

The Central African Republic as a Fragile (Failed) State

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During its 65-year history, the Central African Republic proved to be a country highly susceptible to destabilising processes. Tribalism, corruption, violence and the incompetence of the ruling elite have become immanent elements of the political system, leading to a gradual decomposition of the state and its evolution towards a dysfunctional ('failed') state, unable to perform its basic external and internal functions. The civil war that engulfed the country in 2013 was a consequence of political, social and economic conflicts that had been accumulating for many years. In this article, the author sets himself the task of identifying the main factors (internal and external) leading to the destabilisation of the state as well as the sources of contradictions that lay at the root of this process. Accumulation of negative trends along with low levels of socio-economic development at the moment of gaining independence and the inability to initiate modernisation processes, as well as the existence of negative international interrelations (conflicts in the immediate international neighbourhood) led to a crisis of statehood in the CAR.

Keywords: Central African Republic, dysfunctional state, failed state, fragile state, ethnic conflicts, religious conflicts, African Union, Economic Community of Central African States

The Central African Republic (CAR) joined the community of sovereign African states on 13 August 1960, when it gained independence from France. Since the end of the 19th century, the territory of today's CAR formed part of French Equatorial Africa and was known under the name Ubangi-Shari. When this colonial structure was dissolved in 1958, Ubangi-Shari became an independent colony within the newly formed French Community, created under the Constitution of the Fifth Republic. In 1959 the name Ubangi-Shari was abolished and the territory was named the Central African Republic; the change was regarded to be one of the important stages of the CAR's way to independence. The process of decolonisation was peaceful, mainly due to the fact that the French government had experienced violent colonial wars in Vietnam and Algeria (which later led to the internal political crisis of 1958 and the decomposition of the political system, eventually resulting in the establishment of the Fifth Republic)

and therefore agreed to a non-violent deconstruction of its colonial empire in Africa. Following the end of France's colonial presence in Sub-Saharan Africa, 14 newly independent states came into being, and the Central African Republic was one of them.¹

Just as it was the case with most other postcolonial African states, the Central African Republic's borders were drawn by the former colonial power. External pressure had decisive influence on the population structure as well. The territory of the CAR is almost 623 000 square kilometres, and it is presently inhabited by over 5.2 million people representing dozens of ethnic groups, the largest among them being: Baya – 33%, Banda – 27%, Mandjia – 13%, Sara – 10%, Mboum – 7%, M'baka – 4%, Yakoma – 4%.² The official language is French, but Sango is regarded to be the national language and the language which servers inter-ethnic communication.³

As regards the religious structure of the population, three groups can be identified: about half of the population is Christian (the biggest religious group; approx. half of the CAR's Christians are Roman Catholic, half are Protestant); 35 per cent of the population belong to a group classified as 'indigenous beliefs'; approx. 15 per cent are Muslims, who predominantly reside in the north of the country.

The CAR is situated in the heart of Africa, where the northern savannah zone meets the equatorial forest zone in the south. The geography of the country, its climate and other natural characteristics determine the living conditions of the population and the country's social and economic development. The CAR borders on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC, the border is 1,747 kilometres long), the Republic of the Congo (487 km), Cameroon (901 km), Chad (1,556 km), Sudan (174 km) and South Sudan (1,055 km; since 2011, when South Sudan became an independent country).⁴ The Central African Republic is a landlocked state – the shortest possible route to access ocean shipping lanes leads through the territory of the neighbouring Cameroon.

The CAR is one of the poorest countries in the world. Its development potential is determined by a variety of factors, which hugely impede achieving stable socio-economic development. First and foremost, it is a high level of political instability, which has in fact led to the collapse of public administration and internal conflicts that have rendered the country dysfunctional (failed state). The other negative factors are: relatively low levels of education and skills of the workforce, high levels of corruption, insufficient transport infrastructure, the existence of grey economy, susceptibility to

¹ Next to 14 former French colonies, other countries that became independent in 1960 include Congo-Léopoldville, Nigeria and Somalia. The year 1960 was named 'the year of Africa' as it marked a huge acceleration in the decolonisation process, mainly due to the implosion of the French colonial empire.

² The World Factbook, URL <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ct.html>> (accessed on: 1 September 2014).

³ According to *Ethnologue. Languages of the World* there are 72 languages used in the territory of CAR. 48 of these are classified as 'vigorous'. See: URL <<http://www.ethnologue.com/country/CF>> (accessed on: 1 September 2014).

