vs. "Several political parties, each with its own plan for the country's future."; "A government that controls the press, radio and television in order to prevent discord." vs. "A government that allows the press, radio and television to criticise it and accepts the freedom of the press." Furthermore, items rejected get a point for the "democracy" index: "The largest group governs, and the others accept its decisions."; "One group dominates the others, and those that don't like it must either keep quiet or get out of the country."; "A single party open to everyone governs without opposition."; "Whether we like it or not: when different language or religious groups live together in the same country, they must either dominate or be dominated."

[36] "Very different groups can live together in the same country, accept one another and respect one another's rights."; "A country with groups with different traditions is wealthier and more interesting for it."; "Given the strength of the different groups in our society, it is necessary to search for compromise and come to some agreement."; "In the event of a violent conflict between the different groups, everybody would lose in the long run."; " In spite of everything that has happened, peace and cooperation between the different groups can still be achieved. "; "I feel very close to people of my ethnic group, regardless of their education, wealth or political views."; "I feel very close to people of my own religion, regardless of their education, wealth or political views."; "I would agree to my daughter marrying someone from a different ethnic group if they love each other."; "I would agree to one of my children marrying someone from a different religion if they loved each other."

The six items of the index "religiosity"[37] inquire about faith in Allah/God and religious beliefs and practices, such as praying or attending services.

Most of the seven items of the index "fundamentalist religious attitudes"[38] are used in current fundamentalism research[39] and concern fundamentalist understanding of the Holy Scriptures, the lack of separation of the worldly and heavenly sphere as well as the exclusivity of one's own religion.

To identify Islamist fundamentalism, explicit items that concern Islamic beliefs or the introduction of Sharia law were added to some items of the above religious fundamentalism index. This index includes six items and is titled "Islamist fundamentalism"[40] to distinguish it from the other indexes.

Socio-demographic variables

The socio-demographic variables of the sample reflect recent population estimates[41] of Chadian society. They show the following characteristics: of the 1,857 respondents 52 per cent are men and 48 per cent are women. Roughly two thirds of the respondents are younger than 35 years and one third older than 35 years.[42]

55 per cent of the respondents are Muslims, 43 per cent Christians and 2 per cent indicated that they belong either to traditional or to no religion.[43] 17 per cent of the Muslims identified themselves as Salafists or Wahhabis.[44]

Regional origin, language and in most cases religion serve as clear markers to differentiate among the different ethnic groups. To receive statistically reliable results, the respondents

---

[37] "I believe in a life after death, in which good people will be rewarded and bad people will be punished."; "I try to live my life according to the teachings of my religion."; "I am convinced that my religion is the only true one."; "How often do you pray?" (regularly = regularly and often); "Do you attend services in your place of worship (mosque, church)?" (yes, once a week); "I can be happy and enjoy life without believing in God." (no).

[38] "Faith and religious values must determine all aspects of state and society."; "I believe that my religion is the only true one."; "I would agree to one of my children marrying someone from a different religion if they love each other." (no); "I must spread the word of God among all the people I meet."; "The Qur'an/Bible is the word of God and must be taken literally.";"Whenever my neighbours who belong to a different religion than me celebrate a religious holiday I pay them a visit and congratulate them." (no); "A political party that asks for power in the name of religion would be a good thing for Chad."

[39] Bob Altemeyer and Bruce Hunsberger, 'Authoritarianism, religious fundamentalism, quest, and prejudice', *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 2, 2, (1992), pp. 113–133.

[40] "I would agree to one of my children marrying someone from a different religion if they love each other." (no); "Whenever my neighbours who belong to a different religion than me celebrate a religious holiday I pay them a visit and congratulate them." (no); "A political party that asks for power in the name of religion would be a good thing for Chad."; "Our constitution needs to be revised in order to allow Sharia as the principle law."; "An adulteress must be stoned."; "The Qur'an is the word of God and must be taken literally."

[41] The last census in Chad took place in 1993; since then the population has almost tripled according to estimates and has reached about 15,000,000. <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/chad-population/> (6 June 2016).

[42] In 2015 the average life span in Chad was 53 years for women and 51 for men. Population Reference Bureau (2016), <http://www.prb.org/pdf16/prb-wpds2016-web-2016.pdf> (20 July 2017).

