

Robert KŁOSOWICZ

Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland

rklosowicz@yahoo.pl

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: PORTRAIT OF A COLLAPSED STATE AFTER THE LAST REBELLION

ABSTRACT

Central African Republic (CAR) is one of the poorest and most unstable countries in the world and has occupied the top place in all possible rankings of failed states, instability, poverty, corruption etc. for many years. However, although the CAR has experienced almost constant instability for the last few decades it was only in recent years that it has received the media attention which was unseen before. Such an unusual interest has resulted from two successive internal conflicts: first, in 2012 the anti-government rebellion drawing together the alliance of rebel militia factions, the Séléka, and a year later the insurrection of the opposing Anti-Balaka forces. The article is an attempt to analyse the causes of the instability of the CAR and the current political and security situation in the country, taking into account, among other things, the results of the fieldwork conducted by the author in the Central African Republic, as well as his long-time research on the phenomenon of dysfunctional states.

Keywords: Central African Republic, state dysfunctionality, collapsed state, violence, development issues

In recent years, Central African Republic (*République centrafricaine*), CAR, has been making newspaper headlines all over the world, and has been present in the media almost on a weekly basis. This unusual interest of the international community in this small country – for African standards – and one of the poorest countries in the world has resulted from two successive civil wars: first, in 2012 the anti-government rebellion drawing together the alliance of rebel militia factions, the Séléka, and a year later the insurrection by the Anti-Balaka, which were formed as village self-defence forces in response to the acts of violence committed by the units of the Séléka, which was in power at that time. However, observers who had been following the fate of this country for the last 13 years, since President François Bozizé came to power as a result of a military coup d'état, were not surprised by such a turn of events. This is due to the fact that it was visible much earlier that the state did not function properly, and its breakdown was just a matter of time. For years, the CAR has occupying the top place in all possible rankings of failed states, instability, poverty, corruption or disastrous health status of society¹. Furthermore, almost all the indicators defining dysfunctional states can be applied to Central African Republic. If we follow the *Fragile States Index* – FSI (until 2014 known as the *Failed States Index*), the most important and widely quoted ranking of dysfunctional states (prepared on an annual basis since 2005 by the Washington-based think tank The Fund for Peace in cooperation with *Foreign Policy* magazine), it is evident that Central African Republic has been descending into the chaos of disintegration of statehood since the first ranking was announced in 2005, and over the last ten years it has not left the top ten most dysfunctional countries in the world, whereas in 2014 it joined the group of the top three failed states, classified as a state with a status of a *very high alert*.²

Table 1. The position of the Central African Republic in the *Failed States Index* over the period 2005-2015³.

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
20	13	10	10	8	8	8	6	9	3	3

The article is the result of the author's interest in the problem of dysfunctional states, developed during field research in various Sub-Saharan African states, including the Central African Republic, which formed part of the research project entitled "Failed states and their dysfunctional influence on international relations in the regional and global dimension". The main emphasis was placed on the search for reasons behind the crisis of statehood which is being experienced in the Central African Republic, taking into account the historical and the present perspective, as well as an attempt to analyse

¹ UN-OHRLLS, *Least Developed Countries*, at <http://www.unohrlls.org/en/ldc/related/62/>, 18 July 2014.

² *Failed States Index 2005-2015*, The Fund for Peace, at <http://ffp.statesindex.org/rankings>, 18 July 2015.

³ *Ibid.*

the current state of affairs in the country whose situation is very dynamic and characterized by frequent outbreaks of violence. The main hypothesis of the author is an assumption that in recent years the situation of the state institutions of the CAR (understood rather broadly – in the neo-institutional perspective) has been going steadily downhill and there are no visible symptoms of its rapid improvement.

The Central African Republic is one of the least developed countries in the world, and its share in the global economy does not exceed 0.01%⁴. Economic development is slowed down by an unstable political situation, lack of skilled workforce, poor transport infrastructure, corruption and extensive black economy (mainly diamond smuggling). The railway network does not exist, and out of 23.8 thousand kilometres of roads only 3 per cent have hard surface, which is why during the wet season the majority of roads are impassable. Being an African landlocked country also does not help the economic development and causes additional constraints such as double isolation – because of Africa's isolation from the European, American or Asian markets, and due to the landlocked countries' isolation from the coast; or dependence on its own or transit countries' weak infrastructure⁵. What also influences the situation apart from the poverty and low level of development is the very low standards of education and virtually non-existent public health care (most hospitals and clinics are run by missions). The average life expectancy in the CAR is 50, 3.8 per cent of the population is infected with the HIV virus, 37 per cent of Central Africans aged 15+ are unable to read and write⁶. The country's poverty is confirmed by statistics, e.g. the *Human Development Index for 2015* (HDI) – out of 188 countries in the world the Central African Republic ranks the 187th, and since 2011 it has consistently been ranked among the last ten countries in the HDI⁷. Raw materials are the country's main resources: chiefly diamonds, uranium and timber, but trade in diamonds accounts for 50 per cent of the country's whole export revenue. The condition of the state finances is deplorable. The latest estimates by the United Nations suggest that more than 28 per cent of the population is affected by food insecurity and 33 per cent requires humanitarian assistance⁸.

