



Central African Republic (CAR) Conflict Insight

Situation analysis

Since gaining independence from France in 1960, the Central African Republic (CAR) has been unable to achieve a desirable measure of stability, security and development. Its economy is affected by a legacy of misdirected macroeconomic policies, unequal distribution of income and frequent factional fighting between the government and its opponents. Its largely unskilled workforce and poor transportation network, among others, imposes additional constraints on the country's quest for sustainable development. Following a spate of military coups after independence, the country's political system has witnessed several autocratic rulers.

In the 1990s, calls for a democratic system of governance led to the first multi-party elections, won by Ange-Félix Patassé in 1993. During his tenure, Patassé faced several military coups and army mutinies, leading to deep ethnic divisions in the military and across the country. Patassé was overthrown by General Francois Bozizé during a coup that took place in 2003. Continued civil unrest led to the 2004 Bush War, which ended with the signing of a peace agreement in 2007. However, festering ethnic grievances instigated another successful coup in 2013.

ABOUT THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide analysis and recommendations to assist the African Union (AU), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Member States and Development Partners in decision-making and in the implementation of peace and security-related instruments.

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POPULATION	GDP PER CAPITA (PPP)	LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH (YEARS)	HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX (HDI)	NEIGHBOURS	RECS
4.9 million	\$587	51.5	Index: 0.352 Rank: 188/188	Chad Sudan South Sudan DRC Congo-Brazzaville Cameroon	ECCAS ICGLR

Figure 1: Country profile and demographicsⁱ

Michael Djotodia, the leader of the Sélékaⁱⁱ, overthrew General Francois Bozizé and assumed power and installed himself as president of CAR in March 2013.

Involving several militia groups, the civil war has led to the death of thousands of people and the destruction of property across the whole country. Since the outbreak of conflict in 2013, CAR has undergone several interim and transitional governments. The Libreville Agreement of the same year that was signed between the Séléka and the new government for a coalition of national unity failed due to the dissatisfaction with the distribution of power. With elections only organized three years later in 2016, CAR found itself on the brink of instability and collapse, with the current government overwhelmed by the herculean task of terminating rebel and militia insurgencies, making progress with the peace talks, and implementing a Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation (DDRR) programme for the militias in the country.

The implementation of the peace agreement remains challenging given the existing religious and ethnic fault-lines in the country as well as the continuous violence between warring factions and the emergence of new militia groups.

Causes of the conflict

Weakness of the state

The weakness of the state is manifested in the non-existence of civilian control over the security sector and the inadequacy of security and public welfare provisions for citizens of CAR. Widespread criminality, a vicious cycle of violence and instability, and the lack of adequate mechanisms for criminal prosecution have further exacerbated the security situation as well as the level of impunity on the ground. Due to high rates of

unemployment, younger citizens are increasingly taking up arms and joining militias/rebel groups. This explains why the central government is extremely limited in asserting control over its territorial jurisdiction beyond the capital; leaving the security sector grossly incapable of efficiently combatting the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The government is also unable to eliminate the criminal networks actively engaged in banditry, illegal trade and rebellion, especially in the northern parts of the country.

Ethnic and religious divisions

A 2014 UN enquiry described the situation in the CAR as an ethnic and religious conflict after the revelation that over 99% of Muslims in Bangui had been killed or fled, invariably leading to a major decline in the Muslim population of the country.ⁱⁱⁱ The inadequate inclusivity of ethnic minorities in governance and religious institutions underlies the conflicts that have besieged CAR since its independence. Unfortunately, political elites also use religious and ethnic identities to fuel narratives of discrimination and incite violence along religious and ethnic lines. This was the case at the height of the civil war in 2014 when Christians and Muslims engaged each other in attacks and counter-attacks with heavy casualties sustained on both sides.

In 2013, members of the Muslim Séléka group frequently launched indiscriminate attacks on the Christian population by looting, raping and killing. In 2014, Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a report that illustrated how Christian militias slaughtered and lynched thousands of Muslim civilians. The situation has made it difficult to forge inclusive and functional political systems desired by citizens. The routine exploitation of ethnic and religious divisions in the CAR has frequently led to political instability, with deep mistrust and ethnic divisions in the army having inescapably led to several coups.

ⁱ Sources: Human Development Index (HDI) 2016.

ⁱⁱ One of the major actors in the Central African Republic conflict, the name of the group translates to alliance.