[43] As the latter are statistically insignificant, they will not be mentioned in the analysis.

[44] In Chad both expressions are used synonymously.

were assigned to ten main groups[45] on the basis of their response about their ethnic affiliation. The Sara[46] is, with one third of the population, the largest ethnic group in Chad.[47] In the sample 35 per cent of the respondents are Sara, 16 per cent belong to the Hadjarai, 11 per cent to the Ouaddai and 9 per cent to the ethnic group of Chadian Arabs. Mayo-Kebbi make up 7 per cent and Goran 6 per cent. The share of the other groups is less than 5 per cent.

	Religion	
Ethnic Group	Islam	Christianity
Goran	**100%**	0%
Ouaddai	**100%**	0%
Fitri-Batha	**100%**	0%
Kanem-Bornou	**100%**	0%
Arab	**98%**	2%
Hadjarai	**88%**	12%
Barguirmi	73%	27%
Sara	9%	**91%**
Tandjile	10%	**90%**
Mayo-Kebbi	16%	**84%**

Figure 1 Distribution of ethnicity by religion[48]

Ethnic and religious affiliations mainly overlap (Figure 1): respondents from the Goran, Ouaddai, Fitri Batha, Arab and Kanem Bournou ethnic groups are Muslims (from 98 to 100%). Eighty-eight per cent of the Hadjarai are also Muslims and twelve per cent are Christians. Mainly Christian-dominated groups are the Sara, Mayo-Kebbi and Tandjile (84 to 91%). Respondents mostly live in the region of their ethnic origin; only in N'Djamena are all

---

[45] The classification follows SIL International, <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/TD/languages> (17 April 2016).
[46] According to the census of 1993, Sara, Arab and Mayo-Kebbi constituted more than half of the Chadian population. Ethnonet <http://www.ethnonet-africa.org/data/tchad/genpop.htm> (22 May 2016).
[47] Mario J. Azevedo and Samuel Decalo, *Historical Dictionary of Chad* (Rowman & Littlefield, London 2018, Fourth Edition).
[48] N=1,749; excluding NA, no and traditional religion.
All numbers are rounded percentages in this and all the following figures.

ethnic groups present. Five per cent of the respondents received no schooling at all, and 12 per cent an Islamic-influenced education (Qur'anic school or an Arabic primary school). Almost half of the respondents attended primary (16%) and secondary education or vocational training (28%). More than a third passed the baccalauréat or has an academic degree. Christians are among the respondents with a higher educational level,[49] whereas Muslims tend to have a lower level of education. Muslims are overrepresented among merchants and pastoralists, Christians among small traders, and the Christian-dominated group of the Sara among civil servants and employees. Regarding household incomes it is evident that some completely Islamized groups (Goran, Arab, Fitri Batha and Kanem Bournou) belong to the two highest income groups, whereas predominately Christian groups and the Hadjarai are among the ones with low or average household income.

Indexes and associations

The index "democracy" discloses a remarkable result: a majority of respondents (55%) support democratic ideas. More than half of them show democratic attitudes and only a minority evince undemocratic attitudes.[50] In contrast, interviews with opinion leaders revealed that Chadians do not live in a democratic but rather in an authoritarian state. Déby had promised them peace and democracy when he took power, but had not kept his word.[51]
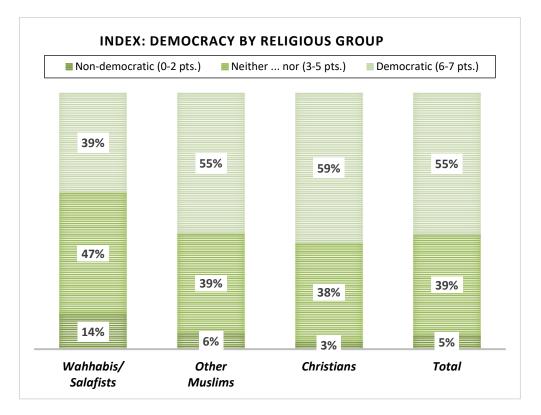
Figure 2 illustrates that Christians (59%) show the highest demand for democracy compared to 39% among respondents who classify themselves as Wahhabis/Salafists. The share of non-democratic Wahhabis/Salafists is almost three times higher than the average. Several interlocutors explained that Wahhabis/Salafists aim at a political Islam[52] and that they are trying to gain political influence by creating political parties without believing in democracy.[53]

