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## **The Forgotten War of Central African Republic**

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### **Introduction:**

The majority of African countries are failed states and weak states have been unstable since they took their independence from the ex-colonial powers. The political instability of some of these countries is paired with their richness when it comes to natural resources. The Center of the African continent is a good example of this colonial legacy and natural resources "curse". The instability of these countries is usually caused by revolutions that would turn to be civil wars such as the case of Congo, Niger, and Mali. These countries have failed at providing their population with political goods which leads to terrorism, coup d'état, and internal wars/conflicts. The Central African Republic is one of the states that keeps going from a failed state to a weak one and vice versa. The country has been home for many conflicts and revolutions for the past decades with some periods of peace in between. The last crisis that the country has witnessed is the civil war that started back in 2013 by armed groups and rebels. The causes of the conflict have been reported as religious and ethnic since the media -both national and international- has reported as such. However, religion has been used by politics as a mean of manipulation of the masses from ages.

Religion has been the reason for conflicts and civil wars such as the revolution of Iran. However, the case of the republic is much more complex to summarize the causes of its latest civil war by religious factors. The paper argues that the 2013 civil war was caused by several factors such as foreign interests, resources curse, political and economic factors.

This paper will research the causes behind the ongoing civil war/crisis in the republic to see if the media claims about the crisis are true or if religion is being used as a manipulation tool. We will try to find the roots of this civil war by finding out the main actors of this war and their reasons for starting this crisis.

### **Lit-Review:**

Civil wars in Africa have been in the middle of interests of many researchers. The literature of African inner conflicts is wide. However, there is almost no literature on the last crisis of the Central African Republic itself. This part will classify conclusions of different researches about the causes of African civil wars in general. It will be organized by the following

main roots: religious, economic (greed and grievance), social, and foreign interests. According to Sabine C. Carey, conflicts in Africa are due to poverty, ethnic violence, and corruption.

One of the most known argument is the greed and grievance made by Collier and Hoeffler in their article "Greed and grievance in civil war". their argument was based on self- interest and selfishness motives. They based their research on quantitative methods in order to define and measure their concepts which didn't help provide wide proof for their conclusion. This argument was made by David Keen as well in an article titled "Greed and grievance in civil war" as well and was criticized by Roland Bensted in 2011.

Another factor would be religion which was argued by Käihkö et al and Trinidad in their articles. According to both researches, religion is not the main reason or cause for the war. Käihkö has argued that although religions, genocide, and anarchy are all concepts used to describe the crisis of the Central African Republic, religion is not the cause of the war. Trinidad also agrees with Käihkö about the crisis not being religious but politically driven by arguing that the high rank members of both armed groups (Séléka and anti-balaka) had political aims to achieve and not to spread a religion. Lombard and Batianga-Kinzi have also agreed with them about the crisis's cause and motives. All these authors have agreed that although religion played an important role in the 2013 crisis in the Central African Republic, religion was not the cause nor the motive behind it.

According to the data I have collected through semi-formal and informal interviews, religion is not the main cause of the civil conflict in the Central African Republic. I have interviewed General Khalil who was an ex-general of the Séléka group and the leader of the revolution that started in the north of the country. He said that their reasons to start this conflict are purely political. They were fighting for their rights and to protect the civilians at first. He was not the only one to deny religion being the main factor that started this war. The spokesman of the Séléka and the ex-general of the anti -Balaka group have also denied religion and ethnicity as the cause of the conflict. I have understood from an informal interview with a representative of the Central African Republic, that Muslims are not the minority of the country either religiously or ethnically. In addition, the country had been famous for his hospitality of refugees from neighboring countries such as Chad and Cameroon. The hospitality of the country for neighboring countries has been proven according to the UNHCR website and various news outlets.

The interviews have not denied the fact that religion has been used as a tool to differentiate between the main members of each rebel group which there are today fourteen of them. However, both representatives of Séléka and anti-Balaka have admitted to losing control of membership in the rebel groups. They both have claimed that people would murder or "rebel" and say they are from the Séléka or the anti-balaka.

Another factor for the crisis according to Trinidad would be economic and political interests/goals. He argued that these goals are what leads the actors of the war (direct or indirect actors) to use religion and identity as a manipulation tool in these wars. Andreas has argued that international actors would rather a civil war to not end due to their interests (foreign interests). He argued that their current agreements are the reason behind motivating them to aggravate the crisis rather than calming it down. Andreas does not however provide a reason for the start of the conflict.

