

# POLITICKÉ VEDY / POLITICAL SCIENCES

Časopis pre politológiu, najnovšie dejiny, medzinárodné vzťahy, bezpečnostné štúdiá / Journal for Political Sciences, Modern History, International Relations, security studies

URL of the journal / URL časopisu: <http://www.politickevedy.fpvmv.umb.sk>

**Author(s) / Autor(i):** Ivan Majchút  
**Article / Článok:** Central African Republic: The West Contra Russia in the Conflict Solution  
**Publisher / Vydavateľ:** Fakulta politických vied a medzinárodných vzťahov – UMB Banská Bystrica / Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations – UMB Banská Bystrica  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2022.25.4.213-230>

**Recommended form for quotation of the article / Odporúčaná forma citácie článku:**

MAJCHÚT, I. 2022. Central African Republic: The West Contra Russia in the Conflict Solution. In *Politické Vedy*. Vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 213-230. ISSN 1335 – 2741. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2022.25.4.213-230>

By submitting their contribution the author(s) agreed with the publication of the article on the online page of the journal. The publisher was given the author's / authors' permission to publish and distribute the contribution both in printed and online form. Regarding the interest to publish the article or its part in online or printed form, please contact the editorial board of the journal: [politicke.vedy@umb.sk](mailto:politicke.vedy@umb.sk).

Poskytnutím svojho príspevku autor(i) súhlasil(i) so zverejnením článku na internetovej stránke časopisu Politické vedy. Vydavateľ získal súhlas autora / autorov s publikovaním a distribúciou príspevku v tlačenej i online verzii. V prípade záujmu publikovať článok alebo jeho časť v online i tlačenej podobe, kontaktujte redakčnú radu časopisu: [politicke.vedy@umb.sk](mailto:politicke.vedy@umb.sk).

Journal Politické vedy is provided under the conditions of Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International CC BY 4.0. / Časopis Politické vedy je publikovaný na základe podmienok Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International CC BY 4.0.



# CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: THE WEST CONTRA RUSSIA IN THE CONFLICT SOLUTION

Ivan Majchút\*

## ABSTRACT

The Central African Republic, located in the central part of Africa, has been known for decades of conflict between the communities. Citizens of local communities first influenced the solution to the conflict. However, the mentioned country cannot solve it, and external actors must contribute to these processes. International organisations (United Nations, European Union, and African Union) and the powered world countries (the United States of America, China, and France) were also significant, active, and influential in this process. Russia obtained a unique position in the process. The present study attempted to critically evaluate this country's historical background, current conflict situation, and perspectives. The study aimed to answer the essential question of the external players, activities, and roles in the Central African Republic and asserted their interests in the mentioned region by the complex of general theoretical methods. Special attention was paid to Russian activities in this country. It is obvious that the mutual relations of external actors fundamentally influence the situation in the mentioned country. The conflict situation in the country was affected, is affected, and will be affected not only by inside processes but also by outside processes.

**Key words:** Central African Republic, External Actors, UN, EU, USA, Russia, China, France.

## Introduction

Naturally, the internal political activities in the Central African Republic (CAR) affect the solution to the conflict in the country. However, external actors also influence the answer to a considerable extent. We highlight the importance and influence of external players on CAR conflict resolution. The situation in central Africa, as well as in CAR, is seriously affected by the interests and activities of some players.

On one side, international organisations are operating in the mentioned

---

\* doc. Ing. Ivan Majchút, PhD. is an Associated Professor at the Security and Defence Department, Armed Forces Academy of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik, Demänová 393, 03101, Liptovský Mikuláš, Slovakia, e-mail: [ivan.majchut@aos.sk](mailto:ivan.majchut@aos.sk).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2022.25.4.213-230>

region. Mostly it is the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU) and African Union (AU). France has a specific role, closely and directly engaged as a power with interests in central Africa. On the other side, there are mainly the USA, China and Russia, which all have special interests in the situation in Africa.

The main hypothesis of this article is that CAR conflict resolution concept is only effective for a few years. It is not only a local problem, and not only local players can finish it successfully. At first, the UN has been active in CAR for a long time with many efforts. Secondly, the EU and the AU are also influencing the country's situation. Third, through the years, the presence of France in CAR is still engaging, and this interest seems to persist. Next, the USA and China also see an opportunity to advance their goods here, and they will be unlikely to back down from their positions. Finally, Russia is growing its interest in Africa and the central part of this continent.

The paper elaborates more thoroughly on the conflict situation in CAR. The aim is to describe the historical background and current position of external players in CAR, to discuss what possible interests and processes are to be expected and to draw attention to the potential role of external players in CAR conflict resolution. Special attention is paid to Russia's activities in the country.

It is necessary to use relevant research strategies and several research methods to fulfil the mentioned aim and demonstrate why the conflict in CAR has not been resolved. It seems most appropriate to choose a qualitative research strategy in the following sequence: observation - description - detection of regularity - comparison - understanding (mutual) relationships - determination of dependencies - conclusions. We see the main effort of qualitative research in the understanding of the investigated phenomenon, which in its essence, has some generally valuable features but is characterized by several unique specifics.

