

2017

Central African Republic Conflict Assessment Report



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Executive Summary

In 2013, the Central African Republic (CAR), a mineral-rich country, has descended into a violent inter-ethnic conflict between the majority Christian population and the Muslim minority in which thousands have been killed. Since the onset of violence, the significant decline in the already low Human Development Index score and the fall in per-capita (USD2011) earnings indicate a severe decline in the average standard of living. This trend can be substantially attributed to the absence of a fully legitimate and representative central government in the country, repression of religious minority rights, the ineffectiveness of government institutions in mitigating sectarian violence, widespread corruption, and the inability of the population at large to access necessities such as health care and food. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced domestically, as well as to neighboring states, and international humanitarian efforts by organizations such as the UN have not been sufficiently effective at compensating for the lack of basic supplies and services. For 2016, the CAR occupies 3rd place in the Fragile State Index out of 178 states – a score associated with a failed state status.¹ The recently-elected Faustin Archange Touadera, however, has been working closely with international organizations, such as the World Bank, the UN and the European Union (EU), and state actors, such as Norway, to implement large-scale projects and reform programs, thus creating some optimism regarding the economic and social development of the CAR in the near future.



Background


In 1960, the CAR has gained independence from France after which the country has experienced decades of political instability, largely attributed to several coups and the country's geographic location in the middle of a politically-fragile region. In 1991, after the military coup orchestrated to oust the authoritarian leader Jean-Bedel Bokassa, a multi-party system was introduced. From the 1990s until the early 2010s, however, the country has been characterized by high level of political turmoil. In the past five years, the country has descended into an increasingly violent inter-ethnic conflict between the majority Christian population and the Muslim minority. In practice, Muslim minorities were discriminated by law enforcement as well as local authorities.² Even though the violence is along ethno-religious faults, the conflict was triggered by the deposition of President François Bozizé by the rebel coalition Seleka. The Seleka coalition, which claims to represent the interests of Muslims in the country, at the initial stage of the conflict, was composed of mercenaries from Chad and Sudan who arrived with the goal of toppling the government of Bozizé and bringing Michel Djotodia to power.³ To resist the Seleka rebels, the Christian Anti-Balaka militia was formed and continuously attacked the Muslim rebel group as well as non-combatants of Muslim faith, effectively forcing most Muslims to the Northeast of the country out of the capital Bangui.⁴ Both militant groups have been accused of severe war crimes such as indiscriminate killings and looting.⁵ To mitigate the violence, from April 2013 to 2014, the UN and France deployed thousands of peacekeeping forces to engage in peace-promoting operations, which yielded uncertain levels of success.⁶ Even though in 2014, the Seleka and Anti-Balaka agreed to a ceasefire, Djotodia resigned, a new government was formed, but the levels of political uncertainty, fragility and violence remain substantial and prevent significant social and economic development in the country.

Primary Stakeholders

Actor	Impact	Effect
Faustin-Archange Touadéra CAR Government 	Mixed	(+) Enacted the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme as a legal framework to reinforcing peace domestically and increasing state authority and capacity. ⁷ (+) Promotes strong cooperation with external actors (states and international organizations) to implement development projects domestically. (-) The government lacks the capacity to secure its external borders, infrastructure and qualified personnel to provide basic services to citizens such as health care and education. (-) The government has made insufficient effort to increase civil liberties and domestic political freedom.
Chad 	Mixed	(+) Joined the Force Multinationale de l'Afrique Centrale (FOMAC) to mitigate the sectarian conflict. (+) Assisted minority Muslims to flee the Anti-Balaka rebels using special forces operations. ⁸ (-) UN has accused the Chadian forces of employing indiscriminate violence against non-combatants in the CAR. ⁹ (-) Accused of assisting the Seleka in the struggle against the Anti-Balaka, thus fuelling the violence. ¹⁰
African Union (AU) 	Positive	(+) The African Union, in order to increase the state capacity and domestic monopoly on violence of government of the CAR government, is implementing major programs such as the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Security Sector Reform (SSR). ¹¹ (+) Implemented the African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA) ¹²

