Central African Republic:
A Conflict Mapping



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

APRD	Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie
AU	African Union
BECDOR	le bureau d'évaluation et de contrôle de diamants et or
CAR	Central African Republic
CLPC	Combattants de libération du peuple centrafricain
CPJP	Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FAC	Forces armées camerounaises
FACA	Forces armées centrafricaines
FDPC	Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain
FPRC	Front populaire pour la renaissance de Centrafrique
IPIS	International Peace Information Service
KP	Kimberley Process
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MINUSCA	Mission multidimensionnelle intégrée des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en République centrafricaine
MISCA	Mission internationale de soutien à la Centrafrique sous conduite africaine
MLCJ	Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice
MNLC	Mouvement national pour la Libération de la République centrafricaine
MPC	Mouvement Patriotique pour le Centrafrique
OCHA	
PRADD	Property Rights and Diamond Development Initiative
RPC	Rassemblement Patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
UFDR	Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement
UFR	Union des forces républicaines
UN	United Nations
UPC	Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique
USAID	US Agency for International Development

CHAPTER I
OVERVIEW OF SECURITY TRENDS IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

A. Background to the evolution of the security situation in the CAR since 2014

In the post-colonial history of the Central African Republic, violence has often been the shortest way to presidential power. President Bozizé presented little deviation from this narrative after coming to power after a coup d'état in 2003. Whilst he faced armed opposition and a conflict-affected northwest from the outset, it is not until the rise of the Séléka, that the CAR entered into an era of unprecedented violence.

During its brief reign (March 2013 to January 2014), severe Séléka abuses in execution of a 'spoils of war' policy, saw local communities fall back on self defence militias (anti-balaka) from August 2013. This marked the start of an unprecedented cycle of violence characterized by ethnic cleansing and reprisal killings throughout much of 2014. It fomented a *de facto* partition between ex-Séléka and anti-balaka territory with a conflict-prone fault line down the country's center. As the transitional authorities fought to restore stability in the west, rising divisions among the ex-Séléka leadership over political strategy and the Brazzavile ceasefire culminated in the splintering of the movement from September 2014.

Since that time, which also saw the publication of IPIS' conflict motives analysis and map, considerable work has been done on the international stage to progress political transition.[1]



La RCA c'est Moi

1 For weekly media coverage of events in the CAR up to February 2017, please visit http://ipisresearch.be/weekly-briefing/. For monthly coverage of the main reported events from the CAR, see also, International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch Conflict Tracker, available at: https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch.

1. 2015: A push for transition[2]

With the departure of most Central African Muslims from western CAR and an increase in operations by French Sangaris forces and UN Peacekeepers (rebranded MINUSCA in 2014), the first glimmer of improved security in the CAR appeared in spring 2015.

From January 2015, ex-Séléka and anti-balaka hardliners and their inner circles[3] had been engaged in controversial negotiations brokered by CAR mediator Sassou Nguesso in Nairobi. These talks, which were not endorsed by the transitional authorities and disavowed by other political actors including the UN, were ultimately derailed by the Bangui National Forum. This forum, which included local consultations, was a reconciliation conference organised by the transitional authorities in execution of the third phase of the Brazzaville peace process.[4] Taking place in May 2015, it culminated in the adoption of a Pact for Peace, National Reconciliation and Reconstruction and the signature of a Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Repatriation (DDRR) agreement by 9 out of 10 armed groups. This achievement saw the political transition process gain considerable momentum in the following months with a constitutional referendum and the advancement of preparations for the holding of much postponed presidential and legislative elections.

Late September to October 2015 saw violence erupt in Bangui and some provinces as political spoilers exploited rising resentment against the transitional authorities and international forces (fueled by ongoing allegations of sexual abuse by peace keepers).[5] With what may have been some coordination between those involved in the Nairobi talks, dissenting anti-balaka and ex-Séléka factions gathered with a view to marching on Bangui, , though were stopped by international forces some distance from the capital. Notwithstanding these events, the first round of legislative and presidential elections were held without significant incident by the end of 2015.



Sandstorm on the banks of the Ubangui

2 For a more detailed resumé of events over this period see the UN Secretary General's Reports on the Situation in the Central African Republic, S/2015/227 and S/2015/576.

3 Referred to as the "Nairobists", they included Micheal Djotodia, Nouredine Adam and their top commanders, as well as the Francois Bozizé and his son, Jean-Francis Bozizé, Maxime Mokom and Joachim Kokaté.

4 Signed in Brazzaville on 23 July 2014 by the ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka

5 This violence left nearly 80 dead, saw 20 attacks on NGO premises and staff, and triggered the displacement of nearly 20,000 IDPs and refugees by 16 October 2015.

2. 2016: Era of hope turns to era of re-escalation[6]

Despite persistent calls for a third transition and partitioning of the country by armed group hardliners, as well as logistical hurdles necessitating a re-run of the legislative polls, March 2016 saw the election of Faustin Touadera as president of the CAR.

Preparations for national elections in early 2016 saw a lull in conflict incidents in numerous parts of the country, as well as the gradual redeployment of state authority to some areas, particularly in the west. This likewise saw the CAR's readmission to the African Union and the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*, as well as a partial lifting of the Kimberly Process embargo on CAR diamonds in the south west of the country.

The relative stability characterizing 2015 and early 2016 fostered a sense of progress among key security actors. Whilst Uganda announced plans to withdraw its remaining LRA Task Force troops from the south east of the country (effected in April 2017), France declared its intent to end its Sangaris mission by November 2016. This saw it reduce its troop presence from 650 to 350 personnel in June, with plans to leave 250 personnel to guard Mpoko airport and others to support the EU training mission.

Unfortunately, this period of relative stability proved short-lived. Clashes in Bangui, the north and centre of the country rose again from June 2016 generating over 6,000 refugees from the northwest alone. Following the violent exodus of PK5's ex-Séléka leaders from Bangui in August 2016, clashes between anti-balaka and ex-Séléka intensified around Kaga Bandoro in September and October, and the FPRC[7] convened yet another ex-Séléka conclave in eastern CAR in October 2016 seeking to reunite the former coalition. Thereafter, pre-existing tensions between the FPRC, MPC[8] and the UPC[9] due to the latter's territorial expansion throughout 2015 to 2016 spilled into open conflict and interethnic violence after the UPC refused to join the FPRC's Séléka reunification attempt. This act of defiance saw the FPRC form a coalition of fighters with the MPC and anti-balaka groups to wage a military campaign targeting UPC positions from late 2016.

3. 2017: Escalating fratricidal violence amid continued peace efforts[10]

Conflict between a FPRC-led Coalition and the UPC continued into 2017, escalating in the centre and east in February and March as the Coalition sought to advance towards Bambari to oust the UPC from its stronghold. MINUSCA's robust protection of civilians in the city halted this advance whilst expelling the UPC from Bambari to enable the municipality's stabilization. Coalition seizure of key diamond production locales in Nzako and Bakouma in March 2017, saw the UPC further disperse into the south east whilst weathering severe attacks from self-defence groups loosely associated with the anti-balaka. Whilst an official ceasefire was not signed between the Coalition and the UPC until October 2017, active hostilities between the two diminished from April. Moreover, fratricidal tensions between the FPRC's Rounga and Gula factions, as well as between the FPRC and its former anti-balaka collaborators, erupted into violence from June 2017, affecting the FPRC's operations into the end of the year.

Indeed, inter-ethnic tensions heightened in and around Bria and other key central and eastern locales from February 2017 as UPC fighters, Fulani populations associated with them and other ethnic minorities came increasingly under fire. Anti-balaka attacks on Muslim communities in Bangassou in May 2017, sparked a series of intercommunal clashes throughout the east, including in Bria, Zemio and Rafai. Anti-balaka attacks on UPC positions throughout the southeast from August to November, often directly targeted Muslim civilians, particularly Fulani, as well as UPC fighters. This saw the killing of at least 50 Muslims in

6 For a more detailed resumé of events over this period see the UN Secretary General's Reports on the Situation in the Central African Republic, S/2016/305and S/2016/824.
7 *Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique* (Popular Front for the Rebirth of Central African Republic).
8 *Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique* (Patriotic movement for the Central African Republic).
9 *Union pour la paix en Centrafrique* (Union for Peace in the Central African Republic).
10 For a more detailed resumé of events over this period see the UN Secretary General's Reports on the Situation in the Central African Republic, S/2017/94, S/2017/865 and S/2018/125.

Pombolo and Kembe alone, raising fears of ethnic cleansing in the country, though an October visit from UN Special Advisor on genocide prevention concluded that the CAR was not facing a "pre-genocide situation".

Certain UPC fighters also targeted civilian populations, perpetrating a devastating reprisal attack on a local health centre in Gambo in August 2017, killing at least 45 civilians, including 10 red cross workers – the highest humanitarian death toll in a single incident since the start of the crisis.

Meanwhile, despite seemingly conflicting international peace efforts, a June 2017 agreement to adopt a single roadmap for a broader mediation process saw the adoption of an African Initiative integrated roadmap for peace in July. This roadmap reaffirmed the country's constitutional system, the significance of the Bangui Forum conclusions and the need for national ownership of reconciliation efforts. Whilst the EU approved a 382-million Euro support package for governance and security sector reform in June 2017, a revised humanitarian response plan was launched in August 2017 seeking $497 million to respond to the crisis in light of recent events.

Following initial consultative talks with all 14 armed groups, President Touadera launched a DDR pilot in September 2017, aimed at integrating 560 combatants from 14 armed groups (40 each) into mixed units. The Central African President likewise undertook a government reshuffle appointing four armed group representatives to cabinet positions, as well as five Muslims – increasing Muslim representation in government to eight. In October, the UN Security Council opted to extend MINUSCA's mandate to November 2018, increasing its troop size by 900 personnel, raising the total to some 13,000 troops and police.

4. 2018: perseverance amid continuing instability and sectarian violence[11]

Early 2018 saw some progress towards the CAR's rehabilitation with the deployment prefects, sub-prefects and magistrates to numerous locales throughout the country, as well as the ministerial adoption of a five-year plan for the immediate and long-term deployment of the CAR's defense and internal security forces (with MINUSCA and EU Training Mission support). Moreover, following the intensification of violence due to clashes between RJ and MNLC, particularly around Paoua in January and February, MINUSCA intervention created a controversial armed group free zone, helping to stabilize region.

Nevertheless, April 2018 saw a significant outbreak of intercommunal violence in Bangui. These events followed a failed joint MINUSCA/FACA operation to arrest and disarm criminal militia leaders, including a "General Force", operating from the capital's PK5 neighborhood. Scores of people were killed in violent clashes in and around PK5 throughout April and May, including during a deadly attack by PK5 militia members on a catholic church in the Fatima district, triggering a wave of retaliatory attacks against Muslims.

Seizing the opportunity of unrest in Bangui, the FPRC once again sought to revitalize the former Séléka alliance, assembling ex-Séléka factions in Kaga Bandoro in mid-April. The meeting, allegedly assembled by the FPRC's Abdoulaye Hisséne, appears to have failed to achieve agreement on reformation with UPC and MPC factions,[12] though concerns about a possible ex-Séléka advance nevertheless saw MINUSCA mobilize north, conducting airstrikes on FPRC vehicles bypassing MINUSCA checkpoints south of Kaga Bandoro.

Meanwhile, in and around Bambari and the southeast of the country, UPC and anti-balaka forces have continued to clash for control over economically and strategically important locales. This has seen a further spike in violence with armed group and intercommunal retaliatory attacks targeting civilians, peacekeepers, humanitarians and government authorities, following the circulation of rumors of the killing of Muslims in mid-May.

11 For a more detailed resumé of events over this period see the UN Secretary General's Report on the Situation in the Central African Republic, S/2018/611.

12 Bea Africa News, "Centrafrique: Ali Darrass dit soutenir l'opération de désarmement du gouvernement", 24 April 2018.

B. Overview of trends in the evolution of the CAR's security situation in 2015 to 2017

IPIS' interactive map of the Central African Republic geolocates nearly 3,900 incidents taking place in the Central African Republic between late 2012 and December 2017.[13] This mapping helps to provide some further contextual understanding of the development of the Central African situation as outlined above. However, quantitative analysis of incident data can provide only limited insight in the absence of a broader understanding of the caveats and context in which that data has been obtained.



Central Afrcian Flag

1. Challenges surrounding quantitative analysis of incident data in the CAR context

Drawing predominantly on open source data, including ACLED, UN reports and other third-party reporting, IPIS' interactive map depicts incidents by reference to seven main categories:

- Confrontations between armed groups;
- Confrontations between armed groups and Central African government authorities;
- Confrontations between armed groups and international forces;[14]
- Violence against civilians;
- Violence among civilians;
- Riots and Protests; and
- Miscellaneous.

Whilst some of these categories can overlap (for example, confrontations between armed groups can also often involve violence against civilians), they have been chosen provide a good outline of the nature of a given incident with particular reference to the parties and the nature of the events involved.

13 Available at: http://ipisresearch.be/mapping/webmapping/car/v2i/index.html

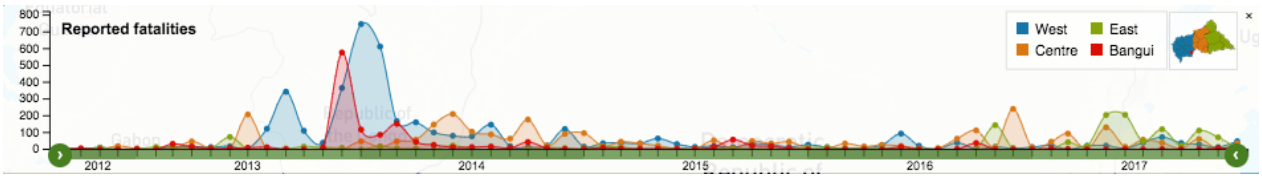
14 Including MISCA/MINUSCA, Sangaris, EUFOR, the AU Regional Task Force and Cameroonian and Chadian armed forces, amongst others.

Whilst the interactive map allows for an overview of some of the dominant characteristics of the CAR's conflict, it is likewise subject to some notable caveats.[15] Firstly, whilst the map brings together numerous well-known incidents, it by no means provides a complete picture of the incident landscape. Whilst IPIS has gathered nearly 4,000 incidents taking place over five years, security specialists have nevertheless reportedly recorded a much higher annual incident figure encompassing 3,216 incidents for 2015, 3,745 incidents in 2016 and 2,954 incidents up to September 2017 alone.[16] This highlights an annual rise in the number of incidents occurring in the country since 2015.

There are numerous explanations for the discrepancy between IPIS' incident data and other data sets. Firstly, incidents on the IPIS map often include amalgamated incidents composed of a series of individual incidents forming part of one broader security event unfolding over a number of days in the same locale. This is a consequence of public reporting practices. By contrast, the real time recording of incident data on an operational level can often split such events into more discrete incidents. Indeed, being reliant principally on open source data, incidents on the IPIS map are subject to notable limitations of access in isolated or highly-conflict affected locales that render information flows to the outside difficult. As such, some single incidents may refer to numerous events in various inaccessible locations within a given region. These events have often taken place over a longer period for which no exact dates can be specified and are therefore necessarily amalgamated into a single entry. This is a phenomenon particularly affecting northwestern CAR. Moreover, outside the major municipalities, individual acts of extortion, looting, killing and other security-related data often go unrecorded. Indeed, until 2014, even those engaged in in-country operations had no comprehensive system for collecting and analyzing security incidents in the few locations in which they were operating. Moreover, the coordination of such reporting is said to remain weak, incomplete and patchy, especially for more remote areas.[17] Finally, it should be noted that a persistent rise in the targeting of civilians, humanitarian operators and peace keepers since late 2016 has adversely affected information flows since the start of 2017 due to an erosion of trust surrounding the use of such information by civilians with links to armed groups.[18] This has further compounded challenges to accessing to data.

2. General observations on the evolution of the CAR's security situation

In spite of the above, some general observations can be made on the basis of the data gathered. Firstly, whilst reported fatalities are very rarely accurate,[19] they can provide a basic indicator concerning the general security environment. Here, geolocalised incident data supports the above assertion that whilst early 2015 to May 2016 saw a relative period of stability, since September 2016 levels of insecurity have reached and possibly exceeded 2014 levels, at least in the center and east.



Histogram showing reported fatalities 2012-2017 disaggregated by region

15 For more information on how to use the interactive map, as well as its sources and caveats please click on the "More Info" button at the bottom of the legend.

16 E. Picco and T. Vircoulon, *The Humanitarian System in the Central African Republic: A time of challenges*, CCO/Mercy Corps, December 2017, p.10.

