



THE PROTRACTED CONFLICT IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC AND THE RESPONSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES

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Article history:	Abstract:
<p>Received 26th April 2021 Accepted: 10th May 2021 Published: 6th June 2021</p>	<p>The Central African Republic has been embroiled in a protracted conflict since 1966 and is still raging with no possible hope yet in sight for its resolution. The violent stage of the conflict is traced to the invasion of the country in 2012 by the Seleka armed militia group from the north of the country. This political instability resulted to the overthrow of President Francois Bozize and installation of a Moslem regime led by Michael Djolodia as President of the country. In retaliation and revenge to the outrageous killings, damage to properties and burning of communities targeted against the Christians/Animists in the south of the country by the Seleka, the anti-Balaka armed group was spontaneously formed to defend southern communities from further attacks. The conflict which was between the Seleka and the government army (FACA), has now spread to include the anti-Balaka, foreign fighters and international peace-keeper, all fighting against each other. It is against this backdrop that the article seek to analyze the conflict in that country and examine the reasons for the protraction of the conflict and interrogate the response strategies by the international community. The article applied the historical/descriptive research design. Secondary data gathered were thoroughly subjected to content analysis. This article discovered that greed, amongst the various conflicting parties and failure of the response strategies by the international community as reasons for the protraction of the conflict. The article concluded that over reliance by analysts on the liberal framework to the exclusion of other tradition like political economy and realist traditions, in the analysis of the country led the wrong implementation of the strategies in Central African Republic. The paper recommended the political economy and realist approaches to the analysis of the conflict with concomitant change of operational strategies to a full military actions to bring the violent conflict into an end like in the Darfur region of Sudan.</p>

Keywords: Protracted Conflict, Response Strategies, Central African Republic.

INTRODUCTION

The violent conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR) has endured for more than half a century with no practical solution to resolve it. The conflict because of its protracted nature has thrown up different perspectives in its analysis. These perspectives includes the liberals, the realists, political economists, internationalists and the religionists.

It is a known fact that the Liberal analysts to the conflict tilts to the view that cause of the conflict could be traced to precolonial, during and after colonialism. The CAR is marred with conflictual historical antecedents which now results in the present maladies bedeviling the country. For example, they view a formal lumping of what is now known as the Central African Republic, into the greater Chad Basin then to the greater Congo and finally to the Sudan Empire; before independence, as incidental to the land luck status of the country and the incessant invasion by strangers (perish). This brought several clashes between farmers and cattle headers, and the introduction of hate speech in which some inhabitants are regarded as "strangers" in the country. It is the belief of the liberals in their analysis that this uncordial relations between the various inhabitants and occupants of the country brought in military coups, hatred and the invasion of the country in 2012 by some Muslim rebels. The solution to resolving this protracted country, they content, could be found in diplomatic, persuasive and non-use of military force. This could be the reason Beas (2014) wrote "*A history of a collapse foretold*".

However, the realists views the conflict as commencing from the 2012 when the aggrieved and armed Northern Moslems under the eagles of the Seleka invaded the country, overthrew the government of Francois Bozize and foisted the Muslim minority regime of Michel Djotodia in the country. This political imbroglio led to the killing of Christians/Animists, destruction of properties. This prompted various groups to armed and revenge this outrageous crimes by the Moslems against their people. This led to the spontaneous formation of the anti-Balaka who fought to bring down the government of Michel Djotodia. Majority of the people believe that military solution, they think, is the answer to the resolution of the conflict in the Central African Republic.

The political economy is of the view that the Central African Republic is endowed with some strategic natural resources which includes, Uranium, oil and gas, limestone, diamond, iron ore, copper amongst others. The perspective noted that judging by greedy and selfish attitudes of armed parties to the conflict, which they states, are interested in controlling these resources and the proceeds, the conflict is not one of liberation but armed struggle to entrench themselves to corruptly manage the resources. In their views, such conflict lasts long to abate. This position receives the support of the duo of Bannon and Collier (2003) in their article titled *"Natural resources and violent conflict options and actions"*. Ager (2015) wrote of a *'World Lord Business: CAR's violent armed groups and their criminal operations for profit and power'*. The political economy of African wars". Malpeli and Chrigo (2014) also supported the views of the political economy in their article. *"A sub-national scale geospatial analysis of Diamond deposits lootability: The case of the Central African Republic in the extractive industry and society"*.