---

[49] 70% of the Christians and 51% of the Muslims attended a secondary school or higher educational institution.
[50] We asked about pro-democratic preferences which Afrobarometer calls demand for democracy and not about the perceived supply of democracy, namely do people think they are getting democracy. Robert Mattes, 'Democracy in Africa. Demand, supply and the 'dissatisfied democrat'', February 2019, *Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 54*, <http://www.afrobarometer.org/publications/pp54-democracy-africa-demand-supply-and-dissatisfied-democrat> (27 September 2019).
[51] Journalist, Muslim, 23 November 2016.
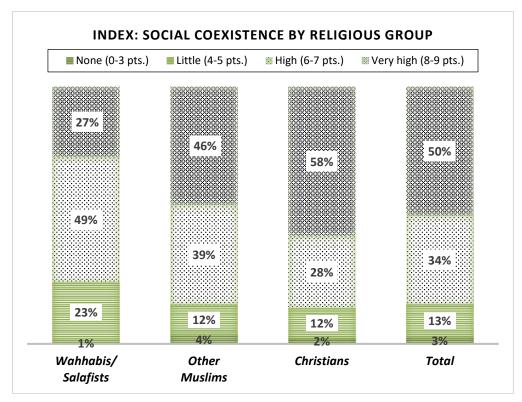[52] Leader of an NGO for Religious Dialogue, Muslim, 5 October 2016.
[53] Imam, university professor, 31 October 2016, and Christian university professor, 6 March 2017.

INDEX: DEMOCRACY BY RELIGIOUS GROUP

Legend: Non-democratic (0-2 pts.) · Neither ... nor (3-5 pts.) · Democratic (6-7 pts.)

	Wahhabis/ Salafists	Other Muslims	Christians	Total
Democratic (6-7 pts.)	39%	55%	59%	55%
Neither ... nor (3-5 pts.)	47%	39%	38%	39%
Non-democratic (0-2 pts.)	14%	6%	3%	5%

Figure 2 Index "demand for democracy" by religious group

Further results are noteworthy: the highest undemocratic attitudes among the Muslim-dominated ethnic groups were shown by the Goran (12%) and Ouaddai (11%). But the Hadjarai, who are also predominantly Muslims, score the highest among the democratic respondents with 76 per cent. The level of education influences democratic attitudes: respondents with an Islamic-influenced education are overrepresented among "undemocratic" respondents. However, respondents with no and also with higher education are above-average democratic. This is a striking result; in other studies only higher education showed an association with higher democratic attitudes.[54]

---

[54] Theodor Hanf, 'Factors Determining Democratic Attitudes in Deeply Divided Societies', *Al-Abhath* 57 (2009), pp. 91-144; Jong-Wha Lee and Hanol Lee, 'Human capital in the long run', *Journal of Development Economics 122,* (2016), pp. 147–169.

INDEX: SOCIAL COEXISTENCE BY RELIGIOUS GROUP

Legend: None (0-3 pts.) · Little (4-5 pts.) · High (6-7 pts.) · Very high (8-9 pts.)

	Wahhabis/Salafists	Other Muslims	Christians	Total
Very high (8-9 pts.)	27%	46%	58%	50%
High (6-7 pts.)	49%	39%	28%	34%
Little (4-5 pts.)	23%	12%	12%	13%
None (0-3 pts.)	1%	4%	2%	3%

Figure 3 Index "cohabitation" by religious group

In religious and ethnically divided Chad a substantial majority demonstrates its willingness to live together with other groups: more than eight out of ten respondents express a very high/high degree of acceptance of cohabitation. However, regarding the highest level of approval of cohabitation (i.e. 8–9 pts.) only 46 per cent Muslims were in favour compared to 58 per cent of their Christian compatriots. Wahhabis/Salafists are the least predisposed towards social coexistence. The willingness to live together increases linearly with age. Only the (Muslim-dominated) higher income groups show a certain reluctance to cohabitation.