The foreign interest, however, has been proven to be a major factor of the war as my interviewees believe. I have interviewed a political scientist and a university professor at the University of Bangui. He has claimed that foreign interests are one of the main factors of this conflict since the war did start after the oil issue where France treats C.A.R as a source of natural resources and that is about it. This claim was also supported by my interview with General Khalil who was a general of the Séléka. According to Albert Mabaya, a central African journalist, Bozizé signing china to exploit petrol in the North Of the country as a direct reason to start the conflict. He also stated that other countries are interested in these resources such as China, India, and Russia lately. According to the armed group's ex-leaders, these foreign interested countries used to support them financially. The last idea was also supported by General Khalil and Dr. Tordet. In addition, according to general Khalil and the spokesman of the Séléka, the regional countries like Chad and Sudan were supporting the Séléka by giving them fighters because they benefit from the instability of the republic.

For the direct actors' interests, the Séléka started the revolution because they disagreed with Bozizé's system and the way he used to discriminate against those who are not from his village and his ethnicity. According to the interviews, general Khalil and Eric Massi (Séléka spokesman) joined for the personal reason which is taking down Bozizé. Sébastien Wenezoui (anti-balaka spokesman) had said that his reason was to protect the people from the Séléka because the country

was in chaos and unsafe.

Another factor that was argued by Michael Auerbach in his article “Global Politics: Causes of war” is the social factor. Auerbach article helps one understands Batianga-Kinzi’s article as they both argue that the social factor is the one behind violence in intrastate conflicts. They argued that a country used to having violent tendencies leads the civilians to suffer from a lack of empathy. Although the articles have explained the reasoning behind the violence in such wars, they have not provided any specific reasons for the start of these conflicts.

According to all the interviews conducted, the socio-economic situation of the people is one of the causes that led to the crisis. According to Eric Massi and General Khalil, the socio-economic factor was one that pushed violence between the citizens that were not part of any armed groups. The fact that the country was unstable and unsafe, people were attacking the Peuls and the Muslims because they were richer and took over the diamond and the cement markets.

Taydas showed in his article that the existing theories do not explain the exact reasons or reason behind the civil war in the Central African Republic. He argued that motives are the main factors behind this type of wars however he doesn’t state the exact factors that lead to an ethnic war in general or the one in C.A.R. The literature review showed a clear gap when it comes to specific factors that started the war. Thus, this research will try to find these specific reasons that initiate this ethnic conflict.

### **Methodology:**

This research will be based on eleven semi-formal interviews that were conducted in the Central African Republic. The interviews were with direct actors of the civil war such as warlords: Eric Massi (spokesman of armed group Séléka coalition), general Abdu-Kader Khalil Ibrahim (coordinator of armed group Séléka coalition), Sébastien Wenezoui (spokesman of armed group the Anti-Balaka). We have also interviewed indirect actors and victims of the civil war such as the minister of communication of the Central African Republic, Dr. Tordet (a political scientist in the university of Bangui), Albert Mbaya and Patrick Brian Mogani (journalists at the republic), Imam Oumar Kobine Layama (representative of Muslims in the Republic), Dieudonné Sana Wembeti (Central African artist), and Mathieu Ndjokam (victim of the crisis). After making the interviews, I transcribed them in their original languages (French and Arabic) and coded them. I have used ground theory to analyze the interviews and organize them. After that, I have translated the parts that will be used in this research. I have also conducted informal interviews with locals in Bangui about the history of the country and past president such as Bokassa in order to understand better the background of crisis.

### **Concepts:**

*Civil war:* It is what we name an internal conflict within a country. It can be in terms of military coup d’état, terrorists versus government, or citizens versus ruling mass.

*Séléka:* It means “coalition” in Sango local language. It is one of the direct actors of the 2013 Central African crisis. It is a coalition of three main armed groups, which are the CPJP, CPSK, UFDR.

*UFDR:* Union of Democratic Forces for Unity is an armed group that was active in the Central African Republic led by Michel Djotodia. The group is one of the main founders of the Séléka coalition.

*CPJP:* Convention for Patriots for Justice and Peace is a rebel group founded by Charles Massi and led by Hassan Al Habib, that was active in the Central African Republic. The group is a founding member of the Séléka Coalition.

*CPSK:* The Patriotic Convention for Saving the Country is a rebel group founded by general Mohamed-Moussa Dhaffane. The group was active in the Central African Republic as well as one of the founding members of the Séléka Coalition.

*Anti-Balaka:* It is a movement that was created as a response to the Séléka’s massacres and injustices toward the Central African Republic’s population.