The internationalists is also a perspective in the analysis of the conflict in that country. They view the conflict as an international one because too many international bodies are involved in it; either fighting to destroy the country or fighting to save the country from destruction. Examples, are international armed fighters in the conflict to destroy the country. They include, the Uganda Lord's Resistance Army, the Sudanese Janjanweed, Pierre Bemba's rebels from D.R. Congo, Chadian Rebels, Islamic state of North African People (ISNAP) and Islamic State of North African People (ISNAP) and Islamic State of West African People (ISWAP), Nigeria's Boko Haram South Sudan rebels. The other international groups fighting to stabilize the Central African Republic and bring peace to it are, European Union Forces, French Soldiers, United Nations Peace-Keeping and Peace-Building Forces and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). They stated that international input in the protracted conflict in the Central African Republic Constitutes about 65% and determines the direction the conflicts take presently whether to resolve it or not. It is the view of this perspective that the international community must dedicate the resolution of the conflict for any resolution to work. Jervis (1979) in his *"Deterrence theory revisited"* seeks to support this perspective. This is also reflective of his previous articles, *"Cooperation under the Security Dilemma"*.

The religionist analysts content that the main cause of the violent conflict in the CAR is religion. They think that members of the two religion, the Christians and Moslems are the members of the armed groups fighting in the conflict with the consequence of drawing the country into a long religious war. The perspective is of the view that unless the leadership of the two religions are involved in resolution there will be no end to the conflict. Cadman (2015), describes the conflict in the Central African Republic in an article titled *"Religious war in Central African Republic Religious intolerance and violence continues to rage in the CAR"* and seek to support the assertion of the perspective.

BACKGROUND TO THE CONFLICT IN CENTRAL AFRICA REPUBLIC

Various literature on the conflict in the Central African Republic attributes it to the 1966 military coup in that country. Six years after the country's independence, the then Chief of Army Staff, Colonel Jean Bokassa staged a successful coup that ousted the independence regime of President David Dacko.

Jean Bokassa ruled, ruined disorganized, dislocated and disarticulated the Central African Republic for 13 years leaving behind all the banalities now hunting the country. For example, Bokassa introduced despotism, dictatorship, tribalism, ethnicity, religious bigotry and the world worst known kleptocracy. He was the one that killed about one thousand prisoners in various prisons in the country and ordered the massacre of one thousand school children who refused to wear a particular brand of school children. Bokassa dismantled the democratic republican status of the country and in its stead introduced monarchical system for the country. In the situation the Central African Republic was changed into the Central African Empire with Bokassa as the Emperor Bokassa of the Empire. The consequence was that the functions of the other organs of government like the legislative and judicial were lumped into the whims and caprices of the emperor. This made incessant military coups very lucrative as successive regimes built on the aberrations innumerate above as his attributes.

List of leaders that ruled CAR from 1960 to 2020

S/N	Head of state	Date	Means of assuming office	Tenure years	Remarks
1.	David Dacko	1960-1966	Election	6yrs	Democracy civilian
2.	Jean Bokassa	1966-1979	Coup and later emperor	13yrs	Military
3.	David Dacko	1979-1981	Coup	2yrs	Military/civilian

4.	Andre Kollingba	1981-1993	Coup and later civilian	12yrs	Military/civilian
5.	Ange-Felix Patasse	1993-2003	Election	10yrs	Democracy
6.	Francois Bozize	2003-2013	Coup and later civilian	10yrs	Military/civilian
7.	Michel Djotodia	2013-2014	Terrorist/Militia coup	1yr	Civilian uprising
8.	Cathrine Samba-Panza	2014-2016	Appointed by a conference	2yrs	Civilian
9.	Archangel Faustin Touadera	2016-date	Election	-	Civilian

Source: Compiled by the Researcher

The consequences of these lacuna created in the governance of the country was the growing complaints by various sections of the Central African Republic especially the North-Eastern part for marginalization and neglect various governments. However, these agitations and complaints failed to receive the attention of the regimes at Bangui, Capital of the CAR, riots, demonstrations, protests and various petitions started. This was followed by the formation of rebel groups. For example, Union Des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement (UFDR) was formed in 2006, convention Des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP) was formed in 2008. Front populaire le redressement (FPR) was earlier formed in 1998, and Front Démocratique du People Centrafricain (FDPC) was founded in 1996. These four rebel groups in the north-eastern part of the CAR, banded themselves in 2007 to form an alliance called Seleka armed militia headed by Michel Djotodia (ICG Report, 2014) (IRIS, 2014 report).