Secondary Stakeholders

Norway 	Positive	(+) 52% of exports from CAR are going to Norway. ¹³ (+) NOK 47 million USD 5.5 Million worth of development aid to CAR. ¹⁴
International Organizations 	Mixed	(+) The EU pledged to provide €409 million to the CAR in development aid between 2016 and 2020 at the Brussels Conference for the CAR 2016. ¹⁵ (+) The World Bank has approved the CAR Health System Support Project (USD 26 million). ¹⁶ (+) UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic deployment of 12,870 total uniformed personnel for peace promotion and maintenance. ¹⁷ (-) UN Security Council Resolution 2127 Paragraph 1 (Arms Embargo) prevents the CAR government from increasing its security-related capabilities and domestic monopoly on violence.

United States 	Positive	(+) U.S Aid has, on average, provided USD100 Million annually in aid funds from 2011-2016. ¹⁸
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Risk Assessment Indicators

Extremely High Risk	High Risk	Medium Risk	Low Risk
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History of Armed Conflict	Trend: Improved 
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Stabilizing Factors:
Armed Conflict: The crisis in CAR has been escalating since December 2013. Rival armed groups in Bangui clashed leaving at least 1,000 civilians dead triggering the deployment of international peacekeepers.¹⁹ Since then, violence reached unprecedented levels leading into early 2014.²⁰ The international community recognized that there was potential for a genocide.²¹ This led to deployment by France of Operation Sangaris, the AU's MISCA, and the UN force MINUSCA in order to bring the violence under control.²²

Destabilizing Factors:
Refugees Produced: In December 2013, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported hundreds of thousands of people were forced to flee their homes as a result of the violence spreading through the CAR.²³ They faced militants looting homes, burning villages and brutally killing civilians.²⁴ An estimated 643,000 people are currently internally displaced.²⁵ An estimated 218,000 people are displaced in the capital Bangui.²⁶ With ongoing conflict, there are over 450,000 CAR registered refugees displaced in neighbouring countries from the violence.²⁷

Refugees Hosted: Central African Republic refugees are still sheltering in Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of the Congo.²⁸ Cameroon is hosting approximately 254,633 refugees, the Republic of Congo is hosting 101,866, Chad is hosting 64,673 and the Democratic Republic of Congo is hosting 30,590.²⁹

Assessment: A deteriorating situation for a fragile state that has encountered its share of past and present political instability. The coup by the Seleka rebels that ousted the previous president in the spring of 2013 has led the CAR into a state of uncertainty almost four years later. The crisis in Central African Republic will continue to produce internally displaced refugees and refugees for neighbouring countries. According to the UNHCR, approximately 25 percent of CAR's population has been internally displaced since the beginning of the conflict in 2013.³⁰ Since the departure of Michel Djotodia in 2014, election of Archange Touadéra in 2016, and the implementations of numerous programs and operations by international organizations, however, the violence along ethnic cleavages has substantially subsided.

Governance and Political Instability	Trend: Stable 
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Destabilizing Factors:
Level of Democracy: Division and fragmentation among key political coalitions continue to inhibit the efforts in CAR for reconciliation in 2015.³¹ There is division within the former Seleka alliance which is now split into rival movements.³² Additionally, the Anti-Balaka forces have split between factions in support of former president Bozize and those who are opposed.³³

Regime durability: The Central African Republic has been run by unelected officials. This administration that has been in power since the 2013 coup.³⁴

Restrictions on Civil and Political Rights: Religious persecution in this ethnic conflict continues to impact not only the movement of citizens but also their civil and political rights.³⁵ Women's rights are not enforced and sexual violence against women has increased in this ongoing conflict.³⁶ The United Nations conducted investigations in 2015 into allegations of sexual misconduct by French military and UN peacekeepers in CAR.³⁷ Additionally, the displacement of women and children has forced many into the labor and sex trafficking network in the CAR.³⁸

Restrictions on Press Freedom: Press freedom is still fragile in the Central African Republic.³⁹ Reporters Without Borders states that attacks on the media in CAR continue and journalists' safety is far from guaranteed.⁴⁰ In the 2016 World Press Freedom Index, the Central African Republic is ranked 110 out of 180 countries.⁴¹