⁴ The World Factbook, op. cit.

the effects of crises that occur in the immediate outside environment.⁵ As proved by the postcolonial history of the region, all but one of the CAR's neighbours (Cameroon being the exception) have suffered serious internal conflicts, which in some cases were protracted and highly destructive (Chad between the 1960s and the 1980s; the DRC in the 1960s and at the turn of the centuries; Sudan has been going through internal instability, conflicts and full scale war practically throughout its whole postcolonial existence, which finally led to the secession of South Sudan – which, alas, has not brought peace to Sudan).

In 2013, the estimated GDP per capita in the Central African Republic was merely 557 USD; what we need to remember, however, is that this value is the consequence of an economic collapse caused by the civil war in the country. The total GDP (in purchasing power parity) reached 2.57 billion USD in 2013. The internal armed conflict led to a sharp decline in the GDP value of as much as 34.2 per cent compared to 2012, when it grew by 4.1 per cent. The course of events brought the CAR to the position of the only African state whose total GDP was lower in 2013 than in 2005 (in 2005–2013 the average rate of GDP growth was –0.9 per cent, even though in 2005–2012 the growth rate had positive values of 1.7–4.8 per cent annually). Negative development indicators are confirmed by the fact that 53.2 per cent of the country's GDP comes from the agricultural sector.⁶ The trade balance is negative; in 2013 exports amounted to 139 million USD (a drop from 207 million USD in the preceding year), while imports were estimated at 219 million USD (334 million in 2012).⁷

Social development indicators place the CAR in the group of the world's least developed countries. Urbanisation barely reaches 40 per cent. Average life expectancy at birth is only 51.35 (one of the worst results in the world), and statistically one doctor needs to serve around 20,000 inhabitants. Infant mortality rate is 92.86 per 1,000 live births – the fourth highest result globally.⁸ The 2014 Human Development Index for the CAR was 0.341, placing it on the 185th position (out of 187 classified states; only the DRC and Niger ranked lower).⁹ The presented statistics show clearly and indisputably the existence of very serious challenges that have made the Central African Republic one of the least socially and economically developed countries in the world.

⁵ Robert Kłosowicz, 'Republika Środkowoafrykańska jako przykład państwa upadłego w Afryce Subsaharyjskiej' (The Central African Republic as an Example of a failed state in Sub-Saharan Africa), in: Robert Kłosowicz, Andrzej Mania (eds), *Problem upadku państw w stosunkach międzynarodowych* (The problem of failing states in international relations), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2012, p. 105.

⁶ Data taken from: African Economic Outlook, <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/statistics/> (accessed on: 1 September 2014).

⁷ The World Factbook, op. cit.

⁸ Only Afghanistan, Mali and Somalia are doing worse. See: *ibidem*.

⁹ Source: *Human Development Report 2014*, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data> (accessed on: 2 September 2014).

1. Internal barriers to stabilisation and transformation

After it gained independence in August 1960, the Central African Republic was a highly unstable country, and through the most part of its postcolonial history it has been governed by authoritarian regimes that were incapable of putting the country on a path to stable and sustainable development. As is the case with many other African states, the mechanism of monopolisation of power in the hands of a small social group has been in place and the political system has been legitimised by – in most cases – sham elections that were far from meeting democratic standards. For the major part of the CAR's history since gaining independence, the army played an important role, supporting the ruling political elites and guarding the political status quo established after each coup d'état. Political stability was also guaranteed by invoking tribal loyalty: various political leaders tended to promote in the political life of the country representatives of either their own ethnic communities or these which, due to the pattern of local interests, were ready to support the existing balance of power. This phenomenon, known as 'tribalism', became one of the most significant factors determining the evolution of the internal condition of the country in the sphere of the effectiveness, competence and quality of its socio-political system.

During the political history of the postcolonial Central African Republic, only the 1993 presidential elections, won by Ange-Félix Patassé, can be regarded as democratic and representative. His tenure, however, was also characterised by the appearance of authoritarian tendencies; the state's coercive apparatus played a great role in balancing the governmental system, and interethnic tensions surging due to the policies of President Patassé fostered further destabilisation of the country. Patassé became famous for recruiting his closest co-workers (including members of the presidential guard, which became the military arm of the regime and a structure competing with the regular armed forces, dominated by supporters of the preceding head of state) from the peoples inhabiting the northern part of the country, where he himself originated from. President Patassé was finally ousted from power in a coup d'état executed in March 2003 by his former ally, François Bozizé.