ⁱⁱⁱ Institute for Global Chance. (4th October, 2017). Ethno-Religious Violence in the Central African Republic.

Economic mismanagement

CAR's economic policy is based on attracting foreign and domestic investment, with the aim to reduce poverty and increase per capita income. To achieve this, CAR relies heavily on income derived from its natural resources and agriculture, particularly timber, gold and diamonds. However, in spite of the abundance of natural resources, a lack of effective development planning as well as weak institutions have rendered economic and social development unsuccessful.

According to the World Bank, the mishandling of the country's public finances slowed economic growth from previous estimates of 5% to 4.44% in 2016, making CAR one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. Deeply-entrenched corruption among senior government officials compounds the country's dire economic situation; a development that has, in turn, created equally deep resentment towards the government to the extent that it is increasingly becoming easier to recruit militants and armed gangs from a large pool of poor and disenfranchised youth.

Social disparities between the north and south

The populations in the north of the country, who often face marginalization due to social disparities, are particularly vulnerable to recruitment into rebel movements. They experience low or non-payment of salaries, high unemployment, or the absence of basic services such as schools and hospitals in their communities. There is also a dearth of basic public amenities and infrastructure in the northeast where the writ of the government is limited in comparison to other parts of the country.

Popular narratives suggest that the main cause of the current crisis in the CAR is religious sectarianism. However, these disputes are closely linked to disparities over resource distribution coupled with weak governance, marginalization and a robust, informal trade in small arms and light weapons. It is widely reported that the proliferation of armed groups across sections of the country in the north is also partly enabled by active external support received from Chad and Sudan as well as the impact of external conflicts in border areas (Darfur to the north and the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army in the south).^{iv}

Actors

Séléka

The Séléka movement, which is mostly made up of Muslim militia, first came into the limelight in 2013. At the time of its establishment, the Séléka consisted of three armed factions: (a) the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP fundamentals), (b) Convention patriotique du salut du Kodro (CPSK), and (c) Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR). The main goals of the alliance were to seek comprehensive political reform after one decade of the regime led by President Francois Bozizé Yangouvonda (2003-2013) and to raise the festering issues of discrimination and marginalization against the northern population. It is worth noting that Michel Djotodia failed to address socio-economic development in 2013, the country was facing – basically the basis for overthrowing the government.

In the aftermath of the successful coup, the priorities of the group were how to integrate its high-ranking members into the newly established government and army. They also expressed interest in investigating the rampant cases of gross - but selective - human rights violations targeted at the north but also those across the country. This, however, never materialized as they proceeded to commit the same violations after assuming power. Following pressure from the international community for atrocities and human rights abuses committed by its members, one of the first actions taken by the new administration was to disband the Séléka in September 2013. The group reinvented itself and came to be known as the ex-Séléka, and the different factions continued to perpetuate violent acts until the elections in 2016.

After the 2016 elections, factions of the Séléka movement began to express frustration that they had not been adequately accommodated in the new government despite the electoral promises made by the winning candidate President Faustin-Archange Touadéra. The early romance with the new administration was short-lived as Séléka members quickly returned to violence.

The ex-Séléka recruited new members by promising combatants financial gains in the form of looting, but also from money to be gained under the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme. In 2015, IRIN estimated the number of armed ex-Séléka

^{iv} Debos, M. (2008). Fluid loyalties in a regional crisis: Chadian 'ex-liberators' in the Central African Republic. *African Affairs*, 107(427), 225-241.

fighters at 12,000, with 1,714 stationed in camps in Bangui, the capital.^v Because they also control large areas across the country, including strategic roads in the north and the east, and remain well equipped with weapons and ammunition, there is a strong chance that the militia can launch another attempt at a coup as they did in 2013.

The Séléka's rise and strength has benefitted immensely from the external support they continue to receive from two neighbouring countries - Chad and Sudan. Both countries are known to be sources of mercenaries and fighters, and also financial as well as logistical support.^{vi} Chad supports the group because it needs to secure its borders and prevent a situation where armed opposition groups fighting against the government in Ndjamená would use CAR as a staging post to launch attacks. Furthermore, Chadian business networks are known to enjoy lucrative relationships with rebel groups in control of the oil fields located in southern Chad. To a degree, also, Ndjamená would prefer to have a neighbour that shares similar ideological and religious beliefs. Sudan, on the other hand, is a key supplier of logistical, political and military assistance to the Séléka. For instance, the country provided military hardware, fighters from the ranks of pro-Khartoum paramilitary groups, and military training to the Séléka during the early stage of its rebellion. Their interest, much like in the case of Chad, was to ensure that instability in the CAR did not spill over into its territory.