As in the case of health care and education, whose standards are generally speaking very low, is provided mainly by religious missions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Public schools often exist only on paper, because teachers do not get their salaries for months and schools do not function at all or are maintained from money paid

⁴ Global Finance, *Country Report 2015: The Central African Republic*, at <<http://www.gfmag.com/gdp-data-country-reports/302-the-central-african-republic-gdp-country-report.html#axzz1VBOmyEyA>>, 18 July 2014.

⁵ J.D. Nkurunziza, 'The Development of African Landlocked Countries' in E. Aryeetey et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to the Economics of Africa*, Oxford 2014, pp. 59-60.

⁶ UNDP, *Country profile of human development indicators: Central African Republic*, at <<http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CAF>>, 14 January 2016.

⁷ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2015*, at <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2015_human_development_report.pdf>, 20 July 2015.

⁸ *Central African Republic*, „African Economic Outlook”, at <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/country-notes/central-africa/central-african-republic/>, 15 January 2016.

by students' parents or local communities. The only university in the Central African Republic is located in its capital – Bangui, but its level of teaching is hardly academic, even by African standards. The apostolic nuncio in Central African Republic – Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo, whom I interviewed, drew my attention to the problem of the correlation between the quality of food and the education of children⁹. Malnourished children in the areas where the main staple food is cassava are not able to properly develop intellectually.

The problem of education should be connected with the problem of childcare. In highly dysfunctional states where additionally, what makes matters worse, the armed conflict takes place, children from an early age are exposed to great danger and they often live with the trauma of flight and fight for survival. Also, the AIDS pandemic and other diseases typical for sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. malaria or yellow fever) make thousands of children reliant on care of their grandparents, or of not much older siblings. According to the report *SOS Children's Villages of 2015*, 60 per cent of children in sub-Saharan Africa live in poverty, and 10 per cent have lost both parents. Only because of AIDS 15 million African children became orphans. For these children SOS Children Villages/Villages d'Enfants have been created – to take care of orphans and street children¹⁰. During my stay in the Central African Republic in July 2010 I visited one of these children villages, established near the town of Bouar. Although without any doubt these institutions help the most vulnerable and often marginalized children, they are run in a “Western style”, detached from surrounding reality, what in consequence, makes the children who grow up in children villages totally unprepared for the living conditions, in which the vast majority of them will have to live in their adult life¹¹.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SOCIETY IS INTERNALLY CONFLICTED

In Sub-Saharan Africa, a complex ethnic structure tends to be the norm rather than the exception, as this part of the world is still dominated by pre-national forms of ethnic awareness. The problem was exacerbated by the colonial legacy, as the European superpowers delineated boundaries of their zones of influence, but failed to take into account ethnic and cultural differences. After gaining independence, the lack of political elites and well-formed modern civil society institutions has led to the situation in

⁹ Author's interview with the apostolic nuncio in Central African Republic, Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo, 18 August 2010.

¹⁰ SOS Children's Villages International, *Children at Risk. The World's most vulnerable children: who they are, where they live, and what puts them at risk*, November 2015, at <<http://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/384bc38a-62aa-4c2a-9563-a5ecc61b6a77/SOS-Child-at-risk-report-web.pdf>>, 31 January 2016.

¹¹ The author's lessons learned from participant observations and interviews with the personnel during his visit to the Children Village SOS in Bouar, Central African Republic, 29 July 2010.

which ethnicity-based groups of interest compete with one another as part of political systems. The Central African Republic is inhabited by over eighty ethnic groups, and not only the largest of them, Gbaja, Banda, Mandija and Sara, compete with one another for power¹². The situation was aggravated by the recently visible sectarian conflict, when as a result of the deposition of President Bozizé, the Séléka group, dominated by followers of Islam, came to power.

State appropriation by ethnic groups in CAR is a norm, which is proven by the country's history since the gaining of independence. When General André Kolingba came to power after the coup d'état in 1981, he used only the ethnic and tribal principle in selection of collaborators for state and military offices. Kolingba was a member of Yakoma tribe from the south of the country, and during his presidency members of his tribe, whose population does not exceed 5% of CAR inhabitants, took over the majority of key positions in the state and army. Recruitment for armed forces was also conducted in line with the ethnic status¹³. It had serious consequences later, when Kolingba was replaced by Ange-Félix Patassé, who came from the north of the country. Patassé, who did not trust the army, whose officer corps was dominated by Yakoma tribe, underpaid it. However, he created a well-paid presidential guard (*Unité de sécurité présidentielle*) and militia formations to which members of northern tribes were usually recruited. Consequently, numerous rebellions broke out against the new president in the years 1996-1997, and the president himself, being uncertain about his soldiers, asked for outside help. At that time, help was provided by Libya's leader Muammar Gaddafi, who sent him 300 well-equipped and well-trained commandos. After quenching the rebellion, Patassé decided to deal with the Yakoma tribe, which led to an exodus of approximately 20,000 people, as well as crimes and acts of violence against civilians. During the coup d'état attempt in 2001, Patassé asked Libyans for help again, promising Gaddafi the monopoly on extraction of diamonds, and hired rebels from the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (*Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo* – MLC) of Jean-Pierre Bemba, infamous for their cruelty and war crimes. Prowling the southern part of the country, those units massacred, raped and robbed the CAR population. As a result of those activities, approximately 60,000 people were forced to leave their homes¹⁴. Overthrown in March 2013, Bozizé also did not trust the army; his *Garde Ré-*

¹² U.S. Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, *Background note: Central African Republic*, at <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/4007.htm>>, 18 December 2010.