During individual interviews Muslim and Christian religious leaders and intellectuals emphasized the Chadians' willingness to live peacefully together. They stressed that both religions are frequently represented in many families. According to the interviewees, the civil war of 1978/79 jeopardised this coexistence. A Muslim stated: "The problem with cohabitation is a heritage of the past. Muslims say, it is our turn now and Christians feel excluded."[55] There was broad consensus that the real threat to peaceful coexistence today might come from Wahhabis/Salafists. "However in Chad we do not have Salafists who are prepared to resort to violence."[56] Salafists or Sunna (see footnote 25) interviewees also emphasised their acceptance of cohabitation, as the Imam of a local branch of the CHIA explained: "Everybody has got his religious book, but we are all Chadians and need to live together without fighting."[57] But other interlocutors contradicted his statement, claiming

---

[55] Researcher, Muslim, 21 January 2016.
[56] High-ranking member of the Council for Higher Islamic Affairs, 31 October 2016.
[57] Imam, member of the Council for Higher Islamic Affairs of Moyen Chari, 5 February 2016.

that "Wahhabis want to change the religion in Chad"[58] and that "they want all of us to turn to their Islam".[59]

Religion plays an important role in the daily life of the Chadians, as is shown in Figure 4. According to the religiosity index, eight out of ten respondents are "very religious" or "rather religious". Only four per cent of the respondents are "not religious".

Clear differentiations between Muslims and Christians can be found. Asked about religious practice it is not surprising that all mainly Islam-orientated ethnic groups are overrepresented among "very religious" respondents (Ouaddai 71%, Arabs 57%, Goran 47%, Hadjarai 45%). Wahhabis/Salafists (with 56% in the "very religious" category) do not differ significantly from other Muslims. Christians/Southerners are overrepresented in the "religious" (49%) and "hardly religious" (30%) categories. Again, education plays a significant role: the higher the educational level, the lower the religiosity. Respondents with a high income belong to the very religious respondents; merchants (57%) are highly overrepresented amongst them.
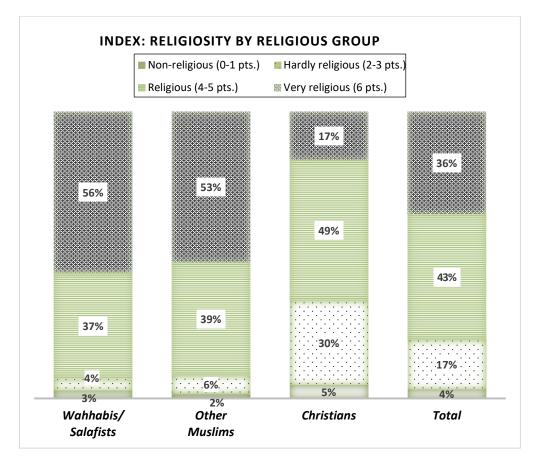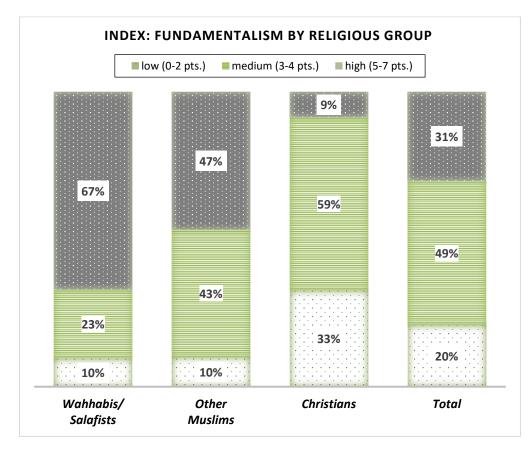
INDEX: RELIGIOSITY BY RELIGIOUS GROUP

■ Non-religious (0-1 pts.) ■ Hardly religious (2-3 pts.)
■ Religious (4-5 pts.) ▨ Very religious (6 pts.)