Anti-Balaka Militia

The anti-Balaka militia, which means 'anti-machete', is another prominent actor in the conflict in the CAR. The group dates back to the mid-2000s and was created with the unification of local Christian militias and former armed security forces that remain loyal to ousted President Bozizé. During its early stages, anti-Balaka militias were active in specific regions fighting highway bandits and armed pastoralists. Initially composed of mixed membership drawn from Christians, Muslims and animists, the group became dominated by Christian militias by 2013. The Christian-dominated anti-Balaka had the initial goal of self-defence against the onslaught of the Séléka rebels. However, due to deep-seated socio-economic and religious grievances in the communities they operated in, their core goals shifted during the second half of 2013 to one that was patently political: to bring former President Bozizé back from exile to resume

his role in national politics. Currently, the interest of the group is in ensuring that Muslims who dominate the commercial and business sectors and are prominent members or sponsors of the Séléka should leave the country on claims that they are Arabs and foreigners.

IRIN estimated that the number of anti-Balaka militia totalled 75,000 in 2015; but this figure is disputed by other sources that estimate their membership to be far less, at around 20,000.^{vii} The anti-Balaka were able to grow their numbers through the recruitment of young men who had, directly or indirectly, been victims of the Séléka, and the large pool of the unemployed. By December 2013, they had gained enough resources and personnel to stage a major attack in Bangui, allegedly financed by the Front for the Return of the Constitutional Order (FROCCA), which was established by President Bozizé in August 2013. Rather than operate with a centralized command structure, the anti-Balaka militia is a loose coalition; one in which leadership is decentralized with respective local commandants having specific areas under their control.

The group also maintains close ties to factions in the Central African Armed Forces (FACA), the presidential guard and Gendarmerie. Since the 2016 general elections, several more brutal factions of the anti-Balaka militia have emerged in the eastern and central parts of the country, mostly targeting Muslim civilians and UN peacekeepers. The latter have been able to incite a call for war against foreigners by instilling the fear of Muslims among local communities.

Return, Reclamation and Rehabilitation (3R)

Otherwise known as 3R, this group came into existence in 2015 and mainly operates in the north-western parts of CAR, where it mostly attacks communities suspected of supporting the anti-Balaka militias. The 3R group, which mostly consists of Muslim cattle herders, was created to protect the minority Puehl Muslim population from the anti-Balaka militia. Their claim to be protecting the civilian Muslim population has however been questioned as some have claimed that the real interest of the group is to profit from the crisis in the country.^{viii}

The group has managed to mobilize and arm hundreds of fighters as well as taken over control of territories near

^v IRIN. (January 2015). CAR data - a crisis in numbers.

^{vi} Weyns, Y., Hoex, L., Hilgert, F., & Spittaels, S. (2014). Mapping Conflict Motives: The Central African Republic. International Peace Information Service, 21.

^{vii} IRIN. (January 2015). CAR data - a crisis in numbers.

^{viii} Aljazeera. (2016). Newly formed 3R rebel group inflicts horrors in CAR: UN.

the Cameroonian border. It is evident that it has the capacity to quickly expand its attacks in the neglected northwest of the country. One of the tactics often employed by the 3R is to rustle cattle to gain funds for its agenda as well as to purchase arms and weapons from the black market. It is also responsible for hundreds of civilian deaths, the burning of villages, and the raping of young girls and women. It is estimated that the group has been responsible for the displacement of at least 30,000 people, and for several attacks on UN peacekeepers.

The Government

Since 2014, the government of CAR has created two ministries responsible for national reconciliation efforts and national mediation. Initially funded by Congo-Brazzaville, they were created by the Bangui National

Forum in an attempt to institutionalize reconciliation efforts. Although the government has enjoyed the support of the armed forces in the war against the militias, it has so far not been able to comprehensively reform the security services to provide adequate protection to its citizens; this has created concerns among citizens that the slow pace of national reconciliation, as well as the rehabilitation of the criminal justice system, might allow impunity to thrive across the country. For the armed forces, the difficulty in reducing violence across the country is due to the operational obstacles it continues to face as well as the lack of resources and trust from citizens. Finally, there is an influential constituency within and outside of government that fails to recognize that reconciliation with the country's Muslim population is a key route to national peace and stability.