Acquiring a large set of general knowledge makes it possible to focus on those that affect a specific case, i.e., the influence of internal but, above all, the influence of external actors on CAR conflict resolution. Although the research mentioned above partially considers the activities of external actors on the African continent, it focuses primarily on those that directly affect CAR. As a result, all attention is paid to only one specific case, and the obtained data allow us to reach fruitful conclusions.

It is why the author has used a complex of general theoretical methods - deduction, induction, generalization and synthesis. The methodological basis of the research also includes the principles of historicism, scientific objectivity, comparison, reliability and analysis.

This issue is fragile in Central Europe and especially in Slovakia. It is also why it was necessary to use primarily foreign literature, which is relatively extensive and looks at the given problem from different points of view. Many authors abroad deal with the situation in CAR, but due to the aim of the article, it is possible to use only a part of the existing research. The Slovak security community became partially interested in the problem only after the deployment of Slovak Armed Forces personnel to the European Union Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA).

Foreign authors such as Vinograd (2018), Spagnol (2019), Siegle (2019), Olivier (2019), Marten (2019), Ingerstad (2014), Calzoni (2018), and Arieff – Husted (2019) contributed primarily to the theoretical understanding of the issue in CAR. The works of the authors Eichler (2014) and Héméz (2016) significantly contribute to the knowledge of the Sangaris operation. Among the Slovak authors, it was possible to apply the ideas of the authors Ivančík – Nečas (2012), Jurčák – Marek (2020), and Kompan – Hrnčiar (2021).

## **1. Historical background of the situation in CAR**

CAR is located in the middle of the African continent. It has an area of 622,984 square kilometres (roughly the size of France or Ukraine) and a population of approximately 4.5 million (less than Slovakia), with the capital Bangui situated on the southern border. The territory of CAR is rich in natural resources such as diamonds, gold, timber, uranium, oil, and other resources coveted by international markets. However, the CAR government cannot use them in a way that would benefit the country's economy. The country's political, social and economic situation is influenced by its complicated history (including colonial legacies) and the diverse national and religious composition of the population.

CAR population is composed of several ethnic groups: Gbaya (Baya) c.33%, Banda c.27%, Mandjia c.13%, Sara c.10%, Mbum c. 7%, Ngbaka c.4% and others c.4%. They currently speak various languages, but French and Sango are the official languages. Sango is a lingua franca spoken by almost nine-tenths of the population. It was initially the language of a people from the Ubangi River region, but Christian missionaries adopted, simplified, and disseminated it in the 1940s and '50s to their followers throughout the country. Most of the population professes Christianity: Protestants - c.51% and Roman Catholics - c.29% of the population. About one-tenth of the population continues to practice traditional

religions (so-called animists). The number of Sunni Muslims (c.10%) is growing (O'Toole et al., 2019).

Present-day CAR (as the region of Ubangi-Shari) was mainly part of the French colonial empire until 1960. Landlocked, ravished by bloody civil wars, and heavily dependent on foreign military support, CAR has become synonymous with disaster.

French colonial rule led to the formation of ethnic groups, their interrelationships and the creation of an elite (albeit less numerous) ethnic group. It influenced the gaining of political positions after independence in 1960, which is still the case today. It also influenced the country's regional division and increased its political system's complexity. Although people living in the country's northern regions have gained more political power since independence, southern nations are still an essential part of national politics (O'Toole et al., 2019).

CAR gained independence in 1960; however, it remained heavily dependent on the support of France. Since its independence, CAR has suffered several intrastate conflicts, military coups and political unrest. Ongoing conflicts are possibly to be defined as typically postmodern. Irregular military and armed paramilitary groups, militia, and guerrillas were active almost all over the country. Fighters were recruited among civilian inhabitants without knowledge of international war law. Civilian casualties were high compared to the military ones. Genocide and crime against humanity were not the side effects but often the tools for achieving goals (Ivančík – Nečas, 2012, p. 30).

Almost every leader of CAR came to power through a French-backed military coup. The modern crisis era in CAR began in 2003 when **Francois Bozizé** seized power in a violent coup. Opposition armed groups occurred in the northern CAR in 2005 and caused severe human rights violations and economic crimes over the next several years. In 2008, **Bozizé** signed a peace deal with the rebels but failed to implement it.

The number of former rebel militias established a new rebel coalition named the Séléka. The Séléka consisted mainly of Muslim people from the northeast of CAR and a considerable number of Sudanese and Chadian mercenaries. They completed a long struggle to overthrow **Bozizé**, seized control of the government, and eventually took control of the country in 2013. **Michel Djotodia**, the head of the Séléka, became the first president of CAR who had come to power without the direct support of France.

After the Séléka take-over, anarchy ruled in CAR. Individual Séléka militia leaders plundered the economic resources of CAR and made personal conquests

throughout the country, attacking villages and killing many civilians, many of whom were Christians. **Djotodia** could not control his militia, so he dissolved the Séléka in September 2013. Since September 2013, the remnants of the Séléka have been called ex-Séléka militias.

