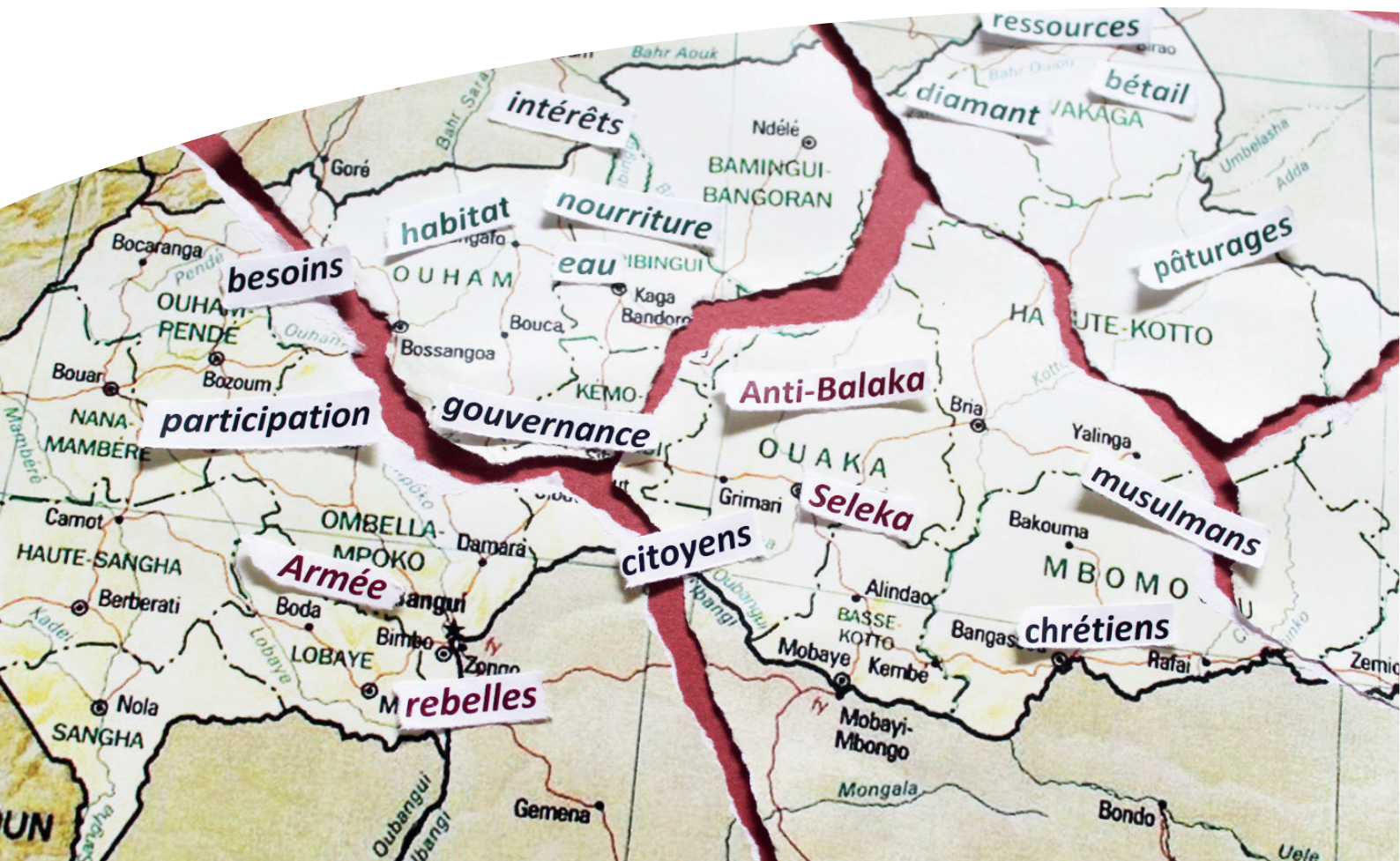




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# PERSISTENCE OF THE CRISIS IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: UNDERSTANDING IN ORDER TO ACT





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**Mr. Friedrich Kramme-Stermose**  
Resident Representative  
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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

**AEF:** French Equatorial Africa

**APRD:** *Armée populaire pour la Restauration de la République et de la Démocratie* (Popular Army for the Restoration of the Republic and Democracy)

**AU:** African Union

**BONUCA:** The United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic

**CAR:** The Central African Republic

**CEMAC:** Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States

**DDRR:** Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration

**DRC:** Democratic Republic of Congo

**ECCAS:** Economic Community of Central African States

**EU:** European Union

**EUMAM:** European Union's Military Advi-

sory Mission in the Central African Republic

**EUFOR:** European Union Forces

**FACA:** *Forces Armées Centrafricaines* (Armed forces of the Central African Republic)

**FOMUC:** *Force Multinational de la CEMAC* (CEMAC Multinational Forces)

**GDP:** Gross domestic product

**IGO:** Intergovernmental Organization

**IMF:** International Monetary Fund

**KNK:** Kwa Na Kwa (work and work only)

**MICOPAX:** Peace Consolidation Mission in the Central African Republic

**MINURCA:** The United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic

**MISCA:** The International Support Mission to the Central African Republic

**NGO:** Non-governmental organization

**OPEX:** external operation

**UN:** United Nations



## INTRODUCTION

The Central African Republic has experienced repeated sociopolitical crises since the tragic death of its founder, Barthélémy Boganda, the year before the country's independence. Today there is a general tendency by foreign observers and analysts who are not conversant with the history of this country, to simply ignore or minimize this aspect of the political background of the CAR. This has resulted in poor understanding of the diachronic and holistic causes of the identity crises, and of the recurrent cycles of violence this country has been experiencing through the years.