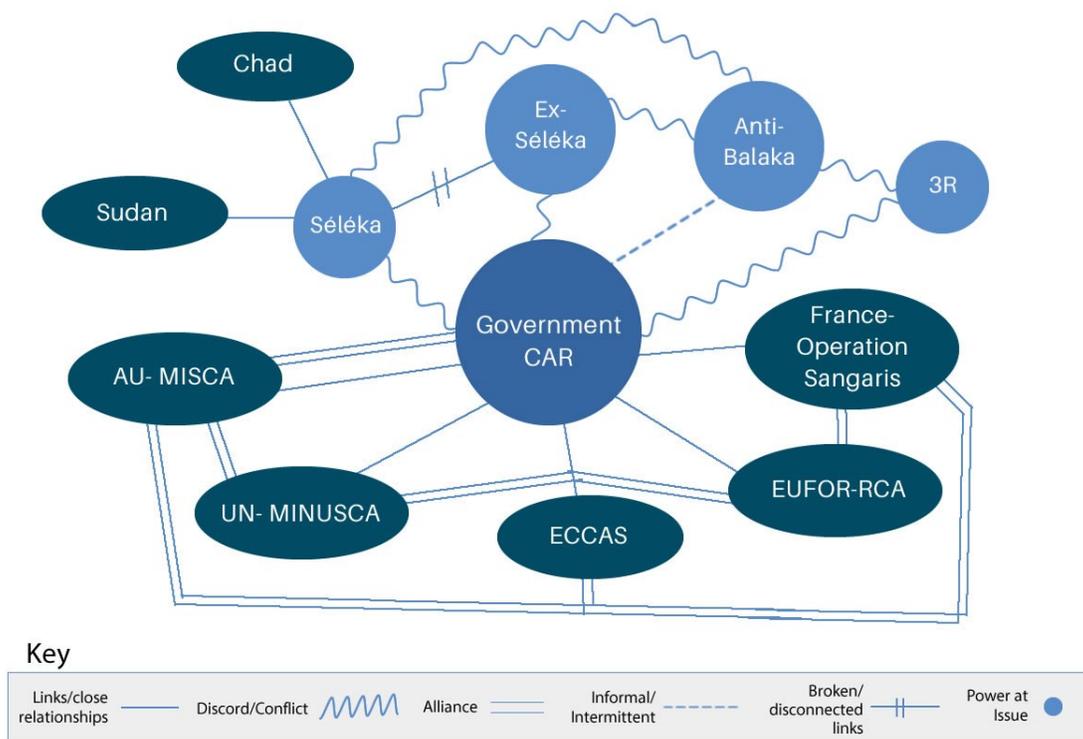


Figure 2: Actors mapping

Conflict dynamics

The rise of the Séléka rebel group and its unfulfilled quest to control the state in 2013 was the turning point for the more recent phase of the conflict in the CAR. In that year, the group accused President Bozizé of renegeing on the terms of the 2007 peace agreement which was supposed to provide armed rebels with jobs and money if they laid down their weapons. The group launched its insurgency in December 2012 and rapidly advanced to the capital, Bangui, capturing numerous cities along the way. By March 2013, the group had pushed out Bozizé's government after numerous clashes and deaths. Their leader, Michel Djotodia, declared himself president and dissolved the government after Bozizé fled to Cameroon. Paradoxically, the Séléka coalition began to fall apart as Djotodia began to consolidate himself in power by dismissing and/or arresting several of the group's leaders.

On 5 December 2013, the anti-Balaka militia launched an orchestrated and brutal attack on Bangui that not only led to the death of approximately 465 people but also changed the tide of the conflict. This attack was in response to what the group claimed to be human rights abuses and atrocities, including killings, violence, rape, arson and looting committed by the Séléka faction after the overthrow of the government. With the Séléka faction consisting of primarily Muslims attacking Christians and the anti-Balaka movement consisting of Christians attacking Muslims, the conflict quickly digressed to the point that the civilian population started taking up arms against each other. At its peak, there were warnings of a situation of genocide if measures were not taken to douse tensions between the two major factions. Although the goals and motivations of the two groups differ considerably, they have both routinely targeted civilians they perceived to be supporting their opponents. Similarly, both have attacked the UN - the global body mandated by the Security Council with the task of ensuring the protection of civilians and the restoration of law and order.