17 For more on the challenges of undertaking quantitative analyses of incident data, see ibid, p.12.

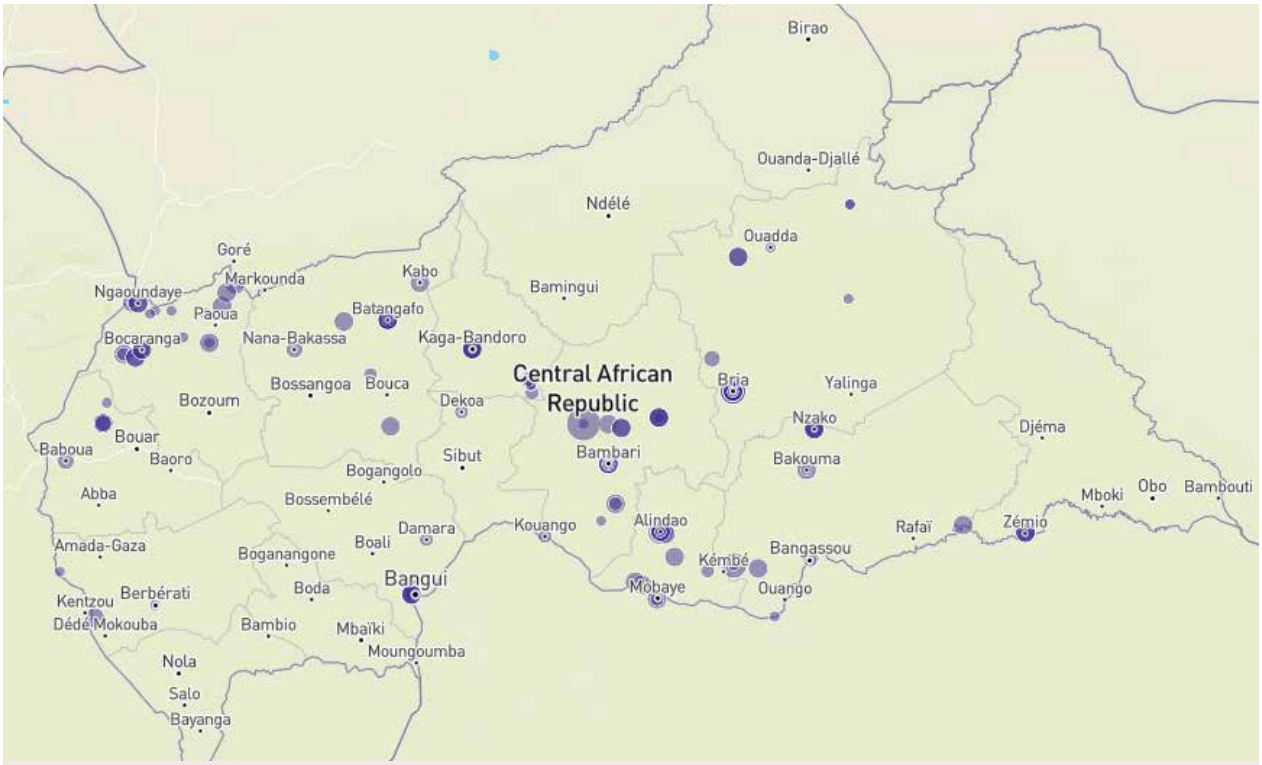
18 Ibid, p.16.

19 Fatality figures are often contested and usually represent an underestimate in failing to account for the fatality outcome of injured and missing persons. Moreover, in a number of cases no such data is offered, though it seems clear that the incident must have occasioned notable causalities. Issues of access likewise affect these figures.

This data reflects the fact that whilst the CAR's central region has remained one of the key zones of insecurity, eastern CAR became the venue for much ongoing instability from late 2016. Notably, this zone is also one of the CAR's most difficult to access logistically, as well as suffering from significant interruption to the provision of humanitarian assistance throughout 2017 due to the targeting of aid activities. These facts further compound the obstacles referred to above about obtaining security and fatality data for 2017 and cumulatively suggest that fatality rates are in fact notably higher than those reported.[20] Certainly, reported incidents and fatalities surrounding events in the north/ far northwest of the country can be expected to be severe underestimates due to a lack of coverage in this area and the fact that fatalities data is rarely provided in public reporting.

3. Incidents characterized by confrontations between armed groups

Of 250 armed group incidents on the map between January 2015 and December 2017, most took place in the key municipalities of Bria, Bambari, Batangafo, Kaga Bandoro, Mbrés and Ngayoundae/Bang, as well as in Bangui. Bria was a particular epicenter for violence after November 2016. Indeed, key mining and transhumance locales, like Bria, Bambari, Nzako, Bakouma, Bakala and Ndassima, as well as Alindao, Mobaye, Niem, Kaga Bandoro, Mbrés and Ngayoundae/Bang, have likewise attracted higher levels of inter-armed group conflict, highlighting the significance of economic concerns to rebel in-fighting.



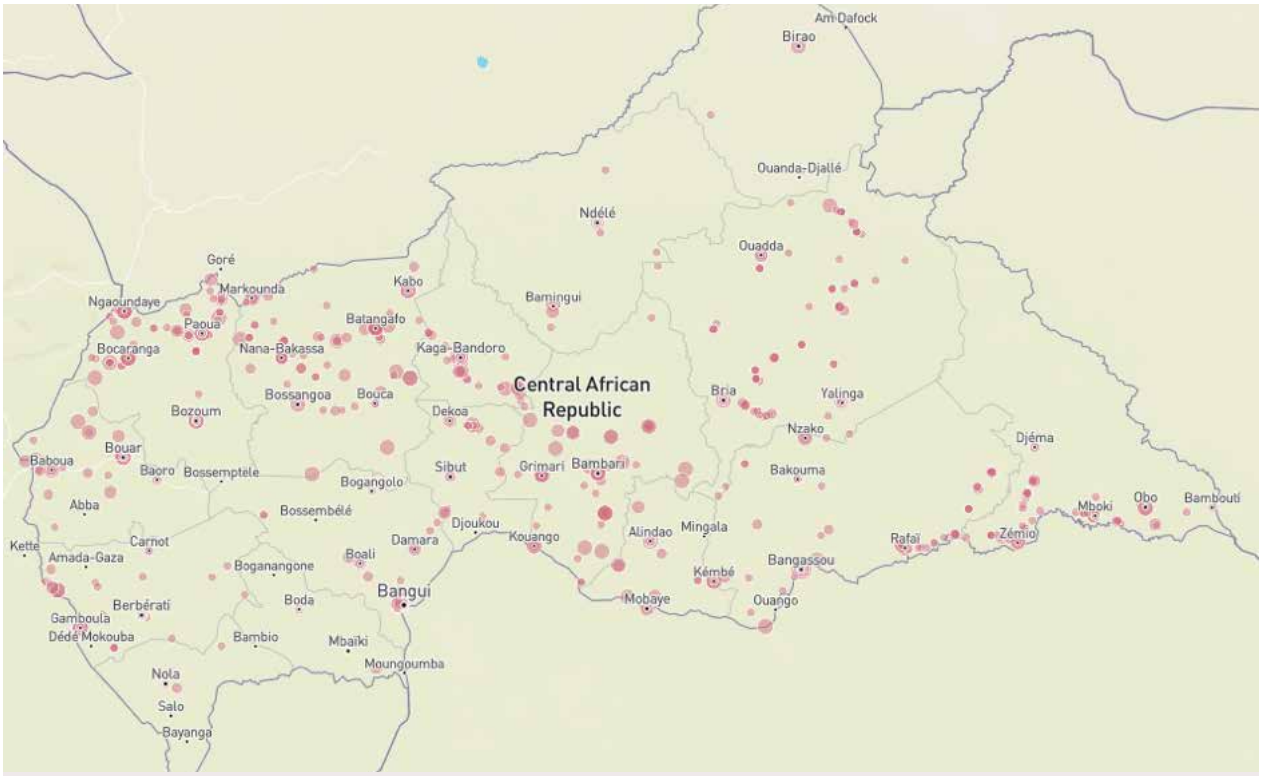
Armed Group v. Armed Group incidents between January 2015 to December 2017

Notably, whilst incidents between armed groups included anti-balaka as one party to the conflict in virtually all incidents in 2015 (a quarter of these between anti-balaka factions themselves), this involvement appears to have dropped to only half of such incidents from 2016. This reflects increased factioning and in-fighting experienced by ex-Séléka groups from 2016. Of all ex-Séléka groups, the FPRC and UPC appear to have been those most engaged in conflict with other groups over this period, including each other. Moreover, the size of the incident markers depicting inter-armed group confrontations on the IPIS map, clearly indicates that these events generate the highest fatalities of all incident types.

20 Note that the relative accessibility of Bangui and western CAR in comparison to the northwest, centre and east may affect the number of reported fatalities in these areas during earlier instability.

4. Incidents characterized by violence against and among civilians

Of 3,877 incidents depicted on the IPIS map, 69% (2692) are characterized predominantly by violence against civilians. Moreover, civilians are also targeted as part of events characterized by conflict between armed groups themselves (hence the high fatality rates), or armed groups and international forces or government authorities. This data therefore strongly reaffirms that civilians are the primary victims of the CAR's security crisis.



Violence against and among civilians between January 2015 to December 2017

The geolocalisation of incidents involving violence against civilians further underlines the enormous task facing the under-resourced Central African government, international peace keeping forces and humanitarian actors in meeting the high levels of civilian protection and humanitarian assistance needs of the Central African population over this vast, often inaccessible territory, particularly in the current security climate.

One notable observation is the correlation of violence against civilians with locales significant to pastoralist activities. Here, key cattle collection markets, *communes d'elevage* and transhumance transit points have often been venues for violence affecting civilians, including Kaga Bandoro, Alindao, Pombolo, Ouandago, Kabo, Paoua, Bepikassé and Ngaoundaye. This high incident rate likely reflects not only frequent conflicts between armed herders and local populations (apparent along major transhumance routes),[21] but also the targeting of Fulani herders for predation or retribution attacks by both ex-Séléka and anti-balaka groups. Notably, however mining locales likewise have high violence against civilian rates, though such incidents are reported less frequently. Nevertheless, where there is significant mining activity as well as pastoralism, like in Bria, Bambari and Nzako, violence against civilians can be particularly high.

It should be noted that due to challenges in accessing data on incidents concerning violence against civilians in 2017 (see above), numerous 2017 incidents are likely to be missing from the current data set. Certainly, anecdotal evidence suggests that violence against and among civilians was extremely high for that year – a fact not as readily apparent on the interactive map.

21 It should be noted that many pastoralist migration routes were abandoned during the insecurity of 2017. As the interactive map only shows the position in 2017, other pastoralist routes are not depicted.

C. Final observations

Whilst the above observations can highlight only general trends, they nevertheless outline the broad contours of the ongoing conflict in the CAR. In doing so, these observations, and the map itself, can help to provide some necessary nuance about the scale and scope of the task at hand in striving for a sustainable peace, including by illustrating possible areas for greater or lesser focus. The following chapters aim to provide some additional necessary context to supplement the data on the map and account for some of the gaps that such a presentation of information may leave in a user's understanding of the situation as at 2017.



Mbororo Peul at a market near Paoua, 2017 (Peer Schouten)

CHAPTER II
ARMED GROUP EVOLUTIONS SINCE 2014

A. Evolutions in the CAR's armed group landscape since late 2014

Since the 1990s, the Central African Republic has increasingly become home to a myriad of armed actors engaged in shifting allegiances and conflicts focused locally and/or on a broader national agenda. It was from these origins that many of those fighters participating in the 2013 putsch hailed. As outlined in IPIS' 2014 report, the Séléka counted among its ranks fighters and commanders from groups such as *Union des Forces Democratiques pour la Rassemblement* (UFDR), *Convetion des patriots pour la justice et paix* (CPJP), *Front Populaire por la redressement* (FPR) and the *Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice* (MLCJ). The 2013/14 anti-balaka movement too emerged from the regrouping of often pre-existing self defence and anti-bandit militias established under Bozizé and subsequently meshed with Bozizé-loyal security forces.

Whilst the events of 2013 and 2014 established a veritable conflict fault line between these two main factions to the CAR's conflict (Séléka and anti-balaka), since then, the divergent interests, strengths and ambitions of their respective memberships has seen them fragment considerably, rendeing conflict dynamics increasingly localised. Thus, whilst the Bangui Forum sought to engage 10 armed groups in dialogue in May 2015,[22] by the start of DDR discussions in October 2016 that figure had risen to 14.[23] By early 2018, at least 16 official armed groups appeared to be active in the CAR.[24]

Moreover, contest over leadership within these groups has sometimes led to multiple delegations representing group interests in peace negotiations,[25] or even the *post facto* revocation of representative mandates.[26] The nature of the anti-balaka especially raises questions about the ability of group representatives to ensure wider group compliance with negotiated agreements.[27] Indeed, despite an ongoing DDR pilot and continued peace talks, 2018 has seen certain groups engaged in highly destabilizing activities against international and national forces in the north and center of the country.

The consequent challenges posed to extending State authority and demobilising armed groups, together with their seeming proliferation has been instrumentalised by critics of the Central African government and MINUSCA. Certain civil society leaders and politicians have used popular resentment to condemn MINUSCA for failing to contain Ex-Seleka factions, heightening calls for the rearmament of the *Forces Armées de la Centrafrique* (FACA).[28] To date, security sector reform as focused on vetting and building the capacity of Central African security forces through trainings provided by the EU Training Mission (EUTM).[29] By early 2018, 7000 out of the 7700 registered FACA had gone through a clearance process and a number of cleared troops put through EU-TM training, which is intended to prepare 4 to 6 battalions for

22 FPRC, RPRC, UPC, MLJC, UFRF, RJ, Séléka Rénové, the Coordination des ex-combattants Anti-Balaka, and Unité des Forces Républicaines. FDPC did not sign. This excludes the LRA, which also has factions operative in eastern CAR.

23 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para. 21. They included FPRC, RPRC, UPC, MLJC, UFRF, UFR, RJ (represented by two delegations), Séléka Rénové, the Coordination des ex-combattants Anti-Balaka, FDPC, MPC, 3R, and Mokom's anti-balaka faction.

24 With the addition of MNLC (formerly the MPC/Bahar faction) and Siriri. One RJ faction leader was killed in late 2017 and the independent posture of his group vis-à-vis DDR remains unclear at time of writing. These figures do not include smaller, less prominent splinter factions from groups such as the MPC and the UPC.

25 For example, to appease tensions within MLCJ and MPC regarding DDR Advisory and Monitoring Committee representation, additional delegates were accepted during the meeting of 12 October (UN Panel of Experts Final Report S/2016/1032, Annex 2.4). RJ also attended in two delegations representing rival conte group leaders.

26 For example, Mohammed Dhaffane's support of the Brazzaville agreement saw him suspended from his functions on behalf of the FPRC for 'high treason' in August 2014 (S/2014/762, para.93(a)).

27 S/2017/639, paras. 12(a), 83-86 and 58.

28 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para. 159

29 La Presse, "La Russie et la Centrafrique veulent renforcer leur cooperation", 23 May 2018. Attempts were being made in early 2018 to align these pre-deployment trainings.