	Wahhabis/ Salafists	Other Muslims	Christians	Total
Very religious	56%	53%	17%	36%
Religious	37%	39%	49%	43%
Hardly religious	4%	6%	30%	17%
Non-religious	3%	2%	5%	4%

Figure 4 Index "religiosity" by religious group

Religiosity based on religious practice and life-style concerns the contemplative and individual outlook on religion. Are "religious" respondents also "fundamentalist"? Could

---

[58] Imam, university lecturer, 11 November 2016.
[59] High-ranking civil servant, Muslim, 4 March 2017.

religion be a dividing force as indicated by the following statements? More Sunna-orientated interlocutors affirmed that "Islam is only a logical development. In the long run we expect all Christians to turn to Islam, the only true religion"[60] and "I would prefer if everybody becomes Sunna – the pure teaching".[61]

Figure 5 Index "fundamentalist religious attitudes"

A fifth of the respondents show low and, notably, almost one third high fundamentalist religious attitudes (Figure 5). The least religious fundamentalist (0–2 pts.) are Southerners/Christians, employees (28%) and civil servants (26%). It is remarkable, that "highly religious" groups are also "highly religious fundamentalists"[62]: Northerners and Muslims with an Islamic-based education, the two highest income groups as well as merchants (51%). Wahhabis/Salafists are more than twice as likely to be religious fundamentalists than the average (67% vs. 31%).

The following associations between the indexes "democracy", "cohabitation", "religiosity" and "religious fundamentalism" answer some of the questions asked at the beginning. Correlations show that the very religious respondents tend to be undemocratic; at the same time they show a high acceptance of cohabitation. Furthermore, religious fundamentalism

---

[60] Imam, Southern Chad, 22 October 2016.
[61] Businessperson, 11 February 2016.
[62] For the sake of brevity I use terms such as "low" and "high" fundamentalists or "high Islamist fundamentalists" to correspond to the indexes into which the data was grouped.

and cohabitation are no contradiction: all three categories of "religious fundamentalists" are prepared to coexist socially. In highly fragmented Chad, religion seems to serve as a buffer and allow cohabitation.

Non-religious or hardly religious categories show fewer fundamentalist attitudes than the very religious ones. This is not surprising. Also respondents who are religious show little tendency towards religious fundamentalism. Only "very religious" respondents also reveal strong religious fundamentalist attitudes.

When it comes to democracy, the differences between "low" and "high religious fundamentalists" are quite striking: 71 per cent of the respondents with low religious fundamentalism score high on the democracy index. On the other hand only 41 per cent of the "high religious fundamentalists" are democratic. A high level of fundamentalist religiosity seems to be an obstacle to democracy.
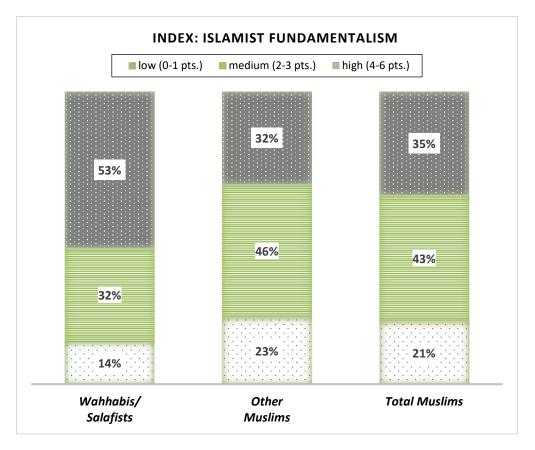
Cross-tabulations with some socio-political attitudes and demographic variables confirm this observation. 37 per cent of the "high religious fundamentalists" show unconditional support for their political leader, but only 17 per cent of the "low religious fundamentalists". Equally, 54 per cent of the first group approve that government is doing the right thing, compared to 22 per cent of the "low religious fundamentalists". The preference for a government of national unity is highly accepted by "non-fundamentalists" (81%) and less so by "high fundamentalists" (65%).

Eight out of ten "highly religious fundamentalists" believe that democratic liberties lead to a debauched life but only five out of ten of the "low fundamentalists". Consequently, for 94 per cent of the "high religious fundamentalist" respondents, religion is more important than politics (53% of the "low religious fundamentalists"). Furthermore, 58 per cent of the "high religious fundamentalist" Muslims and Christians agree that a political party in the name of religion is a good thing for Chad (only 3% of the "low fundamentalists") and 95 per cent that faith and religious values must determine all aspects of state and society compared to 43% of the "low fundamentalists".