¹³ 'Central Africa Republic: André Kolingba (1937-2010)', *Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Social and Cultural Series*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (2010), p. 18295B, at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-825X.2010.03128.x>>; P. Engelbert, 'The Central African Republic: Recent History' in I. Frame (ed.), *Africa South of the Sahara 2008*, London 2008, p. 222 (*Regional Surveys of the World*); A. Mehler, 'Central African Republic' in D. Nohlen, M. Krennerich, B. Thibaut (eds.), *Elections in Africa: A Data Handbook*, Oxford 1999, p. 206.

¹⁴ The crimes committed at that time by Patassé's guard and the Congolese units were investigated by The International Criminal Court, which resulted in Bemba's capture. He was then handed over to the International Criminal Court which in March 2016 found him guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Central African Republic more than a decade ago. International Criminal Court, *Situation in the Central African Republic in the Case of the Prosecutor v. Jean-*

publicaine consisted exclusively of so-called “patriots” who supported the Bozizé rebellion and the Chadians who came with them¹⁵.

A separate place in the mosaic of CAR’s ethnic groups should be given to the Muslim population, which prior to the outbreak of the 2012 conflict was estimated at approximately 15 per cent of the country’s population¹⁶. The Muslims are generally people of immigrant origin – they come from the countries neighbouring CAR from the north, mainly from Chad. They have a big influence on the country’s economy and have dominated the majority of business undertakings, both in the field of extraction of raw materials and small trade. The tension between them and the indigenous population, mainly Christians (50%) and followers of animist religions (35%), is not only of the sectarian, but also of social and ethnic nature, and it intensified after the Séléka came to power, as part of the Chadian population living in the CAR openly supported the rebels¹⁷.

PRIVATISATION OF POWER

Dysfunctional states not only assume a very limited scope of duties, but additionally are not able to fulfil them effectively. As a rule, such states do not have a strong centre of power which would prevent processes of anarchisation of the public life, and they are unable to contain the most important social conflicts. The most evident sign of the state’s collapse is the fact that it has lost monopoly on using force in a part of its territory, which means that the state monopoly on coercion is taken over, in an uncontrolled way, by local leaders, clans, or ethnic groups. Usually such a situation leads to an outbreak of a civil war, which is frequently accompanied by famine, epidemics, mass migration, ethnic cleansing, slaughter and rape. The state’s inability to regulate the course of the public life in its own territory and the actual loss of sovereignty in the

-*Pierre Bemba Gombo*, at <<http://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/doc/doc699541.pdf>>, 15 February 2014; D. Howden, ‘International Justice and Congo “Warlord” on Trial’, *The Independent*, 23 November 2010, at <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/international-justice-and-congo-warlord-on-trial-2141135.html>>, 23 August 2011; International Criminal Court, *ICC Trial Chamber III declares Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity*, Press release, 21 March 2016, at <https://www.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/icc/press%20and%20media/press%20releases/Pages/pr1200.aspx>, 28 March 2016.

¹⁵ M. Debos, ‘Fluid Loyalties in a Regional Crisis: Chadian “Ex-Liberators” in the Central African Republic’, *African Affairs*, Vol. 107 (2008), pp. 229-230, at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adn004>>.

¹⁶ P. Tonino, F. Nyabenda, *Islam en Centrafrique, Afrique Espoir*, at <<http://afriquespoir.org/?q=node/469>>, 15 July 2014.

¹⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook, *Central African Republic*, at <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ct.html>>, 10 October 2015; I. Cywa, ‘Czy nastąpi podział Republiki Środkowoafrykańskiej’, *Afryka*, No. 41 (2015), pp. 85-88; D. Abdoukarim, ‘Central African Republic: “We’re Thought of as Foreign because We’re Muslims”’, *The Guardian*, 16 May 2015, at <<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/feb/16/central-african-republic-muslim-christian-militias>>, 10 November 2015.

country provides non-state actors with extensive opportunities to develop crime activity and exploit the country's natural resources in the conditions of chaos. During Bozizé's rule, one third of the country (mainly northern part) was not effectively controlled by the government in Bangui, and the control of this area was exercised by three major armed rebel groups: *Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement* – UFDR, *Armée populaire pour la restauration de la république et la démocratie* – APRD and *Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix* – CPJP, which, to a significant extent, financed its operation thanks to exploitation of natural resources¹⁸. On the other hand, in the south-eastern part of the country, raids were carried out by the Lord's Resistance Army – LRA, which is still present there and, taking advantage of the weakness of the governments of Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic, massacres civilians in these countries, abducts minors and incorporates them in their ranks, and crosses the borders of the weak states virtually unpunished¹⁹. Whereas the north-eastern part of the country was troubled by raids conducted by the Janjaweed from Sudan, which crossed the border with CAR to chase fleeing residents of Darfur and abduct young men from CAR in order to incorporate them into their militias²⁰.