However, this decision did not stop the killings and chaos (Rosenhart, 2019). The violence in CAR caused the creation of self-defence groups and their formation into the coalition called the anti-Balaka ("anti-machete" or "anti-bullet"). This coalition sought to defend their people from ex-Séléka attacks and to seek revenge when the security conditions in the country deteriorated even more. The anti-Balaka, led by Christians and animists, was created to fight the Séléka (ex-Séléka) but ultimately focused generally on Muslims. Ethnic and sectarian lines are evident in most violence in CAR. The anti-Balaka attacks in 2013 - 2014 forced the Muslim population in the south, centre and west to gather in small enclaves or shift to other countries or the rebel-held northeast. It is possible to assess it as an "ethnic cleansing".

Armed groups created fractions and alliances, which have changed as groups have sought to gain leverage in peace talks and advance their economic interests. Significantly, some of the anti-Balaka groups have collaborated with some ex-Séléka fractions. More than 14 armed groups efficiently control much of the country, and there exists intensive emulation for managing the country's wealth. The conflict in CAR spiralled out of control, and external assistance appeared necessary. The UN, the AU, the EU, the USA and France were actively involved. **Faustin-Archange Touadera**, a former prime minister, became president after the elections in March 2016 (Arieff – Husted, 2019).

Despite international intervention and a post-rebellion political transition, the situation throughout CAR remained highly volatile, with escalating attacks against civilians and humanitarian workers. As a result of the armed group's deployment, at the end of 2018, one-fifth of the country's population was displaced. More than 580,000 were internally displaced persons (IDPs), and more than 591,000 were refugees in neighbouring countries (over 275,000 in Cameroon). About half CAR's population (2.9 million people) needed humanitarian aid. Militia attacks on IDPs have impeded relief efforts, and CAR is among the world's deadliest countries for aid workers. According to some estimates, as much as 80 per cent of CAR was not under government control (McGregor, 2018).

In February 2019, the government and 14 armed groups signed a peace accord brokered by the AU in Khartoum, Sudan. The new agreement - the eighth since 2013 - calls for a unity government, demobilization of non-state combatants,

and interim mixed security units comprising security forces and former rebels. A peace agreement gave a new twist to the conflict yet did not stop militias from carrying out massacres. Several groups threatened immediately to withdraw from the accord, prompting questions over its durability and impact. Prospects for full implementation - arguably requiring armed groups to relinquish control of lucrative economic interests - are tenuous.

Even though international actors support the Central African Armed Forces (Forces armées centrafricaines - FACA), state security forces remain weak and suffer from a history of blame and militia infiltration (Arieff – Husted, 2019).

## **2. Activities of some important foreign players in CAR**

UN Security Council has maintained an arms embargo and targeted sanctions regime on CAR since 2013. In December 2013, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution that mandated an African-led International Support Mission in CAR (AFISM-CAR), which has become better known as MISCA (French acronym for Mission internationale de soutien à la Centrafrique sous conduite africaine).

UN established in 2014 Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA), which absorbed a previous AU military force. MINUSCA is mandated to protect civilians, assist the peace process, protect aid delivery, support the extension of state authority, and, under certain conditions, take "urgent temporary measures ... fight impunity," among other tasks. As of early 2020, MINUSCA had nearly reached 14,708 total personnel. A substantial part comprises uniformed personnel (deployment of 12,870 uniformed personnel, including 11,650 military troops). Top tent troop contributors are Rwanda, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Zambia, Morocco, Burundi, Cameroon, Nepal, and Mauritania. The top ten police contributors are Rwanda, Senegal, Cameroon, Mauritania, Egypt, Indonesia, Congo, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Côte d'Ivoire. Force protection, logistical capacity, and adequate equipment remain key challenges (United Nations, 2022).

UN Security Council, in recent years, has approved some arms transfers to the government on a case-by-case basis, and CAR officials have called for the embargo to be fully lifted for the government. In late 2018, the Council authorized MINUSCA to provide logistical support for the FACA's "progressive redeployment" through CAR's territory. The mission had previously coordinated some operations with the FACA in Bangui and other cities where the military had

established a presence. Although some communities have welcomed the military, the legacy of FACA disintegration and involvement in anti-Muslim violence in 2013 - 2015 may hinder its effectiveness (Arieff – Husted, 2019).

EU deployed some 750 soldiers to help secure Bangui in 2014 - 2015 and 2016 and established European Union Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM-RCA). EUTM-RCA is mandated to give strategic advice not only to the Ministry of Defence, military staff and the armed forces but also to the President's cabinet and to allow it to provide advice on civil-military cooperation, including to the Ministry of the Interior and the Gendarmerie. In 2020, EUTM-RCA reached 181 personnel from 11 nations: Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Georgia, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain, and Sweden. The contribution to the restructuring of the Defence sector in three domains: strategic advice, operational training and education remain key challenges. Since July 2016, the EUTM-RCA has advised, educated and trained more than 4,000 FACA soldiers (European Union, 2019).