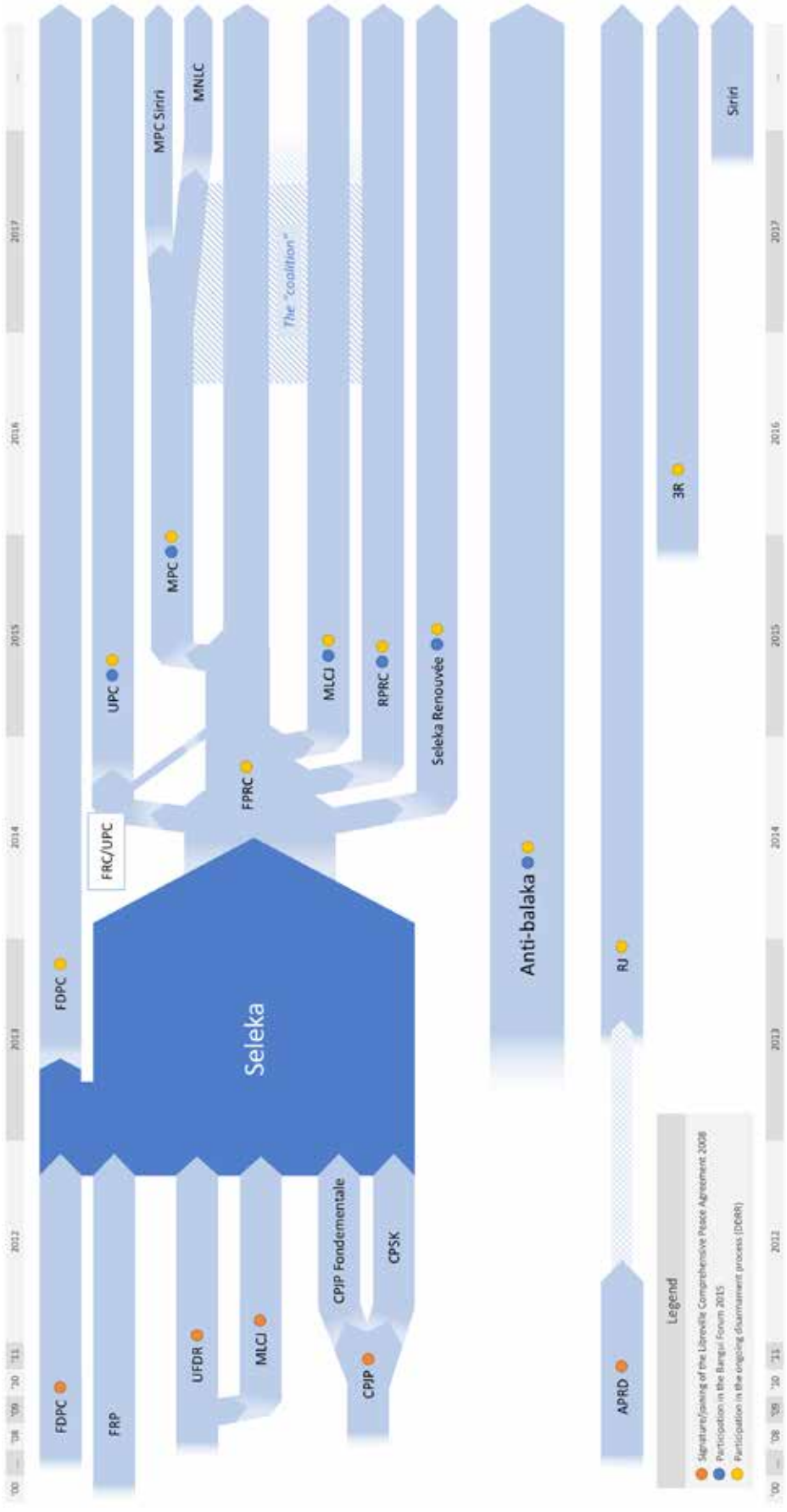
deployment. Post-training FACA deployments began in January 2018 around Paoua (Ouham Pende), and further training appears to be being provided by Russian state forces.[30]

Whilst a number of exemption requests have been submitted to the UN Security Council in respect of the UN embargo on weapons transfers to Central Afrcian armed forces, some have been put on hold pending further information.[31] Nevertheless, the approval of a number of exemptions, including a Russia consignment in December 2017, have aided to relieve tensions surrounding the continuing embargo, which has been renewed to February 2019.[32]



Bangui La Coquette

30 Interview with security expert, February 2018.
31 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.24.
32 La Tribune Afrique, "Centrafrique : l'embargo sur les armes renouvelé pour 1 an", 2 February 2018.



The evolution of armed groups in the CAR up to and since the 2013/14 crisis.

Abbreviation	Name	Date of creation	Leader
3R	Return, Reclamation, Rehabilitation	est. Dec 2015	Abbas Siddiki (Cameroonian Fulani)
Anti-balaka	Anti-balaka	est. Aug 2013	Patrice Edouard Ngaïssona coordination branch (since June 2014), Maxime Mokom coordination branch (since May 2015), Independent local militias with local leadership
APRD	Armée populaire pour la restauration de la république et la démocratie	est. 2006-2008	Jean Jacques Démafooth
CPJP	Convention des patriotes pour la justice et paix	est. late 2008	Abdoulaye Isséne (Runga)
CPJP Fondementale	Convention des patriotes pour la justice et paix - Fondementale	est. July 2012	Nouredine Adam (Runga)
CPSK	Convention patriotique du salut du Kodro	est. June 2012	Mohamed Moussa Dhaffane (Bornu)
FDPC	Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain	est. 2003, left Seleka April 2013	Abdoulaye Miskine (Sara)
FPRC	Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique	est. Aug 2014	Nourredine Adam (Runga), Abdoulaye Hisséne (Runga), Zakaria Damane (Gula
FRC/UPC	Forces Républicaines pour le Changement / Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique	est Sept/Oct 2014	Ali Darassa, Al Khatim
FRP	Front Populaire pour le redressement	est. 1998/2000	Adbel Kader Babba Laddé (Chadian), (Ali Darassa (Nigerian Fulani (Oudda))
MLCJ	Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice	est. late 2008, left FPRC late 2014	Abakor Sabone (formerly), now Toumou Deya Gilbert (Kara)
MNLC	Mouvement national pour la libération de la République centrafricaine	est. Dec 2017	General Ahamat Bahar
MPC	Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique	est. July 2015	Al Khatim (Chadian Arab (Salamat))
MPC Siriri	Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique - Siriri	est. July 2017	Mahamat Abdel Karim (Chadian Arab (Salamat))
RJ	Revolution et Justice	est. Aug 2013	Amel Bedaya Sayo
RPRC	Rassemblement patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique	est. Nov 2014	Zakaria Damane (Gula)
Seleka Renouvée	Seleka Renouvée	est. Oct 2014	Mohamed Moussa Dhaffane (Bornu)
Siriri	Siriri	est. Dec 2017	Ardo Abba (Cameroonian Fulani)
UFDR	Union des Forces Démocratiques pour la Rassemblement	est. 2006	Micheal Djotodia (Gula), Joseph Zoundeko (Gula), Zakaria Damane (Gula)
UPC	Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique	est. Oct 2014	Ali Darassa (Nigerian Fulani, (Oudda))

B. The evolution of ex-Séléka groups since late 2014

As outlined in IPIS' last report, the Séléka had already begun to faction off by October 2014. Having been rebranded the *Front Populaire pour la renaissance de Centrafrique* (FPRC) in August 2014, the ex-Séléka alliance saw its first major splinter group with the creation of the *Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique* (UPC) by Ali Darassa and Al Khaitm. This factioning had followed tensions between fighters loyal to Joseph Zoundeko and Ali Darassa, principally over territorial control and rent seeking, as well as discord over FPRC demands for a partition of the country and rejection of the Brazzaville ceasefire. Whilst Al Khatim appears later to have rejoined the FPRC, he nevertheless splintered off to form his own armed faction, the *Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique* (MPC), in July 2015.

With the exception of more localized factions that remained strongly FPRC aligned in 2017,[33] the FPRC, MPC and UPC have been the dominant ex-Séléka forces controlling central and eastern CAR since 2015. However, since this time these groups have themselves been subject to significant internal factioning along increasingly fratricidal lines (see below).

Despite this factioning of the ex-Séléka into distinct groups from 2014, their frequent collaborations and complexity sees them often still referred to simply as "ex-Séléka" in media reporting, a fact also reflected in certain incidents on the interactive web map.

1. Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC)

The FPRC is composed of a number of ex-Séléka factions loyal to the warlords that form the core of its leadership. Since 2014, that leadership has been further concentrated by departures,[34] fatalities,[35] and marginalization.[36] Whilst lower level faction leaders, like Haroun Gaye, Khalit Azor, Issa Banda and Ali Ousta, have risen in prominence over recent years, the group's orientation up to 2018 remained dominated by Nourredine Adam, Abdoulaye Hisséne and Zacharia Damane. Nevertheless, FPRC infighting from mid-2017 has reportedly seen Zacharia Damane's Goula FPRC faction[37] begin to distance itself in 2018.[38]

33 Including the Birao-based MLCJ of Toumou Deya Gilbert and the Bria-and Ouadda-based RPRC of Zacharia Damane. Since 2017, the RPRC is said to have increasingly distanced itself from the FPRC, however.

34 Ali Darassa in August 2014 and Al Khatim in July 2015 (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, /2015/936, para.147).

35 Oumar Younnous in October 2015 (UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2016/694, Annex 36) and Joseph Zoundeko in February 2017 (UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2017/639, para.53).

36 Micheal Djotodia (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para. 162) and Mohammed Dhaffane (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2014/762, para.93(a)).

37 Forming the bulk of the FPRC's Goula faction and aligned to its reunification attempts since late 2016, the *Rassemblement patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique* (RPRC) has not been given explicit coverage in this report. Being dominated by ethnic Goula and led by Zacharia Damane its main area of operations is in Ouadda and around Sam Oundja, extending down to Bria (see interactive webmap). In this report and on the interactive map, these fighters are variously refered to as the RPRC or the FPRC Goula faction.

38 Correspondence with the UN Panel of Experts, June 2018.



FRPC-related incidents and roadblocks in its principle zone of operations 2015-2017

Territorial reach and revenue generation

From 2015 to 2018, the FPRC maintained one of the largest operational zones of all groups in the CAR, enjoying virtually unchallenged control throughout Vakaga, Bamingui-Bangoran and much of Haut Kotto. In areas where its territorial reach overlaps with those of other groups it has usually engaged in revenue sharing, seeing mostly only low-level conflict with other groups between 2014 and June 2016. This period saw the FPRC consolidate its hold over its existing territory whilst shifting its presence to key areas of economic concern. This has entailed its gradual reinforcement in key transhumance locales, like Kaga Bandoro, to where it shifted its stronghold in 2015,[39] and mining centers like Bria, where it reinforced its presence from late 2014.[40] Here, it has mostly operated collaboratively with MPC (Kaga Bandoro) and the RPRC and UPC (Bria). Early 2016 saw the group further expand its operations south of Bria into mineral rich zones along the Bria-Yalinga axe, and later Nzako and Bakouma.

Building on gains made during 2014,[41] the FPRC has developed sophisticated predation strategies focused largely around control over transit and production hubs, particularly through taxation and the establishment of parallel administrations. Its sources of revenue generation are relatively diverse, encompassing provision of security services for Sudanese traders[42] and Chinese oil exploration activities,[43] as well as control over mining and, to a lesser extent, the cattle trade. Indeed, mining is a key source of income for the FPRC, which together with the RPRC maintains control over the bulk of eastern CAR's diamond production, as well as some notable gold production sites. Both the FPRC and the RPRC have dominated the mining sector in Bria, Ouadda and Sam Oundja, and the FPRC's seizure of areas formerly

39 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, para.151.
40 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, para.105.
41 See for example, modes of predation on the mining sector already developed by mid-2014 in Y. Weyns et al, *Mapping Conflict Motives: The Central African Republic*, IPIS, 2014, p.28-43.
42 See P. Schouten et al, *The Politics of Pillage: the political economy of roadblocks in the Central African Republic*, IPIS/DIIS, November 2017, P.38-47.
43 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2016/694, para. 85-89; and UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para. 215.

under UPC control in early 2017, also saw it capture mining revenues around Nzako and Bakouma.[44] At present it, likewise appears to be the junior partner in gold revenue sharing around Ndassima.[45]

Whilst the FPRC maintains a clear interest in transhumance, including through its lucrative revenue sharing arrangements with MPC around Kaga Bandoro, its links to transhumance communities are arguably not as strong as those of the MPC and UPC. Thus, for example, its bid to control cattle revenues by relocating Bria's cattle market (formerly in the Fulani Golobo district) to the Goula-dominated Bornou neighbourhood,[46] appears to have failed, likely due to an exodus of pastoralists (mostly Fulani) in response to FPRC-led targeting.



Northeastern CAR near Ndele - an FPRC dominated region

FPRC mobilization

Persistently denouncing the marginalization of Muslims and northeastern CAR, Nourredine Adam and Abdoulaye Hisséne have been strong proponents of Séléka reunification to oust the incumbent government. In the absence of a regime change that would place these leaders in key positions of power they alternatively seek to partition the country. Despite a shared concern for the interests of certain Muslim communities, these hardline views are not generally been shared by the more moderate MPC and UPC in the past.[47] Occupying the central fault-line down which any proposed partition might take place these groups would not stand to benefit from such a partition, a fact reinforced by the rank and file of their membership (predominantly Fulani and Arab) who have particularly strong links to pastoralist activities, which rely on this central zone.

44 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2017/639, para.72.
45 Correspondence with the UN Panel of Experts, June 2018.
46 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2017/639, para.71.
47 A joint dissenting political statement was originally issued, and the UPC itself originally established, by both Ali Darassa and Al Khatim in late 2014, though Al Khatim subsequently retuned to the FPRC. The UPC and the MPC have professed to embrace democratic discourse and support ongoing DDR efforts (both expressed support for Touadera in the presidential elections). Despite this, however, both groups have also maintained structured armed units and pursued expansionist agendas that appeared at odds with their political discourse throughout much of 2016 (UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2016/694, paras.18 and 78).

The FPRC leadership's failure to secure key positions in the incumbent government has seen it seek to enhance its leverage against the Touadera administration since mid-2016 via a number of Séléka reunification attempts. October 2016 thus saw it convene an ex-Séléka conclave in Bria, attempting to devise a loose command and control structure capable of servicing the various ambitious of ex-Séléka faction leaders. Buy-in however proved limited, with only Zacharia Damane's RPRC taking an official place on the FPRC's proposed High Supreme Council. The conclave's failure, in large part due to resistance from the UPC (as well as the MPC), saw the FPRC turn its military collaboration efforts to forming an FPRC-led Coalition[48] to weaken the UPC, whose 2016 territorial expansions into highly lucrative zones had created frictions with armed groups and locals since mid-2016. This conflict, which saw intense fighting in numerous locales between November 2016 and March 2017, officially ended with the signature of the Ippy Agreement in October 2017.

The counter-UPC Coalition, which loosely brought together MPC, RPRC and anti-balaka fighters, enabled the FPRC to gain lucrative ground in 2017. However, its cooption of anti-balaka groups engaged in "anti-forienger" rhetoric ratcheted pre-existing tensions between the FPRC's Goula and Rounga factions leading it to spiral into intense inter-ethnic in-fighting from June 2017. [49] This infighting followed inter-communal clashes between Bakuma's local Arab, Sara and Banda populations in May and June 2017, amid rising concern over the use of anti-Muslim rhetoric by anti-balaka groups as part of supposed UPC targeting. The more Banda-sympathetic Goula faction subsequently refused to support Arab and Sara elements allied to Hisséné's Rounga faction, and themselves adopted an Arab/Sara-hostile rhetoric akin to that used against the Fulani in both 2016/17, and earlier in 2014.[50] Since then, the FPRC's Rounga faction engaged in fighting alongside UPC and armed Fulani elements against rival Goula factions in Bria in late November 2017. It was subsequently forced to leave the town by international forces.[51] Further FPRC in-fighting was reported in Ippy in December 2017, allegedly occasioned by diverging economic interests and divisions within the group.[52] This feuding weakened the Goula faction's influence on the FPRC's National Defense Council and saw it excluded from resource sharing arrangements under the Ippy agreement.

The signature of the Ippy Agreement ahead of the restart of economic activity over the dry season in late 2017 highlights financial and political vulnerabilities capable of disrupting FPRC-led attempts at forced reunification of the Séléka, especially where they interfere with revenue generation and instrumentalize tribalist rhetoric. Nevertheless, April 2018, saw the FPRC once again gather both UPC and MPC leaders for reunification talks in Kaga Bandoro. These talks followed a failed joint MINUSCA/FACA operation to dislodge armed militias from Bangui's PK5 neighbourhood.[53] Sparking a cycle of intercommunal violence in the capital, this operation was perceived/presented by certain groups as an attack on the district's Muslim population. It highlights the sensitivity of ex-Séléka groups to events in the capital, particularly when they touch on these groups' professed *raison d'etre* – the protection of Muslims. This ex-Séléka gathering in Kaga Bandoro has heightened anxieties about a potential push on Bangui or Sibut.[54] Whilst at time of writing, no offical pact appears to have materialized, it did help foster greater alignment between the MPC and FPRC.[55] Indeed, it is a testament to the FPRC's continued ability to mobilise alliances to share resources or counter common thrteats to political, economic and territorial interests.

48 Whilst a clear command structure was outlined at the coalition's formation, it does not appear to have necessarily been followed in practice and most leaders were said to still simply command their own troops and decide independently on the degree of support to offer each operation. (UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2017/639, para.56).

49 UN Panel of Experts Final Report S/2016/1032, para. 159. Rounga and Goula communities have a long history of conflict, with particularly intense clashes between the Rounga-dominated CPJP and Goula-dominated UFDR in 2011 (UN Panel of Experts Final Report S/2017/1023, para. 147). This has left a rivalry and mistrust between these groups perceptible in tensions concerning the allocation of key FPRC positions at the Bria conclave in October 2016 (UN Panel of Experts Final Report S/2016/1032, para. 156 and 159).

