

CGS MUN

Committee: Social Humanitarian and Cultural

Issue: Responding to the humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic

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TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The region of Central Africa has faced many brutal conflicts in the past 40 years since the region's states have gained independence from the colonial rule from the European powers. The Central African Republic is no exception; the country has been in constant turmoil for the past 2 decades, with several changes in power, multiple rebel groups fighting each other and the government, and hundreds of thousands of people being displaced from their homes and moving to neighboring countries, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which itself cannot sustain such migration waves. The conflict in CAR is not only destroying the country itself, but is deeply affecting the stability of the region as a whole.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Humanitarian Crisis

A humanitarian emergency/crisis is an event or series of events that represents a critical threat to the health, safety, security or wellbeing of a community or other large group of people, usually over a wide area. (Humanitarian Coalition)

Civil War

A violent conflict between a state and one or more organized non-state actors in the state's territory (Britannica)

Failed State

A state that is unable to perform the two fundamental functions of the sovereign nation-state in the modern world system: it cannot project authority over its territory and peoples, and it cannot protect its national boundaries (Britannica)

Authoritarianism

Any political system that concentrates power in the hands of a leader or a small elite that is not constitutionally responsible to the body of the people (Britannica)

IGOs

Intergovernmental organizations are organizations composed of three or more states that have as a primary purpose the extensive cooperation between states around the world economically, militarily, and socially. Examples include the UN, the World Bank, and the European Union.

INGOs

International non-governmental organizations are organizations that work out of the sphere of any government, are non-profit, and have as a primary goal to better the lives of a group/groups of people. Examples include Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and Greenpeace.

PowerVacuum

A situation when a government has no identifiable central authority and is not able to control its territory, which often times leads to other non state actors controlling parts of the state.

Humanitarian Intervention

An effort from a group of states and organizations to halt human suffering in a sovereign state by intervening in the state's territory directly. In the example of CAR, humanitarian intervention has been used by France and the members of the African Union.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

General Information on Central African Republic and its history of conflicts

The Central African Republic is a country located in the continent of Africa, more specifically in Central Africa. It borders Chad to its north, Sudan to its northeast, South Sudan to its east, the Democratic Republic of the Congo to its south, the Republic of the Congo to its southwest and Cameroon to its west. The country has an abundance of natural resources, the most prominent ones being diamond and gold. However, due to lack of infrastructure and widespread corruption, the state as a whole has not been able to profit much at all from these natural resources. This is known as the natural resource trap, where poor countries become even poorer and get trapped in an endless cycle of poverty and corruption due to the abundance of natural resources in their country. This has been a common theme for several countries in Africa, especially in Central Africa, including Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This combination of corruption, which creates mistrust for the government, and

poverty, which leads to human suffering and the dissatisfaction of even basic needs for the citizens, is a key factor as to why the Central African Republic is in constant turmoil that seems to have no end in site.



It gained independence from France in 1960, but since has faced authoritarian regimes one after the other to the late 1980s. In the 1990s, the first democratic elections were held and a new leader was elected: Ange-Félix Patassé. However, by 2003, a coup had been staged and a 3 year civil war ensued. Despite the several theoretical peace treaties, fighting still continued after 2012 between different belligerent parties, the main ones being, Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR) rebels and government forces. In December 2013, the government actually temporarily fell from the armed rebel groups, which created the stage for a dangerous power vacuum in the country. However, a temporary government has since taken power, but this incident has created distrust of the authority of the government in the local population as well as in the international community as a whole. In 2015, the government could barely control the suburbs of the capital Bangui. The country was losing its internal sovereignty; a power vacuum was being created.

The UN and France, the former colonial power in the country, decided to intervene with peacekeeping missions. The UN created the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, also known as UN MINUSCA, and the French led their own separate mission known as Operation Sangaris. These two missions, along with forces from the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States, have cooperated on the ground to attempt to stop the violence and eventually reach lasting peace and development in the region. Their success has been limited as will be highlighted in the next section.

Situation Today

The situation today has not altered a lot from 2014, when the fighting between the belligerent parties reignited. The Central African Republic ranks the lowest of any other country in the world in the Human Development Index which index is based on life expectancy, educational opportunities, and GDP/capita. As Al Jazeera states, « 1/2 people in CAR are in need of humanitarian aid », which truly indicated the humanitarian crisis at hand. Also, the abuse by UN peacekeepers is a major issue in the country that has worried the international community greatly and prompted UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres's visit to CAR in October 2017 in order to assess the situation. The country's situation is not as well-known as the ones in Syria, Somalia, and South Sudan, the human rights violations and civilian casualties due to the civil war are significant and dangerous for the citizens of the country. The citizens of CAR are fleeing by the thousands to neighbouring countries which are not much better off, such as Cameroon and the democratic People's Republic of the Congo, creating spreading destabilization effect in the whole region of Central Africa.



Several political analysts do believe that the legitimacy of CAR should be questioned, and humanitarian intervention due to the government's inability to protect human rights of its citizens should be strongly considered as a path to stability in the country. This will be further analysed in the possible solution section.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

UN Peacekeeping

Although the UN peacekeeping was sent to help out in the conflict, it has really caused several other problems in the country, including sexual abuse of women, rape, prostitution, and other forms of violence. The UN is investigating these allegations. For example, at least 4 UN peacekeeping personnel have allegedly paid 13 year old girls 50 cents to have sex with them, in the Central African Republic.