The US started its security assistance in 2014, during CAR's transitional government, and it initially centred on the police and justice sector. In 2016, it expanded to include military professionalization, right-sizing, defence reform programs, and efforts to encourage disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of rebel fighters. The US has sought to support conflict resolution and reconciliation, atrocity-prevention efforts, livelihoods, security sector reform, and environmental conservation. The US is the single largest donor to emergency humanitarian aid. Bilateral aid is preferentially focused on food aid, security aid, and development aid.

The Trump Administration has expanded US-targeted sanctions to deter support to CAR's domestic armed groups and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which originated in Uganda and is active in CAR. Sixteen individuals and three entities connected with CAR are designated for US sanctions on CAR, including former presidents **François Bozizé** and **Michel Djotodia**, ex-Séléka leader **Noureddine Adam**, LRA leader **Joseph Kony**, two of his sons, and the LRA as group. US designations are more extensive than those imposed by the UN Security Council sanctions committee on CAR (Arieff – Husted, 2019).

France had been the dominant external player in CAR since colonial times. France has never fully recanted its control over CAR. The connections between France and CAR are still influential. CAR still holds the colonial currency (The Central African CFA franc). CFA Franc has national reserves in the Central Bank of France and contains a large percentage of CAR's foreign currency in the



French Treasury. Also, France has many companies in CAR which exploit its natural resources. Therefore, France was vested in CAR's stability (Spagnol, 2019).

In 2013, France decided to support MISCA by setting up its operation. Its goal was to restore stability in CAR and to protect the population. This operation was named Sangaris after an African butterfly with a short lifespan (Eichler, 2014). It was meant to be a short-duration process (at longest, six months – almost three years). France had deployed around 2,500 troops as part of this operation at its peak, supporting around 10,000 UN peacekeepers. The military engagement in CAR was proving too expensive for France, so later, this was reduced to about 900 (Hémez, 2016).

Even after **Djotodia** resigned, the violence in CAR remained rampant, and the peace process initiated by the international community was not successful. Operation Sangaris was also criticized when reports emerged that French soldiers had sexually abused the local population (Rosenhart, 2019). The election of **Faustin-Archange Touadera** as the president of CAR in 2016, France used as an opportunity to reduce its military presence in the country, discontinued operation Sangaris and left the peacekeeping to the UN and EU. The pull-out was in parallel with the build-up of UN (MINUSCA) and EU (EUTM-RCA) activities in which around 300 French troops military participated (France 24, 2016).

Since 2006, China has hosted the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Beijing every three years, which highlights its expanding role in Africa. China is also active in CAR, although it does not play such an essential role as Russia. Chinese economic and security part in CAR is limited. The trade between the two countries is low even though a handful of Chinese companies are involved in mining in CAR. Chinese banks have not provided any significant loans to CAR since 2011, and China still needs to send peacekeepers to MINUSCA as to other UN peacekeeping missions in Africa. However, China has taken steps to cultivate a relationship with Touadéra's government over the past year by donating military vehicles, sending medical teams, and establishing a China-CAR Friendship Village.

Although China's role in the country is still small, its potential economic influence looms large. China has stepped up its engagement with many African countries in recent years and poured millions into new infrastructure and connectivity projects under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) banner. China and CAR have yet to sign a memorandum to cooperate on BRI. Still, CAR's strategic location at the crossroads of the continent makes it an essential target for this

project, and **Touadéra** expressed his support for this initiative (Minney – Sullivan – Vandenbrink, 2019).

### **3. Russian activities in CAR**

Russia had no prior interests in CAR in the past, and it seems it is acting unilaterally and competitively. A link between the role of the Soviet Union in Africa during the Cold War and Russia in this continent today can be found. However, the Soviet Union had a minimal role in CAR. The culmination of their cooperation was probably a visit of **Jean-Bedel Bokassa**, CAR's bizarre self-proclaimed "emperor", to Moscow in 1970. This visit led to a joint communiqué emphasizing the two states' anti-colonial, antiapartheid stances but promising only educational and cultural exchanges. There is no evidence of any security or arms sales relationship (Marten, 2019).

Russia's nowadays motives for intervening in CAR could be trying to re-establish a reputation for itself as a global power. CAR is a dysfunctional country, and Russia is profiting from its instability in many ways. Its activities in CAR can have strategic objectives. Russia's intentions in Africa are multifaceted. It is pursuing viable trade and investment opportunities in Africa, as do other external interlocutors. Moscow has strategically sought mineral access, weapon sales, negotiated security cooperation agreements, nuclear power development, and trade relationships in selected African countries (including CAR). This fact has resulted in a steady growth of Russia's trade with Africa over the past decade, amounting to just under \$20 billion (Siegle, 2019).