50 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.149. For the use of anti-Fulani rhetoric see, for example: UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, para.68; UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2017/639, para. 63.

51 RJDH, "Des chefs rebelles de Bria contraints de quitter la ville pour Ouadda et Sam-Ouandja", 29 December 2017.

52 UN Secretary General Report on Situation in the Central African Republic, S/2018/125, para.17.

53 Radio Ndeke Luka, "Abdoulaye Hissène responsable des opérations de Kaga Bandoro selon Touadéra", 20 April 2018; Radio Ndeke Luka, "Regroupement d'hommes armés à Kaga Bandoro, psychose au sein de la population", 16 April 2018.

54 CNC, "Centrafrique : conclave des Leaders de l'ex-coalition Séléka à Kaga-Bandoro, des objectifs seraient en discussion", 17 April 2018.

55 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2018/729, paras.70-80.

2. Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC)

Founded in August 2015 by Al Khatim and Ahamat Bahar, the MPC is predominantly composed of Arab fighters, though it also has a notable Fulani contingent.[56] Its leadership is thought to be well connected to Chadian "big men" responsible for driving herds between Chad and the CAR and as such, its principle zone of operations has focused on the northern border area between these two countries. Despite the MPC's split from the FPRC, it has nevertheless maintained functional relations with the group in their areas of mutual interest from the outset. This saw both groups engage in resource sharing agreements and even joint military training around Nana-Grébizi in 2015,[57] as well as entering into tactical alliances to counter common threats, in particular UPC expansion into their spheres of influence.[58] Whilst the MPC has traditionally maintained its independence in the face of FPRC attempts to reform the Séléka, a recent change in political leadership saw the group nevertheless express support for the FPRC's recent strategy vis-à-vis the Central Afrcian government and international forces.[59]



MPC-related incidents and roadblocks in its principle zone of operations 2015-2017

Territorial reach and revenue generation

At its inception, the MPC had an operational presence throughout much of Nana-Grébizi and north east Ouham (Kabo and Batangafo), placing particular emphasis on controlling major pastoralist hubs and transit locales. However, early 2016 saw it seek to expand its territorial reach and augment its fighting capacity by pushing both east and west. Whilst its westerly expansion into Ouham Pendé towards Paoua was facilitated by an alliance with the more native-based RJ up to late 2017, its easterly expansion into Bamingui-Bangoran saw rising tensions with the FPRC in early 2016. The MPC's bid to cash in on

56 As such, it has often claimed to protect both Arab and Fulani interests in certain areas (UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2016/694, para. 84).
57 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, para. 170.
58 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para. 189.
59 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2018/729, para.73 and annex 6.2.

transhumance, mining and potential oil revenues by expanding towards Ndélé saw skirmishes with the FPRC, who had formerly enjoyed exclusive control in this prefecture.[60] Short-lived, these tensions gave way to an FPRC/MPC alliance against the threat posed by UPC expansion into areas of mutual interest around Nana-Grebizi and Ouham. Thus, by June 2016, the MPC's expansions east had scaled back and the first clashes between the MPC/FPRC and the UPC erupted near Ouandago and Batangafo.[61] In late 2016, the MPC went on to join the FPRC-led coalition against the UPC and Al Khatim was nominated FPRC Chief of staff in April 2017, a role he later renounced following the signature of the October 2017 Ippy agreement between the UPC's Ali Darassa and the FPRC's Abdoulaye Hisséne.[62] Having not been included in the agreement's negotiation, the MPC nevertheless agreed to bide by its terms, no doubt due to its beneficial economic implications in allowing the resumption of pastoralist activities, including movement between Kaga Bandoro and Bambari.



Cattle truck in Kaga Bandoro (Photo: Peer Schouten)

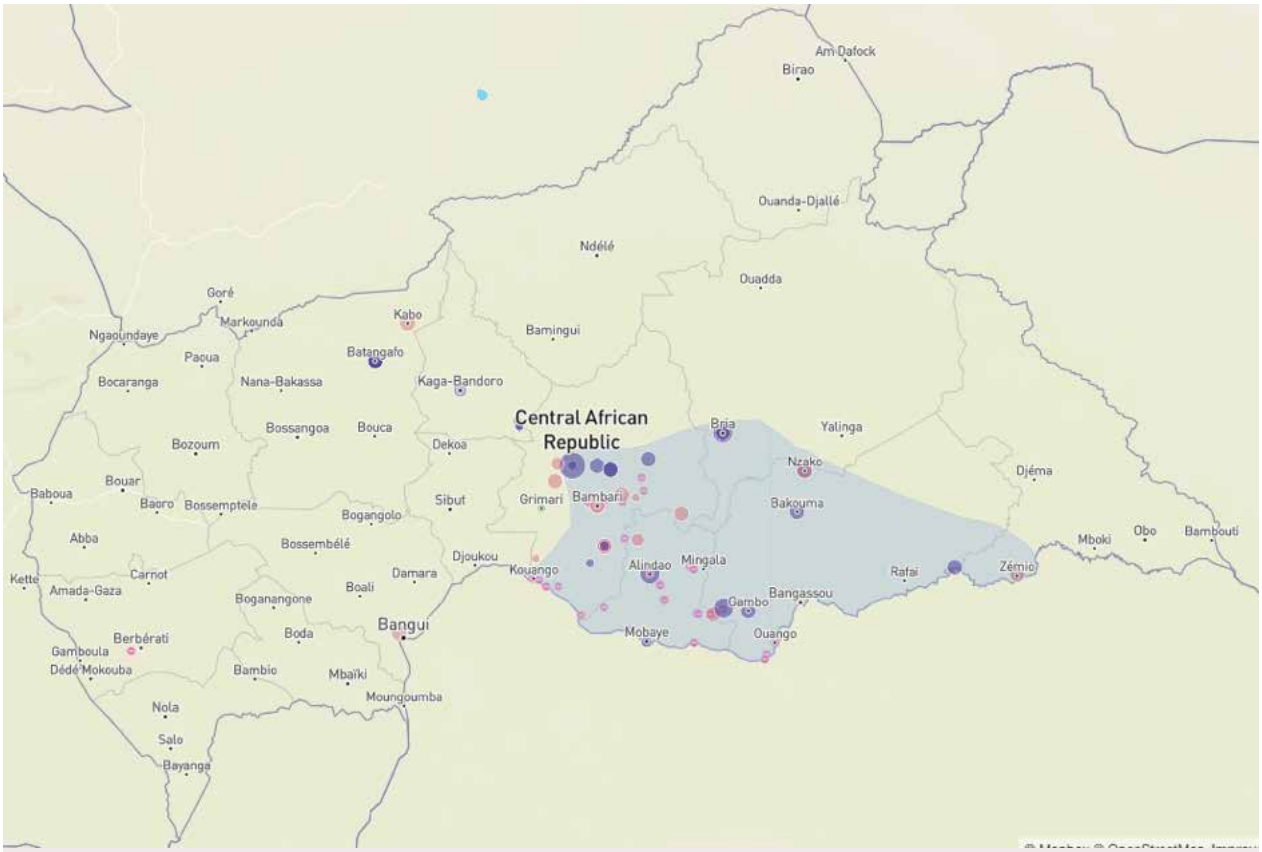
MPC factioning

Since its founding, the MPC has been subject to notable rifts among its leadership, leading the UN Panel of experts to draw a semblance with "a network of independent leaders commanding elements in separate regions, with limited contacts with the Bangui-based political bureau".[63] The seeds of discord between the group's military command were first reported in late 2016 with Paoua Comzone General Ahamat Bahar critical of continued MPC expansion around the northwest.[64] The MPC's Bangui-based political leadership later rejected the group's alliance with the FPRC coalition, dismissing Al Khaitm as

60 UN Panel of Experts Interim report S/2016/694, para. 81.
61 Despite the divergent views of these two groups on issues such as DDR, Séléka reunification and the country's partition, they have nevertheless maintained relatively stable resource sharing alliance in Kaga Bandoro since 2015, collaborating militarily in response to joint threats. See UN Panel of Experts Final report S/2016/1032, para. 189.
62 Fondation Hirondelle, "CAR: Are ex-Séléka preparing to march on Bangui?", 19 April 2018.
63 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023 , para.194.
64 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para. 201.

chief of staff[65] and briefly splitting from the group's military wing in January 2017.[66] Whilst these branches are since believed to have rejoined, relations were said to remain strained into late 2017.[67] In June 2017, a splinter MPC faction emerged calling itself MPC Siriri. Led by Mahamat Abdel Karim and Salah Zabadi, these Arab Muslim fighters are said to have denounced the MPC's association with abuses committed by FPRC-led coalition members against Muslims, particularly Arabs.[68] Moreover, October 2017 saw General Bahar himself officially split from the MPC to form the *Mouvement national pour la lib*ération de la République centrafricaine (MNLC).[69] Having created a secure corridor for transhumance from Chad to the environs of Paoua and its MPC-controlled cattle market, Bahar appeared to have designs on securing the Cameroon-Bang-Ndim-Paoua road axis in 2017, likely in furtherance of security provision for influential Chadian cattle owners, with whom he is believed to have contacts.[70] In late 2017, however, Bahar's faction was caught up in intense clashes with RJ, having ruptured the former RJ alliance that had facilitated the MPC's initial foothold around Paoua by killing RJ leader, Raymond Belanga.[71] Under pressure in the northwest, Bahar is said to have recently joined FPRC and expressed support for its political strategy.[72]

3. Union pour la Centrafrique (UPC)



UPC-related incidents and roadblocks in its principle zone of operations since 2015-2017

65 Al Khatim was reportedly appointed FPRC chief of staff in April 2017 (UN Panel of Experts Interim Report S/2017/639, Annex 5.2).
66 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report S/2017/639, para. 59.
67 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.194.
68 N. Dukhan, *Splintered Warfare: Alliances, affiliations, and agendas of armed factions and politico-military groups in the Central African Republic*, Enough, August 2017, p.11.
69 Interview with MINUSCA personnel, February 2018.
70 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.196.
71 MINUSCA, "MINUSCA denounces the violence by RJ and MNLC armed groups that provoked a humanitarian crisis in the sub-prefecture of Paoua", 20 January 2018.
72 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2018/729, Annex 7.1(3).

Established following the intense inter-communal clashes of 2013/14, the Ali Darassa-led[73] UPC originally counted a variety of factions within its ranks. Composed predominantly of Fulani and Arab fighters, the group claimed to be open to anyone that " wants to work for peace in CAR", outlining its commitment to the Brazzaville ceasefire and its disapproval of the FPRC's partitionist agenda.[74] Since then however a withdrawal of Arab UPC factions in mid-2016 appears to have rendered the group increasingly homogenous. This withdrawal followed in-fighting over what appears to have become a progressively segregationist approach to group operations and an apparent prioritization of protecting Fulani over Arab interests since the group's inception.[75]

Territorial reach and revenue generation

Despite the UPC's democratic discourse, the group has from the outset engaged in systemic and diversified economic predation focused largely on taxation and security provision encompassing livestock, coffee, sugar, agricultural goods and general merchandise, as well as involving itself in diamond and especially gold taxation, production and trade.[76] Initially in competition with the RPRC, as well as local anti-balaka groups, the UPC established a hegemony over the strategic economic hub of Bambari, going on to control resource rich zones and key smuggling hubs in Ouaka, Basse Kotto and Mboumou by mid-2015, as well as extending its presence into Haut Kotto (Bria).[77] On the back of a spike in LRA attacks in early 2016 and the subsequent withdrawal of the AU Task Force from key locales in eastern CAR from August 2016, the UPC developed a particularly expansionist agenda, pushing further into the south east. It established a strong presence around the key trafficking hub of Bema, whilst spreading and further entrenching its control over productive gold and diamond mining areas, including Nzako and Bakouma. The UPC's expansionist agenda also saw the group seek to extend its reach into MPC/FPRC controlled territory in Nana-Grebizi and north east Ouham, igniting tensions with these groups, which escalated into armed confrontations in June 2016.[78]



Roadblock Bria

73 Ali Darassa is a Fulani from the Oudda Mbororo sub-group that originally entered the CAR from Chad.
74 LCN, "Séléka : Une faction dissidente ouverte « à tout le monde »" 5 November 2014.
75 This dispute took place in the context of UPC expansion into areas traditionally falling under MPC and FRPC control, which ultimately resulted in clashes with these groups in mid- 2016. Whilst again justified by reference to the need to protect Fulani interests, this UPC expansion appeared merely to form part of a wider territorial push to enter economically strategic zones in early 2016. It should be noted however that Fulani populations, particularly around Ouaka and Haut Kotto, have in the past been targeted for cattle theft not only by anti-balaka but also ex-Séléka factions. Indeed, some elements allegedly engaged in such predation appear to have become part of the UPC's dissenting Arab contingent (e.g. Yaya Scout) as well as hailing from Goula FPRC factions (e.g. Joseph Zoundeko and Tom Adam), UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2014/762, para.148.
76 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2014/762, para.144-145 and annexes 41-44.
77 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, para. 70.
78 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2016/694, para. 93.

The UPC's activities in its zones of operations heightened tensions with local communities who were subjected to numerous exactions, including taxation, arbitrary arrest, physical abuse and other forms of extortion, as well as retaliation killings and forced marriages.[79] In particular, the UPC's relocation to areas surrounding Bangassou was a source of frustration for some locals, who saw Muslim merchants as receiving preferential treatment at UPC at checkpoints – an allegation later instrumentalized to suggest that the city's entire Muslim community were UPC supporters.[80]

The UPC's aggressive territorial expansion, usually under the pretext of the need to protect Fulani or Muslim populations, unleashed a strong backlash by the start of 2017. Having already engaged in preliminary clashes with MPC and FPRC elements around Ouandago and Batangafo in mid-2016, the UPC consequently found itself the target of attacks from the FPRC-led coalition in Bria and along the Bria-Ippy-Bambari and Mbrés-Bakala-Bambari axes throughout December 2016 to February 2017. By late February 2017, the UPC was forced to vacate its Bambari stronghold by MINUSCA – a bid to limit civilian causalities in the city. As it reorganized itself further east, it continued to face attacks from the Coalition and anti-balaka groups throughout March, including a coordinated effort that successfully dislodged it from the diamond rich locales of Bakouma and Nzako.[81] Whilst FPRC-led targeting waned in April 2017, anti-balaka and self-defense group attacks continued, further displacing the group from key revenue generating and trafficking locales of Gambo, Bema, Satema and Kembé between August and October.

From the outset, UPC targeting was accompanied by strong anti-Fulani rhetoric by both coalition and anti-balaka/self-defense groups.[82] Similarly to the events of 2014, this rhetoric, which depicted the UPC, its leadership[83] and the Fulani community more widely as an invading foreign force,[84] was extended to encompass the CAR's entire Muslim community as a whole. Consequently, anti-balaka attacks on Gambo, Bema and Ouango in August, Pombolo and Kembe in October, and Mobaye in November maintained a distinctly ethnic focus, often directly targeting Muslim civilians, particularly Fulani, as well as UPC fighters. This ethnic/religious targeting stirred up intercommunal tensions throughout the southeast. Here, the displacement of UPC fighters into Mboumou, Haut Kotto and Haut Mboumou saw the development of local self-defense groups throughout these areas, and triggered intercommunal violence and tensions between local Muslim and non-Muslim populations as mutual mistrust heightened.[85]



Ippy

79 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2016/694, para. 56-62, UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para.131-134.
80 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2017/639, para.88.
81 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2017/639, para. 52-54.
82 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2017/639, para. 63.
83 Ali Darassa's identity as a member of the Uu'da Fulani clan (see box "Understanding the term "Fulani") and his previous association with former Chadian rebel leader, Abdel Kader Baba-Laddé, heightens his vulnerability to identity-based discourse surrounding foreign intervention.
84 This association was further compounded by armed Mbororo and 3R exactions in northwestern CAR.
85 For example, clashes were observed in locales such as Mboki, Zemio and Obo between June and July 2017.

It should be noted that whilst the UPC does not have leadership over all armed Fulani present in the CAR, or even in Bambari or Bria, its strong Fulani base and repeated references to protecting Fulani communities in justifying its presence and especially its expansion, has fueled the conflation of the UPC not only with all armed Fulani, but also with the broader Fulani community as a whole.

