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*The Question of the Central African
Republic Civil War*

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RESEARCH REPORT



Forum: Advisory Panel on the Question of Central Africa (APQCA)

Issue: The question of the Central African Republic Civil War

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Introduction

The Central African Republic can be described in multiple ways: one of the poorest nations around the world, a decolonized country, a place with multiple natural beauties, etc. One of those descriptions would also be a place where a civil war has been going on for nine years.

The Central African Republic (CAR) is located in Africa. It is a landlocked country, in other words, it has no border to a sea or an ocean. It is bordered by Chad in the north, Sudan in the northeast, South Sudan in the east, the Democratic Republic of Congo to the south, the Republic of Congo to the southeast, and Cameroon to the west. It is covered by dense forests which do not allow for much transportation around the country.

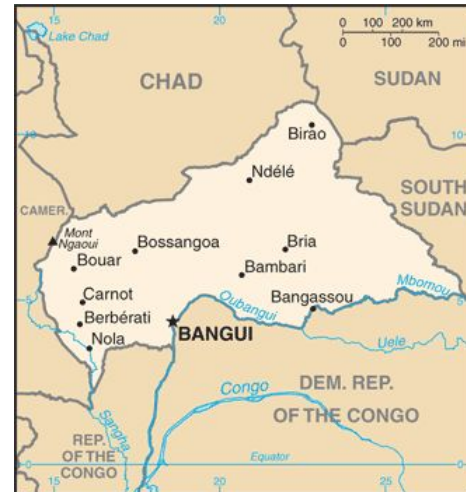


Figure 1: A map of Central African Republic

The lack of a strong government and central authority in CAR can be thought of as the main cause of the civil war that has been going on since 2012. There are many populations from different ethnic and religious backgrounds living in CAR. And as they got more and more polarized, the outbreak of a civil war was inevitable. The war brought other problems with it. Genocides, mass killings, and low humanitarian standards are those problems.

Definition of Key Terms

Civil war: Civil war is defined as “a violent conflict between a state and one or more organized non-state actors in the state’s territory” by Encyclopedia Britannica. A civil war refers to a clash between the state and a group (which is not a country) where the said clash occurs in the country’s land. At the moment, the state and non-state actors are in a clash in CAR.

Genocide: Genocide was defined as “any ... acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group” by the United Nations, in 1948. The keyword being “destroy”, a genocide is happening in CAR as alleged by some experts.

Displacement: Even though the word has multiple meanings, in the question of the civil war in CAR, it refers to the people being forced to move from a location where they normally live. The armed clashes,

the humanitarian problems, and the main actors of the conflict's policies have caused many Central African to be displaced.

Seleka: Seleka is one of the rebel groups in CAR that played a crucial part in the first stages of the conflict. It has an overwhelming number of Muslim members. As it will be explained below, the group had a successful period between 2012-2013, when they came into power. The members of the groups who were not happy with the new government formed "ex-Seleka". The group's power has started to decline since 2014.

Anti-Balaka: Anti-Balaka is a rebel group in CAR and was formed as an opposition to Seleka after Seleka seized the power. Its members are mostly Christian. Unlike Seleka, it is still one of the main actors in the conflict.

General Overview

The Central African Republic became independent from France in 1960. The political climate has always been uncertain, similar to all decolonized nations. The nations have seen many coups in the past decades and many wars. The latest related war would be the Central African Republic Bush Wars between 2004 and 2007. In the war, rebel groups fought against the government. Peace was made in 2007, however, there were still oppositions to the government.

In 2012, the tension rose once again. It was December 2012 when rebel groups criticized the government for not abiding by the peace treaty. A mostly-Muslim rebellious group named "Seleka" began to defy the government from the north of the country, expanding its territory against the government. The then-President then-President François Bozize sought help from France and the United States (US), but he was rejected. A truce was reached in January 2013, but it was broken later on. In March 2013, Seleka overthrew the president, and the leader of Seleka, Michel Djotodia, became the first non-Christian and Muslim President of the Member State. Seleka fighters destroyed many houses in the region, causing many people to be displaced.

Djotodia's presidency was objected to, however, by other regional leaders. As a result, it was decided that a transitional council would lead the country. Djotodia was elected as the president of the said council. He wanted to follow a policy where the Seleka members would be merged into the state and the state's control would be established over the state. However, his power meant nothing for the ex-Seleka (Seleka's name after September 2013) members. There was a lot of distress in the country. On 5 December 2013, for example, anti-balaka (groups that oppose Seleka) members attacked the Muslim population, killing 1000 people. The President and Prime Minister resigned in January 2014, yet the conflicts continued.

In 2014, after the resignation of the President and Prime Minister, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed resolutions regarding troop deployment into CAR. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) was established as a result of these decisions in 2014. The main goal of the Peacekeeping Operation is to expand the state control

over CAR. It is a question how successful the mission was as only a very limited portion of the country is under government control.