It should be recalled that Boganda had not finalized his political vision to turn the Central African Republic into a nation that would truly unite the colonies of the French Equatorial Africa (AEF). His sudden death in a plane crash on 29 March 1959 when the country was still under French colonial rule prevented the people of the Central African Republic from realizing his dream of building a nation that could provide its people with access to food, housing, health and education. Also, he had not had the time to fully develop his political vision or to build a politically savvy, enlightened and dynamic team that could replace him. His sudden death was thus a double blow to the Ubangui people, particularly to the young and inexperienced leaders who were thus forced to inherit a complex situation that was far beyond their capabilities. From that time on, the CAR spiraled into chaos and a long period of instability that has lasted well over 50 years.

The Central African Republic has had limited experience with democratic institutions. Most political institutions in the country are either considered illegitimate or illegal. So, instead of elections, many actors believe that the best way to power is through mutiny, rebellion and military takeovers. Indeed, there have been five coup d'états so far (1965, 1979, 1981, 2003 and 2013). All of this is the direct result of the failure to forge a nation based on the rule of law with a united people, common history and culture. The failure of the judicial system, which is almost nonexistent outside the capital, Bangui, has created an atmosphere of impunity that has led to small scale wars and terrible atrocities. It should be noted that knowing the history of the country is necessary for the understanding of these repeated crises. Resistance to colonial rule and to slave trade by Muslim Peul in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, led to a culture of confrontation and self-defense that can be seen even today in the form of village militias. The Anti-Balaka is simply a manifestation of this culture. To these internal causes, others have been added. These are rivalries, ambitions, geopolitics and geo-strategies to demonstrate economic prowess. Mention should also be made of the influence of France and other emerging petroleum countries within the Central African sub region (Gabon under Bongo, Chad under Idriss Déby and Congo under Sassou). There was some short-lived hope when Faustin Archange TOUADERA was elected president of the Republic in 2016. This hope was quickly dashed by the resurgence of violence and insecurity in the country.

The numerous armed groups in the various parts of the country, which have more or less replaced government armed forces, have contributed to the permanent climate of fear and insecurity.

At the socioeconomic level, the amount needed to provide security, basic social services and life saving food security for some 1.6 million people in 2017 was estimated at 399.5 million US dollars (UNOCHA report, 2016). The discovery of new resources and a chronically weak government have fostered corruption and a ferocious struggle for control over precious stones and other natural resources. Currently, the CAR is twenty times poorer than it was 40 years ago. In the 1970s, the country had 460 industrial enterprises, but today there are barely ten of them. In 1970, the CAR had one university with 1000 students, today, it still has one university with more the 20 000 students. That same year, per capita income stood at more than 400 USD, now it is below 100 USD. Strangely this deteriorating situation does not seem to bother anyone. The various regimes that have succeeded each other every 10 years or so, all seem to be looking to development partners for solutions to the enormous challenges facing the country. All of them have constantly turned to the World Bank, the IMF, the European Union, and the UN or to Paris for solutions to the country's day to day problems.

The takeover by François BOZIZE and his armed rebellion in 2003, and by the Seleka coalition of Michel DJOTODIA in 2013,

were both followed by a sharp increase in rape and other sexual abuses. In 2015, some 693 women were raped, and in the first six months of 2016 alone 501 women, including 81 minors, suffered the same fate. This bleak security situation resulted in 500.000 displaced persons and 70.000 refugees. However, at the end of 2015, there were just 450.000 displaced persons, a number that further dropped by 14.27% by end of September 2016 to 384.884. On the other hand, the number of refugees fleeing to neighboring countries increased by 2.24%, going from 442.069 in July 2015 to 467.960 persons in September 2016. This situation was further aggravated by food insecurity, violation of human rights, enrolment of child soldiers, rape, extrajudicial killings, etc. Since then, the country has been experiencing recurrent multidimensional crises (political, security, economic, social, humanitarian, etc.) with regional and international repercussions.

All the local and international initiatives that have been implemented so far to help the country have not had the expected results. Even the dozen or so international peace-keeping missions to the CAR have failed to bring peace to the country. This publication identifies the various actors, their involvement in the crisis and the factors that have led to these recurrent cycles of violence. It makes recommendations that if implemented, could lead to lasting peace in the Central African Republic.

## **CHAPTER I: ACTORS OF INSTABILITY IN THE CAR: INTEREST AND DISINTEREST IN SUSTAINABLE PEACE**

The conflict in the CAR has been fueled and aggravated by the interests and involvement of internal actors, some foreign countries and international organizations.

### **1- Internal actors: interests, motives, and ability to act or to harm**

The conflict in the CAR involves actors from different sociological backgrounds, often with conflicting or sometimes overlapping political and, or financial interests.

These numerous actors can be classified according to the nature of their activity. These include: political and security actors, military and paramilitary actors, as well as other entities within the political system of the Central African Republic.