Corruption: The Central African Republic has faced corruption and nepotism in all branches of the government.⁴² This challenge remains difficult to solve address under the current security situation.⁴³ In the Transparency International's 2015 Corruption Perceptions Index, CAR is ranked 145 out of 168 countries and territories.⁴⁴

Assessment: The CAR is ranked 3rd out of the 178 countries on the Fund for Peace Failed States Index.⁴⁵ CAR received a score from the Freedom House of 0/12 for functioning government, 4/16 for freedom of the press, 1/16 for autonomy and individual rights.⁴⁶ CAR could be ranked lower in the next year if the conflict increases and if press freedom continues to be restricted.⁴⁷ The election of the Archange Touadéra government brings significant hope for an improvement in political stability and rigidity of governance.

Militarization	Trend: Stable 
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Stabilizing Factors:
National Weapons Importation:
 Weapons importation by the government is very low; there is an arms embargo on the Central African Republic made by the UN Security Council (Resolution 2127, Paragraph 1).⁴⁸

Destabilizing Factors:
Access to Weapons: Weapons access is ranked as extremely high with small arms, the estimated total number of guns (both licit and illicit) held by civilians in Central African Republic is 40,000.⁴⁹

Total military expenditures: The World Data Bank scored Central African Republic at 2.6 in 2010 for total military expenditures.⁵⁰ It increased significantly from 1.5 in 1991 to 2.6 in 2010.⁵¹

Total armed forces: Index Mundi reported that the total amount of armed forces in Central African Republic was 8,150 as of 2014.⁵² As the graph below shows, over the past 29 years this indicator reached a maximum value of 8,150 in 2014 and a minimum value of 2,000 in 2004.⁵³

Assessment: The Central African Republic militarization has been greatly impacted by the crisis. Most of the stabilization efforts are coming from the MINUSCA.⁵⁴ The MINUSCA currently have 12,870 total uniformed personnel, including: 10,750 military personnel (including 480 Military Observers and Military Staff Officers) 2,080 police personnel (including 400 Individual Police Officers and 108 corrections officers).⁵⁵ Generally, the deployment of MINUSCA had a mitigating effect on the trend of violence in the CAR.

Population Heterogeneity **Trend: Stable** 

Ethnic Diversity: The population of the Central African Republic is 5,507,257.⁵⁶ The country is comprised of main ethnic groups that are the Bayas 33%, the Bandas 27%, the Mandjias 13%, the Saras 10%, the Mboums 7%, the M'Bakas 4%, the Yakomas 4%, and others 2%.⁵⁷

Destabilizing Factors:

Religious Diversity: CAR is a secular state that faces religious tensions which overlap with the political divisions.⁵⁸ In 2015, there was a sectarian clash between Muslim and Christian populations.⁵⁹ These clashes continue to threaten freedom of religious practices.⁶⁰ The Freedom House states that few Muslims remain in Bangui or western towns.⁶¹ Members of the Anti-Balaka groups demanded at the May reconciliation forum in Bangui that identity cards issued by the Seleka government be cancelled, a challenge to the citizenship rights of Muslim communities perceived as foreigners.⁶²

Assessment: Religious divides continue to be at the heart of conflict in the Central African Republic. These clashes will make it difficult for a reconciliation process or peace in the country.

Demographic Stress **Trend: Stable** 

Population: CAR has a small population of 4.9 million with modest population growth of approximately 2% as of 2015⁶³

Population Density: CAR has a low population density of approximately 8 people per square km as of 2015 with a relatively stable linear growth rate of population density for the last 40 years.⁶⁴

Urban Population: The urban population of CAR is approximately 40% which is concerning in an impoverished African nation that cannot afford a lot of municipal and urban social services.⁶⁵

Destabilizing Factors:

Urban Population Growth Rate: For the last 10 years, there has been a steady increasing growth rate of the urban population currently sitting at 2.7% growth of urban population a year, which as stated above can place a stress on budgets that already contain heavy deficits and debts.

