

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the fourth Metro Detroit Model United Nations Conference. Over the past four years we have worked tirelessly to develop an exciting and innovative Model United Nations format that challenges our delegates in a competitive and inclusive environment. We work year-round to ensure that our staff members are as prepared as possible to ensure that all of our delegates can participate in our debates. Moreover, the topics that you will discuss have been carefully selected for their global importance and the larger questions that they ask. When reading through the following background guide, be sure analyze and evaluate what larger questions are being provoked by the topic and what commentary these larger questions make about the current international system. Finally, if you have any questions, be sure to reach out to your chairs on the email address provided on their committee page.

We look forward to welcoming you in January,

Mitchell Dennis

Secretary General of the Metro Detroit Model United Nations IV

The Situation in the Central African Republic

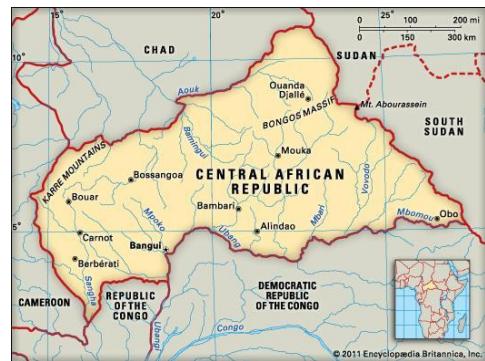
History of the Current Situation

COLONIAL AREA¹

At the end of the 19th century, France, Belgium, Great Britain, and Germany contested the area that would eventually become the Central African Republic. The French were ultimately successful. Later, they leased land to private European companies in order to avoid funding the development of the nation. This lead to the exploitation of the land and the people: the population was forced to gather wild rubber, hunt for ivory and animal skins, and work on plantations, causing food shortages and famine because no one was able to cultivate their own fields. Sleeping sickness, malaria and other diseases began to spread as a result of the conditions people were forced to work under, substantially increasing the death rate. By the 1920s, the indigenous population could no longer stand the inhumane treatment that resulted from French colonization, beginning violent protests against these abuses. Most notable of these uprisings was the Kongo-Wara Rebellion (1928-1931) which took place in the western and southwestern parts of the colony. This resulted in the execution of its leaders as well as the relocation of populations into villages where they could be supervised. During WWII, the citizens of French Equatorial Africa were called upon to fight the Germans. 3,000 answered, providing the veterans with a newfound sense of nationalism upon returning home.

INDEPENDENCE²

In 1957, Barthélémy Boganda formed the Mouvement pour l'Évolution Sociale de l'Afrique Noire (Social Evolution Movement of Black Africa; MESAN) and became president of the Grand Council of French Equatorial Africa. He developed a platform based on the unification of Chad, Gabon, Congo, and Ubangi-Shari. Upon this plan's rejection, he reluctantly agreed to accept the new constitution offered by France to Ubangi-Shari. Upon Boganda's death in 1959, his nephew, David Dacko, became President and lead Ubangi-Shari to independence. The Central African Republic has had a history of internal chaos, beginning with ousting of President David Dacko in 1965 by army commander Jean-Bedel Bokassa due to the nation facing bankruptcy and overall disapproval by the people. In the following decade, Bokassa renamed the country the Central African Empire and declared himself president for life. In 1979, less than two decades into Bokassa's reign, large protests erupted due to



¹ "The Colonial Era: The Central African Republic." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Central-African-Republic/The-colonial-era>.

² "Central African Republic profile - Timeline." *BBC News*. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13150044>.

accusations of cannibalism and the repressiveness of Bokassa's regime in which children were arrested and killed while in detention, resulting in a coup led by former President Dacko with support of French troops to oust Bokassa.

Democratic Transition

It wasn't until the 1990s, nearly four decades after becoming independent from France, that political parties were able to form within the Central African Republic. In the first democratic multiparty parliamentary and presidential elections in the nation's history, President André Kolingba, the military commander who ousted David Dacko in yet another coup in 1981, came in last; however, the results were invalidated because of widespread irregularities. The following year, in 1993, Ange-Felix Patasse defeated Presidents Kolingba and Dacko, ending 12 years of authoritarian military control and becoming the first democratically elected President in the nation's history as the leader of Mouvement pour la Libération du Peuple Centrafricain (Central African People's Liberation Movement; MLPC). Patasse inherited a nation that was practically bankrupt, with civil servants angered over unpaid wages and an administration that refused to respect the rights of the people, sanctioning executions the day after a criminal was apprehended and failing to administer local elections. French involvement in the nation ended in 1997, with the United Nations taking over the peacekeeping mission and sending in troops under the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA). The objective of this mission, which lasted from 1998-2000, was maintain stability and security, and provide aid and technical support for the 1998 legislative elections.