#### **a- Political and security actors**

The political and security actors promoting instability in CAR are members of the ruling political class and of the opposition.

The political elite have always had full control and enjoyed almost unlimited political power in the country. These elite include the President of the Republic, Members of Government and officials ranking as: senior officials, functionaries in the central administration, politicized intellectuals and top military brass. Unfortunately, none of these political elite in the CAR has been able to emerge as a leader capable of truly influenc-

ing, motivating or encouraging the citizens of the country to fight for change that can bring about lasting peace. A culture of corruption, impunity and lack of transparency permeates the entire political structure, and has rendered the system incapable of fully carrying out its responsibilities and providing much needed public services to its citizens. Political leaders in the country are incapable of managing crises and political change. All political changes have almost always led to violence, corruption, nepotism, hatred and insecurity.

The intellectual elite in the CAR have been so politicized that they have ceased to be a source of enlightenment and knowledge. They have failed abjectly in their duty to provide the population, the political class and those in power with objective analyses of the nation's social ills, to enable them to understand and find appropriate solutions. The lure of instant gratification, power and riches has blunted the ability of these intellectuals, and made them incapable of proposing creative solutions. Their goals and approaches to politics are completely at variance with the legitimate aspirations of the citizens of the country. Unholy alliances between the various political actors (government and armed opposition) in the country have made matters significantly worse and rendered the search for solutions even more complex.

The political opposition has always tried to act as a counterweight to the government. Unlike the armed opposition, they have always sought to gain power through the ballot box and not through arms. Even though this is to their credit, it must be pointed out

that even this political opposition has its own weaknesses. These shortcomings are often rooted in the selfish desire of most opposition leaders to gain power or put their personal interests at the forefront. Worse, many political parties in the CAR, which identify either with the ruling party or with the opposition, do not have a political platform or a clear and convincing vision for a nation with a united people. All of them have failed to provide a performance framework that can be used to evaluate their actions. This is compounded by their inability to strategically translate their rhetoric into action. The civilian political opposition relies on patronage rather than on its own ability to take initiative. Because of their inability to propose a viable alternative to the ruling party or to develop the political awareness of the people, opposition parties share responsibility for the crisis in the country. As in most African countries, the proliferation of political parties in the CAR reflects the inability of political leaders to develop a vision, or common platform that can bring people together. Most often, people join parties because of their ethnic or tribal relations with the party leaders. During the 2014 and 2015 elections for example, there were 69 duly registered political parties, with 21 others in the process of registration. All these parties were unable to stop the Seleka and its leader DJOTODIA from seizing power through violence and sowing terror in the country. Even after the takeover by the Djotodia regime, the political class continued to promote social tension by pitting communities and religious groups against each other. They identified the Sele-

ka with Muslims and the Anti Balaka with Christians and non Muslims. Some civil society actors and the media, especially foreign media also played a role in promoting such tensions.

**b- Military and paramilitary actors:  
Defense and security forces and armed groups**

There is urgent need to improve the security situation in the Central African Republic, especially with the current surge in violence in Bangui and in the rest of the country. So far, there is no official security force that the State can use to protect the population. The existence of numerous armed groups has made it virtually impossible for the government to build a strong and legitimate security force.

The Security and Defense Forces (SDF) that do exist are paradoxically at the root of political instability and social conflict in the CAR. Many rebel leaders are either former soldiers of the *Forces armées centrafricaines* (the armed force of the Central African Republic - FACA) or members of the political elite. The security problems in the CAR can therefore also be traced to the collapse of the security sector. The FACA is often in conflict with the country's regimes because all presidents have tried at one time or the other to impose their preferred military leader on it, most often from their ethnic group. Should tribalism be a method of governance? Is it not possible to gain trust and political authority simply through the impartial management of the various ethnic and tribal groups in the country? These questions are not naïve. When

you look at the political and security history of the CAR, the answers to these questions become obvious: governing through tribalism and favoritism has had harmful consequences on the population and the country. The armed political opposition, as opposed to the “democratic opposition”, refers to political parties that have their own armies. These are parties with a two-faced policy, one face legal and the other illegal, hidden and always threatening. As far back as 1981, such a party was involved in the bomb attack on a cinema club in Bangui. This party was against the David Dacko regime that was seen as being propped up by France. Again, the *Rassemblement démocratique centrafricain (RDC)* of André Kolingba played a significant role in the rebellions of 1996 and 1997 and in the coup attempt against President Ange-Félix Patasse on the 21 of May 2001. The latter himself helped to set up the *Armée Populaire pour la Restauration de la République et la Démocratie (APRD)*, in 2009, which was led by Jean-Jacques Dema-

fourth, another controversial figure who played a role in Samba-Panza’s transitional government. Also, President Bozize’s party *Kwa na Kwa* (KNK work and work only) supported the Anti Balaka, who were retaliating against the Seleka which had removed him from power in 2013.

Today armed groups are considered a normal part of the political and security set up of the country. Indeed violence is seen as the fastest way to gain power, and politicians have consistently used such armed groups to get to power or, when in power, to fight bandits and other small criminal groups in remote parts of the country. Today, the composition of these groups is changing constantly. They are often made up of self defense militia, highway robbers, and former members of the security and defense force. Armed groups have been at the forefront of numerous rebellions, mutinies and coups in the country. At least 14 armed groups were identified between 2002 and 2017.