*D.D.R.R:* The Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration, and Rehabilitation program is a program that was adopted by the transitional government of the Central African Republic in 2014 as a solution to the 2013 crisis.

*Media Manipulation:* It is when the media outlets report facts according to their interests or the interests of their sponsors.

### **Background of the crisis:**

The Central African Republic is one of France’s ex-colonies that took its independence in 1960. After the independence of the country, David Dacko was the first Central African president

after independence. The next president was Jean-Bédél Bokassa who is one of the most famous presidents of the republic. He served the first term as president and appointed himself as emperor during his second term. Unlike popular opinion outside of the country, Bokassa was and still very loved by Central Africans because he was the president that did the most for the country. According to several Central Africans, Bangui is still function because of what Bokassa built. It was during his presidency that the BDEAC which stands for the Development Bank of Central African States was created.

The country has been in a critical state since they took down Bokassa from power. The republic suffered from various coup d'états during the '80s. It was followed by the first democratic elections of the republic which were held in the year 1993. The elections were won by Andre Kolingba who became president and released the ex-president Bokassa from jail who will die shortly after that in Bangui. The republic will not be at peace for long since it witnessed another coup d'état led by General François Bozizé. He used armed groups as well during his coup d'état to take down president Ange Felix Pattasé, which succeeded. After the coup d'état, Francois Bozizé will become president which was the first stimulus of the 2013 civil war.

The Central African Republic's latest crisis was a civil war that started by a coup d'état in the year 2013 led by the Séléka coalition. The Séléka which means coalition/union in Sango which is a national language of the republic was an armed group with a Muslim majority. The group was an alliance between three armed groups that wanted to take down Francois Bozizé from power. The Séléka coalition eventually attained its goal which led Michel Djotodia to become president. He was the leader of one of the main armed groups that made the Séléka called the UFDR. The Anti-Balaka, which is the second most important armed group of the crisis, appeared as a response to the Séléka. Anti-Balaka is a Christian majority group that started fighting the Séléka after they took over the political power of the republic, and Djotodia distributed the important roles to his generals, which led to the start of the civil war.

The crisis was very tense and dangerous as the country almost entered a genocide, which led to international interventions. One of the main military interventions that helped the country to calm down was the French one called Mission Sangaris. The mission lasted over two years (late 2013- 2016) and brought back some order to the country with the help of other interventions, such as the United Nations intervention and the African Union intervention. These interventions have appointed two transition presidents and took down Michel Djotodia from the presidency. Before the end of Mission Sangaris, they helped the republic conduct democratic elections, which was won by Faustin-Archange Touadéra the current president.

The country right now is trying to get back to peace and stabilization through the DDRR program. However, many armed groups are not cooperating, even if ex-Séléka and ex Anti-Balaka leaders are used in the sensitization of the need for the program. The country is somehow stable at the moment but not fully since some armed groups are still active, and the citizens do not fully trust the government because some ministers are ex-members/leaders of armed groups.

### **Research Findings:**

The main question to be answered in this research is if the civil war of the Republic of Central Africa is a religious war or if it has other roots. We have defined above the main actors which are the two following armed groups: Séléka and the Anti-Balaka. To understand what pushed these armed groups to start this civil war, we will first talk about the motives behind creating the Séléka coalition and the Anti-Balaka groups.

#### **Séléka & Anti-Balaka motives**

The Séléka coalition was created to throw the president of the Central African Republic at the time, Francois Bozizé from power. According to general Abdu-Kader Khalil Ibrahim (one of the generals of the Séléka Coalition), the coalition has started after that he had a phone call with the ex-president. he said that Bozizé challenged him but also showed his fear from the armed groups. General Khalil Ibrahim was the vice president for the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity known as the UFDR armed group which was led by Michel Djotodia. General Khalil has said that he was among the armed groups that helped Bozizé to become president in the first place. The armed groups that helped him take office back then were expecting that he would keep his promises to them which were to place some of them in the government. However, Francois Bozizé has threw the rebels that helped take power in jail. After that, Bozizé surrounded himself with his family and assigned the important/powerful position to the people from his specific ethnicity and tribe (Baya tribe) only.

“ When he took over the country, turned to be harder than the previous president Pattasé. he entered his kids, wives, and relatives/friends in his

government. you must be from his tribe...The Baya Daga”.

The general has stated that they helped with the revolution against the previous president Ange- Felix Patassé because they had hope in Bozizé to give them back their rights and freedoms.

“ Until the time of the previous president Patassé, we don't have any freedoms at all. which means, even if you come by a traffic station inspection, when they see you don't have a catholic name you must pay some type of tax.”