The Central African Republic experienced a socio-political experiment that was unique in the whole region – the proclamation of the Central African Empire by the then president Jean-Bédél Bokassa, who came to power following the 1966 coup d'état. President Bokassa was formally crowned on 4 December 1976 as the Emperor of Central Africa during a formal coronation ceremony, the scenario of which was copied from the ceremony of coronation of Emperor Napoleon I. The republic in CAR was restored on 21 September 1979, after an intervention by French military forces that overthrew Bokassa and restored the former president, David Dacko, removed by Bokassa on 1 January 1966. Listing notorious CAR presidents, we must not fail to mention André Kolingba, who won the office by ousting David Dacko in another coup d'état. He ruled as dictator for 12 years (from 1981 till 1993) and finally lost power in elections that

were held very much due to strong international pressure (predominantly exhorted by the United States and France). Kolingba based his authority and presidential activities on ethnic ties, handing important state functions over to members of the southern ethnic group, Yakoma, making up 4 per cent of the population. The domination of Yakoma in the CAR's armed forces cemented during Kolingba's tenure later resulted in the lack of confidence in the military by president Patassé and in the creation of competing security forces in the form of Patassé's presidential guard. The policy of ethnic domination fuelled ethnic tensions and deepened the antagonisms between the regions, especially as regards participation or rather lack thereof by the dispossessed groups in the division of power during subsequent presidential terms.¹⁰

Authoritarian rule, corruption, lack of transparency in political life were characteristic of President Bozizé's rule too, whose coming to power, after having terminated cooperation with president Patassé, was the result of a rebellion supported by the neighbouring Chad. Setting up a new political regime did not bring peace to the country, though. In its northwest part, military units still faithful to the ousted president were very active, allying themselves with local tribal militias and finally forming one of the principal actors in the forthcoming military conflict – the Peoples' Army for the Restoration of Democracy (L'Armée Populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie, APRD). The northeast, in turn, saw operations of the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (Union des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement, UFDR), which became fragmented after an attempt to involve it in the peace process negotiations, giving rise to a new military faction that opposed any compromise – the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (Convention des patriotes pour la Justice et la paix, CPJP). Smaller warring units of often criminal rather than political nature were being formed locally as well. Authoritarian governments, tribalism, rivalry over control of the territories abundant in natural resources (especially diamonds) and personal disagreements between the leaders of political factions during Bozizé's rule led to constant instability in the Central African Republic.¹¹

The worsening internal political crisis, mass-scale violations of human rights and the lack of prospects for improvement of the nation's living conditions nurtured the creation of another coalition of armed forces opposing Bozizé's rule – Seleka. It eventually managed to overthrow of Bozizé in March 2013, and its leader, Michel Djotodja, took over power in the country. The events further worsened the internal chaos in the country and caused a gradual collapse of the CAR's institutions. Seleka rebels were utterly unable to ensure security, stability and integrity of the country; on the contrary: the victorious fighters wished to take advantage of the spoils of war and improve their personal material situation. They were highly demoralised, and their activities further deepened the crisis. Interethnic and interreligious tensions became

¹⁰ Robert Kłosowicz, *op.cit.*, pp. 106–107.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 112.

even more obvious. The fact that Seleka units were mostly composed of Muslims (mainly immigrants from Chad) further deepened the serious lack of trust in the new authorities from the CAR's Christian communities. The virtual non-existence of state institutions on the central and local level gave all warring factions a sense of impunity and encouraged them to commit violent acts and pillage. Instead of becoming a new official military force, Seleka members engaged in criminal activities in the territories they took over – pillaging, looting and physical violence became an everyday experience of the country's capital and other regions, treated not as land that needed authority but rather as the spoils of war. This led to the creation of a resistance movement (Anti-Balaka) to oppose Seleka rule and to manage self-defence activities. Anti-Balaka quickly became another element of the country's criminal structure; the CAR was led to the verge of complete implosion. To treat this conflict as simple religious animosity between Muslims and Christians would not paint the true picture. As in any conflict in which criminal entities participate, it is not religious values (or values drawn from other axiological orders, such as ideologies) that define the behaviour of the actors of the events. Brutal violence is rather an emanation of the egoistic interests of individuals and organised political and military groups, for whom the declared values become only propaganda that justifies their undertakings. The escalation of violence in the CAR led to the decision on launching an international intervention to bring back internal stability and to initiate the peace process. France led the operation, assisted and supported by cooperating central African countries within a peacekeeping mission organised initially by the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC/ECCAS) and later taken over by the African Union.