Following the official cessation of hostilities with the FPRC, late November 2017 saw an apparent alliance between the UPC and FPRC Rouga elements who fought alongside one another against both anti-balaka groups and the Azor Kalit-led FPRC Goula faction in Bria amid continuing fratricidal conflict.[86] In December 2017, both parties ousted Gaetan Bouadé's anti-balaka group from Ndassima, killing the latter.[87]

Since the start of 2018, the UPC has sought to regain control over its former stronghold of Bambari and other key locales in Ouaka and beyond. This has pitched it into direct conflict with the Central African authorities and international forces in Bambari since May 2018, as it challenges attempts to render the city an armed group-free zone as part of a pilot for national reconciliation and social cohesion. As such, Bambari has been the venue for a vicious cycle of assaults and reprisal attacks between the UPC and local anti-balaka and self-defence militias since mid-2018.[88] Whilst the group's position on FPRC attempts at Séléka reunion remains ambiguous, it does nevertheless appear to have normalized its relations with Damane's Goula-dominated RPRC since the evenets of 2017.[89]

C. The evolution of the "anti-balaka" movement since 2014

The anti-balaka movement active in 2013/2014 originated in self-defense groups formed mainly in the mid-2000s to fight road bandits (*zaraguinas*) and armed pastoralists. Having emerged spontaneously, these groups were subsequently augmented and offered a greater degree of coordination by low-ranking officers and rank and file of Bozizé's FACA, Presidential Guard and Gendarmerie.[90] This saw the movement orchestrate some well-coordinated and prepared attacks in late 2013 and early 2014, including that on Bangui on 5 December 2013.

Despite this initial coordination, whose original aim was ostensibly to hunt down Séléka fighters and those Muslims seen as complicit in their exactions, the movement is deeply divided.[91] Even its most structured components have been hampered by internal competition for political leadership and recognition, ethnic divisions and conflict between military leaders, rendering it impossible unify under a single banner even for would-be coordinators.[92] The anti-balaka's existence as a wide network of militias with mainly local agendas equates to the absence of any truely centralized command and control structure.[93] This renders it one of the most challenging parties to the CAR's conflict to define, assess and engage.

86 RJDH, "La coalition FPRC et UPC assiège le village Ngoubi, une localité de la Haute-Kotto" 28 November 2017. Notably, both the Fulani and the Rounga communities have been the subject of "anti-foreigner" rhetoric in the past, including in the area of Bria where they are often viewed by local Goula and Banda populations as foreign invaders (Interviews in Bria, December 2017). Indeed, reports of tensions between Goula fighters and fighters of other ethnic factions said to originate from Chad and Sudan (Arab, Sara, Rounga, Fulani, Kara) often cite the use of such rhetoric by the former (see for example, UN Panel of Experts Report, S/2017/1023, para. 147; International Crisis Group, *Dangerous Little Stones*, December 2010, p.16-18).

87 RJDH, "Gaétan, le général Anti-Balaka de la Ouaka, tué à Ndashima", 12 December 2017.

88 MINUSCA Press Release, "MINUSCA condemns the latest violence in Bambari" 1 June 2018.

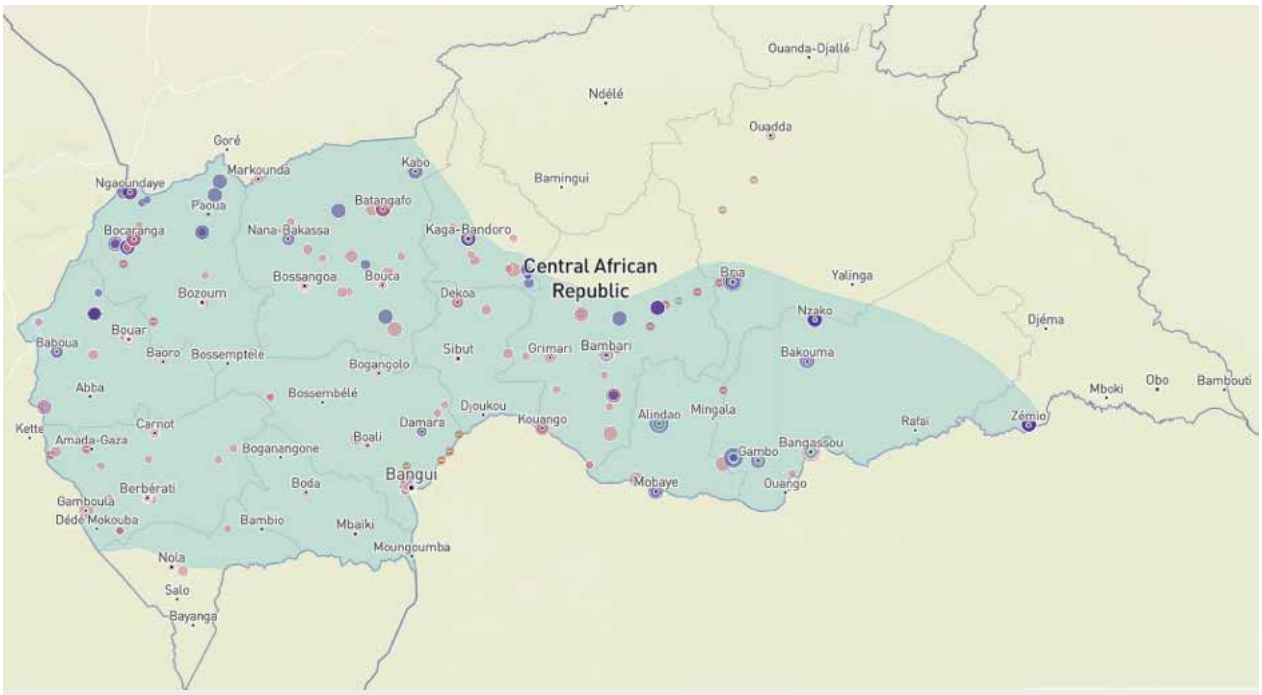
89 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2018/729, para.75-76.

90 See: FIDH/LCDH, "Central African Republic: "They must all leave or die"", June 2014, pp.57-63.

91 Y. Weyns et al, *Mapping Conflict Motives: The Central African Republic*, IPIS, 2014, p.46-47.

92 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2014/762, para.67-68

93 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2017/639, para.86.



Anti-balaka-related incidents in its principle zone of operations 2015-2017

Until recently, the term "anti-balaka" has been used as a panacea to describe a variety of (usually local) actors engaged in violent activity targeting both armed groups, civilians, humanitarians or MINUSCA. Broadly speaking, these actors can be seen as falling within four often overlapping categories:

1. those forming part of the official anti-balaka movement
2. affiliated/loosely affiliated or unaffiliated local militias
3. so-called "Self-defence groups"; and
4. criminal gangs.

Whilst these catagories are not official and are rightfully subsumed under the wider label of anti-balaka on the interactive map, they nevertheless facilitate a better understanding of the wide range of actors that this label has come to encompass.

1. Actors forming part of the official anti-balaka movement

Many actors forming part of the self-proclaimed political and military "leadership" of the anti-balaka movement at the height of its mobilization retain a broadly focused political agenda that they continue to push with the incumbent authorities, usually for personal gain. Whilst numerous anti-balaka returned to their areas of influence, the Bangui-based anti-balaka "leadership" has continued to jockey for political recognition, seeking to enhance its leverage in securing positions of power by bringing local militias within their spheres of influence. Since May 2015, the principle factions dominating this space have been those led by Maxime Mokom and Patrice- Édouard Ngaissona.

Patrice Ngaissona established the *Coordination nationale des libérateurs du peuple centrafricain* (CLPC) in 2014 though is now widely reputed to represent merely his own ambitions.[94] Some prominent anti-balaka factions in Bangui and western CAR continue to be associated with his more politically moderate coordination branch,[95] though Ngaissona himself has gradually removed himself from his anti-balaka base,[96] as well as his former association with Bozizé.[97]

94 Now the *Coordination nationale des ex-anti-balaka* (National coordination of the ex-anti-balaka).
95 Examples: the Ndalé clan in Bouar (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.204, cf. UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, annex 7.1), Gaetan Boadé's anti-balaka in Bambari (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para.135), as well as some anti-balaka operating at Wili gold mine.
96 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/639, para.84.
97 Dukhan, N., *The Central African Republic Crisis*, GSDRC, March 2016, p.7.

Maxime Mokom has become a particularly prominent anti-balaka coordinator since 2015. Considered an anti-balaka hardliner, his faction officially split from the CLPC in late May 2015, following Mokom's participation in the controversial Nairobi talks.[98] At that time, preparations for the Bangui Forum, saw Mokom's faction augment its links and collaboration with the Bozizé family,[99] with whom it appears to have engaged in a rapproachement with Nouredine Adam's FPRC. Numerous groups are said to be affiliated with Mokom's coordination branch,[100] whose involvement with anti-balaka and "self-defence groups" engaged in the FPRC-led coalition remains unclear.[101]

The demands of both these coordination branches include a general amnesty for fighters for past crimes and military and political positions for their leaders and associates. The Mokom faction's close links to the Bozizé family has also seen it continue to seek the restoration of the former regime to power. Both branches maintain close links to both government officials[102] and national security forces, as well as benefitting from the discriminatory and inflammatory discourse of certain political actors, who continue to portray anti-balaka groups as patriots.[103] However, whilst both factions continue to build their networks in the interior by claiming the allegiance of militias operating locally, they in fact have limited influence on the actions of these groups on the ground.[104] Affiliation with any one of these coordination branches is highly changeable and dependent on a variety of local and other factors, including the perceived ability of each to facilitate access to DDR.[105]

Given the predominance of local issues for affiliated militias, the extent to which the nationally focused political discourse of these coordination branches actually reflects the views of their "membership" is highly questionable. Certainly, despite the Bozizé family enjoying the support of allies operating within the current administration, including notable contingents of the FACA,[106] its history of privileging its own Gbaya ethnic group is unlikely to curry favor with many anti-balaka groups currently active.[107] Moreover, late 2017 saw indications of discontent with the movements official leadership among some anti-balaka factions as certain leaders sought to take charge of their own political engagement by establishing their own armed group and splitting off from the official coordination branches.[108] Thus, whilst the two coordination branches remain highly capable of generating insecurity as spoilers to ongoing peace efforts through affiliates and associates, their claims to represent "Central Africans" more widely seem opportunistic.

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98 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, paras.17-24.

99 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, paras.32-34.

100 Examples include Nice Demowance and Crepin Messamba-led anti-balaka in Amada Gaza and Sosso-Nakombo (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.244); Narbé-led anti-balaka in Kaga Bandoro and Mbrés (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, para.175); and the Ndarata-led anti-balaka faction in Bambari (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, para.75).

101 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.150.

102 Some have even managed to secure official appointments: (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, para.18; UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para.30; Radio Ndeke Luka, "RCA : un nouveau gouvernement dirigé par Simplice Mathieu Sarandji", 13 September 2017.

103 UN Panel of Experts Final Report S/2017/1023, para.51. The election of anti-balaka leaders Alfred Yékatom (aka "Rombhot") and Florent Kema as parliamentary representatives for Mbaïki and Nana Bakassa, respectively, extended the space for the airing of such pro-anti-balaka discourse in the national political arena in 2016 (in UN Panel of Experts Interim Report S/2016/694, para.22).

104 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2017/639, para.84-85; UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para.95.

105 Ibid.

106 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para.95.

107 Many of these groups operate in areas not dominated by Gbaya. Indeed, numerous 2013/14 anti-balaka were disenchanted youths, sometimes called "Section 5000" in reference to Bozizé's 2009 to 2011 recruitment drive for 5,000 FACA combatants. Seeing a chance for a career over 20,000 youths applied for a fee, though only one in four were accepted, most of them Gbaya. This inward focus on Bozizé's part is said to have disillusioned youths with the regime. See: FIDH/LCDH, *Central African Republic: "They must all leave or die"*, June 2014, p.59.

108 Gaetan Bouadé established the Bambari-based Rassemblement des républicains (RDR) in August 2017 (UN Panel of Experts Final Report S/2017/1023, para.137). He was subsequently killed on 10 December 2017. Moreover, anti-balaka leaders, Baudoin Yangué and Thierry Lebéné ("12-Puissances") established the *Leaders combattants autodéfense pour la résistance* (LCADR) movement in late October 2017 – a break-away faction from the Ngaissona branch (Agence Anadolou, "Centrafrique : Naissance d'un groupe armé issu du mouvement anti-Balaka", 2 November 2017.



Motorbike transporter and passengers in Bangui

2. Affiliated/loosely affiliated or unaffiliated local militias

Forming part of a loose network of militias operating to mainly local agendas, anti-balaka groups can either generally identify themselves as part of the broader movement or one of its official factions, or else be associated by default without any overt affiliation.

The 2013/14 anti-balaka drew on a large local youth base mobilized by loss, unemployment or personal ambition – a base still susceptible to mobilization rhetoric today. Although many south-westerly anti-balaka appear to have become increasingly dormant,[109] local militias have nevertheless remained particularly active in Ouham, Nana-Grebizi, Ouaka and Basse Kotto prefectures where they have maintained an almost continuous front line with ex-Séléka groups in locales like Kaga Bandoro, Bouca, Mbrés, Bambari and Kouango. This geographical spread, which aligns strongly with ex-Séléka operations and transhumance activities, highlights the continuing relevance of the broad-based anti-balaka agenda of combatting ex-séléka groups and "foreigners".[110] Indeed, 2016 saw a particular rise in anti-balaka activities in northwestern CAR around the 3R-affected Bocaranga sous-prefecture, which has continued to the present day. 2017 likewise appears to have seen a spread of anti-balaka militias and rhetoric into new areas in the southeast of CAR in which the Fulani-led UPC had developed a notable presence.

The more parochial agenda of these anti-balaka factions and internal political or ethnic rivalries and tensions within these groups can often result in local level factioning with multiple anti-balaka leaders operating in a single locality,[111] and even engaged in open conflict with each other.[112] One of the clearest illustrations of these dynamics is in and around Bambari. Here, by 2016, there were at least three anti-

109 With the exception of certain smaller militas in Amada Gaza, certain anti-balaka affiliated individuals in Mambéré-Kadei and the operations of the Ndalé clan, which began in 2015.

110 This term has often been conflated with the Fulani/Mbororo ethnic group more broadly.

111 For example, disagreements over DDR have seen anti-balaka in Bouar split between those under the leadership of "Bello" and those under the leadership of the Ndalé brothers (interview with former anti-balaka in Bouar, June 2016). See also, UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, para.52 and annex 2, for examples of different groups in the Bambari-Grimari-Kouango area.

112 For example, December 2017 saw fighting between the Romaric and Pino Pino anti-balaka factions in Bangassou: CNC, "Centrafrique : extradition sur Bangui des deux chefs Anti-Balaka arrêtés en RDC" February 2018. For other examples, see: RJDH, "Des affrontements entre Anti-Balaka paralysent les activités à Boali" 25 October 2015; LNC, "Bangassou : Les Anti-Balaka s'y battent entre eux", 1 November 2017.

balaka factions engaged in fluctuating degrees of conflict with each other and the UPC.[113] Moreover, August 2016 saw the establishment of yet another Bambari-based armed group with anti-balaka-aligned rhetoric and close ties to the city's existing anti-balaka, though this group sought to disassociate itself from the existing movement, claiming the anti-balaka to be too militarily weak to effectively combat ex-Séléka groups.[114] Indeed, due to the advanced military capability of most ex-Séléka groups over their generally artisanally armed anti-balaka counterparts, in cases of open conflict, the latter are often disadvantaged in securing control over key assets.[115]

The implications of anti-balaka operations for humanitarian activities

Attacks on humanitarian operations are perpetrated by both ex-Séléka and anti-balaka groups, as well as unaligned militias. However, incident mapping suggests that such attacks are most acute in areas with high levels of anti-balaka activity against ex-Séléka groups, especially Batangafo, Kaga Bandoro, Bocaranga, Bossangoa, Bambari and Bria. Such incidents appear to have peaked since late 2016 and begun to encompass new areas of anti-balaka activity, such as Bria, Bangassou and Zemio.[116]

Indeed, an anti-balaka presence in a locale can have several notable implications for humanitarian operations. Firstly, being one of the few parts of the formal economy still functioning in many parts of the CAR, humanitarian actors can be the particular target of predation via road ambushes or looting.[117] Of 181 media-reported incidents on the interactive map that involve both humanitarian actors and looting between 2014 and 2016, at least 67 allegedly involved anti-balaka. This is more than any other single actor in the CAR.[118] Another 87 of these events involved unidentified assailants. These assailants may well include other anti-balaka, though ex-Séléka and other armed actors are also known to target humanitarian operations, disguising their identities to avoid accountability.