Many different rebellious groups were formed during this period: the Popular Front for the Rebirth of Central Africa (FPRC), the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC), and Return, Reclamation, Rehabilitation (3R) are only some of them. Currently, the country seems to be divided between these groups, and moreover, the government's control seems to be around the capital only. There have always been armed *the country* conflicts, which are still continuing, and since 2012, the beginning of the civil war, there have been 8 ceasefire or peace treaties, none of them proving to be successful.

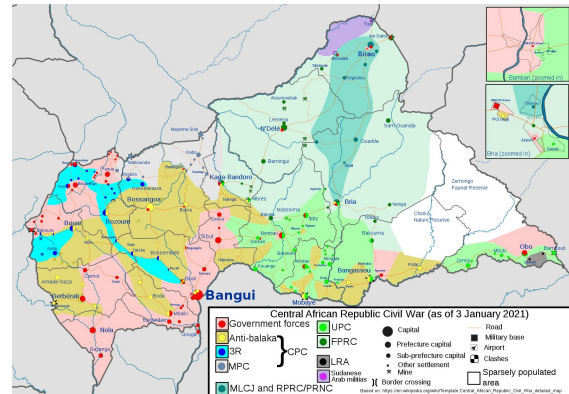


Figure 2: A map showing the forces controlling

Similar to other wars around the world, the CAR civil war also had many humanitarian impacts. The problems that the civilians (excluding the militias and soldiers) faced have always been present from before the conflict, and they just intensified after the start of the civil war. It is known that Seleka has destroyed homes, displaced and killed many, and so on. Anti-Balaka, for example, killed 1000 Muslims on the 5th of December 2013. As of 2021, nearly 3 million people were in need of humanitarian aid while nearly 600 thousand people were displaced.

Additionally, the foreign involvement in the conflict should also be noted. In addition to UN Peacekeepers, there are many foreign forces in the region. The foreign parties are hoping to gain influence over the region, establish economic ties with the leadership and, of course, benefit themselves. Chad, Russia, Rwanda, France, and the EU are only some of the foreign parties present in the region.

Timeline of Events

13 August 1960	<i>Independence of the Central African Republic</i>
2004-2007	<i>Central African Republic Bush Wars</i>
December 2012	<i>Seleka was formed</i>
March 2013	<i>Then-President Bozize is overthrown and replaced with Djotodia by Seleka</i>
10 April 2014	<i>UN Security Council forms MINUSCA</i>

2014-Present	<i>Clashes continue between armed groups and the government</i>
27 December 2020	<i>Elections were held in the Central African Republic</i>

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

As the conflict is an ongoing one, it can be inferred that the solution attempts were unsuccessful. Most of the solution attempts were military-based. The parties involved in the conflict, the state, and the rebellious groups, tried to solve the conflict by beating the opposition. However, this has not worked thus far, and it is highly unlikely that the continuation of the war will give any meaningful result. The United Nations followed a similar attempt with the peacekeeping operations; there are not many non-military solution attempts from the United Nations.

These military approaches caused the conflict to prolong, increased the number of displacement, increased the number of people who died, and so on. Not only did these inadequate approaches not solve the issue, they probably helped it grow.

On the diplomatic side of things, the process was mostly about the peace and ceasefire treaties. However, as mentioned above, they did not work at all. Eight agreements were signed between 2012 and present with little to no effect for each of them. According to a senior researcher in the Africa Division at Human Rights Watch (HRW), the reason why the previous deals failed to succeed was that "... these rebel groups control so much territory that they stand to gain nothing from conceding power and have everything to lose".

Possible Solutions

It can be said that a diplomatic solution would be the most lasting resolution to the civil war. Long-lasting wars have not given and probably will not give any meaningful conclusions to the conflict. There should be talks between the state and the rebel groups in order to settle the disputes. Third-party mediators or intermediaries such as the United Nations or the other Member States can be used to achieve this.

The main reason behind the civil war was the lack of trust placed into the newly-established government. Therefore, the government should prove its reliability to its people. This is easier said than done, of course. Nonetheless, some measures such as a reform in the judicial system, a reform in the government, promises of democracy, etc. can be useful to this end.

Additionally, humanitarian conditions should be addressed. Just because the armed conflict is over, the civil unrest and protests cannot be expected to end. The living conditions of the public should be

improved. Some non-governmental organizations and UN agencies are working towards this, but their efforts are proved to be ineffective. Assistance from these third-party organizations can be necessary.

Finally, closure is needed for the victims of the humanitarian and war crimes of the civil war. There have not been significant convictions regarding the deaths of people and other offenses, and addressing this issue might be crucial to create a stable country.

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