The ways of rising to and using governmental power in the CAR prove that the country's political elite is highly attached to authoritarianism. Moreover, among the state's leaders some were rather eccentric, to say the least. Their behavioural habits raised concerns and were controversial, which led the CAR to isolation in the international environment. President Bokassa (later: Emperor Bokassa I) went down in the history of Africa not only as a political leader whose crowning ceremony cost 1/3 of the state budget (20 million USD); his name is commonly associated with charges of cannibalism, which he allegedly practised during his term in office. The charges were not confirmed during the trial held in Bangui in 1986–1987, but Bokassa was found guilty of other crimes, politically motivated murders among them, and was sentenced to death; the verdict was later changed to life imprisonment (Bokassa was released in 1993 when president Kolingba announced amnesties; three years later (1996), the former Emperor of Central Africa passed away). It is worth mentioning that the methods used by Bokassa and the controversies they were causing eventually brought about the end of his rule. The coup d'état was in fact conducted by French troops when any further continuation of governance of the discredited ruler, accused of various crimes and less and less loyal to the CAR's former coloniser, became too much of a burden.

The practice of monopolisation of power by a small social group (whose political position is based on either organisational structures such as the army or security forces, or on ethnic/tribal loyalty) in an authoritarian political regime, which hindered a natural state elite circulation, led to legitimisation of violence as the way to enforce political changes. The non-existence of democratic representation and procedures of non-violent government change resulted in a situation where conflict became the only means of removing unwanted rulers from power and taking over power by the political opposition. Violence was perceived as a natural way of pursuing political goals. What can be achieved by electoral procedures in democratic societies, in Africa often becomes subject to sharp confrontation of conflicted political forces that use violence as an argument in political discourse. This applies not only to governments defending their position and possessions but to the opposition (organised in political and military movements or in informal structures, for instance, during coups d'état) as well. The latter usually has barely anything to lose while attempting to change the existing political regime and therefore applies even the most violent means. Four out of the six shifts of presidential power in the CAR resulted from coups d'état or rebellions; one was the result of international pressure (at the meeting of Heads of States of the Economic Community of Central African States, ECCAS, held in Ndjamena, Chad, in January 2014, President Michel Djotodja stepped down and interim presidential powers were entrusted by the Interim National Council to Catherine Samba-Panza, who was mandated with organising new elections¹²).

The political system of countries such as the Central African Republic is characterised by the military forces playing a special role; having been formed to guarantee the external security of the state, they become politicised and are regarded as another element of the system of political power and the guarantor of stability of the existing regime. Thus, the army changes its functions and engages in the processes of state management and administration, and its primary function of the guarantor of state security is redefined into the function of guardian of the political status quo. To add to that, the military performs functions that would normally be part of the mandate of police forces. This happens at the cost of weakening the state's external security. The adoption of new roles by the military lead to the erosion of the army's image in the eyes of the society. Associated with the ruling elite, the military is, just as political authorities, evaluated from the angle of administrative effectiveness. In many African states, the ethnic divisions in the society that impact the functioning of the political system also influence the internal structure of the military forces. The relations between various ethnic groups within the armed forces together with the contradictions that emerge while performing political tasks result in internal divisions in the army, which explains the

¹² Between 10 January and 23 January (after Djotodja stepped down and before Samba-Panza was appointed), the presidential powers were in the hands of the President of the Interim National Council, Alexandre-Ferdinand Nguendet.

cases of numerous coups d'état and rebellions organised against the political influence of the armed forces. Examples of individuals who gained presidential powers as high-ranking members of the military in the CAR include Jean Bedel Bokassa, Andre Kolingba and Francois Bozizé.

Low level of social and economic development coupled with no stable economic growth can be seen as another factor influencing the evolution of a political system into authoritarian rule. With poor social and economic development indicators, there often appears a natural tendency among the ruling elite to introduce regulations on redistribution of national wealth in such a way that first and foremost the needs of social groups that back the rulers are met. Most frequently this is the ethnic group from which the individuals in power originate (the phenomena of tribalism). The group thus appropriates the state and, as a result, nepotism and corruption become commonplace. In such circumstances, it is impossible to implement rational development strategies as it is not economic but rather political motives (and often particular interests of individuals as well) that underpin the decision-making process in the economic system. Vast economic interests of the political elites in poorly developed countries, such as the CAR, foster monopolisation of power; this, in turn, diminishes the probability of introducing a democratic political system. Power becomes the source of wealth, while the state turns into a *sui generis* 'enterprise' managed by politicians who only care about their own interests. The government is perceived by the society as alien; the people may even sometimes delegitimise the state as such, which, in a multi-ethnic and tribal society must lead to contestation of the existing political institutions. The state becomes an unacceptable extraneous body that realises the interests of a narrow group of people, who manage public resources and issues for their own good. In such circumstances, the only way to remove the corrupted elites is to oust them by violent means. The events continue to repeat themselves, and that leads to long-lasting anarchy (as in the CAR), which causes the final disappearance of trust in the state and the breakdown of social ties. When this is accompanied by a gradual collapse of state institutions such as the enforcement apparatus, the justice system, the armed forces and the police, the final result is what we refer to as state failure.