Central African Republic Bush War (2003-2007)

In 2003, former army chief of staff François Bozizé, a Christian, seized the presidency from Patasse, the first democratically elected leader in the Central African Republic, whose administration had been plagued with civil unrest and animosity from foreign troops. In 2004, the civil war (termed the Central African Republic Bush War) began when rebel troops attempted to overthrow Bozizé.³ That same year, a new constitution was approved in a referendum which would further allow for Bozizé to legitimize his rule through presidential elections. It is hard to determine what ignited this rebellion; it is possible that the dissolving of parliament and constitutional referendum were contributing factors, but the earliest source of violence was a raid in north-eastern town of Birao, which killed 20 citizens. Thousands of people fled their homes, seeking refuge in southern Chad. It wasn't until February 2007, 4 years into the conflict, that the People's Democratic Front, the rebel group led by Abdoulaye Miskine, signed a peace accord with President Bozizé and urged forces to abide by the cease fire.⁴ As a result of this conflict, hundreds of citizens were killed, over 200,000 displaced.

³ Baptise, Nathalie. "The Central African Republic's Forgotten Crisis." *The Nation*.

<https://www.thenation.com/article/central-african-republics-forgotten-crisis/>.

⁴ "Central African Republic profile - Timeline." BBC. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13150044>.

Central African Republic Civil War

THE CONFLICT

Conflict in the nation began once again in November 2012 when the Séléka coalition, a predominantly Muslim militia faction, overran north and central parts of the country. The group accused President Bozizé, a Christian, of not implementing aspects of previous peace agreements and demanded him be ousted and prosecuted by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Months later, in March 2013, the rebels seized power in the capital and their leader, Michel Djotodia, a Muslim, suspended the constitution and dissolved parliament.⁵ Assuming that this change in leadership would pose a threat, the Anti-Balaka forces began to lash out, committing a series of violent crimes and forced conversions to Christianity. In July 2014, the forces agreed to a tentative ceasefire during talks in the Republic of the Congo, however the government did not approve the agreement, saying it wasn't involved. In January 2015 after the rejection of the ceasefire deal, the United Nations accused the anti-Balaka militia group of ethnic cleansing, while it was also determined that the Séléka was illegally supplied with arms manufactured in China and Iran. Violence between the Séléka and anti-Balaka still continues today, with the most recent upsurge in conflict taking place in May 2017 partially as a result of the withdrawal of foreign troops. As of June 2017, the government of the Central African Republic has signed an "immediate ceasefire" with rebel groups at a meeting in Rome, Italy, agreeing that armed groups will be given political representation and their members will be brought into the nation's military. According to the deal, the rebel forces agreed to guarantee "the free movement of people and goods by removing illegal barriers as an immediate consequence of the ceasefire."⁶ It is difficult to determine how this peace deal will be carried out or if it will be effective in dissolving this ongoing conflict, since hundreds of citizens have died just days after this agreement was signed and fighting has resumed in Bria, the capital of Haute-Kotto (one of the CAR's 14 prefectures/states).⁷

GROUPS INVOLVED: SÉLÉKA COALITION⁸

Initially formed in September 2012, the Séléka originated from an agreement consisting of several rebel groups that had taken part in the Central African Bush War, such as the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UDF), Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP), and the Alliance for Rebirth and Rebuilding. The groups merged to take action because of their grievances, which included political and economic persecution, impunity of violence, and broken promises from

⁵ "The Seleka, Anti-Balaka, and a Way Forward." *Stop Genocide Now.* <https://stopgenocidenow.org/2016/06/29/seleka-anti-balaka/>.

⁶ "CAR government signs peace deal with rebel groups." *AlJazeera.* <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/car-government-signs-peace-deal-rebel-groups-170619175516668.html>.

⁷ "100 dead in Central African Republic town after peace deal signed." *The Philadelphia Tribune.* http://www.phillytrib.com/news/dead-in-central-african-republic-town-after-peace-deal-signed/article_dcc4b9cf-c8b2-5806-b8ad-19b28701cf38.html.