According to General Khalil Ibrahim, taking down Bozizé from the presidency has become a personal matter since Bozizé threw him in jail after the confrontation they had about the situation. He was not the only one that had personal reasons to join the Séléka and to take down president Bozizé from power. Eric Massi who is the spokesman of the coalition and the son of the coordinator of the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace known as the CPJP (another principle armed group that formed the Séléka coalition) also felt the need to join the coalition on behalf of his dad, Charles Massi.

“ My father was the general coordinator of the armed group CPJP. he hoped to stop armed groups to go down to Bangui and wanted to reassemble them for the hope of free, democratic, and transparent elections....he was again arrested by Chadians and delivered to Bozizé. Until this day, he didn't reappear..... it was because of his disappearance that the leaders of the CPJP contacted me to ask me if I was ready to assist them and achieve his goal..”

The Séléka Coalition was created from three main groups which are the CPJP, UFDR, and CPSK (Patriotic Convention for the Country's Salvation) which was led by general Dahman. The armed groups decided to unite and go to war against Bozizé to take him down and take over the government. The reasons behind the revolution of the Séléka coalition according to both Eric Massi and general Khalil Ibrahim were political led by socio economic causes. Eric Massi has clearly stated that the civil war's roots are not related to religion and he clearly said: “*This war has nothing religious*”. The Séléka's goal as mentioned before was to take down Bozizé to give the citizens of the Central African Republic can have a better life, especially those of the North (citizens living in Birao, Boromata, and that region) as well as the minorities such as Muslims and the “Peuls”. The Séléka succeeded in taking out Francois Bozizé from the presidential office which led the coalition to grow until they lost control of its members. The loss of control resulted in people taking advantage of the chaos and committing crimes in the name of the Séléka coalition.

Eric Massi has denied attacking people because of their religion and explained that the Muslims were not attacked by other civilians because of their religion nor were the Peuls attacked because of their ethnicity. He said that the Muslims were rich because they work in diamonds and gold mines. The crisis has allowed others to attack these Muslims and chase them away so that they can take over the market of gold and diamonds. The “Peuls” were also victims like Muslims since they were attacked and chased away to steal their cattle. However, that does not make the crisis religious but economic and social.

Thus, the civil war created the perfect chaos that allowed the rest of the population to attack each other for socio-economic reasons. The fact that Muslims and the “Peuls” were attacked goes back to their social class and their wealth. This finding agrees with the argument made by both Käihkö in his book and Trinidad in his article about religion not being the core reason for civil wars and genocides.

The Anti-Balaka was the second main armed group that acted in the civil war of the Central African Republic. The name of the group means Anti-Machete in English since the word *Balaka* in *Sango* means machete. This armed group was the one portrayed by the media as the Christian rebel group. In order to understand what pushed the creation of the Anti-Balaka, we interviewed Sébastien Wenezoui - spokesman of Anti-Balaka and formal minister of environment-. He has described the Anti-Balaka as a movement that came as a reaction to the exaction of the Séléka coalition on the people of the republic. He said that the Anti-Balaka had false information about

“ we thought that Séléka are our Muslim and Christian brothers who made a rebellion. But we realized that there were mercenaries that came from Sudan and Chad, and they were based in Darfur. So, these people dominated the numbers of Séléka troops.”

According to Wenezoui, the Anti-Balaka was created to defend the civilians from the Séléka. He said that their group was the real revolution while the Séléka were a group of Chadian and Sudanese rebels and that some of these rebels did fight against president Omar Bashir. Thus, we can see that they have also denied any relation between the civil war and religion, but it was the actual crisis that divided the Muslims and the Christians.

“they were brothers both Muslims and Christians like brothers from the same parents, but this shitty war that was imposed on us divided us. So, it’s not a war about religion. Of course, there are flagrant aspects of the war, but it is surely not religion.”

The Anti-Balaka was dissolved after that they chased down the Séléka according to their spokesman. he said:

“I can tell you that at a certain moment when we succeeded at hunting down 80% almost of the Séléka missionary, they left with their captain Djotodia, there was no reason to stay at an armed group named anti-balaka. That is why I announced the dissolution of the group on the 30th of September 2014 at the sports stadium, with the presence of the communication minister at the time of transition.”

We can conclude from the above that the two main direct actors of the 2013 crisis - the armed groups- did not have religious motives to start this war. The general motives of both the Séléka coalition and the Anti-Balaka were social since the Séléka has claimed that they defended the minorities rights according to General Khalil and the Anti-Balaka claimed that they defended the civilians from the Séléka according to Wenezoui.