The aim and objectives of the alliance being foisted a fratricidal and internecine conflict and divided the country into either ethnic or religious lines. This was demonstrated by one of the leaders of the Seleka group, Nouredin Adams of the Convention Des Patriotes Pour la Justice et la Paix (CPJP) when in August 2, 2015, declared a separate country from the Central African Republic called “*Republic of Lagone*” with capital at Kaga-Bandora and used that opportunity to declare some of the leaders including Mohammed Dhaffane, persona-non-grata. The peace keeping troops of the United Nations foiled the attempt and brought down the flags hoisted by the rebels (Reuters, 2015).

In 2009, the Seleka armed militia group started a march to Bangui in an uprising to invade the capital with a view to overthrowing the regime but the intervention of African Union and ECCAS troops stopped the move at Bambari.

After an interregnum between 2011 to 2019, the Seleka resumed their uprising and aided by the Sudanese and Chadian armies, they invaded Bangui in 2012 and overthrew the regime of President Francois Bozize (ICG, 2015). In the course of the uprising to capture Bangui, the Seleka group killed, maimed, destroyed and burnt villages believed to belong to Christian/Animist population. This irked the affected population who immediately organised to form a revengeful and retaliatory defense group called anti-Balaka meaning “anti-AK47” in the local language. This group fought with Matchetee and locally made guns and pistols; and with the help of African Union and Economic Community of Central African States’ governments were able to flush the Michel Djotodia regime out of Bangui and with it, all elements of the Seleka back to the northern fringe of the country. Thus, began a protracted and violent conflict in the Central African Republic

The International Peace-keeping Forces in the CAR as Response Strategies

S/N	Abbreviation	Name	Formed by	Date	Strength
1	FOMUC	Force multinationale en centrafrique	Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC)	1996	800
2.	MISAB	Mission interafricaine de surveillance des Accords de Bangui	Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)	1997	800
3.	MICOPAX	Mission de consolidation de la paix en centrafrique	ECCAS)	2003	1,050
4.	EUROFORCE- CAR	Eur force in the Central African Republic	European union	2015	800
5.	MISCA	Mission internationale de soutien a la centrafrique sous conduit africaine	African union	2013	6,000
6.	MINURCA	United nations mission in Central Africa Republic (mission multidimensionnelle intégrée des nations unies pour la stablisation en République centrafricaine)	United Nations	1998	1,350

7.	BINUCA	United Nation Integrated Peace Building Office in the Central Africa Republic	United Nations	2000	1,350
8.	BONUCA	United Nations Peace building Support Office in the CAR	United Nations (S/RES/2121)	2013	5,000
9.	MINUSCA	United Nations Mission for Stabilization in the CAR	United Nations (S/RES/2149)	2014	12,000
10.	France of Sangari	France operation Sangaris	France	2013	1,200
11.	South African troops	South African Army	South Africa	2007	400

Source: *Compiled by the researcher from various sources*

CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONFLICT

The grievous consequences of the raging conflict in the Central African Republic is better imagined. From the demography, the CAR is a land locked country bounded by Sudan and South-Sudan Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of Congo, Cameroon Republic, Niger Republic and Chad with a population of about 5 million people (World Bank, 2013). Out of this population figure, Christians occupies 60 percent, Animists 25% and the Moslems 15% (ICG report, 2014). About 1 million people have fled the country as refugees in neighbouring countries, 1.5 million are internally displaced in several camps within the country (ICG, 2015).

The administrations in Bangui do not have control of the whole country as the rebels have limited their control to the capital city of Bangui. The rebels are control of the mining sites, collect levies and taxes from companies and deprived government from the needed funds. Multinational companies prefers to deal the armed rebels than the government. Thus, the Central African Republic has fallen from a weak state to a failed state, from a failed state to a paraiah state and now to a phantom state both economically, financially and politically.

RESPONSE STRATEGIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The international community here reflects sub-regional, regional (continental), individual countries and the global body (the United Nations). Thus, there have been efforts from the sub-regional bodies like the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), The Regional or Continental Organization like the African Union, Europeans Union, and the United Nations Organizations, France, South Africa at individual country levels.