Religious fundamentalism also determines support of the authoritarian regime. "Highly religious fundamentalists" are overrepresented among the supporters of President Déby, whereas "low religious fundamentalists" prefer to support an opposition leader. In numbers: Déby is the most favourite politician of 42 per cent of the "high religious fundamentalists". Only 16 per cent of them would opt for an opposition leader.

In short, higher religious fundamentalist attitudes are not an obstacle to cohabitation but rather to democracy.

Finally, Figure 6 illustrates high Islamist fundamentalist attitudes among more than a third of respondents and low attitudes among a quarter of them. As expected, Wahhabis/Salafist are, at 53 per cent, overrepresented among "high Islamists" (4–6pts).

INDEX: ISLAMIST FUNDAMENTALISM

low (0-1 pts.) ▪ medium (2-3 pts.) ▪ high (4-6 pts.)

	Wahhabis/Salafists	Other Muslims	Total Muslims
high (4-6 pts.)	53%	32%	35%
medium (2-3 pts.)	32%	46%	43%
low (0-1 pts.)	14%	23%	21%

Figure 6 Index "Islamist fundamentalism"

"Islamist fundamentalists" show notably firm views on the political order: 88 per cent of them opt for Sharia as the principle legal system compared to only one per cent of the respondents who show low levels of Islamist fundamentalist attitudes. Christian interlocutors expressed the fear that "Muslims want to Islamize the public sphere"[63] or even "turn Chad into an Islamic state".[64] A Muslim intellectual expressed concrete plans precisely for this aim: "We try to get more young people into the civil service. They will enforce the Islamization of the state."[65]

75 per cent of the "high Islamists" are in favour of a political party in the name of religion (11% of the "low Islamists"), 45 per cent would unconditionally support their political leader (13% of the "low Islamists") and 62 per cent think the government is doing the right thing (compared to 38% of the "low Islamists"). A government of national unity is favoured by only 65% of the "high Islamists" compared to 77% of the "low Islamists". Moreover, "high Islamists" are more likely to support Déby and to a far lesser extent opposition leaders. 37 per cent cite Déby as their favourite politician (compared to 27% of all respondents) and

---

[63] Catholic Bishop, 6 February 2016.
[64] Leader of an NGO, Christian, 19 January 2016.
[65] University teacher, Salafist, 11 March 2017.

only 16% name members of the opposition. Merchants (59%), farmers (52%) and small traders (49%) are above-average Déby supporters.[66]

Briefly, "high religious (Muslim and Christian) fundamentalists" and "high Islamist fundamentalists" show a strong tendency towards undemocratic attitudes and authoritarian structures.[67] Moreover, the higher the religious or Islamist fundamentalism, the lower the support for democracy.[68]
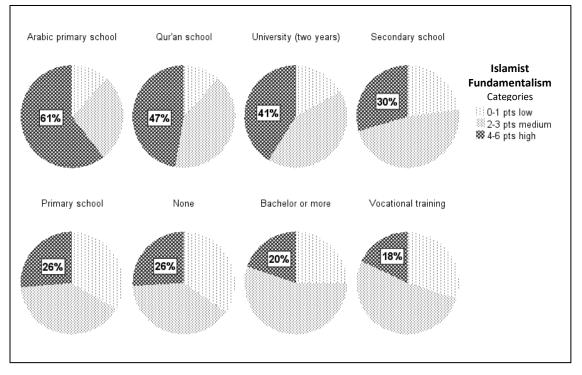

Figure 7 Islamist Fundamentalism by Education Level

The level of education (Figure 7) plays a significant role in shaping Islamist attitudes. Respondents with an Islamic-based (Arabic primary school: 61%, Qur'an school: 47%) and equally with a university education of two years (41%) are overrepresented among the "high Islamists" – not so respondents without any education (26%). The high level of Islamist fundamentalism among university graduates confirms Hoinathy's and Eizenga's[69] observation about the infiltration of Islamic extremism in higher education. The high level of Islamic-educated respondents is less surprising and the respondents' professional profiles provide further information: merchants are overrepresented among the "highest Islamists". As described above, they mainly received an Islamic-based education but also belong to respondents with a higher income. Muslims are overrepresented among the latter. The data reveal that the two highest income groups show the highest Islamist attitudes. This