By 2014, the intensity of the civil war had increased, causing destruction and an unprecedented humanitarian crisis across the country. This new phase was largely due to cycles of violence and retribution between the ex-Séléka after their reinvention and the anti-Balaka groups. According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), between January and September 2014 an estimated 800 acts of politically motivated violence occurred, resulting in over 3,000 fatalities mainly in the Muslim and Peuhl communities in Bangui and the west

of CAR. ACLED also reported that since the emergence of the anti-Balaka, 128 battles had been fought with the Séléka by the end of 2015. As of June 2018, UNOCHA reports that an estimated 653,890 people are internally displaced and 2.5 million people are in dire need of humanitarian assistance.

In May 2015, the conflicting parties signed a comprehensive Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation (DDRR) programme facilitated by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). However, the programme has so far lagged, partly due to poor funding. Currently, only 1,180 ex-Séléka members are located in three cantonment sites whereas none have participated from the anti-Balaka or other armed groups. In December 2016, the Mission supported a new dialogue between 11 of the 14 armed groups in the country as part of an ongoing effort to disarm the factions. After President Faustin-Archange Touadéra assumed office, he engaged in talks with both the ex-Séléka and the anti-Balaka militias to renegotiate and develop a new DDRR agreement. Several of the armed groups are willing to engage in DDRR, but other militias remain sceptical and have imposed certain preconditions such as their integration into governing institutions and security apparatus in the country.

The 2016 elections offered another opportunity for the establishment of a new government that would put the country back on a path towards peace and stability. Following the elections, several leaders from both the anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka were included in the political process as a compromise for peace. These leaders expected newly elected President Touadéra to appoint a Muslim as Prime Minister to showcase the commitment of his government to establish a representative government. Instead, he appointed a Christian, Simplicie Sarandji, as Prime Minister.

Although the capacity of both the anti-Balaka and the ex-Séléka has considerably diminished at the national level, they have reinvented and reintegrated themselves in the rural areas. Members of the ex-Séléka continue to maintain substantial control over large areas of the country while the disarmament process slowly grinds along, with only a few members of the militia group having come forward to surrender their weapons and enter the DDRR programme. Notably, in January 2018, the government rejected a faction of the ex-Séléka who wanted to be integrated and join the police and gendarmerie forces due to disagreement over the terms. One interesting development is the first prosecution for

atrocious crimes occurred in 2018 with the conviction of former anti-Balaka leader General Andilo, who was sentenced to life in prison. Further sentences were handed out by the government to members of both the ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka militias as well as new rebel groups.

By November 2017, the violence in the country had slightly calmed down despite intermittent incidences of sectarian violence. However, 2018 brought more fragmentation and the rise of several new armed militias, with clashes between these groups particularly in the north-eastern parts. One of the biggest challenges the country faces is that militias still control large swaths of land across the country and are capable of causing havoc in major towns and cities, including the capital, Bangui, as has been recorded in 2018.

Scenarios

Best case scenario

The best possible scenario will be one in which political inclusivity is mainstreamed as an integral part of any reform agenda. Inclusivity would also require the integration of militia groups in the new government as a way of addressing marginalization. As such, the best case scenario should focus on ending religious and ethnic violence as the first step towards closing ranks between the Christian and Muslim communities. Furthermore, the reform should pay attention to DDR - one in which armed groups faithfully surrender their weapons and undergo rehabilitation and resettlement. The DDR process would need to move at a fast pace and in a manner that is transparent and based on trust. One of the banes of previous DDR exercises is the fact that the militia groups do not trust the government, and vice versa. It is only when these key priorities are addressed that CAR can return to the path of integrated, long-term and sustainable peacebuilding and development.

Worst case scenario

The worst case scenario is inevitable if an all-encompassing political reform agenda stalls and the exclusion of militias in the new central government persists. In this instance, the government and the various militia groups are likely to engage in violent armed contestations that may further destabilize the country and deepen the on-going humanitarian crisis. The failure to implement a successful DDR programme could potentially degenerate into a balance of terror, one in which the government and militias have sufficient

firepower to undermine public safety, law and order, or, in an extreme situation, lead the country back to another civil war. Currently, the government only has tenuous control over the capital, Bangui, while other parts of the country are under the control of different militias. In a worst case scenario, the existence of militias might continue to worsen political, religious and ethnic relations in the short and medium terms while in the long run, they might lead to the outright collapse of the state and worsening of the humanitarian crisis. This scenario is likely given that the conflict has created new and harmful dynamics among communities across the country that may prove difficult, if not impossible, to eradicate.