“ the suffering that they brought to the Central African Republic citizens was beyond limit and the only solution that was left is to organize ourselves into auto-defense to fight back the daily aggressions of the mercenaries who are part of the Séléka.”

The leaders/ elites of the armed groups had personal reason to start the chaos in the country. Some of them had personal motives as we saw above with both Eric Massi and General Abdu-Kader Khalil Ibrahim. Other elites might have had economic and personal reasons or political aims such as Djotodia who claimed himself president although he was not the person that the Séléka coalition decision board agreed on assigning according to General Khalil. Then the question to ask is: Why the media has been claiming the crisis as a religious war?

### **Media Manipulation**

The media has been covering the crisis of the Central African Republic as religious. We have seen from some of the warlords above that there were no religious motives for the war.

That is why we turned to Imam Oumar Kobine Layama who is the imam of Mohamed VI mosque in the Eight Arrondissement ( a neighborhood’s name in Bangui). He is also the president of the Muslim community in Bangui and a founding member of a religious platform. In addition to that, he is a founding member of the Mohamed VI foundation for Muslims in the African world. Imam Layama is a key actor of the crisis because he helped stabilizing the citizens of the republic and keeping the war from becoming a religious war. He has also said that the crisis in question has no religious basis and that the religious cover was given to it as a form of political manipulation to divide the country.

“ It is a manipulation and I will justify it, Because the Séléka is not only made from Muslims”.

The Imam’s claims about the origins of the Séléka coalition were confirmed by both general Khalil and Eric Massi which have stated that the coalition was initially made from the groups stated above that existed since the year 2005.

The media coverage of the crisis as a religious/ethnic conflict did divide the population. The religious responded to the results of the media manipulation with awareness movements. Imam Layama have said that the hidden agenda of this crisis like many others is to divide the population, and religion was the medium to reach that goal.

“ There has been military-political crisis, so many mutinies in our country and also regional crises that were unleashed in the country; ethnic as well; as they turned to such finally. Never was such a shattering goal that by

instrumentalizing the religion using religious fiber could achieve the goal which is to divide the country into an ungovernable country.”

Thus, according to the Imam, religion was used as a manipulation tool by those interested in keeping the country in chaos and divided. In order to understand more about the media manipulation and why it decided to cover the war as religious/ethnic, we turned to Albert Mabaya who is the publishing director of the newspaper “*Quotidien Labora*” in Bangui. He also said the same thing as the Imam and the warlords about how Muslims and Christians cohabited in peace. According to him, the politicians who decided to use the religious aspects for their own interest. He said that dividing the people was in their best interests because promoting a religious war through media will eventually lead to an ongoing war/chaos in the country. He added that the hatred between the two communities today was imbedded in the people through fake news. The creation of the “*Les confessions Religieuses de Centrafrique*” was a response to this manipulation. The media promoting the crisis of the Central African Republic was pure manipulation by the politicians. According to Albert Mabaya who is as well the communication coordinator of the Religious Confession Platform in Central African Republic, international media has fallen into the trap set by the politicians and those who have interest in turning the crisis to a religious conflict.

“ Occidental media have bitten the hook of political manipulators who, they, in RFI, BBC, said that said to invite them to a religious conflict... they showed them a cliché to say. listen, there is a religious conflict here and they have repeated it like parrots”

Albert Mbaya has showed that the fact that the media reported it as a religious/ethnic war was because of political manipulations led by internal and foreign interest. Eric Massi agrees with the Imam and Albert Mabaya as well. According to Mbaya, the occidental powers had a need to report the crisis as religious using the fight against Islamic terrorism as an excuse to enter the country using military interventions.

“ The media have had to exacerbate the religious fact. It must also be said that there was on the side of the West that is conferred to the fight against Islamic terrorism, both at home and in the middle east, the necessity to communicate about the religious fact vis-à-vis their own public opinion to obtain funding and logo for their interventions.”

Patrick Gongga Mogani who’s a Central African journalist has also agreed with the Imam, Eric Massi, and Albert Mbaya about the fact that the media was manipulated by foreign powers. He focuses on the national media of the republic being manipulated as well as the Western media and he said the following:

“In reality, it is wrong. our national media that seems that, those have followed this from A to Z, swept a hand. it was not a religious war, it was really a manipulation of foreign powers, of the West, and the international media.”