Youth Bulge: Children age 0-14 are 40% of the population of CAR, which places a heavy strain on budgets for education and healthcare, when there is not a stable and growing workforce.⁶⁶ Youth unemployment sits at 11.5% which encourages young men of fighting age to seek wealth either by engaging in the fighting or by working in blank market sectors that fund the conflict.⁶⁷

Assessment: While urban population growth and the youth bulge are concerning elements of CAR's demographics, they likely were not structural causes, but may have exacerbated the conflict by providing young, restless, poor and unemployed youth living in underdeveloped urban areas to fuel the conflict.

Economic Performance **Trend: Stable** 

Stabilizing Factors:

Inflation has remained relatively stable during the conflict.⁶⁸

Destabilizing Factors:

GDP growth was expected to be at target for 5.5% growth before increased conflict in the area brought it down to 4.1%⁶⁹ meaning that economic growth has increased since conflict broke out. The Central African Republic has one of the lowest GDP per capita of any country and has one of the highest rates of income inequality.⁷⁰ Both of those factors have only been exacerbated by the conflict. Since conflict broke out in 2013, FDI has plummeted, going from USD 70 million in 2012, to USD 3 million in 2015.⁷¹

Assessment: Substantial income inequality and decreasing GDP per capita provide CAR residents with little economic incentive to avoid joining the conflict. The conflict has driven out almost all FDI and the only substantial trading partner CAR has left is Norway. CAR still has a substantial trading imbalance, and 40% of total exports are still in the corrupt and mismanaged diamond industry.⁷²

Human Development **Trend: Declining** 

Access to Sanitation: While access to sanitation has been linearly improving for the last 20 years, it is still very low, with only 20% of the population having access to improved sanitation facilities.⁷³

Life Expectancy at Birth: Life expectancy in CAR is extremely low at 52.3 years, one of the lowest in the world. While it has been trending upwards for the last 20 years, it still is abysmally low.⁷⁴

Infant mortality rate: Similarly, while infant mortality has been decreasing steadily for the last ten years, CAR has the 4th highest infant mortality rates in the world at 88.4/1000 lives.⁷⁵

Maternal mortality rate: In conjunction with the infant mortality rate the maternal mortality rate has also substantially decreased in the last 20 years. However, the maternal mortality rate in the Central African Republic is also the 4th highest in the world at 882 deaths/100,000 live births.⁷⁶

HIV/AIDS Rate: CAR has a 3.7% HIV infection rate. While that is a substantial improvement from their peak of 8.8% 15 years ago, it still places CAR in the top 15 in the world.⁷⁷

Health Expenditures: Health care expenditures are extremely low at only 4.2% and this has been after yearly increases since 2012. They are 168th in health expenditures as percentage of GDP which is concerning considering the CIA factbook ranks major infection diseases as a very high degree of risk including: diarrhea, Hep. A and E, typhoid fever, malaria, dengue fever, meningitis, schistosomiasis, and rabies.⁷⁸

Education: CAR ranks 171st in education expenditures at only 1.2% of GDP. Total literacy rate is 36.8%, and only 24.4% for females. The average years of schooling is 8 years for men and 6 years for women, and 47% of children aged 5-14 are participating in some form of child labour.⁷⁹

Assessment: Human development in CAR is abysmally low, and any recent improvements still place CAR as one of the least developed countries in the world. These negative conditions are cyclical: the country has low levels of political stability and effective governance and this leads to underfunded and mismanaged human development efforts. However, a country with low levels of human development will encounter substantial difficulties in development economically, to mitigate the creation or proliferation of insurgent rebels, and to generate stability for democratically elected governments. This may lead to coups or civil wars or other activities that destabilize governance and political rigidity. It is a vicious cycle that can only be broken with a relentless and permanent effort on the part of the international community to make genuine commitments towards long-term human development.

Environmental Stress **Trend: Stable** 

Rate of Deforestation: CAR has a considerable amount of forest land even with current rates of logging. They had an annual deforestation rate of .1% and has only lost 1.9% of its forests between the years of 1990 and 2005.⁸⁰

Arable Land: There is little arable land which is concerning for a country where 58% of its GDP is derived from agriculture.⁸¹ Arable land has decreased as conflict has spread and areas surrounding conflict zones are either burned or people simply flee the area. In 2010 the percentage of arable land in the country dropped below 3% for the first time since the 1970s and has stayed below 3% to this day.⁸²

Fresh Water Resources: While there are still sufficient amounts of renewable internal freshwater resources per capita, the rate has been substantially decreasing: going from 33,500 cubic metres per capita in 2007, to 29,300 in 2014.⁸³

Assessment: Even though elements of environmental stress exist in CAR, they seem to be caused by the conflict, and do not seem to be a structural cause of the conflicts. Fresh water and forests seem to still exist on a sustainable basis and an increase in arable land will likely happen a few years after the conflict has declined in intensity. Environmental conditions are likely to remain pretty stable with minor decreases in arable land as conflict continues.