THE CONDITION OF THE ARMED FORCES

In dysfunctional states, armed forces are usually weak, both, in terms of training and discipline, as well as equipment. The army is dragged into political conflicts, demoralised by participation in frequent coup d'état attempts or penal expeditions against civilians opposing the government in the capital. There is a rule that the one that controls armed forces also has power, and the loss of this control is tantamount to the loss of power. The army does not protect the country's interests, and neither is able to defend its borders and population. Sometimes the army oppresses it, and soldiers are perceived as just a lesser evil than rebels. In fact, the line here is blurred due to the fact that frequently as a result of coup d'état attempts and civil wars, rebel units become the government army after their leader takes power, and former soldiers of the government army organise rebel units. This is the case of Central African Republic. *Forces armées centrafricaines* (FACA) play (apart from France's support) the key role in taking and retaining power. Historically, the army has taken part almost in all changes of the country's president. Presidents

¹⁸ G. Queyranne, *Peace in Central African Republic? Last rebels sign deal to end conflict*, Centre for African Development and Security, at <http://cads-cdsa.org/2011/07/peace-in-central-african-republic-last-rebels-sign-deal-to-end-conflict/>, 2 August 2011.

¹⁹ 'Lord's Resistance Army Killed Hundreds in Congo Massacre', Reuters, 27 March 2010, at <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/03/27/us-congo-democratic-massacre-idUSTRE62Q1PZ20100327>>, 17 January 2016; *Central Africa: Lord's Resistance Army Exploits State Weakness*, <http://www.rights-monitoring.org/2011/02/central-africa-lords-resistance-army-exploits-state-weakness/>, 20 December 2010.

²⁰ Human Rights Watch, Vol. 19, No. 13(A): *State of Anarchy. Rebellion and Abuses against Civilians* (September 2007).

Dacko, Bokassa, Kolingba, Bozizé and Djotodia came to power as a result of a coup d'état, supported either by the national army or by foreign mercenaries. Out of five Central African presidents three used to be army chiefs of staff. The country's first president, David Dacko, was overthrown by an army chief of staff – Jean-Bédél Bokassa. In 1979, he returned to CAR as a result of another coup d'état, supported by the French commandos sent by Paris as part of *Baracuda* operation. In 1981, he was overthrown again by another army chief of staff – General André Kolingba. The only president who came to power through a democratic election was President Ange-Félix Patassé in 1993, who quickly became very unpopular among military men, as majority of officers and soldiers came from southern tribes which supported former President Kolingba. Over the period 1996-1997, badly paid soldiers incited a number of rebellions in the country, and in 2001 an unsuccessful coup d'état attempt took place. Unable to rely on loyalty of the national army, Patassé requested Libya and Democratic Republic of Congo for help. The CAR army is not only badly trained, but it is also unstable. Demoralised soldiers have expressed their discontent on many occasions, inciting numerous rebellions and demanding payment of overdue salaries. Participation in coup d'état attempts has, by no means, raised the morale of the armed forces. Furthermore, the army is criticised for frequent violations of human rights, crimes, rapes and widespread corruption. Consequently, when a moment of trial comes, which was the case during the latest Séléka rebellion, the army is not able to carry out military activities effectively, and usually disintegrates. This can be exemplified by the events of March 2013. On March 24th, the Séléka rebels assumed control of the capital, and a few days later had the whole country under their control. The Séléka soldiers mainly come from Chad and Sudan. They mostly use Arabic and in the vast majority of cases do not know French or Sango. When they were taking control there was over 5,000 of them, and later their number increased as much as fivefold. After a few days of training, new recruits received weapons, uniforms and were conscripted into the Central African army. Not having much idea about military discipline and soldier's honour, they committed numerous abuses, such as theft, rapes, extortion of fees at road barriers, shops, markets and many other places. The abuses were committed with explicit or presumed consent of their army superiors. In fact, even the military ranks they assigned to themselves have been earned for participation in rebel campaigns in various African countries, and not after a long period of service and training²¹.

WARS

Wars are the bloodiest consequence of a state's collapse, and over the last twelve years the Central African Republic has been affected by three major internal conflicts showing features of the civil war, which have resulted not only in the suffering of the population but also in thousands of people who have been killed, wounded or deprived of the roof over their heads. In an underpopulated country such a conflict is disastrous.

²¹ Based on the account of missionary priest Miroslaw Gucwa, 27 November 2013.

Those who take part in the fight do not follow the code of war laws or basic principles of dealing with civilians, prisoners of war and places of worship. The lack of the sense of responsibility for the consequences of waging such wars is exacerbated further by the fact that the structure of the warring armed organisations is highly decentralised, and demoralised units act in a coordinated way only temporarily, usually during bigger military operations. Moreover, the units of the warring parties include mercenaries from other countries (mainly from Chad, Sudan, or Democratic Republic of Congo) who do not identify themselves with the local population and are focused on looting, demonstrating huge ruthlessness in their behaviour²².

The struggle for power in the Central African Republic between President Ange-Félix Patassé and General François Bozizé ruined the country and put it at risk of famine catastrophe, when the fighting politicians asked foreign armies for help (Patassé – Libyan and Congolese mercenaries, Bozizé – Chadian ones). Some of defeated units transformed themselves into gangs who robbed civilians or attacked them on roads. This phenomenon of road bandits was called *zargina*. The practice was particularly oppressive in the north of the country, near the Chadian border²³.