---

[66] It is worth noting that the Hadjarai, who turned to Islam only in the middle of the last century, are "low religious" and "low Islamist" fundamentalists. They also reveal less support for the ruling regime.
[67] Altemeyer and Hunsberger also stated the link between fundamentalism and authoritarianism. Altemeyer and Hunsberger, 'Authoritarianism, religious fundamentalism, quest, and prejudice'.
[68] The age of the respondent does not show significant differences in these categories.
[69] Remadji Hoinathy and Daniel Eizenga, 'The state of secularism in Chadian higher educations'.

corresponds with Marchal's insight that Wahhabi influence has grown stronger among the economic elite since the mid-1990s.[70] Civil servants and employees, on the other hand, tend to show low religious and low Islamist fundamentalism.

In other words, Islamist attitudes are highest among respondents with an Islamic-based education and among (two years) university graduates, both of whom are part of the Chadian economic elite, especially merchants.[71] Their self-assessment confirms this assumption: "high Islamists" are financially better off than two years ago and regard themselves rather as upper or middle class. According to them the gap between rich and poor has decreased. Consequently, they express above average satisfaction with their income and less envy of rich people. They are wealthy, therefore poverty is neither an important issue for them nor do they judge Chad as a society with striking economic differences. Contrary to the majority of their compatriots, they are happy today[72] and – more importantly – expect that they will be happy in ten years' time. Their outlook on the future is optimistic compared to their "low Islamist" compatriots. Respondents who classify themselves as Wahhabis/Salafists show the same tendencies – statistically only to a slightly lesser degree.

Conclusion

In view of the above results it needs to be stressed that the majority of Chadians are seriously impoverished and struggling to survive. Oil production has not led to the desired reduction in poverty; on the contrary, bad governance and high levels of corruption have caused an increase in social inequality, as evidenced in different indexes.[73] The ingredients that have led to the growth of Islamist movements in neighbouring countries also exist in Chad. So why has Islamist fundamentalism not led to any significant extremism or violence against the government? After all, a third of Chadian Muslims show Islamist attitudes.

Firstly, Chadians are willing to coexist with compatriots of a different religious orientation – this is partly a lesson from a violent past. This willingness is high among all defined groups/categories. Even self-defined Wahhabis/Salafists approve of ethnic and religious cohabitation, albeit to a slightly lesser degree than other Muslims. Christians, as a minority, are dependent on peaceful cohabitation. On the whole the high level of religiosity among all groups seems to play an important role as a binding force. It could also be advantageous for

---

[70] Roland Marchal, 'The reshaping of West Africa after Muammar Qaddafi's fall', *NOREF Report: Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre*, 10 (2012).

[71] Claude Arditi, 'Le Tchad et le monde arabe: essai d'analyse des relations commerciales de la période précoloniale à aujourd'hui', 207 (2003), *Afrique contemporaine,* pp. 185–198.

[72] The Gallup Global Emotions Report states named Chad as the most negative country in the world in 2018. <https://www.gallup.com/analytics/248906/gallup-global-emotions-report-2019.aspx> (22 May 2019).

[73] "In 2011, the richest 20 percent of Chadians accounted for about 48 percent of total consumption expenditures, while the poorest 20 percent of Chadians accounted for only 5 percent. The increase in these wealth disparities can be attributed to the growth in the oil industry, as the increase mainly benefited oil-related investment in urban capital." <https://borgenproject.org/tag/income-inequality-in-chad/> (19 July 2019).

social coexistence that the two largest ethnic groups, which score the highest on the cohabitation index, have substantial Muslim (Christian) minorities amidst their ranks.