The negative consequences that follow are boosted by refugee crises generated by military conflicts and their results. During the fighting against the regime of both President Patassé and his successor, President Bozizé, forced displacement of civilians from the territory touched by military activities was commonplace. The situation of the population of the CAR was especially dramatic during the 2013/2014 crisis. At the time of fighting between the Seleka rebels and the government forces in January 2014, the number of internally displaced persons reached 825,000 people and fell by half with the onset of the peace process (410,000 in October 2014). The number of refugees, in turn, reached 420,000 (October 2014), rising from 185,000 at the beginning of 2014. It is estimated that approximately 2 million civilians in the CAR are in need of humanitarian assistance. The inability to meet to the very basic needs of civilians

negatively impacts the condition of the society, and children are in especially dire need of assistance.¹³

A failed state is characterised by inability to perform its basic functions, one of them being the ability to exercise effective control over its territory. The weakness of state institutions, including the forces responsible for internal and external security, eventually leads to the loss of control over the use of force. In such circumstances, local political, military and paramilitary organisations take over and become the principle entities that secure the material and institutional means of existence in a certain territory, at the same time taking care of the interests of their own members. Growing anarchy of the political and social life when the state is unable to execute and implement laws in its sovereign territory is addressed by violence used by local military and political structures. On the one hand, these structures are formed because communities are in desperate need of securing the very basic means of existence, but on the other hand, the void of state power fosters creation of various criminal groups that benefit from the vacuum. These groups abuse the situation to secure their own interests – the growth of wealth, power and prestige. Violence and brutal force override the rule of law, and the civilian population (unwilling to accept the new conditions or simply not interested in the developments) becomes victim to warlords' policies of terror and violence. Plunged into anarchy, the state is unable to secure decent living conditions to its citizens. The economic system is deprived of basic regulatory mechanisms and ceases to function. Community ties fall apart as they are undermined by the primacy of violence over other regulatory mechanisms of social life.

The evolution of the internal situation in the CAR has led to such developments –subsequent reports of the Fund for Peace determining the level of internal stability of states (Failed/Fragile States Index, FSI) have for a number of years invariably placed the CAR high in the ranking. From 2005 to 2010, the situation gradually deteriorated, with the CAR's position rising from the 20th to the 8th position among the least stable countries in the world.

A slight improvement in the FSI index in 2011–2012 was associated with the stabilisation process implemented and supported by the international community. This process was stalled by another deterioration of the internal situation and the following collapse of state institutions as a result of another internal conflict. The CAR plunged into chaos, eventually being ranked 3rd in the 2014 FSI ranking (right after South Sudan and Somalia).¹⁴

The Index results clearly indicate that the primary cause of instability in the CAR is the lack of political structures capable of providing the country with development and modernisation capacities. Authoritarian political power proved to be weak, unable to generate rational development strategies. Corruption, tribalism and nepotism occurring

¹³ OCHA, Central African Republic, <http://www.unocha.org/car> (accessed on: 10 November 2014).

¹⁴ Source: <http://ffp.statesindex.org/rankings-2014> (accessed on: 19 October 2014).

in the country on a large scale deepened the internal imbalance between different segments of the society, leading to anarchy in social life and, in time, to civil war.

Table 1. The Central African Republic's ranking, as per Failed/Fragile States Index – 2005–2014

Year	Rank	Total points
2005	20	93.7
2006	13	97.5
2007	10	101.0
2008	10	103.7
2009	8	105.4
2010	8	106.4
2011	8	105
2012	10	103.8
2013	9	105.3
2014	3	110.6

Source: <http://ffp.statesindex.org/rankings>.