Most likely scenario

The 2016 elections led to a considerable de-escalation of conflict across the country, particularly in the capital. The government will likely continue negotiations with militias while paying lip service to comprehensive political reforms and political inclusion in the government. There might also be partial implementation of the DDR programme due to logistical and financial constraints as well as the unwillingness of the militias and rebel groups to lay down their weapons. Since the government does not control most of the regions outside Bangui, it will likely be unable to meet both the demands of the different factions as well as the provision of basic services outside the capital. It will be a major, and recurrent, challenge to douse tension and violence across the country.

Current response assessment

In 2013, the African Union (AU) condemned the unconstitutional change in government, suspended CAR's membership in the organization, imposed sanctions and travel bans, and froze the assets of the Séléka leaders after they suspended the constitution and dissolved the parliament. However, the AU decisions were flouted by a number of African countries including Sudan, the Republic of Congo, Kenya, Gabon, Chad, Benin and Burkina Faso.

The AU has also been involved in coordinated peace support operations to de-escalate the conflict in the country. In December 2013, the AU approved a mandate to deploy the 6,000-strong International Support Mission to CAR (MISCA) to stabilize CAR, ensure the protection of civilians, restructure the security sector as well as provide humanitarian assistance. Unfortunately, AU peacekeepers face numerous challenges trying to achieve this mandate. The AU cannot effectively control

the numerous peacekeeping actors involved in the region, and they are met with multiple logistical and financial constraints. Support from the government of Chad has however been vital to the AU as it increased pressure on Michael Djotodia to resign from the presidency in 2014. Chad also supported the AU mission by contributing 5,500 soldiers to MISCA. In February 2018, the AU, through the Facilitation Panel of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation, held third round consultations in Bangui with 14 rebel leaders.

The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) has played a significant mediating role in the Central African Republic. At the height of the violence in 2013, the regional body brokered an agreement between the government and the Séléka militia in Libreville, Gabon, which resulted in the signing of a ceasefire agreement. The regional body has also had peacekeeping forces - Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in Central African Republic (MICOPAX) - in the country since 2008. MICOPAX later merged with the AU-led MISCA. Two other neighbours, Chad and Cameroon, have also played important roles in the CAR peace process. As a military heavyweight in the Central African region, Chad has made the largest contribution of troops to MISCA, helping to influence the conflict and reduce its intensity by 2016.

The UN has played a major role in CAR's peace support operations, maintaining a long presence in the country with the first UN peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA). The mission launched in 1998 and consisted of 1,350 military personnel and 24 civilian police from 14 countries at maximum strength. It was replaced in 2000 by a peacebuilding mission that remained there until 15 September 2014 when it was replaced by the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). MINUSCA was launched through Security Council Resolution 2149, which was mandated to protect the civilian population from physical harm in addition to stabilizing the country. To achieve this, the mission increased its personnel to include more civilians (1,390), police (2,049) and military personnel (10,263). In 2018, MINUSCA, with support from the government, deployed forces from Cameroon and Bangladesh to help secure provinces and create zones free of armed groups in the northeast (10km around Paoua, Ouham Pende).

Other international actors provided logistical and troop support to the peace missions in CAR. In January 2014,

the EU sent 1,000 soldiers to render assistance to the French forces and MISCA. This ensured improvement in the capacity of MISCA to handle the situation by increasing medical and logistical support, increasing vehicles and air assets as well as improving communications systems. The efforts of MISCA have been impeded by allegations of sexual abuse by peacekeepers of civilian women and children, including both boys and girls. This unfortunate development led to the resignation of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Babacar Gaye. The EU further gave the green light for the deployment of a military operation, European Union Force (EUFOR RCA) "to provide temporary support in achieving a safe and secure environment in the Bangui area, to handing over to African partners".