From the above, we can see that the media was manipulated by external forces. The next part will research who are these external forces that influenced/manipulated the media to report the crisis as a religious conflict. We will also try to look into the reasons and the benefits that these indirect actors gain from the country being in chaos.

### **Foreign interests: International and Regional actors**

#### **In terna tional In terests: Fra nce, China, a nd In terna tiona l Orga nizations**

The civil war of the Central African Republic had more actors than just the armed groups. The citizens, the government, non-state actors, regional actors and international actors have been responsible indirectly for the crisis and for the failure to bring peace to the country. The country is wealthy in terms of natural resources as it has diamond mines, gold mines, petrol, and wood. The control of these resources is wanted by many such as individuals in the republic and foreign countries such as Chad, France, and China. According to Albert Mbaya, the very first reason that led to this crisis is the fact that president François Bozizé signed a contract with the Chinese to exploit petrol in the North-East of the country.

“ this country is sitting on petrol, the day that the RCA starts exploiting its petrol, all of Africa will move and you know that petrol attracts more conflicts than happiness. It is known, Nigeria, so all these disputes, unfortunately, were

invited here as well.”

According to Mbaya, China has invested a lot in the petrol contracts that they signed with Bozizé as well as worked a lot on the project. However, France is also interested in those mines and treating them as its safety net. Thus, they cannot afford to lose them. The fact that the conflict over the petrol is in the north of the country where most of rebels and armed groups are is not a coincidence. China is not the only foreign investor that has signed exploiting contracts with Bozizé but so did India.

The Chinese interest in the country has shown in their abstain from voting for the renewal of the peacekeeping missions during the last security council meeting. This abstain from voting along with Russia has showed France's greed in the country. We can also see this decision as a way to show that the Central African Republic is a rational actor which will allow their contracts and investment in the republic legit in the eyes of the public. France on the other hand has voted yes along with the rest of the members which led Russia to call France on their actions since the Russian ambassador at the United Nations said the following:

“Behind all of this what we can see is an approach to the African countries as one's own turf and reserve within the vicious circle of metropolis versus colony”

Doctor Paulet Gervis Tordet is a political science professor and the coordinator of the political science major in the school of political and legal sciences at the university of Bangui. He said that the multinationals are the first to benefit from civil wars generally. They are the ones who finance these civil wars by providing armed groups with weapons, cars, and other means. why would they do that one might wonder; well, According to Dr. Tordet and to Albert Mabaya, the civil wars created the perfect opportunities for these multinationals to gather the fallout of these civil wars. “ An illegal exploitation and traffic of gold and diamonds on a global chain.” Doctor Tordet has given the example of the warlord Ali Daras who is not a central African. Ali Daras who came from Niger has taken over the east of the republic and was appointed as responsible for the military in that region.

“ he took over a part of national territory which allowed him to gather taxes on a local level, take what was to come back to the state and profit at the same time to exploit the national wealth. gold diamond and as that was not enough, during the negotiation, he was appointed as military officer of the eastern region.”

General Khalil Ibrahim has also pointed fingers to France being involved heavily in the civil war and they are the ones that financed the chaos by giving away weapons. He has said that: “ The French don't like it when the country has peace. The French tanks, before, gave away weapons to people.” Patrick Mogani has also said that it was France who gave the weapons to the Séléka coalition and Anti-Balaka movement using neighboring countries.

“ It was France that financed them, especially in weapons and ammunitions, financial means, behind U'bangi hill.”

“We went to interview them to know how they got their weapons, who was financing them. They were clear with us. Here, France was with them.”

Another form of foreign interest is the military interventions and the missions such as the Sangaris missions. Doctor Tordet did not deny the help that these missions have provided to the population when they first entered the country. However, he raised an important point when it came to the people sent in this mission profiting from the crisis. He said that they make the process and their mission as long as possible so that it works with their personal interest. We can compare the crisis in question with what happened in Congo and how the UN forces never left the country. Professor Tordet has expressed his worry concerning the republic ending like the Congo's case and he raised an important question. The question was

“when we see these means in weapons, these man that came so that they bring peace and four years later we still are at the starting point; it makes us ask the question: what did they came here for?”

According Albert Mbaya, the crisis is a result of the country being an interest for many foreign powers because of its natural resources. He has stated that the real problem can only be justified by the petrol contracts.



### Regional Interests: Sudan and Chad

We can see above that the conflict is complexed due to the country being a center of interest to many powerful countries.

However, regional powers are also benefiting from this conflict. Eric Massi has spoken of foreign countries which helped the coalition and from the countries he brought us were Chad and Sudan. He has said that the coalition did get military help from both Sudan and Chad. The help was through providing the coalition with fighters but there were not sent officially by the government.