2. External factors of stabilisation and destabilisation

The Central African Republic is situated in a region of Africa characterised by an exceptionally high level of instability. Crises and conflicts in neighbouring countries tend to penetrate borders and to cause adverse effects in neighbouring states due to high political, ethnic, religious or economic interdependences. In this context, Chad has been playing a particularly important role in the recent history of the CAR. The support President Idriss Déby expressed towards Francois Bozizé's rebellion proved decisive for its victory and the overthrow of president Patassé. In the aftermath of these events, the relations between both countries remained close throughout Bozizé's presidency. N'Djamena supported the CAR's governmental army in the fight against rebel forces in the first decade of the 21st century in the north of the country. This assistance was far from selfless; as another country that had experienced periods of instability and civil wars in the past, Chad wished to maintain a friendly regime south of the border. Considering the existence of tensions in Chad's relations with Sudan, that policy was supposed to guarantee the government in Chad stable relations with Bangui.

The anxiousness of the Central African Republic's ruling elite about instability spilling over the border from Chad was based on solid grounds, drawing on experience from the past. In April 2006 Chad rebels (supported by Sudanese authorities) used the CAR's territory to stir up an anti-government rebellion.

The fall of President Bozizé took place at a time when Chad was involved in military action against rebel forces (fundamentalists) in Mali. That limited the extent of N'Djamena authorities involvement in the CAR, although later Chad contributed troops to the peacekeeping forces tasked with stabilisation activities.

The CAR has also seen the expansion of the ongoing conflict in Darfur (the western part of Sudan) to its territory. The Central African Republic has become a refuge for civilians from Darfur persecuted by the armed Janjaweed militia and the Sudanese army. At the same time, the CAR's border areas became home to armed groups of the Sudanese opposition fighting for the rights of the people of Darfur. Unsurprisingly, this has led to reported incidents of penetration and counterinsurgency operations of the Sudanese army and Janjaweed across the border in the CAR. Sudan was also involved in supporting local political and military groups (the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity) fighting against the central government in Bangui. Pressured by the internal opposition and dependent on external support, the government of President Bozizé was unable to take effective action to guard state frontiers. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the border regions of the Central African Republic, Chad and Sudan have become site of rivalry between conflicted political and military forces, which destabilises the internal situation of all the countries suffering the consequences of the conflict.

To a certain extent, the evolution of internal affairs in the CAR in the past was also influenced by Libya. The regime of Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi supported the government in Bangui after the outbreak of interethnic rivalry conflicts caused by the repressive policies of President Patassé. In 1996, Gaddafi sent a special forces unit to support the government forces in the CAR.

Similarly, during the civil war between the government of President Patassé and the future president Bozizé, supported by rebel forces from Chad, Patassé enjoyed military support of the Libyan regime. This alliance and mutual cooperation was strengthened by an unsuccessful coup attempt against Patassé that took place in 2001.

The decision on military involvement of the Libyan government has been associated with licenses on diamond mining in the CAR offered to Libya. The internal conflict was aggravated once President Patassé enlisted the help of one of the organisations involved in the civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in fighting against the armed opposition. Fighters of the Movement for the Liberation of Congo, led by Jean-Pierre Bemba, became infamous for their exceptional cruelty in combating anti-government rebels.

And it were mostly civilians who fell victim to rape and violence during these operations.¹⁵ The crimes committed in that phase of conflict in the CAR have been investigated by the International Criminal Court, which charged Bemba with war

¹⁵ Robert Kłosowicz, *op.cit.*, p. 107.

crimes, crimes against humanity and hampering international investigations against five alleged criminals.¹⁶

During the rule of President Bozizé, the government's forces received the support of military instructors from South Africa. The corresponding agreements, under which several dozen soldiers (20–46) were to train members of the Central African Republic's armed forces, including special forces, were signed in 2007 and extended in 2012. At the beginning of 2013, in connection with increasing activity of the Seleka rebels, the South African military presence was increased by approximately 200 soldiers.

During the battle for the capital, Bangui, in March 2013, thirteen South African soldiers died. However, the instructors were withdrawn from the CAR only after the Seleka opposition forces seized power in April 2013. The South African presence, similarly to the Libyan one, was associated with economic concessions to Pretoria. Given the nature of the regime of President Bozizé, and the role of South African military instructors in consolidating his rule as well as the emerging accusations of ties between the military presence and the involvement of South African businessmen working closely with the governing elite in Bangui (mainly in diamond mining), the South African presence aroused considerable internal controversy in South Africa. The authorities in Pretoria were accused of basing the decision on military foreign intervention on improper grounds, namely on particular interests of the decision-makers.¹⁷