The conduct of Séléka-related soldiers was the main cause of the Anti-Balaka movement, whose main aim was to drive out the “strangers”, i.e. Séléka rebels associated with the followers of Islam. That led to the second part of the bloody civil war full of slaughters and rapes, as a result of which thousands of Muslims were forced to leave their homes. Therefore, the latest civil war was not only an instance of a struggle for power, but a conflict with ethnic and religious background. In order to provide self-defence, militias of animistic and Christian populations, *Anti-Balaka* have been formed in response to the activities of the Séléka group, as it was mentioned above, consisting mainly of Muslims. As a consequence of international pressure condemning the Séléka rule, and the outbreak of an uprising (with the main force – the aforementioned Anti-Balaka militias), the leader of Séléka and his most important collaborators in January 2014 left the country. Power was taken over by the former mayor of Bangui – Catherine Samba-Panza – as a transitional president. She was to stay in office until the parliamentary and presidential elections. Although initially it was planned that they would be held one month later, the election date was continuously postponed, and, finally, they were held more than a year later (in December 2015). For the 2016 presidential elections dozens of people declared their candidacy, including three former prime ministers and three sons of former presidents²⁴.

²² Y. Weyns et al., *Mapping Conflict Motives: The Central African Republic*, International Peace Information Service, Antwerp 2014, at <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20141124_CAR.pdf>, 27 February 2016.

²³ R. Wiczorek, *Listy z serca Afryki*, Kraków 2007, p. 75; International Crisis Group, *Central African Republic: The Roots of Violence*, Africa Report no. 230, Brussels 2015, at <[http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/central-africa/central-african-republic/230-central-african-republic-the-roots-of-violence.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/africa/central-africa/central-african-republic/230-central-african-republic-the-roots-of-violence.pdf)>, 25 February 2016.

²⁴ D.N. Kolingba, S. Patassé, J.-S. Bokassa, ‘Central African Republic Election Delayed over Logistical Concerns’, *The Guardian*, 24 December 2015, at <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/24/central-african-republic-election-delayed-december-30>>, 9 January 2016.

As it was previously mentioned, the conflict for power has escalated into an ethnic and religious one. The Muslim community living in the CAR experienced retaliation, which turned into massacres of Muslim population. The hatred for the acts committed by the Séléka coincided with the economic factor, because the Muslims were the richer part of the society, and actually they controlled most of the trade and services. Before the outbreak of the conflict in 2012, the Muslim population was estimated at 15-17% of the country's population²⁵. In the capital, their number reached 120,000, currently only little over 10,000 of them left. They used to have a big influence on the economy of the country, because, as it has been already mentioned, they controlled most business ventures, both in the sphere of extraction of raw materials, as well as small trade activities. For example, rich Arab merchants practically seized control of the gold and diamonds trade – the greatest wealth of the CAR. Moreover, the trade itself was to a large extent illegal. In their mines, they employed hundreds of local workers, who worked in very difficult conditions for minimum rates, they were 'treated like cattle' by hired bodyguard units, consisting mainly of Muslims. During his visit in the CAR in summer 2010 the author witnessed many times the ill-treatment of local populations (mostly Christians and animists) and ostentatious attitude of superiority toward them was demonstrated by Muslims²⁶. According to many politicians and observers, the escalation of the political and religious situation has to do with involvement of external actors, e.g. oil states, headed by Saudi Arabia which supports the Séléka rebels financially, it seems to be related with far-reaching plans of Islamization of the Central Africa²⁷.

After the loss of control over the greater part of the CAR experienced by the Séléka in the first months of 2014, the majority of Muslims living in the western part of the country, including the capital Bangui, had to leave their homes under the threat of losing their lives. Their property was plundered, their shops and homes looted and burnt down. Some enclaves inhabited by large concentrations of Muslim population, which decided to stay, are currently protected by international peacekeepers. But leaving these enclaves became practically impossible because of the threat of attack by the Anti-Balaka militants. It is assumed that over the period from December 2013 to October 2014 almost 190,000 people fled to neighbouring countries – mainly to Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo-Brazzaville and Chad. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Cameroon received more than 135,000 refugees. In addition, over 850,000-930,000 people (around 20-25% of the country's population) became internally displaced persons (IDPs), living in appalling conditions, without adequate food security and life safety²⁸.

²⁵ P. Tonino, F. Nyabenda, *Islam...*

²⁶ The author's observations during field research in the Central African Republic, July-September 2010.

²⁷ The report of Polish secular missionary Izabela Cywa, based on the interviews with Central African politicians conducted in Autumn 2015.

²⁸ UNHCR, *2015 UNHCR country operations profile: Central African Republic*, at <<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e45c156.html>>, 29 January 2016; Doctors Without Borders, *CAR: No Hope of Returning Home*, 27 January 2016, at <<http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/article/car-no-hope-returning-home>>, 31 January 2016.