“ There are first solidarities that were expressed with militaries. I will say that they were from sub-region, especially from Soudan... I would say, Djotodia’s sector with Sudanese because he had been consul Nyala in Sudan. There is also a proximity with Chadian soldiers who have had to support, say I say, the Chadian Government ”

Although Sudan did not accept general Khalil’s official request, the armed groups have been getting support from both Sudan and Chad.

“ We asked Soudan to help us without revolution, they said we should write an official demand which we did. After that we wrote the demand, one day, we went to pray the “*Fajr*” prayer and on our way back to our hotel, I spotted police surrounding out hotel. I asked what was going on and the man said they are looking for South African rebels ... I understood quick that they were looking for us and we ran away and hid.”

According to Albert Mbaya “Chad has provided them with weapons through Soudan, which helped them to get into power.”

We can understand why General Khalil would think that Soudan would want to officially support his movement. First, president Omar Bashir and president François Bozizé were not seeing eye to eye. thus, it was normal to think that Omar Bashir would want to help them take Bozizé from power. The second reason will go back to the history of the country. this past goes back to when parts of Chad and the Central African Republic being controlled by Al Zoubair Rahma Mansur. Zoubair Mansur was a Sudanese governor and Pasha as well as a slave trader during the nineteenth century. This past explains that why Central Africans in the country feel close to Sudanese and Chadians.

Chad actually has become home to diamonds stock exchange while it has no diamond mines. According to Albert Mbaya, the civil war in the Central African Republic is economically benefiting neighboring countries such as Sudan and Chad through diamond illegal exploitation. this chain of illegal export of Central African diamonds reaches the Middle East.

It is not just the diamonds or the gold exploitation that Albert Mbaya is worried about. Chad and Sudan are also interested in the North of the country being rich in Petrol and fighting over which road the republic should use to export its good. In addition to that, the fact that the Central African Republic has weak boarder on the Darfur region makes illegal exploitation of its goods much easier. This location also makes it the perfect place to smuggle guns into the country as well as human trafficking. The Republic’s triangle (boarders with Chad, Sudan) with Darfur region is the source of the country’s problems. For now, China is using Sudan as a route of exporting, but Chad wants to be part of the mission as well.

The Central African Republic is home for many goods such as Diamond, gold, wood, and petrol which led it to be the center of foreign interests. The fact that great powers such as France, China, and Russia are interested in investing and exploiting the goods of the country for their economic benefits has led the country to be in chaos. In addition to the great powers, regional powers are also benefiting from the crisis of the republic which makes it hard for the Central African government to find a long-lasting peace program for the country.

Now that we know that the crisis was partially causes by the foreign interests and by political manipulation so that individual actors could reach their political, personal, and economical goals. We will explain why the civil war of the Central African Republic is not a religious conflict in the next part.

### Not religious:

The above findings have indicated the civil war in the Central African Republic have deeper roots than being a simple religious war. Ex-members of the two main actors of the 2013 crisis have denied religion as a cause. However, they have given different causes since the Séléka’s goal was to take Bozizé from power and the Anti-Balaka claims they revolted against the Séléka to protect the Central Africans. We have turned to Doctor Paulet Gervais Tordet who

has confirmed that the Séléka's motives were not religious but political. He has stated that the same people that helped Francois Bozizé get to power and become president are the ones that wanted him out because he did not give them access to power.

In addition to doctor Tordet, every interviewee we had has denied the fact that the civil war was religious. Imam Layama has pointed out that we cannot call it a religious war for the simple fact that the armed groups were not religion based. Their speeches were advocating for freedoms and not religions. Moreover, the Séléka coalition was a Muslim majority and not a Muslim group. The coalition was founded by three main groups which one was led by Charles Massi ( father of Eric Massi) called the CPJP. Charles Massi was a Christian and so is his son Eric Massi (coordinator and spokesman of the Séléka coalition). The Anti-Balaka have also denied being a Christian group since warlord Sébastien Wenezoui has said that the Anti-Balaka is a movement and not a rebellion. The movement included citizens of the republic that wanted to protect themselves and their families from the Séléka.

The fact that the country's religion statistics shows that Muslims are of the minority in the country, does not mean that they suffered because of their religion. We have seen above that Muslims in the republic were famous for being wealthy due to their diamond businesses. We cannot deny the violence that was between the two religions which was later calmed down thanks to the "Religious Confessions Platform". However, according to the data we gathered during this research, the religious aspect of the war was made up as a way of media and political manipulation.