⁸ "What is the Seleka?" *Centre on Religion and Geopolitics.* <http://www.religionandgeopolitics.org/s-l-ka/what-seleka>.

numerous peace agreements. Leaders of a group consisting predominantly of Muslims, looted state and treasury institutions, seized control of the diamond trade, and preyed on civilians and communities. The original group was dissolved in 2013 after Michel Djotodia, a member of the coalition, was installed as president. Once the group took over the capital, it was unable to control the excess of fighters and failed to integrate militias into the national military. From that point on, the group known as the ex-Séléka fought in the civil war, promoting anarchy that soon gave rise to the group that rivaled them.

ANTI-BALAKA⁹

The origins of this Christian militant group date loosely back to 2009, when President Bozizé established village self-protection groups that were to combat bandits and other sources of insecurity locally. These groups coined the name Anti-Balaka. The group joined the fight against the Séléka in September 2013 as former members of the national army joined the ranks of the militia, taking over Bangui in December 2013. While the membership of the Anti-Balaka is mostly Christian, people didn't necessarily join this group because of their faith, but rather for revenge or because it was their only way to survive. The Anti-Balaka fought not only the Séléka, but also turned on their Muslim neighbors who had been living peacefully with Christians in the nation for generations.

INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

In October 2016, France formally ended their military mission in the Central African Republic, leaving the United Nations-Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central Africa Republic (MINUSCA) the only foreign power in the nation to combat the militia groups terrorizing civilians. As a part of Operation Sangaris, the French had been active in the Civil War since December 2013 and, because of their departure, which many feel is occurred too soon, the citizens of the Central African Republic and MINUSCA



peacekeepers are overwhelmed.¹⁰ The possible escalation of this sectarian conflict also affects neighboring nations, as the continuous violence destabilizes the region of Central Africa and poses challenges to resolving conflicts in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.¹¹

⁹ "What is the Antibalaka?" *Centre on Religion & Geopolitics*. <http://www.religionandgeopolitics.org/anti-balaka/what-antibalaka>.

¹⁰ Wires, News. "France ends military mission in troubled Central African Republic." *France 24*. <http://www.france24.com/en/20161031-france-ends-military-mission-troubled-central-african-republic>.

¹¹ "Global Conflict Tracker." *Council on Foreign Relations*. <https://www.cfr.org/global/global-conflict-tracker/p32137#/conflict/violence-in-the-central-african-republic>.

2015 Referendum

On December 13, 2015, despite violent attempts to block voting, citizens overwhelmingly voted in favor of the Constitution that would attempt to end the political instability that stemmed from the Central African Republic Civil War. With 93% of votes in favor, this document forbade current legislators from participating in the election that took place two weeks later, as well as limiting presidential terms to two years. In addition, it was declared that a Senate will be the primary law-making body and members of parliament and the constitutional court will not have immunity if charges of high treason were filed against them. Most importantly, “all kinds of religious fundamentalism and intolerance” is formally prohibited.¹² This successful referendum allowed for legal countermeasures to be put into place in order to prevent “constitutional coups,” in which African leaders have bent the laws to stay in power longer.

Economic Instability

BLOOD DIAMONDS

The diamond industry in CAR contributes to a cycle of poverty and violence. These diamonds are attractive because of their quality: experts ranked them among the top five in the world, being worth nearly \$170 per carat. In 2008, Bozizé sought to create a domestic monopoly for his relatives. In May 2013, as the Séléka took control of Bangui, the Kimberley Process, the process created in 2003 in order to prevent conflict diamonds from entering the mainstream diamond market, banned diamonds from the Central African Republic from the global market in an attempt to limit the progression of conflict caused by diamonds.¹³ Despite these limitations, it was estimated that in less than six months, nearly \$24 million worth of diamonds were fraudulently exported into the global market. According to a report published by Amnesty International in September 2015, the Central African Republic’s biggest traders have purchased diamonds worth millions without investigating whether they profited the militant groups reaping havoc within the nation during the civil war. In June 2016, this ban was partially lifted; initially applying to the southern region of Berberati, however, a United Nations panel said that the illicit diamond trade was still funding the conflict in the Central African Republic and increasingly involved neighboring nations, specifically Chad and Cameroon.¹⁴

EXTREME POVERTY

Ranking 172 out of 176 on the Human Development Index, the Central African Republic is one of the poorest nations in the world, with the GDP per capita being \$307 USD. It is ranked among the poorest countries not only in Central African but also on the African continent, with its GDP per

¹² Deutsche Welle. "Central African Republic voters say yes to new constitution." *Deutsche Welle*. <http://www.dw.com/en/central-african-republic-voters-say-yes-to-new-constitution/a-18933653>.