It is also worth to mention an economic aspect of the current internal conflict in the Central African Republic. Many of the mining areas are now under control of rebel groups, both the Anti-Balaka and the Séléka, which thanks to the income from the illicit trade in diamonds and gold can finance their conflict²⁹. There is also evidence of forced labour and child labour in the mines, but the information is limited because of the difficult access to the sites. The newly raised question is the timber trade. According to the *Global Witness Report*, the European and Chinese timber trade companies has been funding the armed groups on both sides since 2013 (which is seen as related to the diamond trade ban imposed by the Kimberley Process). The same reports estimated that in 2013 the logging industry companies paid nearly 3.4 million euro in security and checkpoints payments to the Séléka rebels in the north of the country, and in 2014 hundreds of thousands euro to the Anti-Balaka militias³⁰.

THE DESTABILISATION OF THE REGION

Dysfunctional states often not only struggle with the plague of the internal war themselves, but also are the breeding ground for the conflict in the neighbouring countries, thus destabilising the whole region. Being unable to effectively control their territory and borders, they cannot prevent acts of aggression launched by armed groups from their territory against the neighbouring countries. The instability in Central African Republic influences the neighbouring states, and led to interventions from outside, including interventions of the neighbours: Chad, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as by the former colonial master – France, and, in addition, forces international organisations to take action, e.g. the United Nations or the European Union – The United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad – MINUCART (2007-2010), European Union Force Chad/CAR – EUFOR (2007-2009)³¹.

The relations between CAR and Chad can serve as an emblematic example. The Central African Republic and Chad have a history of mutually supporting rebel groups against the central government in these countries. For instance, in 2003 General Boz-

²⁹ Until May 2013 Central African Republic was a major exporter of diamonds, but then the Kimberley Process banned shipment of its rough diamonds (the decision had the character of suspension), because of the current CAR's security situation. *2013 Administrative Decision on Central African Republic*, Kimberley Process Documents, at <<http://www.kimberleyprocess.com/en/2013-administrative-decision-central-african-republic-0>>, 29 December 2015.

³⁰ Global Witness Report, *Blood Timber: How Europe Helped Fund War in Central African Republic*, July 2015, at <<https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/forests/bloodtimber/>>, 31 January 2016; 'Timber Companies Paid CAR Armed Groups Millions, Claims Report', *The Guardian*, 15 July 2015, at <<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jul/15/central-african-republic-timber-trade-paid-millions-armed-groups>>, 30 November 2015.

³¹ In total, 21 EU states became involved in the European Union mission to Chad and Central African Republic. Cf. M. Brylonek, 'PKW w Czadzie i Republice Środkowoafrykańskiej', *Przegląd Logistyczny*, No. 4 (2008), pp. 4-10; A. Kępczyński, 'Wyzwania logistyczne operacji w Czadzie i Republice Środkowoafrykańskiej', *Przegląd Logistyczny*, No. 4 (2008), pp. 11-16.

izé's rebellion against the incumbent, President Patassé, began in Chad with the official support of Chad's President Idriss Déby. Later, Chadian president provided support to President Bozizé, who fought the rebellion in the north of the country. The aim was obvious – to prevent closer cooperation between rebel groups on both sides of the border, which would have resulted in the establishment of bases of Chadian rebels in the CAR's territory³². It was the Chadian authorities which arrested and handed over to the government of Central African Republic Charles Massi – the leader of CPJP rebel group, which operated in the north of the country. Furthermore, in November 2010 Chadian troops pushed off the rebels from the above-mentioned group from the strategically important town of Birao in the north of the country, when they were requested to do so by the government in Bangui³³. Sudan supported rebels from Central African Republic against Bozizé. With tacit consent of Khartoum, armed raids to the CAR's territory were also conducted by Muslim militias – Janjaweed, which attacked refugee camps. In addition, the Sudanese government army conducted a number of armed operations against rebels hiding in the CAR territory. It was from the territory of Central African Republic, among other places, that in April 2006 Chadian rebels under Mahamat Nour's command conducted an attack on Chad's capital, Ndjamena. It is also known that the Chadian rebel units recruited Central African mercenaries³⁴.

In the peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic – the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) took part around 12,000 international peacekeeping troops³⁵ and 2000 French soldiers from the Military Operation *Sangaris*³⁶. However, these forces are not sufficient to stabilize the situation in the country and ensure safety to its population, even to its most vulnerable part – women and children, who are especially exposed to violence, forced conscription to the rebel groups, forced marriages, forced labour, and sexual slavery. In August 2014 the UN Secretary General presented a report on sexual slavery, forced marriage and the recruitment of child soldiers (including re-recruitment of the children who were previously used as child soldiers). According to the report, more than six thousand of children are being used in the armed conflict in the CAR. The problem does not apply only to the activities of the Central African rebel groups.

³² K. Campbell, *Central African Republic, Chad, and Sudan: Triangle of Instability?*, Center for Conflict Analysis and Prevention, United States Institute of Peace, December 2006, at <<http://www.usip.org/publications/central-african-republic-chad-and-sudan-triangle-instability>>, 2 August 2011.

³³ G. Queyranne, *Peace...*

³⁴ K. Campbell, *Central African Republic...*

³⁵ Created in 2013 to replace the African Union peacekeeping operation – MISCA (African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic).

