

Initiative "one book in one snapshot"

Title of the paper: Central African Republic: Better Late Than Never

Author: International Crisis Group

Date of publication: 2 December 2013

Sectors: Conflict, Peace keeping, Security, Central Africa, Regional Stability, Central African Republic, Cameroon

Summary

The situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) continues to escalate. Half of the population (2.3 mio people) are in need of assistance and 400 000 are displaced. The fighting has evolved from a scramble for natural resources and wealth, to religiously inspired violence. The (Muslim) Séléka rebels are carrying out a countrywide criminal operation that has no other motive than personal gain and filling the power vacuum. Outrage of the atrocities that were committed led to the creation of the (Christian) Anti-Balaka self-defence groups. Due to empty state coffers and the lack of a functioning national security force, the authorities in the capital Bangui seem powerless to prevent a deterioration of the situation and instability is spreading to neighbouring countries, specifically Cameroon and Chad. The current international efforts to establish stability seem to be ineffective. The MICOPAX consolidation and peace mission under the responsibility of ECCAS in Bangui enjoyed little credibility after continuous losses against Séléka. In July 2013 the mission was rebranded by the African Union to MISCA, but remained ineffective, largely due to institutional rivalry between AU and ECCAS, as well as a lack of resources and troops. At the time of writing, the prospects for Bangui and the rest of the country seemed bleak, even though France, fearing a "Somalisation" of CAR, reversed its military disengagement policy in November 2013. The International Crisis Group proposed short, medium and long term measures:

Short term: Restoring Security

- The UN Security Council should authorise MISCA, supported by French troops, to take all necessary actions to restore law and order, protect civilians and provide humanitarian relief.
- Reinforcement of MISCA and French troops
- Bangui should be secured first, followed by areas where fighting between Séléka and Anti-Balaka occurs or where religious tensions are high. As well as securing major roads, specifically the one linking Bangui with Cameroon.
- Assure full operational capacity of MISCA with additional resources.

Medium term: Achieving Transition

- Organise an inter-religious dialogue
- Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of rebels

Long term: Rebuilding the state

- This goes beyond institutional capacity and involves, among others, rebuilding of destroyed infrastructure

The situation in CAR is changing rapidly, and since this report has been published a lot has changed. Most importantly, in January President Djotodia has been replaced by the Mayor of Bangui, Samba-Panza. As Djotodia came from the Séléka ranks, Samba-Panza is perceived as a much more neutral politician and she established a government consisting of mainly technocrats. Troop presence has increased, especially by new French, Burundian and Rwandan troops. However, in April 2014 the situation continued to deteriorate. Chadian MISCA forces opened fire on a large crowd in a Christian neighbourhood, while French troops are perceived by locals to be siding with the Anti-Balaka rebels. Religious resentment is now spreading towards international peacekeepers as well. France has warned the international community for a genocide risk. *(Based on information of the International Crisis Group's website)*

Takeaway messages for DG DEVCO

The International Crisis Group is well-known for its assessments of the different conflicts and crises around the world. Their insights into both current and future developments can help DEVCO to assess the safety risks related to her activities.

Given the current situation in CAR, conventional DEVCO activities are very difficult to implement. This is not only due to the insecurity, but also because of the lack of a functioning government. As restoring security should be the main preoccupation according to the report, DEVCO might not appear to have any role to play. However, as the EU is one of the only remaining development actors in the country, DEVCO can play a crucial part in supporting both the military and humanitarian agents. Such support would not only involve sharing acquired knowhow on CAR, but also help in the preparations of a post-conflict plan. DEVCO would also be very well positioned for supporting the rebuilding efforts if a constant presence is kept.

Date: 30/04/2014

Name of Trainee: Felix Braeckman (E1)