Secondly, because anti-balaka groups often operate locally their links to communities affected by displacement caused by insecurity can lead them to be associated with IDP camps.[119] As a result, IDP camps are often targeted by ex-Séléka groups, as illustrated in the ex-Séléka attack on Kaga Bandoro's IDP camp following anti-balaka violence in the vicinity in October 2016.[120] Moreover, they can also become the venue of conflict between warring anti-balaka factions, as seen in and around Bambari's Sangaris IDP camp between February and April 2016.[121]

113 Numerous clashes between these groups in and around Sangaris IDP camp between February and April 2016, culminated in the signature of a ceasefire between these groups in May (MINUSCA, "Bambari : Deux factions anti-Balaka rivales se réconcilient et signent un accord", 12 May 2016), though the groups continued to be divided into 2017 (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032). Having gone on to establish his own armed groups, the *Rassemblement des républicains* (RDR), Bouadé was killed in clashes with the UPC and FPRC Rouga faction in Ndassima on 10 December 2017.

114 UN Panel of Experts Final Report S/2016/1032, para.138-142.

115 For example, despite the advances of anti-balaka groups in securing control over mine sites around Bambari and Nzako in late 2016 and early 2017, control of such sites was subsequently recovered by ex-Séléka factions in armed clashes, sometimes with the same groups with which they had formerly collaborated (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/639, para.55, and interviews with UN experts in April 2018).

116 See also, E.Picco and T. Vircoulon, *The Humanitarian System in the Central Afrcain Republic: A time of challenges*, CCO/Mercy Corps, December 2017, p.14.

117 This *modus operandi* has traditionally been associated with anti-balaka operations. See for example, UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, paras.85-87. For more on the parameters of anti-balaka predation on transit see Chapter II.

118 It should be noted that in some cases assailants can seek to disguise their actions as that of another group to deflect responsibility for their exactions. As such, this figure can only be treated as indicative.

119 For example, anti-balaka are reputed to control Bria's PK3 IDP camp. Zahar, M.J, and Mechoulan, D, *Peace by Pieces? Local Mediation and Sustainable Peace in the Central African Republic*, IPI, November 2017, p.32.

120 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032 ,para.196; UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, paras.66 and 95. Other examples include the abduction of three humanitarian workers and killing of one by FPRC/MPC elements in Batangafo in September 2017 for their alleged complicity with anti-balaka in the area (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.184). Other examples include the killing of an aid worker in Bambari by anti-balaka due to suspicions that he had provided information to international forces on anti-balaka movements (UN Panel of Experts Final Report 2015/936, Annex 2.7).

121 MINUSCA, "Bambari : Deux factions anti-Balaka rivales se réconcilient et signent un accord", 12 May 2016.

Indeed, the discriminatory discourse often associated with anti-balaka rhetoric can polarize perspectives on the activities of humanitarians and peacekeepers. Here, attempts to render assistance to certain vulnerable central African populations, such as Muslims or Fulani, or failures to prevent armed group violence targeting civilians can be interpreted as partisan actions that "side with the enemy".[122] Moreover, the unwarranted conflation of peacekeeping operations with humanitarian activities was observable in and around Bocaranga in September and October 2017, when anti-balaka kidnaped four humanitarian workers and harassed both peace keepers and humanitarian agencies in the city in retaliation for the arrest of one of their fighters.[123] These events saw humanitarian agencies forced to suspend operations twice as a result of repeated attacks, severely undermining civilian access to emergency assistance.

These factors have seen attacks on humanitarian operations increase since 2016, rendering the Central African Republic the most dangerous country for humanitarian workers to operate globally in 2017 (for more see Chapter II).

3. So-called "Self-defence groups"

Late 2016 and 2017 saw the rise of self-proclaimed "self defence groups" in eastern CAR, claiming to be a response to local threats to community security. The appearance of these groups correlates with ex-Séléka, particularly UPC, expansions into the southeast in 2016 and early 2017. This expansion was reportedly attended with a rise in exactions locally, particularly around areas of economic interest,[124] which may well have fostered a local sense of victimization. At the time of their emergence, these new militia claimed to have no connection with the wider anti-balaka movement, maintaining their status as "self defense" militias. However, these groups appear to be distinguishable from other civilian groups responding to imminent security threats, like those mobilized during a severe spike in LRA activity in southeastern CAR in late 2015/early 2016.[125]

Indeed, a number of factors equate these new militia more closely to anti-balaka groups (including in some cases, their own affiliation with Bangui-based factions since late 2017). Firstly, the mobilization and deployment of these groups appears to have been highly premeditated. For example, groups in Bangassou were composed of youths mobilized in September 2016 – 8 months before their assault on that city and at a time when there does not appear to have been any UPC presence in the area.[126] Secondly, these groups appear to have had crucial strategic assistance from "broader networks", including local anti-balaka[127] and "outside fighters" associated with anti-balaka activities. The latter includes alleged former FACA elements, one of whom is said to be a former Bozizé presidential guard hailing from Ben Zambé in the anti-balaka dominated Bossangoa sous-prefecture.[128] These "outside fighters" assisted with mobilization, training, military strategy and coordination – a fact reminiscent of 2013/14 anti-balaka mobilization. Thirdly, these groups received significant financial and logistical aid from local and Bangui-based actors with personal political and economic interests in their areas of operations.[129] Finally, their mobilization and deployment took place in the context of significant anti-Muslim rhetoric in both Bangui and locally. This led many of their assaults being characterized by the systematic targeting of Muslim

122 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para.191.
123 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.215.
124 For more on the human rights dimensions of economic predation by armed groups see chapters II to IV.
125 A significant uptick in LRA attacks during this period saw a notable rise in the spontaneous formation of local self-defence groups seeking to protect their communities from these attacks (Confidential UN report, June 2016). Some other limited examples can also be found on the interactive map.
126 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.88.
127 Local anti-balaka leader "Sossengue" is said to have aided in the mobilization of youths, performance of pre-combat "vaccination" rituals and organistion of links with "outside fighters". UN Panel of Experts Final Report,S/2017:1032, para.80. Other local anti-balaka leaders are widely reputed to include Romaric, Afandé and Ngabé.
128 Kevin Berebere (from Benzembé) and Crepin Wakanam alias "Pino Pino" (from Boali, Ombella –Mpoko Prefecture) reportedly played key roles in the attack on Bangassou on 13 May 2017
129 In particular, Maxime Takama is said to have used the opportunity to advance his local and national political ambitions concerning his contested leadership on the local Nzakara community, whilst local diamond miner, Yvon Nzélété is also said to have supported the self-defence groups to take over local Muslim businesses (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1032, paras.84 and 98).

populations, especially Fulani, as well as UPC fighters – again a fact somewhat reminiscent of the ethnic cleansing carried out in eastern CAR from late 2013 to early 2014.

Whilst circumstance, and consequently media reports, have clearly associated these more recent militias with anti-balaka both during and since their advent, there appeals to "self-defence" suggests an attempt to either legitimize their activities, or else disassociate themselves from the anti-balaka movement. Here, care should be taken to look at the conduct and circumstances surrounding such self defence groups in determining their true nature.

4. Petty criminals and criminal gangs

Petty criminals and criminal gangs, essentially engaged in banditry, kidnapping and/or cattle rustling with no broader agenda beyond predation have also fallen under the anti-balaka banner,[130] sometimes affiliating themselves with one or both anti-balaka coordination branches. These actors are usually comprised of unemployed youths or organized criminals appealing to the "liberation" rhetoric of the anti-balaka movement to legitimize their activities or mobilize greater support for their local profiteering agendas.[131] The operations of the Ndalé clan's anti-balaka provides one illustration of such a gang.[132] Emerging in early 2015, this clan, which has direct control over anti-balaka militias in Nana-Mambéré and influences those in Ouham-Pendé, has generated notable revenues principally through cattle raiding, and taxation of herders and other travelers.[133] As such, it has resisted calls for DDR[134] and challenged the re-establishment of State authority in areas that would challenge the clan's economic interests.[135] Whilst it was officially affiliated with the Ngaissona faction in 2017, it is also close to Mokom, and is said to shift allegiance at convenience.[136]

Whilst such groups may well form part of established criminal networks, it is nevertheless extremely important to take criminal anti-balaka factions seriously not the least because they seem consistent in targeting 'foreigners' – here broadly defined as non-locals, comprising (mostly Muslim) transporters and pastoralists, as well as aid workers. While mere bandits to the outside, their targeting of those coming from afar can make them appreciated locally in a context where little good is seen as coming from 'outside'.

130 This trend is especially observable in incident reporting up to 2016, where acts characterized by criminality have often been designated as perpetrated by "presumed anti-balaka", particularly in Bangui. This highlights the increasing conflation of this term with references to banditry and delinquency. The engagement of a variety of other actors, including official armed groups, in criminal activity and generalized violence has increasingly seen the use of the term "unidentified assailant" in respect of such incidents since 2016.

131 Around KP compliance zones IPIS noticed that an effort was made to distinguish such actors, usually engaged in criminal activity on their own account as "bad boys". Interviews with MINUSCA in Berberati, February and June 2016.

132 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, paras.203-208. Unlike other AB leaders, the Ndalé clan reportedly already had a criminal history before the crisis and used their experience to advance within the AB movement. See, UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, paras.202-208; T. Vircoulon, *Assessment of Conflict Dynamics in Mercy Corps' Area of Intervention (Nana-Mambéré Prefecture)*, Merci Corps, August 2017, p.22. Repeated references to the criminal activities of anti-balaka elements under Nice Demowance during interviews in Berberati suggest that this faction might likewise be classed as falling within this category.

133 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, para.205. Interviews undertaken in Bouar in June 2016 indicate that the brothers may also have had some involvement in gold mining activities.

134 This is a position that ultimately split the anti-balaka in Bouar between those willing to engage with pre-DDR and those seeking to remain with the Ndalé clan. Interview with demobilized anti-balaka in Bouar, June 2016.

135 UN Panel of Experts Final Report S/2017/1023, para. 206.

136 Interview with confidential UN source, February 2018.



Abandoned truck at petrol station, Berberati

1. Anti-balaka mobilization

Anti-balaka mobilization since 2014 highlights the continued sensitivity of local militias to the perceived need to protect non-Muslim populations from ex-Séléka/"foreign" actors. As 2015 saw a decreasing visibility of anti-balaka in areas essentially emptied of their Muslim populations, conflict over tactical control of the central region in the prefectures of Ouham, Nana-Grebizi, Ouaka and Basse Kotto persisted. Whilst early 2016 continued that trend, a number of events following the elections nevertheless highlighted the potential for anti-balaka remobilization, especially by parties instrumentalising local dynamics in their political discourses or playing on local level anxieties surrounding broader security events.

Firstly, early to mid- 2016 saw a number of attacks by youths formerly associated with the anti-balaka on returning Muslims in Mambéré-Kadei.[137] The timing of these events around intercommunal conflict in Bangui's PK5 district, highlight the possibility of security events in the capital having repercussions for stability in the interior.[138] Moreover, they highlight the continuing risk of anti-balaka remobilization in response to security dynamics currently developing in this prefecture. Secondly, the violent exodus of ex-Séléka fighters from Bangui in August 2016, efforts to reunite the ex-Séléka in Bria and ex-Séléka targeting of IDPs in Kaga Bandoro in October 2016 are believed to have reinvigorated anti-balaka groups in Bangui and further north.[139] These factors, which were attended by the rising use of anti-Muslim rhetoric among political and military actors, catalysed pre-existing violence between anti-balaka and ex-Séléka groups from September 2016. It also sowed fertile ground for the development of the aforementioned anti-balaka-associated operations throughout the south east of the country, as well as the inter-communal clashes that followed.[140] Again, in the current context, anti-balaka meetings in Kaga-Bandoro and events in Bambari may be expected to have wider implications for anti-balaka mobilization.

137 See UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/694, Annex 35.

138 Interviews with UN personnel in Berberati, Bangui and Bouar, June 2016.

139 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, p.2. The return of Jean-Francis Bozizé to Bangui in August 2016 is also believed to have been a factor.

140 In addition to numerous attacks on muslim communities in Ouaka and Mboumou from March 2017, the May 2017 attack of "self-defence groups" on Bangassou generated a cycle of mistrust between communities in Haut Mboumou, with attacks on IDP camps in Zemio, clashes between FACA and local muslims in Mboki and rising intercommunal tensions in Obo (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, paras.115-122).

Anti-balaka vulnerability to anti-Muslim rhetoric

Whilst anti-balaka elements can be highly susceptible to anti-Muslim rhetoric, it should be noted that some anti-balaka appear to make a distinction between what they see as Central African and "foreign" Muslims.[141] UN observers in Bouar have suggested to IPIS that the targeting of Muslim communities in 2014 may in fact have been ethnically-based because certain Central African Muslim communities in the region were untouched by the violence.[142] Indeed, in Bangassou, the refusal of the local Yokoma-dominated faction to participate in the massacre of Muslim civilians in the city's Tokoyo district is reported to have split the city's anti-balaka, culminating in clashes between the two groups in November 2017.[143] Bouar's Ndalé anti-balaka likewise appear to be trying to nuance their rhetoric since the events of 2016 and 2017, allegedly mooting a rebranding of themselves as an "anti-étranger" (anti-foreigner) militia,[144] as opposed to anti-balaka.

2. Anti-balaka revenue generation and access to weaponry

Having no discernable centralized structure for the coordination of revenue generation or for weapons acquisition and dissemination, loot or revenue is generally retained by those anti-balaka directly involved in securing it and weaponry is self-acquired.[145] Unlike the systematic and structured predation of ex-Séléka groups on transit routes, mine sites and the cattle trade, anti-balaka revenue generation seems more ad hoc and localized. Here, former anti-balaka leaders, who nevertheless often maintain their links to the official leadership,[146] have established themselves in "business", often through "security provision" and/or involvement in mining in their local areas of influence.[147] Indeed, the gold sector is particularly affected by an anti-balaka presence with elements at mine sites in areas around Boassangoa, Yaloké, Amada Gaza, Sosso-Nakombo, Sibut and Mbrés, amongst others. Notably, anti-balaka profiteering is often done with the complicity of local authorities, due either to their relative influence over those authorities or to their availability as a private armed force, often under the guise of "DDR".[148]

As a loose network of autonomous groups anti-balaka militias are in most places poorly militarily equipped, particularly in the centre and south/southeast. Armed overwhelmingly with artisanal weaponry including hunting rifles, machetes, knives and bows and arrows, the use of conventional weapons, such as AK47s, is generally restricted to group leaders.[149] However, groups in northwestern CAR – particularly Bouar, Bocaranga, Bossangoa and Batangafo – appear to have better access to conventional arms.[150] This may be due to a number of factors. Firstly, this area has long been affected by conflict even before 2013, which may be expected to affect levels of militarization in the region, particularly given the well-equipped nature of ex-Séléka groups currently operating locally. Secondly, Bossangoa in particular is said to be have high levels of arms circulation due to the alleged shipment of weapons to, and a high presence of,

141 Conciliation Resources, *Perspectives of non-state armed groups in the Central African Republic*, December 2017, p.8.
142 Interviews with UN personnel in Bouar, June 2016.
143 LNC, "Bangassou : Les Anti-Balaka s'y battent entre eux", 1 November 2017.
144 Interviews with a confidential UN source and a Bangui-based security expert, February 2018. Some interviewees suggest that the Ndalé brothers are themselves Muslim, though this has not been confirmed.
145 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.103.
146 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.244.
147 Examples here include the employment of anti-balaka elements, including anti-balaka leader "General Dale", as security agents for the Camsona gold mining cooperative by Elite Sécurité RCA. Here these elements have have been used by Camsona to defend its leadership's interests and silence protesters (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.237); the use of anti-balaka as irreGoular security forces at numerous gold sites throughout the west of CAR, especially in Koro-Mpoko and around Bossangoa (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.231); the establishment of the Koyo private security company by Alfred Yékatom to provide security to palm oil production sites in Ombella-MPoko and Lobaye (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.36-38); and the involvement of anti-balaka elements in gold and diamond mining and trading (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para.228-229).
148 See UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, paras.205, 231 and 237 for more recent examples of complicity or collaboration of local authorities with anti-balaka in Bouar, Koro-Mpoko and Sosso-Nakombo.
149 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.103.
150 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.253.

FACA in this locale (Bozizé's home turf) shortly before the March 2013 *coup d'état*. As such, Bossangoa and nearby Bouca are reputed to be anti-balaka re-armament hubs.[151] Thirdly, high levels of gold production and the proximity of two international frontiers may render access to weaponry much more accessible than in other regions, particularly through the notorious gold trafficking hub of Garoua-Boulai, as well as the international junction around Ngaoundaye – a zone long noted for its lawlessness.[152]

D. The role of "unaligned" armed groups in the CAR conflict

Whilst ex-Séléka and anti-balaka forces continue to constitute the dominant actors defining the countours of ongoing conflict in the CAR, a number of unaffiliated (or barely affiliated) groups also have crucial security implications. These groups appear to play a more localized role in conflict dynamics – a fact reflecting their sphere of influence, specific grievances and relative strengths. Nevertheless, they cannot be underestimated in their role in the conflict overall. Not only are they known to forge opportunistic alliances with stronger groups, as well as posing a severe threat to civilians, they are likewise a reservoir for potential mobilization against the government or specific communities. Indeed, their continuation is often indicative of both the insecurity affecting their constituents and the lack of alternative livelihoods for young men in the areas from which they draw their recruits.