They have contributed human and financial resolve this conflict. For example, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) formed the force multinationale en Centrafrique, a peace-keeping force of 800 contingent in 1996, popularly called FOMUC. In 1997, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) also formed as peace-keep of Central African States (ECCAS) also formed a peace-keeping contingent of 800 strength, otherwise known as "mission interafricaine de surveillance des Accords de Bangui (MISAB).

Again, the ECCAS in 2003 formed another peace-keeping force called "Mission de consolidation 1,050 strength de la paix en centrafrueque (MICOPAX) the European Union in 2015 sent to the Central African Republic a Contingent of 800 military personnel in the same vein, the African Union in 2013 formed a peace-keeping force called "mission internationale de soutien a la Centrafrique Sous Conduit Africaine (MISCA) with a strength of 6,000 personnel. The United Nations has also established the following bodies; mission multidimensionnelle integree nations unies pour la stabilization en Republique Centrafricaine (MINURCA), a peace-keeping force of 1,350 in 1998.

United Nation Integrated Peace-Building office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA), a peace building mission made up of 1,350 staff strength established in the year 2,000. United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the CAR (BONUCA) established in 2013 with a staff strength of 5,000 personnel. In 2014, the United Nations established a peace-keeping force called United Nations Missions for Stabilization in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) with a continent strength of 12,000.

Multinational companies, their countries of origin and mineral they engage in Central Africa Republic

S/N	Name of company	Country of origin	Mineral
1.	Bureaux d' a chat (groups of companies exporting diamond/gold)	France	Gold, diamond
2.	Axmin Inc	Canada	Gold
3.	prospero minerals crop (formerly corunel minerals corp)	United States	Gold
4.	Jamija gold & diamond exploration Inc.	United States	Gold
5.	Pan-African resources Plc	United kingdom	Gold
6.	GBM Gold ltd	South Africa	Gold
7.	Senet (pty) ltd	South Africa	Gold
8.	Energem resources Inc	Canada	Diamond
9.	Vaaldiam resources ltd	Canada	Diamond

10.	Pangea diamond field plc	Isle of man	Diamond
11.	Gem diamonds ltd	United kingdom	Diamond
12.	United Reef Ltd	Canada	Mineral fuels
13.	RSM production corp	Denver, U.S	Mineral fuels
14.	South Atlantic Petro	Nigeria	Crude oil
15.	Uramin	France	Mining uranium
16.	Areava	France	Mining uranium
17.	Compaigne internetion rapid (CIR)	France	Providing security in the private sector
18.	Societal D' exploitation forestiere centrafricaine (SEFCA)	Lebanon	Timber logging and export
19.	Industries forestiere	France	Timber logging industry
20.	SCAD	France	Timber logging industry
21.	Scaf/Scad (Subsidiary of IFB)	France	Timber logging industry
22.	Verwood (with subsidiaries like Thanry centrafricaine Sofokad, vica and Sinfocan)	Chinese	Timber, oil and gas diamond mining
23.	Exotica	Lebanon	Transport industry (transportation of illegal timber, gold, diamond and oil and gas
24.	Tropica-Bois	France	Graphite, iron ore
25.	Johann D. Vos	Germany	Tin, Manganese
26.	F. James	France	Limestone, uranium
27.	Bois De Trois Ports	France	Kaolin, monazite
28.	Pettier Bois	France	Salt, quartz, rutile
29.	Bytterbier Hout	Belgium	Timber, diamond, lignite, kyanite
30.	Timberland industries (with subsidiary like Malaysian Taman industries Ltd)	Malaysia	Timber logging ilmenite, copper
31.	Senet (pty) ltd	South Africa	Gold, diamond, oil and gas

Source: *Compiled by the researcher from various sources.*

Also in 2013, France sent a contingent in its operation called “*France Operation Sangaris*” with strength of 1,200. South Africa also sent a troop of 400 soldiers in 2007 to the CAR.

In addition, the United Nations through various resolutions, imposed travels ban on persons or individuals in the CAR implicated in the conflict on acts inimical to peace. The world body imposed arms embargo on all parties/groups in the CAR conflict. It also freeze assets, finances and economic resources of individuals or entities encouraging conflict in the CAR.

A number of panels, and commissions have also been set up to find out one problem or the other in the CAR conflict and make recommendations. United Nations Panel of Experts for the Central African Republic. United Nations International Commission of Inquiry in the CAR conflict, United Nations sanction committee on the conflict in the CAR conflict, UN special representative of the secretary-general for children in armed conflict in the CAR, UN Special Representative for Sexual Violence in the CAR Conflict, UN International Contact Group on the CAR Conflict, and UN high level panel on threats, challenges and change in the CAR.