Russia has a security presence in Sudan (to CAR's northeast) and an agreement to send military personnel to service its weapons in the Republic of Congo (to CAR's southwest). CAR is located at the geographic centre of Africa, and establishing a base there, or at least flyover and landing rights, would ease access to the rest of the continent. Probably Russia tried to create a corridor linking the Mediterranean to the South Atlantic across Africa's landmass (as France attempted unsuccessfully in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century). Weapons donations and military training would probably be enough to gain access rights in CAR and secure reputation goals.

Next possible Russia's (or some Russians' personal) motives could be interests in CAR's diamond, gold, and uranium mines. The perspectives of financial gains from these mines could also greatly influence Moscow's policy.

Diamonds in CAR are not in concentrated lodes but spread shallowly over a

wide geographic area. They have always been mined using a labour-intensive method (gold is also mined similarly there). Decades back, diamonds made much money for a few traders (often based abroad). Since 2016, some "foreign operators" (including Chinese businesses with their private security forces) have obtained permits to exploit diamond and gold sites. However, the arrival of other new actors in this trade can be a bit complicated for them.

Many follow-up steps condition the way to make money off the mines. Obtaining mining and export permission requires cooperating with the state, and access to the mines requires cooperating with the militias that control a large part of the country. It expects that bringing the state and rebels together in a peace accord will pay off the (former) rebels by giving them unusual access to power in the capital. At the same time, it is necessary to obtain the relevant diamond districts certified and conflict-free in the Kimberley Process (needed for access to the legal diamond global supply chain) (Kimberley Process, 2014-2022).

Besides, CAR lacks the transportation infrastructure needed to get industrial equipment (and even necessary supplies) imported easily, much less sent to outlying areas. Russia (in cooperation with Sudan) proposed participation in the AU's plans to build a transcontinental railroad (Korybko, 2018), which might eventually ease the infrastructure problem in the region, but it will take time.

It is questionable which of the two aspects, as mentioned earlier, dominates, the effort to build the position of a global player or the vision of economic profit or it is an equal combination of both. One way or another, Russia takes a stand against France. Moscow risks driving away Paris at a time when it most needs friends in the West and cooperation more fully with the UN, and the EU security missions are also insecure.

### **3.1 Diplomatic activities**

CAR is an example of Russia's approach in Africa: "Russia is mostly interested in trading weapons for natural resources, such as gold, minerals and rare earth elements, which are used for making electronic devices". Russia may be seeking more significant diplomatic influence in Africa at the expense of France; however, Moscow claims that it is only interested in restoring peace in CAR (McGregor, 2018).

The first signs of a budding friendship emerged in October 2017, when **Touadera** met Russia's foreign minister in Sochi. The two politicians discussed the trade and "the considerable potential for partnership in mineral-resources exploration". **Touadera** continued to cosy up to Russia when he met

his Russian counterpart, **Vladimir Putin**, in St. Petersburg, and they declared hopes to forge even closer ties (Vinograd, 2018). In October 2019, he was one of the 43 African heads of state in Sochi for the first-ever Russia-Africa Summit (Marbot, 2019).

In 2018, Russia and CAR's government signed several CAR-Russia bilateral deals, but the details were not made public, which caused even more distrust on the part of France, the US and the EU. It is evident that diplomatic agreements specifically allow Russia to access CAR's natural resources and identify Russia's economic interests in CAR. Russia is attempting to negotiate with both sides of the conflict. Russian emissaries have met with several armed groups, but the results of their talks are unknown. Efforts to obtain information about Russian deals and activities in CAR sometimes lead to tragedies. For example, in 2018, three Russian investigative journalists were killed in CAR (60 miles northeast of Bangui) in unclear circumstances while probing private military contractor activities (Ljubas, 2020).

**Valery Zakharov**, the seasoned Russian diplomat, who gained his experience in conflict resolution during Russia's ferocious Chechen wars, was involved in the diplomatic processes at CAR. This person symbolizes Russia's diplomatic takeover of the country, but his diplomatic mission was and is much greater than that of a mere envoy from Moscow's ministry of foreign affairs.

He has been installed as the national security adviser to the president of CAR, and he is also known to have contacts among ex-Séléka militant groups and the ex-President and Russian-educated Séléka leader **Michel Djetodia** (McGregor, 2018). In connection with his mission, he claimed, among other things, that "Russia is just rebuilding ties with old friends". The statement: "Russia has been in CAR since 1964... And now we are back", confirms this idea (Elabdi 2018).

### **3.2 Influence by information**

CAR President **Touadéra** maintains good relations with Russia. He justifies his action by feeling left abandoned by France. France withdrew its peacekeeping forces from CAR shortly after its election in 2016. Touadéra's turn to Russia is a positive development for the country. France's involvement is explained as post-colonial enforcement of its interests in CAR. Russia is presented as a possible alternative for France, which can provide military assistance to prevent massacres (Rosenhart, 2019).

Russian government's official operations in CAR are trying to create a

positive view of Russia and its activities in the country. The Russian flag is seen, and the Russian language is heard in many ways. Many tools for influencing public opinion are used, radio being prominently among these tools. Companies with Russian participation (Prigozhin's conglomerate, which also includes a company called Lobaye Invest) fund the existence of the new radio station in CAR (Lister – Shukla – Ward, 2019).