Source: [jeuneafrique.com](http://jeuneafrique.com) Centrafrique-JeuneAfrique.com 2013

Before 2012, the armed opposition was not very interested in carving out territories for themselves. This changed with the overthrow of President Bozize in 2013. Taking advantage of the vacuum in some regions of the country, armed groups suddenly started occupying such spaces to consolidate their influence. By 2014, Seleka, Anti-Balaka and the LRA controlled vast territories within the country. In the areas under their control, they performed functions that fell under the purview of the State such as mining, selling diamonds and collecting taxes on agricultural and commercial activities. Cattle breeders were either killed or had their cattle stolen, sometimes as many as 1 500 cattle per week. That is about 750 million FCFA per week or 3 billion per month, or 36 billion per year. They also set up road blocks to extort money from road users, with nearly 40 road blocks on the road between Bangui and Bambari alone. At each road block road users had to pay a toll according to their social standing. Timber trucks moving from the south to the west paid between 150 000 to 200 000 FCFA per truck on such road blocks.

A phenomenon also appeared that can only be described as “unholy or incestuous alliances”. This is the implosion/breakdown, and re-composition/reconstruction of new alliances between factions with sometimes opposing objectives. As a result of internal wrangling, some well-known armed groups like the Seleka and the Anti-Balaka split into factions, and some of these factions linked up with factions from other militia, or with whole militia groups that were being paid by local communities, or business entities to

protect them in the absence of State security institutions. Others even assumed judiciary functions and started acting as *procureurs* and local magistrates, demanding payment for legal services. This further eroded the legitimacy of official State institutions. (National recovery and Peace building Plan 2017-2021)

The priorities of the State and interests of these armed groups are thus frequently at odds. This is made even more complex by the fact that these armed groups are constantly breaking up and forming alliances with breakaway factions from other groups. This has made it difficult to untangle the underlying factors so as to find solutions to end the crisis.

### **c- Other actors**

Under the category “other actors”, we have civil society organizations, religious leaders, sects and the youth. All these actors have at one time or the other, depending on the political regime in place, played a role in the violence in the CAR. Civil society in the CAR is split between those trying to foster a democratic and peaceful society, and those that are merely positioning themselves for well paid and influential administrative and political posts. The many civil society organizations have not been able to suggest viable solutions to the problems facing the people of the Central African Republic. The vast majority of these organizations are based in the capital, Bangui. They have all failed to either promote a change of mentality or to educate the population on democracy and social communication. Many of them have no

solutions to the pressing challenges facing the nation as a whole. These shortcomings might be due to the often heterogeneous sociological backgrounds, and sometimes opposing objectives of these organizations. Many are run by young unemployed graduates, civil servants in search of additional income, public sector employees or dismissed political party leaders or members trying to earn a living. Many see civil society merely as a stepping stone to social, economic or political advancement.

Other actors include the many religious groups and occult circles in the CAR (Rosicrucian, Freemasons, Lion's Club, etc.). These groups have greatly influenced the thinking and actions of people in the CAR. The leaders of these groups or sects and their followers are always fighting those from other sects, during sub regional initiatives, to position themselves and their sects for promotion or appointment to high level government posts. Even though it is difficult to determine the extent to which these sects have influenced the thinking of the people, it is obvious that they have played a significant role in the crisis in the CAR. In fact, their proliferation can be seen as both the cause and effect of the crisis in the country.

Finally the youth: government has not been able to provide them with the type of training and education that can turn them into veritable development actors. The youth today in the CAR are easily manipulated. Since 1990, politicians have taken advantage of the vulnerable youths by recruiting them into militias and diverse armed groups. They easily fall prey to various gurus who recruit

them into armed groups, militias and political movements. (Karako, Balawa, COCORA, COAC, Anti Balaka, Seleka). Also, many of these idle and abandoned youths are turning to crime for a living.

## **2- External actors**

Due to its enclaved location, the CAR shares long and porous boundaries with many other countries. This porosity is further compounded by the close ethnic and cultural relations between people on both sides of such borders (Chad, Sudan, Congo-Kinshasa and Cameroon) and the lack of State institutions in border regions. The conflict in the CAR therefore has direct implications for insecurity in the Central and the West African sub regions. As a matter of fact, foreign actors, both States and international organizations, have always played an outsized role in the history of the Central African Republic. As indicated above, there are two main types of external actors: States (neighboring or not) and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs – continental or international)

### **a- State actors**

Foreign States often intervene officially or unofficially in the internal affairs of the CAR for economic, geopolitical or geostrategic reasons. These include Chad and France and to a lesser extent Cameroon, Congo, Sudan, South Africa and the US.

#### **- Chad**

Chad has intervened most frequently in the various crises in the CAR. This can be attributed to geographic, historic, cultural,

political, economic and security factors. The relationship between Chad and the CAR is several centuries old. But the military and political influence of Chad in the country increased sharply when Idriss Déby came to power in 1990 and started backing rebels in the CAR. Some observers even believe that Chad considers the CAR as its 24<sup>th</sup> region. It was the political and military backing from Idriss Déby ITNO that enabled General François Bozize to overthrow the democratically elected Ange Félix Patassé in 2003. Ten years later, the same Déby turned against him and provided rebel groups with the means to overthrow him. A survey in 2003 by an American firm, Western Geophysical, shows that Chad and the CAR share the same oil reserves in two blocks in Doba, to the north of the CAR near the Doseo and Salamat basins (*Les dynamiques de la crise centrafricaine, Libération*, 10 January 2014; also see "*Aperçu sur le potentiel minier de la République centrafricaine*" by the Central African Republic's ministry of mines, petroleum, energy and water resources). However, many believe that Chad would like to keep the crisis alive in the CAR (but far from the north), so that it can continue to exploit the common oil reserves unchallenged.