¹³ "What is the KP." *KimberleyProcess*. <https://www.kimberleyprocess.com/en/what-kp>.

¹⁴ "In Central African Republic, Diamonds Fuel A Cycle of Violence and Poverty." *Voice of America*. <https://projects.voanews.com/central-african-republic-diamonds/>.

capita being only \$20 ahead of Burundi. The life expectancy within the nation is only 39 years, more than half of the population is illiterate, including more than 80% of rural women, and it has one of the highest HIV/AIDS rates in the world, with roughly 4% of the population being infected and at least 82,000 children orphaned due to AIDS.¹⁵ While donors and the World Bank are supporting large-scale development projects in the south, the situation in the north is significantly worse: infrastructure is essentially non-existent, there is no way to access clean water, and there are no government structures, such as law enforcement and schools. The primary project being carried out by the World Bank in the Central African Republic is called the Londo (“Stand Up”) Project, aiming to “provide temporary employment to vulnerable people throughout the entire territory of the country,” focusing on local government, public infrastructure, socio-economic integration, and project management.

Other Sources of Violence

LORD’S RESISTANCE ARMY

Since its founding in 1987, the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), a religiously-inspired militant group, has been responsible for crimes against humanity in the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan. Between 1987 and 2012, the LRA was responsible for over 100,000 deaths, the abduction between 60,000 and 100,000 children, and the displacement of as many as 2.5 million people. According to a report by the United Nations Office for Central Africa published in May 2016, the LRA “has demonstrated increased boldness by attacking larger or less isolated population centers” in the Central African Republic in 2016. Although there has been a significant reduction in the number of fighters in the militant group, it still remains an ongoing threat to the people of Central Africa. Protecting the nation from attacks by the LRA is considered to be a lower priority, not only by the country itself but also by the UN peacekeepers.

Humanitarian Crisis

REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE¹⁶

Nearly 1 million men, women, and children have fled their homes in the Central African Republic, seeking refuge in mosques and churches, as well as in neighboring nations, many showing signs of brutal attacks and malnutrition. Today, over 450,000 refugees are sheltered in Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Republic of Congo. Despite the peaceful elections that occurred as a result of the 2015 constitutional referendum, 415,000 are still currently internally displaced. The amount of internally displaced persons (IDPs) currently in CAR reflects the largest wave of movement since December 2013. Considered by the United Nations High Commissioner for

¹⁵ HIV and AIDS Estimates (2015).” UNAIDS. <http://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/centralafricanrepublic>.

¹⁶ "CAR Situation." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/car-emergency.html>.

Refugees (UNHCR) as one of the most poorly funded emergency situations globally, many refugees living outside of formal sites and within communities lack food, health, water, shelter, and sanitation.

“LARGEST FORGOTTEN HUMANITARIAN CRISIS”

Roughly 2.2 million people in the Central African Republic (50% of the nation’s population) continues to require emergency humanitarian assistance. Despite the successful constitutional referendum of 2015 and elections months later, the need for aid continues to persist as the constant violence and access constraints complicate the work of organizations such as the UNHCR, USAID, and ECHO. The primary issues that are being addressed by these organizations include the diminished national healthcare system, lack of civilian protection, food insecurity, lack of clean drinking water, and minimal access to basic construction materials in order to develop shelter. As stated by António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, “the Central African Republic is falling through the cracks of international attention.”¹⁷

MINUSCA is the current United Nations operation in the Central African Republic, proceeded by The UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA), which was deployed from January 2010 until the escalation of conflict in December 2013, and the African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA), which was expanded into MINUSCA in 2014 under Security Council Resolution 2149. MINUSCA’s mandate declares the following tasks are to be considered a priority: protection of civilians; support for the implementation of the transition process, including efforts in favor of the extension of State authority and preservation of territorial integrity; facilitate the immediate, full, safe, and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance; protection of the United Nations; promotion and protection of human rights; support for national and international justice and the rule of law; and Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration (DDR), and Repatriation (DDRR).¹⁸