³⁶ UN, *MINUSCA Facts and Figures*, at <<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minusca/facts.shtml>>, 29 December 2015; Ministère de la Défense, *Opération Sangaris*, 10 December 2013, at <<http://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/centrafrique/dossier-de-presentation-de-l-operation-sangaris/operation-sangaris2>>, 20 November 2015; A. Jaulmes, 'La France envoie 400 soldats supplémentaires en Centrafrique', *Le Figaro*, 14 February 2014, at <<http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2014/02/14/01003-20140214ARTFIG00377-la-france-envoie-des-renforts-en-centrafrique.php>>, 28 February 2016.

Children are also abducted for forced labour and military service by the the Lord's Resistance Army, originated from Uganda, which moved to the territory of the CAR, taking advantage of the current weakness of this state³⁷. Furthermore, in recent months, international outrage has been sparked over the reports of sexual abuse (including rape and accepting sex as payment) committed by the international peacekeepers³⁸.

CORRUPTION

Corruption is an inherent element of reality of countries which are weak and were thrown into a crisis. This problem concerns all officials of the state apparatus, from a rank-and-file soldier to the highest state authorities. In these countries, corruption is not only an element which is accepted by society, but, in fact, an official form of a sideline, and sometimes simply the main source of income. Due to the omnipresence of corruption, the country's citizens are helpless against it, as there is no possibility of appealing against the decisions of officials. A state official or a soldier who guards a road barrier and tells travellers to wait for passage for a few hours due to the reasons only known to himself, but offers immediate passage for a bribe, or a customs official on the border who comes up with fees which are nowhere to be found pay money to their superiors to keep their positions, whereas the superiors pay to those above them, and this goes to the very top of the civil servant ladder. Consequently, the citizen has no possibility of being protected, and the public interest is neither important to nor respected by citizens and persons who represent the state. In the Central African Republic, corruption is visible almost everywhere, from the moment of crossing the border, when customs officials and border guards come up with fees and customs duties and do not give any confirmation of payment, through paying bribes to soldiers at rain barriers erected on roads, to licences issued for mining raw materials, mainly diamonds, or permits to log tropical forests. The corruption related to diamonds was presented in an already famous documentary by Mads Brügger entitled *Ambassador*³⁹. Polish missionary Robert Wiczorek describes corruption in this country in the following way: "The reform of the laws regulating mining of and trade in diamonds was conducted once again. It turned out that probably half of the precious stones are smuggled out of the country. An inspection conducted by the Ministry of Labour showed the ex-

³⁷ *Global Slavery Index 2014*, Walk Free Foundation, pp. 86-87, at http://d3mj66ag90b5fy.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Global_Slavery_Index_2014_final_lowres.pdf, 24 January 2015.

³⁸ 'UN Receives New Allegations of Rape by Minusca Peacekeepers in CAR', *The Guardian*, 19 August 2015, at <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/19/un-receives-new-allegations-of-by-minusca-peacekeepers-in-car>>, 30 September 2015; 'UN Finds More Cases of Child Abuse by European Troops in CAR', *The Guardian*, 29 January 2016, at <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/29/un-finds-more-cases-of-child-abuse-by-european-troops-in-car>>, 1 February 2016; Human Rights Watch, *Central African Republic: Rape by Peacekeepers*, 4 February 2016, at <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/04/central-african-republic-rape-peacekeepers>>, 5 February 2016.

³⁹ *Ambassador*, directed by M. Brügger, Denmark 2011, distribution Against Gravity.

istence of 10% of fictitious civil servant positions [...]. Both in the past and today the craving for money demonstrated by employees of uniformed services of all sorts has been easy to satisfy. It is sufficient to let them out to roads to erect barriers. And there let them ask travellers to “comply with formalities”, i.e. FCFA 500 per head⁴⁰. A few years ago there was a lot of talk about Polish traveller Maciej Pastwa, who ended up arrested in the Central African Republic. The police detained him, because he refused to pay a bribe. The Pole came to Africa to build a school and a deep water well for those who urgently needed it⁴¹. There is a principle according to which there are two ways of arranging things in such countries: either you know somebody or you have to pay. According to the *Corruption Perceptions Index* published by Transparency International, out of the 168-175⁴² countries classified the Central African Republic has ranked the 144-154th over the last six years, being one of the most corrupt countries in the world⁴³.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PROGNOSTICS

The Central African Republic demonstrates all the features of state dysfunctionality, and there are no signs that the situation will improve significantly in the near future. The government does not control borders, the army is demoralised and completely disintegrated, and there is an internal conflict of ethnic and sectarian nature taking place in the country's territory. For many years the Central African Republic has been considered one of the poorest countries in the world, however, today it is completely devastated, even for the conditions of the CAR. Nearly a million people have been forced out of their homes (around 25% of the population). The country is currently paralysed by a violent internal conflict of ethno-religious character, the warring parties mutually accuse themselves of war crimes and crimes against humanity, such as tortures, unlawful killings, rapes, lootings, use of child soldiers, sexual slavery, and forced resettlements. After the coup conducted by Séléka in 2013, the state was deprived of effective leadership. Chaos in the country is very hard for civilians, especially those most vulnerable: women and children. The current situation in the CAR can be seen as a complex humanitarian crisis. The rapidly growing number of deaths caused by epidemics and lack of access to drinking water (many drinking water reservoirs have been destroyed during the conflict). Under the conditions of protracted violence, a complete breakdown of the rule of law and the spread of impunity took place, human rights violations are being committed on a daily basis.