International Linkages **Trend: Declining** 

Stabilizing Factors:

Economic organizations: CAR has not experienced external arrears to bilateral and multilateral creditors.⁸⁴ Payment of external and domestic debt by the new authorities will be critical to avoid any disruption in the flow of funds from the international community, and adversely affecting the local private sector. Foreign mining companies have largely withdrawn their business from the CAR.⁸⁵

Foreign aid: USAID Office of Food for Peace has provided the UN World Food Program nearly \$29 million to address the emergency food needs of conflict-affected Central Africans within CAR and displaced to neighboring countries.⁸⁶

UN organization index: The Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic (CAR) until 15 November 2017.⁸⁷ The 15-member body called on the CAR authorities to urgently implement a genuine and inclusive reconciliation, address the presence and activity of armed groups and urgent implementation of an inclusive disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programme and security sector reform.⁸⁸

Destabilizing Factors:

International/Regional disputes: Faced by social and political problems, both Chad and the Central African Republic are currently affected by the crisis in neighbouring Sudan's Darfur province.⁸⁹ They suffer spillover violence, displaced people and rebel groups along the Eastern Borders. The impact of climate change and intervention over oil and gas resources has worsened their conflicts.⁹⁰

Assessment: The Central African Republic will continue to rely on the international community and foreign aid for support. The United Nations Security Council will play an immense role in the peacebuilding process. Their efforts will decrease the level of conflict in CAR. The Central African Republic's economy will continue to deteriorate due to the ongoing violence and departure of foreign investors.

Possible Scenarios for the Next Five Years

Best Case Scenario	Worst Case Scenario	Most Likely Scenario
<p>The best-case scenario is that the Archange Touadera government remains in power and begins moderate, but important initiatives in the areas of political representation, economic and human development. The international community, in response to this effort, eliminates the UN arms embargo, continues international cooperation both in foreign direct investment and in humanitarian aid. Foreign direct investment from previously-present companies, such as Total and Areva, grows and contributes to economic growth. Humanitarian aid increases human development in health and education. The Archange Touadera government makes targeted reforms aimed at government institutions to eliminate procedural prejudice against Muslim, or other, minorities. After the Archange Touadera government's term ends, there is a peaceful transition of power in a democratic election.</p>	<p>There is substantial probability of the re-ignition of the Seleka and Anti-balaka violence, which can turn into a large-scale genocide against ethnic minorities in the CAR. As a result of the escalation of sectarian violence, many humanitarian organizations, such as Doctors without Border, may completely withdraw while the UN peace-building and peacekeeping operations will not mitigate the sectarian violence significantly. As in the case of the Bozize government in 2013, the Archange Touadera government may be ousted through a coup by either of the militant factions. With an increase in sectarian violence, an invasion from Chad becomes an increasingly likely scenario under the justification of protection of Muslim minority right. With an increase in inter-ethnic violence, infiltration of other radical multi-national terrorist organizations such as Islamic State becomes likely.</p>	<p>An increased rate of attacks against foreign aid workers is likely. The conflict will increase the number of internally displaced people and external-registered refugees hosted by neighbouring countries. There will be continued small-scale violence between the Seleka and Anti-Balaka sides. International organizations will continue to face obstacles in the aid for the Central African Republic. Their efforts to increase the standard of living through large-scale projects will be unsuccessful. Press freedom will continue to deteriorate and the media will face obstacles in documenting the situation due to the violence journalists and other analysts face. Vulnerable populations such as women and children will continue to face sexual violence and human trafficking. The current government will continue operating with a lack of transparency, but with an increased capacity and efficiency due to its improved legitimacy and substantial projects in cooperation with international organizations.</p>

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