Alas, the south-eastern regions of the Central African Republic have also witnessed the presence of foreign military troops; they became the area of operation of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Since 1987 the LRA, under the leadership of the self-proclaimed prophet Joseph Kony, have been conducting military actions against the government of President Yoveri Museveni in Uganda. Following military defeats, LRA militants were forced to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, that is the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan (South Sudan), and since 2007, despite a rather large geographical distance, in the Central African Republic as well.¹⁸ Ideological and religious fanaticism and ruthlessness in the use of violence (including the abduction of children and forcing them into violence) led to the LRA being widely recognised as a terrorist organisation. The Army's leaders have been wanted by the International Criminal Court since 2005 on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.¹⁹

¹⁶ ICC, *Situation in Central African Republic*, source: http://www.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/icc/situations%20and%20cases/situations/situation%20icc%200105/Pages/situation%20icc-0105.aspx (14.11.2014).

¹⁷ Nickolaus Bauer, 'CAR: Did Zuma Defy the Constitution', *Mail & Guardian*, 9 April 2013, <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-04-08-zuma-constitution-car-deployment-sandf> (accessed on: 12 November 2014).

¹⁸ For more see: Tim Allen, Koen Vlassenroot (eds), *The Lord's Resistance Army: Myth and Reality*, Zed Books, London-New York 2010; Andre Le Sage, 'Countering the Lord's Resistance Army in Central Africa', *Strategic Forum*, 14 July 2011, Issue 270.

¹⁹ *Warrant of Arrest unsealed against five LRA Commanders*, source: <http://web.archive.org/web/20110616142249/http://www.icc-cpi.int/menus/icc/situations%20and%20cases/situations/situation%20icc%200204/related%20cases/icc%200204%200105/press%20releases/warrant%20of%20arrest%20unsealed%20against%20five%20lra%20commanders> (accessed on: 8 November 2014); Matthew Happold,

Like in many similar cases, the Central African Republic's government has not had enough strength to eliminate the LRA militias from its sovereign territory and to protect civilians from the LRA's violence.

Last but not least, among external actors influencing the CAR the former colonial metropolis – France – plays a highly significant role. Close ties with France and cooperation in political, military and economic relations were important for the internal situation and international position of the African country. Since its independence, the CAR has been involved in structures aimed at deepening cooperation with Paris. In the 1960s, the Central African Republic was one of the twelve countries making up the francophone Brazzaville Group. Throughout its postcolonial period, the CAR was member of the CFA franc zone – the common currency of Francophone countries in Africa, where the exchange rate has been guaranteed by the Bank of France. France has also remained one of the country's most important trade partners. Paris, as stated before, played the principal role in ousting Emperor Bokassa in 1979, taking direct part in restoration of President David Dacko to power.

Until 1997, the CAR hosted two French military bases: in Bangui and Bouar, later shut down due to changes in the French African strategy and to the weakening of bilateral relations during the rule of President Patassé. France was the first country to recognise the government of President Bozizé, which resulted in re-rapprochement between the two countries. The government in Paris supported the CAR in the peace process held under President Bozizé and after he was overthrown. France became a major force in the international intervention units sent to the country to restore stability and internal order and to stop bloody acts of violence.

These latter activities were a manifestation of a wider phenomenon – the international community's efforts to support the peace process in a country that had been shaken by increasingly aggressive behaviour of the parties to the internal conflict. Starting from the escalation of civil war in the final period of Patassé's presidency, a number of international institutions and individual countries become engaged in peace initiatives designed to restore internal stability and allow the country to develop.

In 1997, a mission was established to monitor the peace agreement concluded by the then government of the country with President Patassé. It was called MISAB (Mission interafricaine de surveillance des accords de Bangui) and enjoyed political and material support of France. The MISAB was composed of forces from six African countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Gabon, Senegal and Togo).²⁰ It lasted until 1998. From 25 October 2002, in turn, stabilisation forces of FOMUC (Force multinationale en Centrafrique), legitimised by the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), were stationed in the CAR. The status of the mission was changed on

'The International Criminal Court and the Lord's Resistance Army', *Melbourne Journal of International Law*, May 2007, Vol. 8, Issue 1, pp. 159 ff.

²⁰ Eric G. Berman, Katie E Sams, *Peacekeeping in Africa: Capabilities and Culpabilities*, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Geneva 2000, pp. 222–228.

12 July 2008, when the responsibility for it was taken over by the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC/ECCAS). From then on it operated under the name Mission for consolidation of peace in Central African Republic (MICOPAX, Mission de consolidation de la Paix en République Centrafricaine).