Radio Lengo Songo (French: radio of peace and national reconciliation), officially accredited and launched on November 8, 2018, has developed into "a crucial medium fostering harmony and national cohesion". The radio broadcasts not only in the local Sango but also in English, French and Russian languages, and it is a powerful tool of mass communication in CAR (Zwicewicz, 2019, p. 56).

**Yevgeny Prigozhin** and the Wagner Group (believed **Prigozhin** is behind this notorious group) are also actively involved. Since 2018, they have been pursuing their agenda – parts of which align with the Russian government and details that do not. This affirmation is confirmed, for example, by analysing 13 Facebook Pages assigned to Prigozhin's companies. They are trying to influence the population of CAR via five categories: news devoted to political topics and current events in CAR, representation of a politician or CAR citizen, sports, social events, and other issues.

The primary themes of "news pages" are presenting benefits brought to CAR by Russia, including military support. Some of the "sports pages" spotlight Russian support for sports activities in CAR (for example, athletics) and "social events pages" report about events with the help of the Russian government (for example, Miss of CAR) (Grossman - Bush – DiResta, 2019).

### **3.3 Military activities**

In November 2017, Russia received an exemption on the UN arms embargo on CAR and provided CAR military with small weapons and ammunition. In early 2018, Moscow shipped, along with five military and 170 civilian instructors, more than 5,000 AK-47s, sniper rifles and grenade launchers to train two army battalions. In October 2018, additional military equipment and 60 more instructors were sent there. This action puts 235 Russian personnel in CAR (**Calzoni**, 2018).

Adhering to the UN Security Council's request to secure and track arms, Russia's engagement is legitimately recognized internationally but not controlled by the UN Security Council. On the one hand, Russian involvement in CAR provides Russia with a positive image of international provision and intervention. However, it is unlikely that Russia is acting from purely altruistic motivations.

Since then, Moscow has expanded its military involvement with military personnel and private contractors. Russia is involved in military training and funding of FACA. Russian instructors prepare the military to combat rebel groups across the country. Furthermore, Russian guards also help protect the President from a coup or assassination. What is interesting about Russia's military involvement is that not all military forces based in CAR are part of the Russian army.

Wagner, a private security company, provides more than a thousand instructors to CAR, ensures the security of various institutions, and plays a leading role in training the Presidential Guard and the army. Like Sewa Security Services, another Russian company is operating in CAR. It needs to be clarified what exactly Wagner's role is in CAR. According to their business cards, some employees are "Presidential Advisers".

Interestingly, since April 2018, Russian "instructors" have been residing in a now dilapidated Jean-Bedel Bokassa's former property and the presidential palace in Berengo (two-hour drive south-west of the capital Bangui) and set up a training camp. Wagner and Sewa Security Services – which already operate airfields in Ndelé, Birao and Ouadda – have rehabilitated the 2,000m runway built by **Bokassa** (Olivier, 2019).

These private companies offer Russia the benefit of interfering in CAR with minimal political and military risks. On the other hand, private military companies can pursue their interests and be a source of instability in a country where the primary natural resources are situated in rebel-held territory and are being fought over by warlords (Rosenhart, 2019).

As of late 2018, the UN sanctions monitors reported that Russian instructors often accompanied FACA deployments outside Bangui. Russian personnel also have established a presence in mineral-rich rebel-held areas. Russia has been involved in equipping and training the same violent rebel groups. Specifically, about 500 Russian soldiers have been stationed near Um Dafug on the border between South Darfur in Sudan and CAR. During the five months, 600 Séléka members from CAR and Sudanese soldiers were trained. While this training is extensive, including advanced weapon training, vehicle instruction, and paramedic training, the Russian government does not highlight its involvement (Dabanga, 2018).

The arming and training of CAR's government forces and rebel factions enable Russia to influence all sectors while leveraging these opposing sides to further develop a mighty Russian stronghold in CAR. Moscow's military activities

in CAR are a reality, but intentions are unfortunately still unclear in these processes. With additional troops in nearby Sudan, Russian personnel in CAR provide activities for Russia's benefit in rebel-controlled areas with significant natural resource value.

### **3.4 Economic interests**

Interaction with African partners strengthens Russia's position as a "great power", increasing the possibilities for Russia's participation in the most critical international processes and regulations. The economic cooperation of Russia with CAR plays an important role and cannot only expand in the medium term but also be significantly profitable.

However, the "return" to CAR (and also to other parts of Africa) is complicated by competition from some Asian states, as well as competition from the "Western world". At the same time, it seems to be in Russia's interest to actively combine steps to expand its presence in Africa's economy and politics with initiatives that raise that presence and ensure the particular interest of African states in long-term cooperation with Russia (Jurčák – Marek, 2020, p. 201).