1. Revolution et Justice (RJ)

Armel Sayo's *Revolution et Justice* (RJ), established December 2013, claimed to be a response to Séléka and Fulani activities in north western CAR, where it appears to have drawn heavily on former *Armée Populaire pour la Restauration de la Démocratie* (APRD) fighters.[153] The group operates in the area extending from Markouda (Ouham) to Bang (Ouham-Pende) close to the Chad /Cameroon border (north of Bocaranga and around Paoua), vying particularly for control of Markounda and Ngayoundaye.[154] Whilst making some notable gains in early 2014, 2016 found the group considerably diminished and facing a leadership crisis, whilst playing junior partner to Alkhatim's MPC. Both these issues came to a head in late November 2017 when General Bahar's MNLC (the MPC splinter group operating with RJ in the northwest) killed RJ leadership contender Raymond Belanga, breaking the alliance between the two groups and sparking violent clashes between them in the Paoua region from December 2017.[155] In response to the violence, MINUSCA instituted an armed group-free zone around Paoua in mid-January 2018. This operation ("Mbaranga") may have been more effective at dispersing the MNLC than RJ, which draws notable support from locals, whose fighters are therefore more readily concealed among the civilian population.[156] Nevertheless, 30 January 2018 saw



RJ-related incidents in its principle zone of operations 2015-2017

151 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.254.
152 Chauvin and C. Seignobos, "L'imbroglio centrafricain. Etat, rebelles et bandits", *Afrique Contemporaine*, 2013/4, n°248, 119, p. 146.
153 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, para.140.
154 Note that this zone represents a reduced sphere of influence to that formerly controlled by the APRD, which up until 2012 had extended as far east as the limits of Kaga Bandoro. See L'imbroglio
155 Whilst RJ was certainly the subordinate force to the MPC in 2016, it appears to have benefited from its collaboration with MPC and the strategic force of its local membership base, to pose a notable security threat to the MPC around Paoua and Markounda in late December and early 2018.
156 Interview with confidential UN source, February 2018.

Armel Sayo's RJ reportedly agree to disarm in accordance with national DDR, making it the first of the CAR's groups to voluntarily dissolve itself.[157] The actual adherence of the group and its membership to this agreement has yet to be determined, not least due to its continued clashes with MPC around Markounda since that agreement.

2. Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC)

Operational since the early 2000s, the small FDPC rebellion of Abdoulaye Miskine was originally established to combat highway robbery though soon shifted to focus on opposing the Bozize regime.[158] Its zone of operations before 2013 was predominantly north of Kabo, where it controlled the main axe from Moyenne-Sido as part of a territorial agreement with the APRD. The FDPC briefly joined the Séléka in late 2012 only to leave amid conflicting political and territorial interests in March 2013. It continued to operate around the strategically significant RN3 supply road close to the Cameroonian border in 2014 and 2015, rendering it western CAR's principle security threat at that time.[159] 2016 and 2017, however, saw the group become much less active in the context of a rising security presence in its zone of operations, as well as the growing strength of the Ndale anti-balaka faction. Whilst the FDPC continued to engage in negotiations for remaining hostages in 2016, its elements have also formerly expressed interest in DDR, with other fighters rumoured to have joined the group's leader in Congo-Brazzaville.[160] Nevertheless, the group remains active around Zoukombo, where it engages in taxation and from where is said to have supported armed Fulani in Amada Gaza. The FDPC is said to have leant support to armed Fulani in Amada Gaza and is more recently rumoured to be collaborating with the more recently formed Siriri group (see below).[161]



FDPC-related incidents in its principle zone of operations 2015 - 2017

3. Retour, Reclamation et Réhabilitation ("3R")

December 2015 saw the advent of the "3R" (Retour, Reclamation et Réhabilitation) armed group under the leadership of former *Front Populaire pour le Redressement* (FPR) commander General Sidiki.[162] This group has become particularly active around Koui and Bocaranga, north of Bouar, as well as in the environs of Niem-Yelewa and as far north as Bang. Whilst it has claimed to defend the interests of Fulani communities returning from refuge in Cameroon, its activities have seen it mete out violent reprisals for acts of cattle rustling or hostage taking, characterized by widespread human rights abuses.[163] Indeed, 3R acts as de facto authority in many locations around Koui extorting the population, and imposing

157 UN Secretary General Report on the Central African Republic, S/2018/125, para.9.
158 Chauvin, Emmanuel, et Christian Seignobos. « L›imbroglio centrafricain. État, rebelles et bandits », Afrique contemporaine, vol. 248, no. 4, 2013, pp. 119-148.
159 The group's attacks on vehicles on Bangui's principle supply route in 2015 occasioned trucker strikes in Cameroon and posed a serious impediment to the country's beleaguered economic revival.
160 Interview with confidential UN source, June 2016.
161 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2018/729, Annex 7.1(1).
162 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/694, para 98. Operational links between 3R and Ali Darrassa, who was chief of staff of FPR before joining the Séléka are unclear.
163 Human Rights Watch, "République centrafricaine: un nouveau groupe armé sème la terreur. Le groupe 3R a perpétré des meurtres et des viols dans le Nord-Ouest du pays", December 2016. And also UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, para.119.

"taxes", illegal detentions and looting.[164] It is also confirmed to have secured control over the Yéléwa-Sangéré III and Niem-Besson road axes charging taxes between Cameroon and the rural livestock communes of Niem-Yéléwa.[165] Whilst fear of attack from anti-balaka elements has seen Fulani communities favour the group's presence, its predation is also rumored to be alienating this community. Indeed, 3R siezed control of the Niem commune d'elevage in May 2017, withdrawing from the locale only after the issuance of a MINUSCA ultimatum. Whilst 3R's principle adversaries have been the Ndalé anti-balaka clan, it has also found itself in contest with MNLC/MPC and RJ in areas around Koui and Bocaranga. As such, it was ousted from Bocaranga in October 2017 after siezing the city following an attack on MPC and RJ positions there in September. 3R and anti-balaka groups signed an unprecedented non-aggression pact in Bouar in mid-December, which stipulated that 3R was not to venture south of the RN1 road (Bangui-Bouar-Garoua Boulai).[166] This pact appears to have been maintained with 3R continuing to engage in predation in its zone of operations and establishing links with other armed groups operating locally (see below).



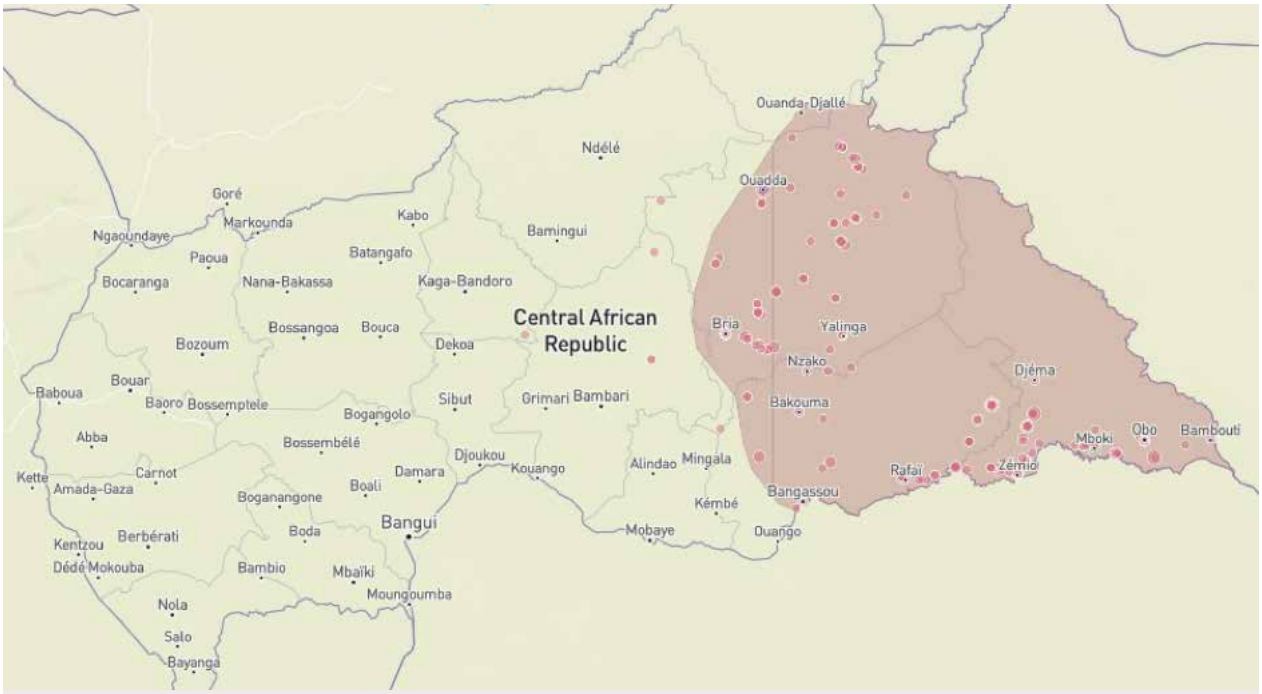
3R-related incidents in its principle zone of operations since end 2015-2017

4. Siriri

Siriri (meaning "peace" in Sango) emerged at the end of 2017 around Gamboula.[167] Led by Ardo Abba, Siriri was an apparent response to attacks and predation on returning refugee herders by anti-balaka cells from Noufou sector.[168] Like 3R and the UPC, Siriri claims to seek the protection of Muslim herders returning to their former pastures in western CAR. It is believed to number over 100 fighters and has been operational close to the Cameroonian border around Noufou, Gamboula, and as far north as Nguia-Bouar. By 2018, it had allegedly engaged in numerous undocumented skirmishes with anti-balaka, and in April reportedly mobilized to challenge state authorities in Gamboula clashing with MINUSCA near Nassolé.[169] Siriri's emergence only at the end of 2017 means it does not appear on the web map, though its activities in 2018 have reportedly seen it well equipped and engaged in looting and taxation, as well as alleged collaboration with FDPC and 3R.[170] Its collaboration with the FDPC has seen the group expand its area of operations north from Mambéré-Kadei into Nana-Mambéré where it engaes on predation on mining and pastoralism.[171] Its previous head of operations (killed in April) was alledgely a former UPC fighter, and the group is said to maintain stong links to the UPC.

164 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, Annex 7.1, and UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2016/694, paras 98-101.
165 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para. 199. In June 2017, the group was also believed to have secured control over the Kpakana gold site (interview with confidential UN source, February 2018). Note that the 3R's revenue generation activities may be significant as unconfirmed media reports in April 2018 indicated the group's acquisition of heavy weapons and vehicles from Chad.
166 Interview with confidential UN source, February 2018.
167 For more on this group see the UN Panel of Experts Interim report for 2018.
168 Interview with confidential UN source in Bangui, February 2018.
169 ANI, "Centrafrique : Le groupe armé « Siriri » a été neutralisé dimanche par des casques bleus tanzaniens entre Berbérati et Gamboula", 23 April 2018.
170 Jeune Afrique, "Centrafrique : un nouveau groupe armé, le Siriri, sévit dans l'Ouest", 14 July 2018. For further sse UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2018/729, Annex 7.1(3).
171 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2018/729, Annex 7.1(1).

5. Lord's Resistance Army



3R-related incidents in its principle zone of operations since 2015-2017

Eastern CAR's vast swathes of unsecured territory continued to provide a haven for Lord's Resistance Army cells and bands of Sudanese poachers for much of 2014 to 2017. The LRA's *modus operandi* sees it target civilians on roads and in rural locales for looting and abductions, whilst avoiding confrontation with other armed groups and international forces. Recorded LRA activities in eastern CAR showed some decrease between 2013 to 2015,[172] but was subject to a massive spike from early 2016 with over 500 civilian abductees over 104 attacks – the most in a single year since 2010.[173] Indeed, January and February 2016 saw a surge in LRA incidents between Sam Oundja, Bria and Yalinga, including the abductions of dozens of persons by groups loyal to Kony. This spike in LRA activity was instrumentalised by ex-Séléka and other criminal groups to engage in both territorial expansion and acts of oppertunistic violence and pillage. Indeed, attacks upon civilians in Haut Kotto, Mboumou and Haut Mboumou increased substantially in early 2017, as the departure of the African Union Taskforce from the east of the country in April 2017 left a power vacuum filled by armed groups and criminal gangs. Present in eastern CAR since 2009, the AU Task Force had exacerbated the LRA's internal weaknesses by killing numerous senior officers, scattering the group over a huge area, and frustrating sat phone and HF radio communications.[174] Indeed, despite the increase in LRA activities in early 2016, by June 2016 there were thought to be only four main cells left operating in the CAR.[175] Three of these were believed to be reporting to Kony, repatriating loot seasonally to Kafia Kingi from Haut Kotto and Haut Mboumou. The other is thought to be the Achaye splinter faction, which had lost ties to the LRA leadership and is operating in survival mode, looting for subsistence and avoiding confrontation in a bid to preserve ammunition. Despite the relative weakness of this group, it has nevertheless visited some particularly violent attacks on civilians in the south east of the country, occasioning a rise of self defence groups around Rafia and Zemio, as well as increasing frustration with international forces unable to prevent such attacks. 2017 reportedly saw the LRA push further east towards Mboki, possibly in response to rising armed group presence further west.[176] Overall, 2017 saw the stabilization of LRA activities to approximately the same annual average prior to 2016.[177]

172 Down from 64 in 2013 to 56 in 2015. See LRA Crisis Tracker: https://www.lracrisistracker.com/.
173 LRA Crisis Tracker, *Dominic Ongwen's Domino Effect*, January 2017, p.11.
174 LRA Crisis Tracker, 2017 Annual Brief, February 2018.
175 Interview with confidential UN source, June 2016.
176 LRA Crisis Tracker, Monthly Report, October 2017.
177 See LRA Crisis Tracker.

CHAPTER III
ARMED PREDATION ON TRANSIT ROUTES

A. Introduction

Trade and transit routes are crucial to the political economy of the Central African Republic. Aside from their obvious significance to the CAR's development potential, at the most basic level, economic gain in the country is contingent upon getting locally produced goods (such as sugar, coffee, gold, cattle and wood) to a place where they are valued more than the cost of their production and transport. As natural resources can only increase in value by being put into circulation, placing roadblocks at obligatory points of passage for their commercialization is an easy and efficient means of intervention from both a government revenue and rebel perspective. It allows them to benefit from a portion of the added value without engaging in labour-intensive exploitation, or the complex effort of managing production.

This chapter focuses on the key role of trade and transit routes in the political economy of conflict in the Central African Republic. The significance of control over such routes to armed group strategy is evident from the fact that all parties to the conflict seek to extend their hold over as many strategic nodes along trade routes as possible. This is because it allows armed groups to impose taxes, control profitable commercial activities, and limit economic actors involved.[178] This chapter therefore discusses the main means by which parties to the conflict exercise control over trade and transit routes and translate such control into power and profit. Key among these mechanisms are roadblocks, the imposition of obligatory escorts, market taxes, and customs duties for zones under armed group control.



Ouadda

178 This chapter presents updated key findings from a much larger IPIS study dedicated to the topic. See P. Schouten and P. Kalessopo, *The Politics of Pillage: The Political Economy of Roadblocks in the Central African Republic*, IPIS, December 2017.

B. The landscape of Central African roadblocks

The Central African Republic is a landlocked country that relies on imports for about 50 percent of its basic consumer goods.[179] This makes trade routes vital for the country, not only in economic terms but also for the provision of basic needs. The CAR generally, and Bangui in particular, are mainly supplied with manufactured goods by river and through the Bangui-Bouar-Douala corridor. As such, the stability and functioning of the Central African government are dependent on these routes. Eighty percent of the fuel consumed in Bangui is imported via the Ubangi River. The road corridor to Cameroon—the only all-weather road in the country—is the shortest route to reach the Atlantic coast and is the only road in the country that is useable year-round.[180] It alone accounts for 80% of Central African imports and exports. These vital arteries are under government control. The few other key trade routes remaining in the CAR are under the control of armed groups.