European Union

The EU has partnered with the Central African Republic for the past 3 decades and still is one of the country's major financial supporters. From 2013 up to today, the EU has contributed more than €500 million to assist the Central African Republic in responding to the political instability and violence it has faced the past decades due to civil war.

African Union

The African Union, which is a union of all states in the continent of Africa besides Western Africa, has played an instrumental role in the conflict in CAR. More specifically, along with the UN, they have initiated peacekeeping missions in several urban and rural areas of the country, with limited success however. They are actively attempting to solve the conflict through resolutions created in meetings between member states.

Economic Community of Central African States

The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) is an economic union under the auspices of the greater African Union that seeks to promote economic stability and raising of standards of living in Central African States. ECCAS has actively tried to get the belligerent parties to reach a peace agreement with both the Libreville and the N'Djamena Declarations in 2013, which were both ultimately violated once fighting erupted back up in 2014.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

As a large and important country in Central Africa that borders CAR, the DR Congo has received thousands of refugees over the past decade or so due to the brutal conflict. The DR Congo judiciary system has also tried several peacekeepers that allegedly would involve in sexual abuse and prostitution.

France

France had colonized the Central African Republic for more than 70 years, from the late 19th century with the well-known Berlin Conference that divided up Africa for European powers, to 1960. Currently, 1 million people residing in France are from Sub-Saharan Africa. France feels obliged to take action to support its former colonies and its government also has the political motive due to the large presence of Central Africans in France. The French military has worked alongside the African Union peacekeeping missions to try to stabilize the country. Besides direct military intervention, France contributed €170 million Euros in aid to CAR. This aid money paid for civilian assistance in addition to humanitarian assistance, support of the electoral process, support for the end of the crisis and democratic governance in the country. France has since pledged to continue financial aid to the country.

United States of America

The United States has remained more passive in the conflict compared to counterparts like France. No U.S. troops have been directly involved on the ground in CAR. However, the Obama administration did provide financial support of almost 100 million dollars to the French and African Union troops that are in the country since 2014.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

1960: Independence of Central African Republic from France

1976: Central African Republic Empire established

1979: Central African Republic restored

1981: Rise of Houphouët dictatorship

1988: Semi-free elections take place

1993: Free elections are held with the help of international community

2004: First uprising begins, first civil war

2006: Support of France on the side of the government

2007: Birao Peace Agreement in April, but not all belligerent parties sign

2012: A large group of rebels begin the fight again and took over towns in the north region of the Central African Republic

2013: Rebels sign peace deal in the early year

2013: The peace deal breaks and the rebels (Séléka) capture the capital Bangui

2013: Former president Bozizé was investigated for crimes against humanity in the ICC

2014: UN Secretary General urges UN peacekeepers to join the efforts of the French military and of the African Union

2015: Séléka rebels declare an independent state (Republic of Logone)

20018: conflict, power vacuum, civil unrest, humanitarian crisis all still ensue

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

2387 (2017): <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc13068.doc.htm>

This resolution increased troop levels of stabilization mission in Central African Republic, but also put a cap on the number of personnel that should operate in the country. It also addresses the issue of assault on the part of peacekeeping mission .

2339 (2017): <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12697.doc.htm> (Arms Embargo, Other Sanctions on Central African Republic)

In this resolution, the Security Council extended its sanctions against the government of Central African Republic. This embargo consisted of an arms ban, travel ban and asset freeze on specific individuals and committees in the government that are responsible for improper mismanagement and brutality against civilians in the country.

2399 (2018): <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13188.doc.htm>

This resolution is a continuation of the 2339 of 2017, and extends sanctions on the government. Their effectiveness has yet to be proven.

The UN has also send major peacekeeping force units to CAR several times, but they have seen limited success and have even caused major problems in the country; widespread sexual abuses and rapes are often being recorded by local authorities and journalists. Finally, the UN Security Council in its resolution 2127 on CAR created “Mission internationale de soutien à la Centrafrique sous conduite africaine” or MISCA to help de-escalate the conflict in CAR.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

EUFOR RCA Bangui Project was a project adopted by the foreign ministers of EU member states in the beginning of 2014 to deal with the rising conflict in CAR. During the project, 800 troops were deployed in CAR to try to reduce the inter-religious violence.

The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCA) initiated and had under its auspices both the peace agreement of Libreville and the N'Djamena Declaration in April 2013. Unfortunately, these treaties were violated just a year later.

In order to ensure peace and disarmament in the region of CAR, the African Union has been calling since July 2017 for a meeting between the government and rebel groups in a safe zone city outside CAR. The idea has not been entertained by the belligerent parties of the conflict.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

There are various ways to approach the conflict at hand, all with a set of advantages and shortcomings. Firstly, there is the notion of isolationism that has been followed to a large extent by the major powers who have avoided intervening in CAR after seeing failures of such humanitarian interventions in previous cases. Even though less countries are involved in the conflict as a result of the policy, CAR seems to not be able to recover from the conflict on its own.

The second approach is the interventionist approach which seems to be followed by the UN, the African Union, and even the European Union as mentioned before. They actively seek to engage in the CAR conflict to help find a solution. The downside is that more often than not, foreign actors are seeking their own national interests.

So far, the problem lies in the fact that there is not a decisive approach that is being used. A way to reach a resolution to the conflict in the Central African Republic would be for all nations, especially the United States, Russia, and China, who all seem to agree on the issue, to adopt an interventionist approach not by providing funds to the government and militias and invading CAR, but by using smart power to get the belligerent parties on the negotiating table and strive for lasting peace.

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