Chad also has geopolitical and geostrategic ambitions as it tries to emerge as a sub-regional power in central Africa. This can be seen in the active participation of Chadian troops in support of continental and international forces in the CAR. This can also be explained by the struggle for leadership between Presidents Idriss DEBY of Chad and Denis SASSOU NGUESSO of the Republic

of Congo. This was on display when they disagreed over the road map to resolve the crisis, notably when the Chadian president's proposal was approved by the African Union to grant amnesty to former rebels.

#### **- France**

France has close ties with the CAR because of colonization, the franc zone, defense agreements, military cooperation and the French energy group Areva in the CAR. It played a major political role when it backed heads of state like David DACKO and Barthélemy BOKASSA. It has also participated in many bilateral and multilateral military interventions during the various crises in the CAR. These include "Operation Barracuda" of 1979 that brought down Bokassa and his empire and installed Dacko as president; operations "Furet" and "Almandin I, 2, and 3" alongside the Forces of the Central African Republic (FACA) to protect President Patasse under threat from the 1996 revolt. Others include the EUFOR-Chad/RCA 2007 and then, EUFOR-RCA 2014 (under the banner of the European Union); the *Sangaris* force in 2013 (as part of a UN mission) alongside the International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA). French involvement in efforts to end the crises in the CAR has to a certain extent been beneficial, especially as other countries and the international community which have no strategic interests to protect in the CAR, have generally ignored this country.

France has mostly abandoned its *Françafrique* policy and now purportedly acts only with "the legal backing of the UN and the



legitimacy conferred on it by the AU". But the people of the CAR are doubtful about the alleged humanitarian intentions of France. It would be naïve to think that all the operations in the CAR or elsewhere are for purely altruistic reasons. France's interest in the CAR is not based on some kind of altruism. It may not be underpinned by the *Françafrique* policy, but, as we all know, relations between states are always based on interests. Its interests in the Central African Republic are economic, geostrategic and geopolitical.

Concerning its economic interests, even though the volume of trade between the CAR and France is negligible, and the transnational group Areva which had signed an agreement in 2008 with the CAR to mine Uranium in the east has abandoned its plan to do so, France still has economic interests to protect. These include France Telecom that has been operating since 2007 in Bangui and the Bollore group managing the container terminal port in Bangui. By protecting these economic interests in strategic areas such as communication and commercial shipping, France hopes to maintain links with the CAR at a time when the African continent, especially sub-Saharan French speaking Africa is growing at a fast pace (3.7% in 2016 according to the World Bank) and is being actively courted by countries like Brazil, China, Turkey, etc. Apart from min-

ing interests which often generate a lot of negative publicity, there are rumors of links between French logging companies and local armed groups. This is reminiscent of the Lafarge scandal in which Lafarge was suspected of indirectly financing the Islamic State in Syria in 2013.

The geostrategic interests of France are mostly regional. Because of the central location of the CAR, which is flanked on many sides by countries in which France has interests (Cameroon, Chad, Congo and Gabon which is not far off), any chaos there would provide a base for all armed groups from Chad, Sudan and the RDC that could pose a threat to the entire region, and especially to countries in which France has vast and direct interests.

Finally, France's geopolitical interest is the same as that which has always motivated all major powers: to project power. It is a member of the UN Security Council and wants to maintain its stature as an international power broker. For this reason, France has been actively involved in UN resolutions relating to the CAR, especially Resolution 2127, and in European Union operations. By its actions in the CAR one can see that France wants to keep Central Africa within its sphere of influence. French involvement is thus not as disinterested as it would want the world to believe.



PHOTO/Source: humanite.fr, "CAR: Djotodia gone, crisis still to be resolved", 2013

### ***Sudan and South Sudan***

The armed conflict in Sudan with the rebellion of John Garang has caused thousands of refugees to flee to the CAR, further worsening the security situation there. Indeed, it was the involvement of rebel fighters from Sudan and Chad that helped Michel Djotodia to seize power.

### ***Uganda***

Uganda is facing a security threat of its own from the LRA that has its base in the south of the CAR. Ugandan armed forces have therefore been deployed in the southeast of the CAR alongside American Special Forces to fight the LRA.

### ***South Africa***

South Africa is not found in the central Africa sub-region. However, it wants to play a role as a continental power by helping to resolve

conflicts on the entire continent. Currently it has a contingent of 400 soldiers in Bangui as part of a 2007 bilateral agreement with the CAR to train military personnel. Again, when President Deby withdrew the Chadian armed forces that had been protecting Bozize in September 2012, the latter turned to South Africa for protection. The fall of Bozize caused political tension to the extent that President Jacob Zuma pulled diplomatic strings to get Djotodia removed.