⁴⁰ R. Wiczorek, *Pęknięte serce...*, pp. 250-251.

⁴¹ 'Kłopotypolskiego podróżnika, nie dał łapówki', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 5 August 2011, at <<http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/regionalne/poznan/klopoty-polskiego-podroznika-nie-dal-lapowki,1,4813576,region-wiadomosc.html>>, 5 August 2011.

⁴² It depends on the year of the ranking.

⁴³ Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2010-2015*, at <http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi>, 15 July 2015.

A little bit of hope was brought by the visit of Pope Francis in November 2015. The Pope, being the first pontiff in recent history to visit an actual war zone, turned to the Central African Muslims, apologizing for any acts violence committed by the Christians. This supposed to be a step towards reconciliation, peace, and inter-sectarian cooperation⁴⁴.

At the beginning of December 2015, there was a constitutional referendum concerning the adoption (or rejection) of a new version of the constitution. The voting went peacefully without any serious incidents. According to the observers, however, it was difficult to find written information about the actual content of the constitutional changes. One of the important presumed changes concerned the establishment of the upper house of parliament – the Senate, which in one of the poorest countries in the world will surely increase the costs of government administration. According to the official results, 93 per cent of Central Africans voted “in favour of the reforms limiting the president’s tenure to two terms, fighting institutional corruption, and reining in armed militias” – as it was presented by the state’s representatives⁴⁵. At the end of December 2015 presidential and parliamentary elections finally took place (They had already been postponed several times). Initially, there were 80 candidates on electorate lists, of whom 32 eventually participated in the elections. The electoral campaign was conducted in eight out of ten of prefectures, due to the presence of the armed groups in a part of the national territory. One of the presidential candidates, former prime minister, Martin Ziguélé, was widely regarded as a French candidate. The electoral campaign he ran was supported financially and militarily by Paris, what gave him quite a significant advantage (during the electoral meetings the French soldiers from the *Sangaris* Operation were his official escort)⁴⁶. However, for the big part of the society this candidature was highly controversial because of his earlier cooperation with the Séléka rebels and the government of Michel Djotodia. The former did not hide that their aim is a division of the state according to the religious affiliation⁴⁷.

⁴⁴ H. Sherwood, M. Benn, ‘Pope Francis Promises to be “Apostle of Hope” on Central African Republic Visit’, *The Guardian*, 29 November 2015, at <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/29/pope-francis-arrives-central-african-republic-historic-war-zone-visit>>, 19 January 2015.

⁴⁵ ‘Central African Republic Referendum Clears Way for Elections’, *France 24*, 22 December 2015, at <<http://www.france24.com/en/20151222-central-african-referendum-elections-unrest>>, 16 January 2016; The account of Polish secular missionary in Central Africa Republic, Izabela Cywa, January 2016.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*; C. Dembassa-Kette, ‘Central African Republic Postpones Key Elections for Three Days’, Reuters, 24 December 2015, at <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-centralafrica-election-idUSKBN0U718820151224>>, 16 January 2016.

⁴⁷ After the fighting in mid-2013 a part of the Muslim population was evacuated to neighboring countries. Since the beginning of 2015 an increasing number of Muslims is returning to the CAR, especially to Bangui. They hope that they will be able to restore their old life, but their return causes further unrest in the capital. Every day there are new incidents, including killings, on both sides of the conflict. In September 2015 another serious riot began in Bangui, which resulted in the deaths of several hundred people. The rioters also attacked international troops. The roads have again become dangerous due to the activity of numerous armed groups. One of them was the group of Miskin, who in 2014 kidnapped a Polish missionary priest Matthew Dziedzic. I. Cywa, ‘Czy nastąpi podział...’, pp. 90-92.

The results of the first round were announced in early January 2016. Former prime minister Anicet Georges Dologuélé topped the pole, having gathered 23.7 per cent of the votes, the second place was taken by Faustin-Archange Touadéra with 19.4 per cent of the votes. However, the second round was won by Touadéra (62.72% of votes cast). His defeated rival accepted the results, thus the country perhaps can avoid another internal conflict⁴⁸. Despite the completion of the election process, the situation in the Central African Republic is far from a stable one. The country is destroyed after several years of civil war and the divisions in the society, both ethnic and religious, are still very strong. The efforts taken up by the international community and the regional African organisations seem to be a chance for a long-term stabilisation. However, the Central African Republic has still long way to go to achieve this goal.

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⁴⁸ 'Touadéra Hopes to Heal Rifts after Winning CAR Presidential Poll', *Euronews*, 21 February 2016, at <<http://nr.news-republic.com/Web/ArticleWeb.aspx?regionid=31&articleid=58458865>>, 28 February 2016.

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Prof. Robert KŁOSOWICZ, Ph. D. – historian of international relations, Africanist, Director of the Institute of Political Science and International Relations of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Head of the Jagiellonian Research Center for African Studies, Vice-Chairman of the Polish Africanist Society, editor-in-chief of the publishing series: *Studia nad rozwojem* of the Jagiellonian University Press. His research interests include relations between diplomacy and the armed forces, the issues of international security and military conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa; dysfunctional states; US history and the Napoleonic era. He has conducted fieldwork in several Sub-Saharan African countries.