In June and July 2018, CAR's Minister of Mines granted mining recognition permits in the Yawa and Pama regions to Russian company Lobaye Invest Sarlu intending to identify possible gold and diamond deposits. Lobaye Invest Sarlu is at the beginning of its conquest near Ndele, Bria, Birao and Alindao (Olivier, 2019).

In 2018 CAR gave prospecting-mining exploration concessions to Russia. As one of the leading global uranium producers, Russia sees enormous growth potential in CAR. The majority of good resources are under rebel control (for example, the Popular Front for the Renaissance of the Central African Republic [FPRC] - one of the most powerful armed groups) (Goodison, 2019).

## **Conclusion**

CAR is unlikely to resolve its internal affairs and conflict situation accompanied by violence without the help of foreign actors. Using the concept of stabilization and reconstruction could be fruitful, but there are many actors with different goals. The activities of such actors make it challenging to implement mentioned concept and undermine the international community's efforts to maintain stability. Destabilizing actors have the most significant influence until the host nation can ensure its internal and external security. Therefore, the

international community should strive to restore the local security sector. So, CAR provides the required level of protection to the local population and thus confirms its viability and, additionally, its legitimacy (Kompan – Hrnčiar, 2021, p. 89).

The country experienced several peace-building processes; however, previous experiences have unfortunately been negative. They can play a significant role in the future conflict resolution process. There is a necessary collaboration of both the providing and receiving sides. The receiving State undertakes to protect the building and the mission employees under the provisions of the 1961 Vienna Convention. However, the mission employees must inform the receiving State of all details when they feel risk so that the receiving State can gain the time factor in providing the required safety procedures (Nečas – Andrassy, 2018, p. 268).

Russia's intentions in Africa are multifaceted. It is pursuing viable trade and investment opportunities in Africa, as do other external interlocutors. Moscow has strategically sought mineral access, weapon sales, negotiated security cooperation agreements, nuclear power development, and trade relationships in selected African countries (including CAR).

Russia's varied engagements in Africa call for a multi-tiered policy response. In general, international attention must be firm and long-term; otherwise, money and time will be wasted, the population will be disappointed, and it will not take long to restart the violence cycle. European countries contributing to peacekeeping operations in CAR must consider two aspects - internal and external players. Notably, the response from the countries contributing to peacekeeping operations in CAR should not be reflexively only anti-Russian.

Respect for the rule of law is a prominent theme of the policy guidance and should steer priorities in CAR. The focus should be a legitimately elected government, respect term limits, and uphold the rule of law. Doing so establishes a clear and positive framework to guide European countries' engagements in CAR. A policy framework upholding the rule of law is not only consistent with European values.

The implementation of reforms is dependent on the political will on behalf of the government. It is also crucial that people can connect communities that have previously been enemies through support for inter-communal efforts (Ingerstad, 2014, pp. 61-68).

An essential step in the operation of European countries is the identification of those responsible for illicit transactions, actions that result in human rights violations against their citizens or actively undermine democratic processes or



institutions. The next important step is their elimination/separation (possibly punishment).

CAR's president and the government have an irreplaceable place in how to prevent it. Local elections have not been held in decades. The international community's help will be necessary for their organization. Keeping them would go a long way towards strengthening decentralization and local governance. The government and international community should focus on four critical issues:

- advancing reconciliation;
- developing a strategy to help refugees return home;
- fighting impunity; and
- resolving the thorny question of what to do with the armed groups.

The African States must improve their capabilities to meet the expectations of their populations in terms of security. They must also increase their response level regarding democracy and good governance, particularly regarding participation, responsibility-sharing, and democratic control in the security sector. These are the necessary conditions to be met so that they may build a future based on social cohesion, political stability, justice, cooperation, mutual respect and solidarity.

### References:

- ARIEFF, A. – HUSTED, T. F. 2019. *Crisis in the Central African Republic*. Congressional Research Service. Accessible online: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IF11171.pdf>
- CALZONI, F. 2018. *What Russia Wants from the Central African Republic*. Fair Observer. Accessible online: <https://lnk.sk/rvyv>
- Dabanga. 2018. *Russian troops training CAR rebels and Sudanese soldiers*. Accessible online: <https://lnk.sk/hkt9>
- EICHLER, J. 2014. Operation Sangaris 2013: French Intervention in Central Africa. In *Vojenské rozhledy*. [online]. Vol. 23 (54), No. 2/2014, ISSN 2336-2995, pp. 41–52. Available at: DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3849/2336-2995.23.2014.02.041-052>
- ELABDI, F. 2018. *Putin's Man in the Central African Republic: Is Valery Zakharov at the Heart of Russian Skulduggery?* The Daily Beast Company. Accessible online: <https://lnk.sk/xrux>