Secondly, the dividing lines between "high" and "low fundamentalists/Islamists" are education and income. Those who score "low" on the Islamist fundamentalism index are poorer and have no education. Those who score "high" on the same index attended only Qur'an schools or primary Arabic schools and hence have a low level of education or – on the contrary – a high level, namely the first university degree, but not the highest level. The latter belong to the economic elite and are optimistic about their future despite the economic crisis. They show undemocratic attitudes, support authoritarian structures and the president. Merchants are overrepresented among them. There is one plausible explanation: they profit considerably from the Déby regime. Therefore, they see no need to turn against the corrupt structures that benefit them. Consequently, they present themselves as supporters of the regime and show the strongest anti-democratic attitudes. However, what will happen if the Chadian leadership is no longer capable of meeting their expectations? Would they finally become a seedbed for radicalisation? They show the least acceptance of cohabitation and also the highest Islamist attitudes.

The results of this research have identified those groups within Chadian society that are not only prone to Islamist tendencies but at the same time are beneficiaries of the current political system: wealthy merchants with international networks. Their proximity to the Chadian political elite was clearly indicated in the data of the survey that concentrated on urban centres. At the same time, the political elite profits from wealthy merchants' resources and contacts.[74] Further insights into these close-knit relations are desirable.

This analysis has shown the usefulness of surveys in complementing and informing qualitative insights. It would be helpful to have similar data from other Sahelian countries. The distribution of wealth and education among ethnic groups in conjunction with religious affiliation, attitudes and proximity to government may help to explain the salience of the religious cleavage in current armed conflicts beyond the Chadian case.

---

[74] In May 2019 furious merchants demanded payment from the government for supplies and services that had not been paid for five years. <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20190624-tchad-etat-mauvais-payeur-syndicats-commercants-colere> (24 June 2019).

ABI Working Paper series

The ABI working paper series focuses on socio-political issues in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

Already published issues

12 | Kößler, Reinhart
The Bible and the Whip – Entanglements surrounding the restitution of looted heirlooms
ABI Working Papers Freiburg | 2019 | 21 S.

11 | Jenss, Alke; Lehmann, Rosa
Multi-Scalar Struggles: The Selectivity of Development Governance in Southern Mexico
ABI Working Papers Freiburg | 2019 | 44 S.

10 | Le Noan Anne-Clémence; Glawion, Tim
Education nationale en territoire rebelle Le cas du lycée de Ndélé en République Centrafricaine - State education in rebel-held territory The case of the Ndele secondary school in the Central African Republic
ABI Working Papers Freiburg | 2018 | 24 S.

9 | Wetterich, Cita
Gendered security perspectives of the refugee "crisis" in the British and German Media: a securitization of gender?
ABI Working Papers Freiburg | 2018 | 31 S.

8 | Mehler, Andreas; De Vries Lotje
Les Conditions marginales du néopatrimonialisme performant: Pourquoi l'Afrique ne « marche » pas dans la République centrafricaine
ABI Working Papers Freiburg | 2018 | 21 S.

7 | Niyonkuru, Aimé-Parfait
Judicial Protection of Human Rights in Post-Conflict Burundi: Gap Between Legal Principles and Practices Freiburg
ABI Working Papers Freiburg | 2018 | 30 S.

6 | Plänitz Erik Fixed on the Rural - Neglecting the Urban? Reviewing spatial disparities in Climate Change – Conflict Literature
ABI Working Papers Freiburg | | 2017 | 24 S.

5 | Franzisca Zanker
The Politics of EU and African Migration Governance: From Rhetoric to Practice
ABI Working Papers Freiburg | 2017 | 54 S.

4 | Ottmann, Martin, Haas, Felix
Does Peace Trickle Down? Micro-Level Evidence from Africa
ABI Working Papers Freiburg | 2017 | 24 S.

3 | Schütze, Benjamin
Misrepresenting the Contextual and Idealising the Universal - How US Efforts at Democracy
Promotion Bolster Authoritarianism in Jordan
ABI Working Papers Freiburg | 2016 | 18 S.

2 | Solarin, Adepeju O.
Respect, Restorative Justice and the Oslo 1993 Talks
ABI Working Papers Freiburg | 2015 | 28 S.

1 | Lübke, Christian von
Continuity and Change - Societal Power and Accountability in Democratic Indonesia
ABI Working Papers Freiburg | 2015 | 26 S.