ABUSES BY PEACEKEEPERS

In April 2015, allegations of sexual abuse by peacekeepers in the Central African Republic came to light, and in January 2017, an investigation conducted by the United Nations was able to identify 41 perpetrators. The UN condemned these assaults and stated that it was up to the authorities in Burundi and Gabon, the home nations of the assailants, to take actions against the accused. In addition, between October and December 2015, peacekeepers raped and sexually exploited eight women and girls near an airport in the Bambari, a city in the middle of the Central African Republic. The victims believed that their assailants were from the Democratic Republic of the Congo or the Republic of the Congo.¹⁹ The most notable instance of peacekeepers abusing the citizens of the Central African Republic occurred between December 2013 and June 2014, when testimonies of 6 children between the ages of 9 and 13 described abuse by French peacekeepers in Bangui. The case resulted in

¹⁷ "Refugee Crisis in the Central African Republic." USA for UNHCR. <http://www.unrefugees.org/where-we-work/car/>.

¹⁸ "United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA)." United Nations. <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minusca/background.shtml>.

¹⁹ "UN inquiry into CAR abuse claims identifies 41 troops as suspects." *The Guardian*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/05/un-inquiry-into-car-abuse-claims-identifies-41-troops-as-suspects>.

international outrage when a panel of French judges decided not to bring charges against the peacekeepers, despite being accused of sexually abusing children. The lack of consequences carried out against peacekeepers accused of committing a violent crime by not only their home nation, but also the United Nations, has been a problem on countless peacekeeping missions throughout history.²⁰ In addition to the plethora of evidence of sexual assault committed by peacekeepers, overwhelming evidence of murder by the UN officials came to light in February 2016. A mass grave was discovered near a peacekeeping base in Boali, uncovering the remains of 12 unidentified citizens of the Central African Republic who had been detained by peacekeepers in March 2014. The Human Rights watch has also documented the torture of two Anti-Balaka leaders in December 2013, the public execution of two suspected Anti-Balaka in February 2014, and the beating to death of two civilians by Congolese peacekeepers in June 2015.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

As stated in the MINUSCA mandate, this peacekeeping operation, and peacekeeping operations in general, are based on the following principles: consent, impartiality, and withholding the use of force. In February 2016, peacekeepers in the Central African Republic abandoned the key principle of withholding force when they “intervened militarily to halt an offensive maneuver” by 40 members of an armed group near the town of Bambari.²¹ This instance raises the question about how far peacekeepers deployed under MINUSCA will go to enforce the mandate without violating international law.

LACK OF FUNDING

As the United States significantly reduces their peacekeeping budget, MINUSCA continues to struggle to carry out its mandate as threats to civilians in the Central African Republic escalate. The issue of not having enough funding allocated for this mission was made evident in October 2016, when peacekeepers failed to halt an attack on a displacement site in Kaga Bandoro, resulting in the death of 37 civilians. Only one month after the deadly conflict in Kaga Bandoro, peacekeepers left their post near a hospital in Bria, which quickly became occupied by armed groups and the location of yet another fatal attack. At the end of the first quarter of 2017, only 5% of \$399.5 million in funding for humanitarian needs in the Central African Republic was received. According to Federico Borello, Executive Director at the Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC), “MINUSCA has fewer resources compared to other UN missions given the immense size of the country, the scale of threats, and the number of tasks it’s been assigned. The mission is trying to do more with less, but it is struggling.”²²

²⁰ "No Charges in Sexual Abuse Case Involving French Peacekeepers." *The New York Times*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/06/world/africa/french-peacekeepers-un-sexual-abuse-case-central-african-republic.html>.

²¹ "The UN Goes to War in the Central African Republic: What are the Limits of Peacekeeping?" *Just Security*.
<https://www.justsecurity.org/39151/war-central-african-republic-limits-peacekeeping/>.

²² "The Primacy of Protection: Delivering on the MINUSCA Mandate in the Central African Republic." *ReliefWeb*.
<http://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/primacy-protection-delivering-minusca-mandate-central-african>.

Questions to Consider

- To what extent has the MINUSCA been successful? How can the mission be improved?
- Should peacekeepers deployed in the Central African Republic who are accused of committing violent crimes face stricter consequences?
- How can nations further contribute to help alleviate the humanitarian crisis?
- How can further religious conflict be prevented?
- What can be done, within the jurisdiction of the United Nations Security Council, to improve stability in the nation?
- What role do diamonds play in the ongoing conflict in the Central African Republic? How are militias and outside powers impacted by their presence?
- How can the government of the Central African Republic be further improved?
- What long-term solutions must be implemented to stop the cycle of conflict, violence, and instability within the Central African Republic?