However, in spite of these strategic measures and responses in tackling the conflict and eventually resolve it, it has proved a herculean task as the conflict is still raging, protracting and till date, there is no hope it will end soon. The factors aiding the protraction of the conflict will be identified below.

FACTORS AIDING THE PROTRACTION OF THE CONFLICT IN THE CAR: These are outlined as follows;

- a) The natural resources in that country is strategic and needed by all, hence this resource conflict.
- b) Corrupt political leadership in the CAR.
- c) Selfish and greedy rebel groups in the conflict.
- d) Illegal activities of multinational companies operating in that country.
- e) Fictionalization and splintering amongst all the armed parties in the conflict.
- f) Arms proliferation in the Central African sub-region.
- g) Destructive objectives of foreign fighters in the conflict in the CAR.
- h) Unsecured and porous borders of the CAR with neighbouring countries.
- i) Misperception of the conflict, CAR and its people.
- j) Continuous misunderstanding and squabbles between ECCAS and AU, and between AU and UN.
- k) Poor logistics for takeoff peace-keeping forces.
- l) Undiplomatic activities of some foreign missions in Bangin

Armed groups faction that broke away from Seleka

Group	Active since	Composed of	Leader(s)	Areas of Activities
FRC/UPC	Sept./ Oct 2014	Former seleka	Ali Darassa, Mohamat Al Khatin and Habyalah Awal	Split off from FPRC in September 2014. Main zone of influence in northwest Ouham, Nana Greb-izi and Ouaka prefectures
FPRC	August 2014	Former seleka	Michel Djotodia, Nouredine Adam and Joseph Zoundeko	Main zone of influence in Vakaga, Bamingui-Bangoran and Haute-Kotto prefectures
Seleka	August 2012	Former CPSK, CPJP Fondamentale and UFDR at core	Michel djotodia, Mohamed Moussa Dhaffane, Nouredine Adam	Rebranded as FPRC in August 2014; FRC split from FPRC in September 2014
CPSK	June 2012	Former CPJP	Mohammed Moussa Dhaffane	Part of the seleka since its creation. N. Adam suspended Dhaffane from his functions for high treason in August 2014
CPJP fondamentale	July	Former CPJP	Nouredine Adam	Part of the seleka since its creation. Now part of FPRC
CPJP	Late 2008	Runga communities	Abdoulaye isséne	The CPJP had concluded a peace agreement with Bozize in August 2012, but eventually joined the seleka in April 2013
UFDR	2006	Fighers from the northeast, in particular from the Gula communities	Michel Djotodia and 'General' Zakaria Damane	Joined the seleka at the end of 2012. Currently part of the FPRC
FDPC	2003	Condidants of former president patassé	Abdoulaye Miskine	Brief alliance with seleka from December 2012 to March 2013. The FDPC remains active, mainly in western Nana-Mambéré, although their leader, Miskine, was arrested in Cameroon in September 2013
UFR	Mid-2003	Fighters from northwestern CAR	Florian Ndjadder	More political than military. Brief alliance with seleka up to May 2013. Has expressed support to the transitional government
FPR	1998/2000	Chadian and Central Africa Peuhl pastoralists	'general' Baba Laddé, Ali Darassa	Laddé is in Chad since September 2012, as well as some 400 FPR fighters. Those who stayed in CAR joined the seleka and are under the command of Ali Darassa, FRC

Source: Adopted from the 2014 report of IPIS

The second log of the reasons for the protraction of the conflict is that the armed rebels are using armed struggles to entrench themselves in the class struggle to control the natural resources and its proceeds in the Central African Republic.

The third reason is that at the level of implement, the response strategies and other policies by the international community failed, was defiled and also suffered ineptitude. The reason for this is the over reliance by policy makers on the literal analytical framework to the exclusion of other analytical tradition.

CONCLUSION

This article concludes that if the findings and recommendations are seriously implemented the protracted conflict in the Central African Republic will be resolved and peace restored to that country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of the conflict must change from a liberal framework to political economy and realist analytical tradition. The policies that will emerge from these genre are full military action and the implementation of Disarmament, Demobilization, Demilitarization (DDD) and Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Repatriation (RRR) in the CAR.

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