### **b - Intergovernmental organizations involved in the crisis**

Since 1997, the CAR has had thirteen peacekeeping missions, earning the nickname "land of peacekeepers".

The IGOs involved in the crisis can be grouped into two categories: extra-continental and intra-continental.

• ***Extra-continental initiatives in the crisis in the CAR***

By extra-continental we mean peacekeeping missions by the United Nations or by multinational forces from outside Africa, such as the European Union.

UN missions include: the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA, 1998-2000), the United Nations Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA 2000-2010), the United Nations Integrated Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA, 2009) and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) that replaced MISCA in 2014.

European Union missions include: European Union Forces (EUFOR) TCHAD/ RCA from 2007 to 2009, EUFOR-RCA from 2014 to 2015, EUMAM-RCA (European Union Military Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic) since 2015, EUTM (European Union Training Mission in the Central African Republic) since 2016.

All these forces have been of immense help and have provided much needed assistance

• **African initiatives in the CAR**

These include: The Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB from 1997 to 1998), CEN-SAD from 2001 to 2003, FOMUC (under the CEMAC) from 2002 to 2008, MICOPAX (under the auspices of ECCAS) from 2008 to 2013 and MISCA (international mission but led by Africa) from 2013 to 2014.

According to Roland Marchall there has been some ambivalence about the involve-

ment of countries of the region in the crisis. The Multilateral Forces in the Central African Republic (FOMUC) failed to act as a buffer between the army of President Patasse and Francois Bozize's fighters. After Bozize seized power, African countries transformed this force into MICOPAX under ECCAS. This force sat passively as the Seleka took over power in 2013 and began to commit exactions on the population. There was no coordination or even cooperation between CEMAC and ECCAS.

Unlike FOMUC, MICOPAX had three components: military, police and civilian component. It had as mandate to consolidate peace, coordinate humanitarian aid, ensure human rights, assist in the peace process through promoting dialogue and national reconciliation, and help in the organization of elections. When Seleka went on the offensive in 2012, MICOPAX convened an extraordinary summit in Ndjamena on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 2012 which ordered MICOPAX to act as a buffer force, along with an additional Chadian military unit in Damara. This summit also approved ceasefire agreements that were never enforced for two reasons: the presence of a powerful contingent of Chadian soldiers whose conflicting objectives have been explained above, and the inability of ECCAS to enforce sub-regional decisions and to even function normally. This inability to operate normally can be seen in its budget woes. Indeed, the annual budget of MICOPAX was estimated at about 30 million Euros, with about 50% of this amount expected from the EU (in equipment and logistics) and 20% from contributions by

Member States. Member States of course failed to meet their commitments and it became difficult to pay salaries and fund the civilian component.

The African-led Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA) was deployed in collaboration with the United Nations and ECCAS. This African initiative was intended to help the transition government of the Central African Republic in its effort to provide security in the country and to support a "brother country abandoned by the international community". Initially scheduled for the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2013, the deployment finally took place on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December 2013, confirming Mathias Éric OWONA's assertion

that acting in a timely manner has always been a strategic challenge for central Africa. On deployment, the CAR was backed by 2000 soldiers from the French "Sangaris" force and 600 soldiers from the EU's EUFOR force. Although one of the most significant achievements of MISCA was securing the corridor between Bangui and Cameroon, the lifeline of the Central African Republic's economy, it failed to reconcile opposing factions in the country and to stop the killings and exactions against civilians. This failure can also be explained by the fact that this force had only 7000 soldiers (all forces combined), to cover a surface area of 623 000 km<sup>2</sup> in conflict or post conflict.



PHOTO/Source: grotius, fr, history-lesson-understanding the Central African crisis.

## **CHAPTER II: DYNAMIICS OF THE CONFLICT IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: A STATE IN FRAGILITY!**

We will start with an observation which, though obvious, is still questionable: the Central African Republic is a State. From a legal point of view, it is a State because it has its own territory, its own population, and its own government even though the latter might not always be stable or legitimate. However, its status as a State is often questioned because of the absence of a fea-

ture that would make it a State in the true sense of the word: sovereignty. For it to be a sovereign State, it must have the requisite and legitimate physical force. Unfortunately, a closer look at the security situation of the country shows that the government does not have monopoly over the use of legitimate violence. This is so because many other actors causing instability in the country also have the capacity to use such force. This is the reason why we will examine the factors perpetuating the crisis in the CAR and make useful suggestions that can help to resolve it and consolidate lasting peace.



PHOTO/Source: FES expert, Bangui, 2013

## **1- Factors perpetuating the crisis: is the CAR a “failed” State or a “State in Fragility”?**

The Republic of Central Africa could have been described as a “failed” State – an unflattering description by the way – if since its independence in 1960 it had been able to at least function even a bit normally. In 2015, the OECD proposed a new multidimensional fragility framework with a working model based on five dimensions: violence, justice, institutions, economic fundamentals and resilience. Depending on the crisis, political, economic, military, ideological or religious factors, may be the main cause or may even merge to give specificity to a crisis. For the CAR, all these factors seem to be in play.