- European Union. 2019. *European Union Training Mission in Central African Republic (EUTM-RCA)*. Accessible online: <https://lnk.sk/jdh2>
- France 24. 2016. *France to end Central African Republic military mission in 2016*. Accessible online: <https://lnk.sk/ev89>
- GOODISON, K. 2019. Russia in the Central African Republic: Exploitation Under the Guise of Intervention. In *Philologia*. Vol. 11, No. 1/2019, ISSN 2372-1952, pp. 33–42. Available at: DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21061/ph.177>
- GROSSMAN, S. – BUSH, D. – DIRESTA, R. 2019. *Evidence of Russia-Linked Influence Operations in Africa*. Stanford Internet Observatory. Accessible online: <https://lnk.sk/gfq4>
- HÉMEZ, R. 2016. Operation Sangaris: A Case Study in Limited Military Intervention. In *Military Review*. Vol. 96, No. 6, p. 72-80. Accessible online: <https://lnk.sk/aec6>
- INGERSTAD, G. 2014. *Central African Republic – Trapped in a Cycle of Violence? Causes, Conflict Dynamics and Prospects for Peace*. Stockholm : Swedish Defence Research Agency. Accessible online: <https://www.asclibrary.nl/docs/407047700.pdf>
- IVANČÍK, R. – NEČAS, P. 2012. *International Security from the View of Postmodern Conflicts on the African Continent*. Rzeszów : Amelia, 2012. 168 p. ISBN 978-83-63359-44-7.
- JURČÁK, V. – MAREK, J. 2020. The Russian Geopolitical Interests in Africa. In *Politické Vedy*. [online]. Vol. 23, No. 4, 2020. ISSN 1335 – 2741, pp. 196-212. Available at: DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2020.23.4.196-212>
- Kimberley Process. 2014-2022. *The Russian Federation and the Kimberley Process*. Accessible online: <https://www.kimberleyprocess.com/>
- KOMPAN, J. – HRNČIAR, M. 2021. The Security Sector Reform of the Fragile State as a Tool for Conflict Prevention. In *Politické Vedy*. [online]. Vol. 24, No. 2, 2021. ISSN 1335 – 2741, pp. 87-107. Available at: DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2021.24.2.87-107>
- KORYBKO, A. 2018. *Trans-African Railways: Russia's Expertise Could Reshape African Geopolitics*. Global Research. Accessible online: <https://lnk.sk/rxq0>
- LISTER, T. – SHUKLA, S. – WARD, C. 2019. *Putin's private army*. Cable News Network. Accessible online: <https://lnk.sk/nvb3>
- LJUBAS, Z. 2020. *Russian Investigators: Robbers Killed Journalists in CAR*. Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project. Accessible online: <https://lnk.sk/jwnp>

- MARBOT, O. 2019. *Russia-Africa: Sochi more about symbolism than strength*. Theafricareport. Accessible online: <https://lnk.sk/fakt>
- MARTEN, K. 2019. *Russ-Afrique? Russia, France, and the Central African Republic*. PONARS Eurasia Policy Memos. Accessible online: <https://lnk.sk/atpv>
- MCGREGOR, A. 2018. *How Russia Is Displacing the French in the Struggle for Influence in the Central African Republic*. Eurasia Daily Monitor 15, no. 74. Accessible online: <https://lnk.sk/vcx1>
- MINNEY, L. – SULLIVAN, R. – VANDENBRINK, R. 2019. *Amid the Central African Republic's search for peace, Russia steps in. Is China next?* United States Institute of Peace. Accessible online: <https://lnk.sk/giss>
- NEČAS, P. – ANDRASSY, V. 2018. Diplomatic Missions' Order Versus Security and Sustainability. In *Journal of Security and Sustainability Issues*. Vol. 8, No. 2/2018, ISSN 2029-7017 pp. 267 – 276. Available at: DOI: [https://doi.org/10.9770/jssi.2018.8.2\(13\)](https://doi.org/10.9770/jssi.2018.8.2(13))
- OLIVIER, M. 2019. *Russia's murky business dealings in the Central African Republic*. Theafricareport. Accessible online: <https://lnk.sk/ykv3>
- O'TOOLE, T. E. et al. 2019. *Central African Republic*. Encyclopaedia Britannica. Accessible online: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Central-African-Republic>
- ROSENHART, E. 2019. *Central African Republic: Between France and Russia*. Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University. Accessible online: <https://dayan.org/content/central-african-republic-between-france-and-russia>
- SIEGLE, J. 2019. *Recommended US Response to Russian Activities in Africa*. National Defense University, Washington. Accessible online: <https://lnk.sk/yky7>
- SPAGNOL, G. 2019. *Is France Still Exploring Africa?* IERI. Accessible online: <http://www.ieri.be/en/publications/wp/2019/f-vrier/france-still-exploiting-africa>
- United Nations. 2022. *MINUSCA fact sheet. United Nations Peacekeeping*. Accessible online: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/minusca>
- VINOGRAD, C. 2018. *There's a New Battle for Influence in Central Africa, and Russia Appears to Be Winning*. The Washington Post. Accessible online: <https://lnk.sk/auh4>
- ZWICEWICZ, J. 2019. *Russia in Africa: Manipulation and Expanding Influence*. Accessible online: <https://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/259/290/308/286/zwicewicz.pdf>