As the former colonial power, France has been an active intervener in the crises in the CAR. It has had a military presence for years, but most recently through Operation Sangaris, which was established in 2013 and came to an end in 2016. This operation was the seventh intervention by France in the country since it attained independence in 1960. The role of the 1,600 soldiers that were deployed to CAR was to protect civilians caught in the web of a prolonged war in the country. One of the criticisms of Operation Sangaris is that it focused on demobilizing ex-Séléka fighters but left the anti-Balaka militias armed, thus changing the political dynamics in the country. Experts claim that France supported the anti-Balaka militias in order to prevent a Muslim presidency as it perceived this to be a bigger threat to their political and economic interests in the country.^{ix}

Strategic options

To the AU and RECs

- ❖ There is a need for the AU, RECs and stakeholders to assist the central government in Bangui to rebuild the weak security institutions across the country as a first critical step towards improving internal security and the successful implementation of peace agreements. This can be achieved with article 16 (2) of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (hereby the PSC Protocol), which entrenches the need for consultations with RECs to promote initiatives that will maintain and prevent conflicts, this may include a restructuring of the security sector, civil and public service.

^{ix} Abdurrahim Siradağ. (2016). Explaining the Conflict In Central African Republic: Causes And Dynamics

- ❖ The AU should expand its support to the security sector through DDR programmes that target all the armed groups in the country in order to respond to and accommodate the armed groups that have expressed interest in the programme. As such, the AU can invoke Article 14 of the PSC Protocol to assist CAR on successful DDR implementation.^x On-going DDR continues to move slowly due to limited resources. The AU should leverage the successful and comprehensive implementation of DDR by partnering with the UN and other external stakeholders to raise adequate funds.
- ❖ The AU, in partnership with the UN mission, should continuously and adequately provide humanitarian assistance as well as protect the civilian population in the country. This is pursuant to Article 15 of the PSC Protocol, which underscores the importance of the council developing the capacity to undertake humanitarian action. It is only through this that the desirable trust can be rebuilt within the population and peace projects successfully and sustainably implemented.
- ❖ According to Article 7 of the PSC Protocol, it is prudent for the AU and UN to re-examine and

harmonize their mandates in the CAR, especially the crucial aspect of improving humanitarian response and better protection of civilians as well as addressing the emergence of new militia groups in the country.^{xi}

To the national government

- ❖ The government should address the issues of marginalization, particularly in the northern parts of the country, and generally be seen to be pursuing a more robust policy of political inclusion that accommodates different shades of opinion across the country.
- ❖ The government should take into account the religious and ethnic dimensions of the conflict, and insert relevant and adequate safeguards in future peace agreements and in the national constitution.
- ❖ The government should, within the shortest possible time, give priority to the setting up of special courts to hear and prosecute cases of impunity; and, in doing so, draw support from the AU and the UN.

^x Article 14(c): implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, including those for child soldiers; Article 14(d): resettlement and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons.

^{xi} Article 7 (o): examine and take such appropriate action within its mandate in situations where the national independence and sovereignty of a Member State is threatened by acts of aggression, including by mercenaries.

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CAR Conflict Timeline: 1960-2018

1960 August	CAR gains independence from France.
1965 December	Military coup led by commander of the armed forces Jean-Bedel Bokassa overthrows President Dacko. Bokassa declares himself president for life.
1979 September	Bokassa is ousted in a coup led by former president Dacko with backing from French troops following protests where school children were arrested and massacred while in detention.
1981 September	General Andre Kolingba removes Dacko from power through another coup and establishes a military government.
1992 October	Multiparty presidential and parliamentary elections held but the results are annulled by the Supreme Court based on widespread irregularities.
1993	Ange-Felix Patassé wins elections against Kolingba and Dacko to become president, ending 12 years of military rule. Kolingba releases several thousand political prisoners, including Bokassa.
1996 May	Soldiers stage a mutiny in the capital Bangui over unpaid wages.
1997	France begins withdrawing its forces and African peacekeepers replace French troops.
2000 December	Civil servants stage a general strike and opposition groups organize a rally accusing President Patassé of mismanagement and corruption; this deteriorates into riots.
2001 May	Around 59 people are killed in an abortive coup attempted by former president Andre Kolingba. President Patassé suppresses the attempt with help from Libyan and Chadian troops as well as Congolese rebels.
2002 October	Libyan-backed forces help stop an overthrow attempt on President Patassé by forces loyal to dismissed army Chief General Bozizé.
2003 March	Rebel leader Francois Bozizé seizes Bangui and declares himself president.
2004 December	New constitution is approved in referendum.
2005 May	Bozizé is named the winner of presidential elections after a run-off vote.
2006 October	Rebels seize Birao, a town in the north-east while President Bozizé is away on an overseas visit.
2007 February	The rebel People's Democratic Front, led by Abdoulaye Miskine, signs a peace accord with President Bozizé in Libya and urges fighters to lay down their arms.
2007 September	UN Security Council authorizes a peacekeeping force to protect civilians from violence spilling over from Darfur in neighbouring Sudan.
2008 June	Two of three main rebel groups - the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR) and the Popular Army for the Restoration of Democracy (APRD) – sign a peace agreement with the government providing for disarmament and demobilization of rebel fighters.