### **a- The internal vulnerability of the country**

One of the major challenges faced by Djotodia was providing security and restoring the authority of the State throughout the country. Lack of the necessary human resources and absence of State institutions in some regions made it impossible to provide even basic social services. In fact, many of such services were being provided by humanitarian and religious organizations. Humanitarian organizations support State social structures and provide assistance to the population in about 50% of the country (UNOCHA report). Some years back, the president of the Republic was unable to travel to some parts of the country: the entire northern part of the country was in the hands of armed groups that considered themselves “sovereign”. Being under an embargo imposed by UN Resolution 2127, the government is not allowed

to buy arms. Unfortunately, weapons are circulating freely among armed groups that by their very nature defy such resolutions. The reluctance of the international community to lift the embargo tied the hands of the Samba-Panza’s transition government and even today remains a challenge to Touadera. Because of this state of fragility, it will not be easy for the people of the Central African Republic to rebuild the country on their own, especially as the adult literacy rate is just 37% (UNICEF report, 2016). This has been compounded by social disharmony and the chaos that exists in the education sector with its numerous and greedy actors. As the saying goes, “a hungry belly has no ears” and thus no memory!

### **b- Splintering of armed groups and worsening of intercommunity tensions**

Although there is relative stability in Bangui, the security situation in the rest of the country is very poor. There is widespread and growing criminal activity to the north, increased intercommunity tension to the south and a proliferation of armed groups to the east of the country. About 14 armed groups are currently controlling nearly 80% of the territory.

The Seleka coalition which was formed in 2012 to overthrow the Bozize regime split into three factions just three months after the coup d’état when a dispute arose between the *Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC)* and the *Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique (UPC)*, two of the more powerful factions of the former Seleka, over control of the mining and coffee growing areas.

Exactions and looting allegedly by the UPC (mostly Peul) in some southern and eastern parts of the country fueled an anti-Peul sentiment. To retaliate, local self defense groups were organized, sometimes through unnatural alliances with other groups, to carry out targeted attacks against Peul communities. An example of such an attack is the one on Bangassou on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 2017 that killed about a hundred people. Punitive expeditions against the Peul and Muslims were considered by some warlords as an act of expiation, or an obligation to chase from the Central African Republic “foreign Muslims” who were seen as the incarnation of evil.

The escalation of attacks following the fragmentation of armed groups has resulted in a sharp increase in the number of killings of civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. Today, very few NGOs will venture into some provinces. Some humanitarian organizations have even suspended operations in the north of the country because of the increased violence there. The constant splintering of armed groups has rendered peace negotiations even more complex and made Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration, and Rehabilitation (DDRR) more difficult. The failure to reunite some armed groups by mediators like the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) which tried in 2016 to bring the factions of the former Seleka back together, shows the extent of the rift between such armed groups. However, the recent attacks against Muslims have facilitated the rapprochement between the UPC and the FPRC.

### **c- Absence of a collective memory**

The absence of a collective memory is in fact the result of the failure to take advantage of peacekeeping initiatives and of the recommendations of the numerous forums, seminars and workshops organized to seek ways to kick-start the never ending peace process. One of such initiatives was the forum in Bangui from May 4<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> 2015 which had as objective to create the dynamics necessary for a successful peace process and national reconciliation. In other words, the forum was intended to moderate the greed of the actors of the conflict and to reconcile the population with the regime in power. Unfortunately, the Samba-Panza transition regime was mostly characterized by opportunistic behaviors at the Presidency with its hordes of advisers, the National Transition Council and in the Government. The main innovation by her initiative was the possibility given to delegates from the provinces to make the voices of people in the hinterlands heard by national authorities. Delegates from the eastern provinces, for example, were able to ask the government to take measures to neutralize the Basse-Kotto Seleka rebels who were sowing terror in their provinces. But, for armed groups in general, their demands and intransigence, particularly their various demands for guarantees against legal action or social reintegration were based on their strength on the ground.

The recommendations of the forum had the merit of creating relatively conducive security and political conditions under Samba-Panza for the elections that followed. The

agreement between the transition government and armed groups on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Rehabilitation (DDRR) and absorption into government forces, was based on objective criteria: individual (not determined by membership in a given group), progressive, after vetting (no criminal past) and professionalism.

### **- Possible future scenarios for the Central African Republic**

The manner in which the crises and conflicts in the CAR have been analyzed, understood and managed in the past cannot bring about lasting peace in the country. In most cases, the need to strengthen the resilience of the communities has been ignored by United Nations initiatives, humanitarian organizations and international NGOs. Indeed, a large share of the funds received in the name of the crisis in the Central African Republic is not spent on efforts to consolidate peace and build social harmony at grassroots level. The crisis in the Central African Republic has enriched many external actors. When programming, little or no provision is made for the use of local and national forces, energies or intelligence. Most political, security and development objectives focus on the priorities of the State and its development partners, and no thought is given to efficient integration. Because of these shortcomings, there are three possible future scenarios for the crisis in the CAR:

- **Worst case scenario:** The conflict factors in the CAR will persist and the State will continue to be weak and lack the coercive force to respond to the proliferation of armed groups. It will also continue to be unable to

lower intercommunity tensions and to build a sustainable society both at individual and collective levels.

- **Median scenario:** The Central African Republic will continue to be monitored and kept on life support by the UN and foreign development partners.

- **Best case scenario:** There will be a sudden and collective reawakening. The people will start promoting new political, economic and social ideals for their country (think ahead to reinvent the future), to enable it to emerge from the never-ending crises that has been bedeviling them for decades, and to make their country a truly independent and sovereign nation. Such a national reawakening will require a change of mentality, attitudes, governance approaches and strategies. It is only after such changes are made, that the Central African Republic can become a truly independent, sovereign and stable nation.