After the overthrow of President Bozizé and with internal anarchy skyrocketing, the involvement of the international community took on an enormous scale. Even during the fight between Seleka rebels and the army loyal to President Bozizé, the Economic Community of Central African States and the African Union were undertaking mediation efforts. The latter organisation decided to establish the peacekeeping mission MISCA (African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic/Mission internationale de soutien à la Centrafrique sous conduite africaine), which gained legitimacy from the UN Security Council on 5 December 2013 and replaced MICOPAX.²¹

The United Nations were present in the CAR in 1998–2000 under MINURCA (United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic), mandated with replacing the MISAB African Standby Force in the process of overseeing the implementation of the Bangui peace agreement. In 2007 another UN mission, MINURCAT (United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad),²² was established to assist in resolving tensions in the border regions of Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic. Upon its completion, from December 2010 the stabilisation process was supported by BINUCA (UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic), and in April 2014 the UN set up MINUSCA (United Nations Integrated Multidimensional Stabilisation Mission in the Central African Republic), which took on the role of the African mission MISCA (MINUSCA began its operations in September 2014).²³

Last but not least, the European Union was also involved in peacekeeping activities in the CAR. In 2007–2008, the EU's EUFOR Chad/CAR mission was mandated with preparing MINURCAT. On 10 February 2014, the UN Security Council authorised the creation of EUFOR RCA, tasked with supporting the peace process in the Central African Republic and ensuring conditions necessary for the delivery of humanitarian aid to the civilian population.²⁴ Since December 2013, France has been executing Operation Sangaris in order to stop violence and control chaos in the CAR. With the permission of the UN Security Council, Paris sent some 2,000 soldiers to execute the mandate and to cooperate with international forces.²⁵

²¹ See: *Security Council Resolution 2121 (2013)*, 10 October 2013, source: [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2121\(2013\)&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2121(2013)&Lang=E) (accessed on: 14 November 2014).

²² See: *Security Council Resolution 1778 (2007)*, 25 September 2007, source: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1778%282007%29 (accessed on: 14 November 2014).

²³ See: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minusca/> (accessed on: 14 November 2014).

²⁴ See: http://eeas.europa.eu/csdp/missions-and-operations/eufor-rca/index_en.htm (accessed on: 15 November 2014).

²⁵ See: <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/centrafrique/dossier-de-presentation-de-l-operation-sangaris/operation-sangaris2> (accessed on: 15 November 2014).

Concluding remarks

The fifty years since the Central African Republic gained independence have shown that the country is extremely unstable and vulnerable to internal shocks – even according to African standards. Frequent changes of government, rebellions, interethnic and interreligious conflicts, the personification of the governance system and the lack of civil society eventually led the state to failure.

The disintegration of administrative structures and ‘privatisation’ of law enforcement institutions during the conflict of 2012–2014 resulted from a long process of progressive destabilisation and the subsequent accumulation of consequences of violence generated by corrupt authoritarian governments that lacked a broad social base.

Tribalism as a way of legitimising power, in turn, resulted in the intensification of interethnic animosities, thus hampering the inception of a coherent social fabric based on political values associated with nationality. The rebellion organised by the united opposition forces against President Bozizé (the Seleka movement) was dominated by representatives of the Muslim population from the north of the country, and this fact led to the process of growing interreligious conflict, which – combined with fanaticism and poverty – brought escalation of violence.

Events taking place in the immediate neighbourhood of the country have had a significant impact on the evolution of the situation in the Central African Republic as well. The weakness of the central government created a beneficial environment for the infiltration of not only political and military forces but also refugees from neighbouring countries into its territory. That exposed the CAR to further destabilisation.

The evolution of the situation in Chad, Sudan (South Sudan) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo has had serious consequences for the CAR; it should be noted, however, that in Africa such interdependencies are of a multilateral (symmetric) nature. Finally, the internal weakness of the state condemned the authorities to looking for external support, both in terms of stability of the political system and of economic development (France, Libya, Chad, South Africa).

A set of coinciding negative factors destabilising the CAR has so far made the external attempts to support the process of stabilisation and modernisation of the country (ECCAS, the African Union, European Union, United Nations) ineffective and have not prevented the CAR from becoming a dysfunctional – or even failed – state. It remains to be seen whether further efforts of the international community towards the reconstruction of the CAR’s statehood, legitimised by the UN Security Council, will make it possible to realise the ambitious plan of bringing peace and justice to the country.