2008 December	A government-rebel peace deal envisages the formation of a consensus government and elections in March 2010.
2009 April	Clashes between government and rebels continue. UN Security Council agrees to the creation of a new UN peace building office for CAR to address on-going insecurity.
2010 July	Rebels attack northern town of Birao.
2011 January	Presidential and parliamentary elections held with Bozizé winning another term.
2012 August	Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP) sign peace deal.
2012 September	A dissident faction of the CPJP, led by Colonel Hassan Al Habib and calling itself "Fundamental CPJP", attacks the towns of Sibut, Damara and Dekoa.
2012 November	New Séléka rebel coalition rapidly overruns northern and central parts of the country.
2012 December	An armed group seizes the towns of N'Délé, Sam Ouandja and Ouadda.
2013 January	A ceasefire agreement is signed in Libreville, Gabon.
2013 January	Bozizé signs a decree removing Prime Minister Faustin-Archange Touadéra from power, as part of the agreement with the rebel coalition.
2013 March	Séléka rebels overrun the capital and seize power, reaching the presidential palace where heavy gunfire erupts and President Bozizé flees. Rebel leader Michel Djotodia suspends the constitution and dissolves parliament in a coup condemned internationally.
2013 August	Coup leader Michel Djotodia is sworn in as president.
2013 October	UN Security Council approves the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force to support African Union troops already on the ground and French troops controlling the airport.
2013 December	With turmoil continuing in the country and rival Muslim and Christian fighters accused of killing hundreds of people, France increases its troops to 1,600 in a bid to disarm the militias.
2014 January	Interim president Michel Djotodia resigns over criticism that he failed to stop sectarian violence. Catherine Samba-Panza takes over as interim leader.
2014 April	UN Security Council authorizes a peacekeeping force of 12,000 troops.
2014 May	French and Estonian troops take charge of security at the airport in Bangui under a European Union (EU) mandate from the previous French force.
2014 July	Muslim Séléka rebels and Christian "anti-Balaka" vigilante forces agree to tentative ceasefire at talks in Brazzaville.
2014 September	UN formally takes over and augments the African Union peacekeeping mission and is renamed MINUSCA. The EU's French mission remains in place.
2015 January	The CAR government rejects a ceasefire deal made in Kenya between two militia groups aimed at ending more than a year of clashes, saying it was not involved in the talks.

2015 September	Communal clashes break out in Bangui after Muslim taxi driver is attacked.
2015 December	New constitution is approved in referendum, parliamentary and presidential elections take place peacefully, but constitutional court annuls results of parliamentary poll, citing irregularities.
2016 February	Faustin-Archange Touadéra wins presidential election in the run-off.
2016 March	UN adopts resolution against sexual abuse by peacekeepers particularly those who were in the CAR.
2016 April	Three Congolese peacekeepers appear before tribunal in first prosecutions for sex abuse crimes in the CAR.
2016 October	UN claims 25 people were killed in two days of violence between ex-Séléka and the anti-Balaka in Bambari. Four days later, France announces that it is ending its peacekeeping mission in the CAR, Operation Sangaris, and withdrawing its troops, saying that the operation was a success.
2017 May	Humanitarian crises worsen and violence increases in part due to the withdrawal of foreign forces: anti Balaka militants attacked Bangassou against Muslim communities which led to 115 deaths and also using heavy weapons to attack MINUSCA's base.
2017 July	Due to worsening violence numerous aid agencies withdraw leaving thousands of people without support.
2017 September	The UNHCR states that the continuous violence has caused high displacements as over 1 million people have left their homes.
2017 November	UN Security Council prolongs MINUSCA's mandate for a year and increases its troop and police size to 13,000.
2018 January	The International Committee of the Red Cross issues a warning that half the population of CAR needs humanitarian assistance as the situation in the country worsens.
2018 May	In Bangui, tensions between security forces and armed groups triggered fighting between Muslim and Christian armed groups and attacks against civilians, leaving 24 people dead.
2018 June	Unidentified gunmen attacked UN mission (MINUSCA) patrol between town centre and the airfield.