## **2- Recommendations**

Here are few recommendations that can guide some actors of the crisis in the Central African Republic. The various recommendations are directed at specific actors:

### **a- To the government to enable it to restore State authority throughout the country**

- **Reform of the FACA: a must for the government**

International partners, the government, armed groups and the population see the army as indispensable, and this is the only



area where they all agree (Thierry Vircoulon). It is not for nothing that the army is the crucible of national integration in other countries. For the army to become a factor in national unity, a number of difficult decisions must be taken: incorporate some militias into the armed forces, provide the army with good training and lift the embargo on arms. Who benefits from the embargo anyway? It is certainly not the government and the FACA. How can a government succeed in fighting against or even negotiate with armed groups if it cannot buy and own arms? After these three conditions are met, the army of the Central African Republic will need to be rebuilt and made more professional. Care should be taken to include men and women from all parts of the country. After training, this professional army should immediately be deployed to all parts of the country to prevent rebel armed groups from occupying them.

• ***Reform the judicial system and enforce court rulings***

Reforming the judicial system will require massive and sustained injection of funds. The country will have to build the necessary physical infrastructure from scratch and train judicial officials. Even though trials for crimes started in 2015 and have continued under President Touadera, their painfully slow pace is evidence of the numerous challenges facing the courts, especially in the area of victim and witness protection (Amnesty International). These have led to cases being dismissed and also to the release of well-known and hardened criminals. Efforts must

be made to enforce sentences against those found guilty of crimes. The country must also apply the provisions of the Oslo accord and accelerate the setting up of the special criminal court.

- improve the profile of those in charge of implementing the DDRR.
- Periodically evaluate the mandate of the international missions.

It will be necessary, in collaboration with external partners, to evaluate the work of international missions (especially MINUSCA), so as to be in a position to take corrective measures where necessary, to avoid conflict between the objectives of the government and those of the population with the priorities of international partners.

- Set up a coordination and funding body that will pool financial resources that could be managed collectively by development partners. Such a body should be put in place as soon as possible (National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan PNCR 2017-2021).
- Set up State institutions in all regions of the country.

Redeploy administrative services in all parts of the country to gradually restore State authority. Upgrade education facilities in all remote areas to help train the many under educated youths, and to prevent them from being recruited by armed groups. The State should also endeavor to upgrade basic services that can provide alternatives to the population living in areas plagued by inter-community violence.

**b- To political parties**

They must work for the general interest and educate the public on the importance of gaining power through elections. Political parties must stop supporting local militias and should strongly condemn exactions by such groups.

**c- To civil society**

It must boost its technical and operational capacities through training. It should also endeavor to mobilize its own resources so that it can speak with authority when proposing solutions, for a peaceful society in the Central African Republic.

**d- The international and African communities should**

- Properly vet, train and manage the staff in charge of peacekeeping operations to avoid abuses such as rape or drug trafficking by some army contingents. The good reputation of these forces is crucial for the smooth implementation of humanitarian projects, particularly now that MINUSCA is increas-

ingly facing attacks from rebel fighters and criticisms from the population (UNOCHA, 2016). The size of MINUSCA and the funds for its operation need to be increased to enable the Mission to fight armed groups.

- Work more closely with the government to disarm groups and evaluate the work of international missions. Care should be taken to always put the interests of the population first.

- Coordinate mediation efforts and harmonize the positions of the various mediators (Angola, Chad, Congo, Gabon, the Catholic community of Sant' Egidio), on the future of warlords, rebel fighters and the return of former heads of State.

- Continue to finance structural reforms and investment projects both at national and local levels (while the State is being built).

- The AU, ECCAS and CEMAC should not tire of mobilizing aid from members States and assisting the population. They should also help to definitively "demobilize" armed factions.

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### About this publication

In spite of its abundant wealth in natural resources such as diamonds, gold, uranium, coffee, forest products, etc. the Central African Republic has been gripped in the throes of repeated security crises since its independence. Instead of investing in the wellbeing of the country's population, a large portion of its resources is spent on repeated coup d'états, armed rebellions, and intercommunity and interreligious violence. The consequences are multidimensional: in addition to the regrettable loss of lives, the economy has collapsed, there is constant misery, and social relations have suffered, leading to a vicious cycle of mistrust, violence and the massive displacement of the population both in and out of the country. The Central African Republic is located in a very unstable region. With a surface area of 623 000 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 6 616 000 inhabitants, the country is hemmed in by six different countries: Chad, Cameroon, the

two Congos and the two Sudans. It shares porous boundaries with countries that are experiencing security problems of their own which sometimes overflow into its territory. To examine ways that can bring about lasting peace, FES commissioned research on the political economy of the crisis and organized a series of security dialogues in April that led to this publication titled "Persistence of the Crisis in the Central African Republic, Understand in order to act". To properly understand the reasons for the recurrence of the crisis, the analysis has focused on two aspects: the dynamics of the actors involved and the factors that are causing the crisis to last for so long. The first analysis examines the typology of actors and clearly identifies their interests, which oscillate between interest and disinterest. At the end of this study, one can say without any doubt that responsibility for the crisis is evenly shared by all the actors.