### **Discussion:**

The research findings have showed that the 2013 crisis of the Central African Republic had social, economic, and political factors. In addition to that, we have noticed the influence of the international actors and of politicians on how the war was portrayed on national and international media. Collier's quantitative research method was proven to not be effective to explain the causes of war in the Central African Republic. We cannot measure motives only based on economic factors to conclude that the war was driven by greed. Although the crisis had economic motives due to the country's wealth in terms of natural resources, the model created by Collier cannot be used because the qualitative data showed that the real causes of this war are socio-economic, political, and personal.

Collier's model and thesis which is basically based on pay-offs in order to explain long civil wars does not apply to our case. The conclusion that Collier has made about greed being the cause of civil wars is possible. However, his method and concepts were not strong enough to prove it. As we have seen throughout the paper, we cannot explain a civil war from a single aspect such as religion or economy. There have been scholars who have contradicted Collier's work such as Roland Bensted. Bensted wrote a review and a critique of Collier's work by saying that he ignored data and concepts. I would not say that I confirm Bensted's critic, but I do agree with him when it comes to the inefficiency of Collier's work to explain civil wars.

The research has uncovered many aspects/factors that might cause a civil war which are religion, political, economic, international interests, regional interests, multinationals, and personal. Warlords have joined the armed groups in this case of the 2013 crisis for personal reasons such as revenge in the case of general Khalil Ibrahim and Eric Massi. We have other warlords such as Ali Darass who joins conflicts just for the money and the political benefits of it. When it comes to the economical aspect or the greed as Collier called it in his thesis, we find that it is hard to be measured using the factors he gave in his paper and that greed in reality comes in different forms. We could see the greed of international actors such as France as well as the greed of politicians that started the crisis indirectly such as Bozizé who took the decision to not keep his word to the armed groups that helped him get to power.

Although this research has shown that the 2013 crisis of the Central African Republic had many indirect causes, we cannot say that our findings can be applied to all civil wars. In fact, we cannot lay our findings on the previous civil war of the same country fully. That is why, Collier's work has serious limitations and cannot be used to measure violence nor to understand what causes a civil war. We believe that in order to understand what will cause a civil war one needs to make qualitative research rather than quantitative. One should as well apply the same methodology on different civil wars of the Central African Republic as well as other African countries to be able to conclude a pattern that explains the main causes of war in Africa.

## Conclusion:

We can conclude from this research that civil war of the Republic of Central Africa is not a religious conflict. The war had social, economic, and political motives according to warlords, political scientists, and journalists that lived through the conflicts. The 2013 crisis started as a revolution against the system by the Séléka, but the chaos served regional states and international actors to take advantage of the war and make economic profit. In addition to that, the warlords such as Eric Massi and Sébastien Wenezoui who achieved political power after the DDRR (Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration, Rapatriement) negotiations. Needless to say, that the DDRR program is not working because most armed groups are not willing to let go of their arms. According to the minister of communication Maxim Kazagui, the DDRR program has been in trail phase and it just started for real since 2018.

We have used qualitative method to gather our data through semi-formal interviews with interviewees that almost made the whole list of the actors ( not including the international and regional actors). Our findings have answered our initial research question which was: What caused the 2013 civil war in the Central African Republic? The crisis was not caused by religious factors as we assumed in our hypothesis, but we have found out that the conflict is much more complex than that. According to our data, the crisis was mainly caused by personal and political factors. In addition, the media coverage it got as a religious war was nothing but a media/political manipulation by those who are interested in keeping the country in chaos. There were serious accusations by our interviewees of the implication of France as a main cause of the crisis of the country. These accusations were made by general Khalil, Eric Massi, Wenezoui, doctor Tordet, Mbaya, and Patrick Mogani. Some have explained their accusation because of the petrol contract and others have only said that France was financing them.

Thus, the ongoing crisis of the Republic is a complex conflict to understand and research. The conflict was caused by a mixture of factors and cannot be reduced to a simple religious conflict. In fact, our research has come to the conclusion that the crisis was not caused by religion.

## Appendices:

Find the content of the Annex in the following google drive links:

1. Secondary interview transcripts:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AbS0Wuo5QIA-1LYfJOpbeLxsTVAd9Orss5C4e353eV4/edit>

2. Primary interview transcripts:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cPpDOZAePJm26TAZFP6ZhhR5AwqNAqMohlmbg4\\_JnJK0/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cPpDOZAePJm26TAZFP6ZhhR5AwqNAqMohlmbg4_JnJK0/edit)

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