Efforts to exercise control over Central African trade routes concentrate along the limited routes that have survived the crisis.[181] Each of these is associated with specific kinds of trade: the cattle circuit, the Sudanese circuit, and the 'legal' circuit.[182] The *cattle* circuit is composed of livestock trade routes, roughly between the north of the country and Bangui, passing through major cattle markets like Kaga Bandoro and Bambari. Armed groups often fight each other for control over strategic points on this circuit, at which it is possible to block or facilitate the movement of livestock. The *Sudanese* circuit principally concerns the trade routes used by Sudanese traders between Birao, Kaga Bandoro and Bambari. Roads connecting Sudan and the CAR are used for the export of coffee, honey and sesame to Sudan in exchange for manufactured goods consumed in ex-Séléka-controlled areas. The *'legal'* circuit concerns supply chains in the government-controlled west of the country, in particular the Bangui Garoua-Boulaï corridor and the Ubangi river. These are used mainly for the import of manufactured goods on which Bangui relies.

Table 1. Overview of principal economic circuits in 2017

Circuit	Principal corridor	International contractors	Associated armed actor	Number of roadblocks
Cattle	Zone around Bambari / Kaga Bandoro, to Bangui	Chadian and Sudanese pastoralists	MPC / UPC / 3R	62
Sudanese	Am Dafok – Birao – Ndele – Kaga Bandoro and Am Dafok – Birao – Bria - Bambari	Sudanese traders	FPRC/ UPC	64
'Legal'	Garoua Boulaï - Bangui	Cameroonian transporters	Government / MINUSCA	26

While the picture presented in the table above seems static, the reality on the ground is dynamic. The first dynamic element concerns seasonal variation. Most of CAR's overland trade routes are only passable during the dry season (December-March). With the heavy rains (April-November), the black cotton soil covering the country turns into heavy clay. During the rainy season, river traffic becomes more important.

179 C. Tessandier et al, *Analyse du fonctionnement des marchés en relation avec la sécurité alimentaire des ménages en République Centrafricaine*, WFP, November 2011.

180 Logistics operators call it the "legal corridor" and military operators call it the "MSR" (main supply road).

181 Indeed, roadblocks can be even more important for the subsistence of armed groups operating in areas without any significant natural resource production. See E. Chauvin, "*Conflits armés*, mobilités sous contraintes et recompositions des échanges vivriers *dans le nord-ouest de la Centrafrique*", in *Les* échanges et la communication dans le bassin du lac Tchad, ed. Baldi Sergio and Magrin Géraud, September 2012, p. 14. Competition for control over road space in the CAR becomes particularly acute as there are relatively few of these critical roads in a country the size of France.

182 This classification echoes other analyses on the relative importance of different sectors in the conflict economy in the CAR. Apart from the reports of the UN Panel of Experts, a report on the political economy of the conflict from 2015 highlighted the cattle and coffee circuits – in which Sudanese economic actors dominate – as one of the main sources of income for armed groups, apart from other natural resources such as minerals and timber. See K. Agger, *Warlord Business: CAR's Violent Armed Groups and their Criminal Operations for Profit and Power*, Enough Project, 2015, especially p.11.

Waterways – Central Africa's oldest highways

Whilst roads are the key logistics infrastructure for supplying Central African municipalities with goods, services and people, rivers likewise play an important transit role. Not only do they demarcate administrative and ethnic boundaries (rendering them sometimes sites of contention or neutrality), they can also provide rural communities with transport between locales. Indeed, just as roads attract human settlement, rivers likewise attract habitation due to their ability to furnish food, water and income – whether through fishing, cash crop or subsistence farming, mining[183] or pastoralism. In the southeast, where roads are sparse and unnavigable in the rainy season, rivers have particular significance. Indeed, as roads become unpassable during this period, the consequent swell of the Ubangi permits larger barges to shuttle from Bangui as far as Mobaye (1200 km upstream), and sometimes even Rafai.

The CAR's lattice of river networks arguably forms the base for much of its resource wealth in the broader sense. The country is home to a myriad of streams and rivers that flow into two main watercourses: the Uele, Mboumou, Chinko, Mbari, Kotto, Ouaka, and Lobaye Rivers flow southwards into the Ubangi River, which forms most of the country's southern border with the DRC. The Mambéré and Kadei, which also flow south, are tributaries of the Congo River, while the Ouham and Bamingui Rivers flow north to Chad to join the Chari River, which continues to the Chad Basin. With exceptions during certain periods of the dry season or certain obstacles, all these rivers are potentially navigable. In addition, they also present points of transit vulnerability for overland passage, rendering bridges and ferries strategically significant to the extent that they channel people and produce through a single locale.[184]

The transit role of rivers and funnel effect of crossing points render certain waterways also a potential source of revenue. IPIS' 2017 study highlighted the existence of taxation on river traffic up and down the Ubangui by anti-balaka groups. However, predation at crossing points has also been noted in locales such as Batangafo.



Network of Central African riverways. Source: WRI

183 Much artisanal and semi-industrial mining in the CAR is conducted in, along or close to rivers, especially in the east. Indeed, there have been unconfirmed reports of the use of dredges along rivers in Berberati and Bambari, as well as sightings on the Lobayé river. For more on mining see Chapter V.

184 As such, for example, armed group control over passing points around Bria renders access to certain areas beyond the city challenging.



Crossing point on transit route

After this seasonal pattern, the second dynamic factor in the roadblocks economy is on-going strife regarding control over strategic points along trade routes. This too is largely seasonally determined, to the extent that such events predominantly take place during the dry season when transit and intense economic activity, such as mining and transhumance, resume. The UN Panel of Experts for the CAR recognizes that competition over rackets is a key source of violence perpetrated by armed groups who, paradoxically, claim to defend the interests of economic actors in the circuits concerned.[185] Certainly, whilst the Séléka explicitly targeted the most profitable nodes in the country's network of trade routes during their 2012/13 geographical expansion,[186] they were not the first CAR armed group to place strategic emphasis on controlling transit (see below). Moreover, since the group's fragmentation in 2015, this strategy has been incorporated into the operations of all ex-Séléka factions, generating further conflict as identity dynamics overlay onto control over transit and trade. This was illustrated in violent conflict between ex-Séléka factions over a customs checkpoint in Bema in March 2015, as well as in clashes between anti-balaka and FPRC/MPC in September 2016 because of the erection of an additional roadblock in Ndomete, 10 km from Kaga Bandoro.[187] Indeed, the eruption of largescale violence between the UPC and FPRC in and around Bria in November 2016 was allegedly instigated by disputes over the collection of "road taxes" around mining areas and along Peul migration routes. These clashes occasioned at least 130 reported deaths and were imbued with a strong ethnic dimension.

185 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, p.2. See also Chapters IV and V.

186 Y. Weyns *et al, Mapping Conflict Motives: The Central African Republic,* IPIS, November 2014, p. 39-40.

187 Human Right Watch, "Central African Republic: Deadly Raid on Displaced People", 1 November 2016, p. 3. Located on the southerly junction of the axe from Kaga Bandoro to Mbrés and Dékoa, Ndomété is a notable strategic node for the placement of checkpoints and has consequently been the venue for numerous conflict incidents and power plays. For its most recent role in managing ex-Séléka movements see the UN Secretary General on the Situation in the CAR Report, S/2018/611, para.20.

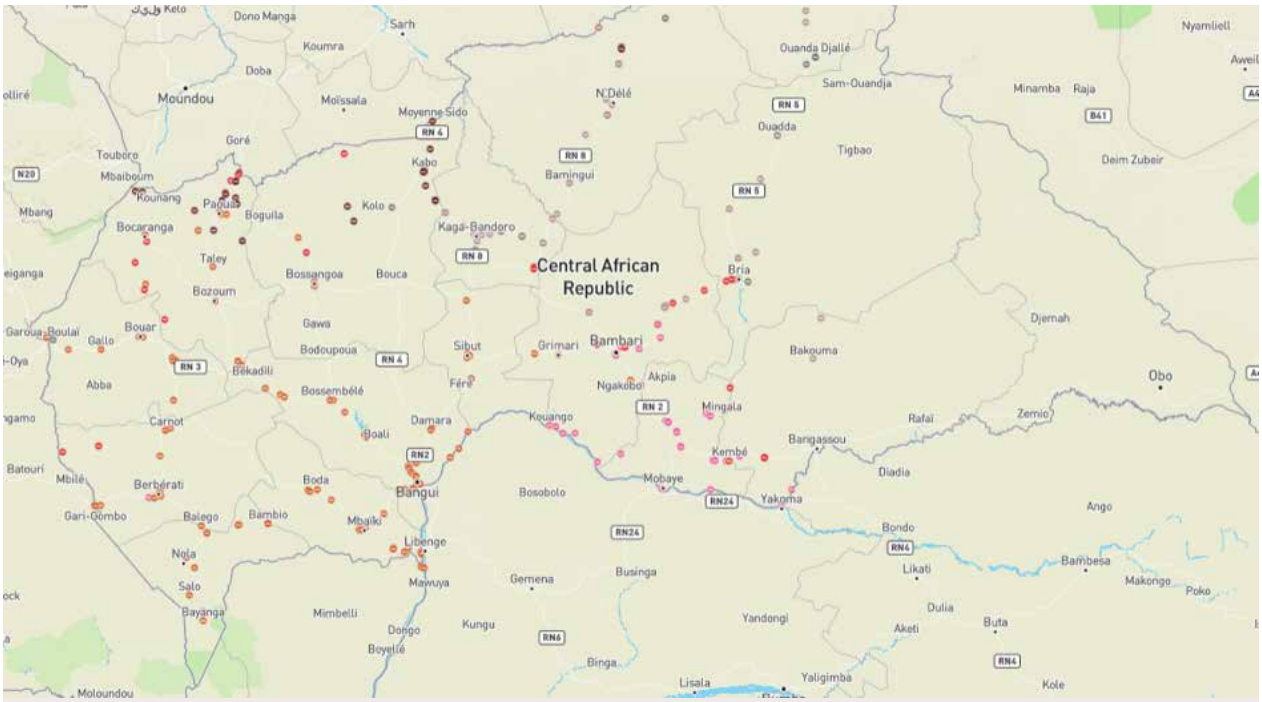
C. Determining the scale of the roadblocks phenomenon

In 2017, 290 roadblocks were identified in CAR. Of these, 117 (40%) were operated by government forces, 149 (51%) by ex-Séléka groups, and 46 (16%) by anti-balaka (see table 2 below). In numerous instances, multiple actors shared control over the same roadblocks, and there are numerous instances of ex-Séléka groups entering into such arrangements between themselves, or with non-Séléka groups, like RJ.

Table 2. Number of roadblocks per actor

Actor	Number of roadblocks	Affiliation	Number of observations
Ex-Séléka	149	FPRC	61
		UPC	42
		MPC	40
		RPRC	4
		Ex-Seleka (undefined)	2
Other armed groups	61	RJ	16
		anti-balaka	46
		FPDC	1
State agents	115	Gendarmerie	92
		FACA	11
		Police	34
		Customs	14
		Water and Forests	29
		Mairie	12
		Phytosanitary	6
Other (unclear, peasants, village youths, . . .)	6		

Roadblocks operated by government structures (ranging from different administrative entities to the police and the army) are largely concentrated in southwestern CAR, whilst armed group roadblocks are situated along the main axes in the rest of the country.



Central African Roadblocks between 2016 and 2017

All road users are obliged to pay taxes at roadblocks. These taxes vary by type of actor: trucks and motorcycles are subject to specific regimes, while traders and passengers pay taxes on cargo. Taxes apply not only to manufactured goods, but also to natural resources (e.g. wood or minerals), as well as local farm produce (e.g. coffee or maize), fish or cattle. Estimates of the scale and sums of such levies enable a conservative estimate that ex-Séléka factions comprising the MPC, UPC and FPRC, together generate at least EUR 3.59 million a year from their taxation of the cattle circuit, and another EUR 2.5 million along Sudanese trade routes.

D. Roadblocks and state agents

The CAR's problem of illegal roadblocks run by state agents is not new. In 2012, the Central African government issued Decree 12.148 concerning legal barriers, accompanied by a list of 92 legal barriers across the country. This decree was an attempt to bring roadblocks under regulatory supervision – a response to their widespread proliferation throughout the CAR. At the time of its issuance, at least 193 known roadblocks had been identified nationally, all collecting a variety of illicit taxes.[188] Today still, along trade routes under government control, most roadblocks are unauthorized, and even legal checkpoints are used for illicit taxation.[189] In 2017, the gendarmerie appeared to be the largest single roadblock entrepreneur in the CAR.

In 2017, the State largely controlled the Bangui-Bouar-Douala (in Cameroon) corridor, the Gamboula road, and the Oubangui river linking Bangui to the ports of both Congo-Brazzavile and Congo-Kinshasa. These trade routes constitute one of the State's main sources of revenue and customs generated over them were projected to reach around 75 billion CFAF (EUR 150 million) in 2017.[190] This represents 55% of the

188 Radio Ndéké Luka, "Le Président Bozizé met fin aux barrières illégales", 5 July 2012. On a more pragmatic level, it was also a response from the government to the World Bank's requirement to remove all physical and non-physical barriers on the Douala-Bangui corridor (except the Beloko border post) as a condition for a loan of several million dollars. See L. Pascal, "*La privatisation des missions douani*ères en République Centrafricaine (RCA) : une opportunité d'amélioration des Finances Publiques?", 2014, Doctoral Thesis, Université de Bordeaux, p. 143.

189 As IPIS observed in 2009, low morale and overdue salaries were among key motivations of this proliferation (F. Hilgert and S. Spittaels, *Mapping Conflict Motives: Central African Republic*, IPIS, February 2009, p. 12).

190 See Ministry of Finance and Budget, *Rapport d'Execution Budgetaire du premier semestre 2017*, p.4.

State's own annual revenue, and 20% of its budget. The government appears to prefer giving monopoly concessions to foreign companies to import and sells basic commodities like fuel (Total), sugar (SUCAF) and soft drinks (MOCAF) instead of developing a much more fragmented domestic industry. Indeed, such concessions are easier to tax, rendering this a widespread phenomenon in Africa.[191]



Vendor, Bangui

In addition to the vital importance of these routes to supplying Bangui, their strategic significance is why there is such a large concentration of UN and Central African troops on the Bangui-Bouar-Douala route. Indeed, control over revenues generated along this route has been one of the key stakes of contest during successive Central African civil wars.[192] During the crisis in 2013, trade on these road corridors decreased by 50% under the control of the Séléka,[193] and trucks were forced to pay a total sum of 213,900 FCFA at multiple roadblocks between Beloko and Bangui.[194] Not surprisingly, much of the French military's efforts during the Sangaris mission were dedicated to restoring government control over the corridor.[195]

There are eight official roadblocks on the road linking Bangui to the Cameroonian border: three customs posts at PK12 (exit to Bangui), Bouar and Beloko (border post on the Central African side, before the Cameroon post of Garoua-Boulaï), and five toll stations in Ndéré, Birlo, Bossembélé, Yakolé and Bossemptélé. At each of these, transporters pay 2,000 FCFA (4 EUR).

Despite the legality of these eight barriers, officers currently manning these posts often demand illegal payments from transporters. In addition, there are other illegal barriers on the corridor: 26 were mapped in total between Bangui and Beloko as part of this research. The sheer density of high-value traffic seems to function as a magnet for illegal taxation. State agents principally resort to extortion at roadblocks because they are not, or are very poorly, paid by the State. Thus their livelihoods can depend on their ability to impose taxes along the road. However, as the UN Panel of Experts points out regarding similar situations involving military agents, there is a notable risk that State agents engaging in this type of behaviour further alienate the population from the incumbent government.[196] Indeed, illegal taxation often has a stifling effect on local economies, which can generate local resentment, especially when attended by other abuses of power.

191 See R. Marchal, "Being rich, being poor. Wealth and fear in the Central African Republic" In: Carayannis, Tatiana and Louisa Lombard (eds.). *Making Sense of the Central African Republic*, Zed Books: London, 2015.
192 See G. Ngovon, "Le contrôle des ressources de l'Etat, un enjeu des conflits en Centrafrique", in *Les Cahiers d'Outre-Mer*: 501-33, 2015.
193 See Y. Weyns *et al, Mapping Conflict Motives: The Central African Republic,* IPIS, November 2014, p.39-40.
194 See B. Bangda, *Cameroun-Rca : Gr*èves à répétitions de camionneurs à Garoua-Boulaï*, 2015*.
195 Interview with former Sangaris, Bangui, February 2017.
196 UN Panel of Experts Final report, S/2015/936, para 207.

Roadblocks as a structural imperative?

Roadblocks as revenue generating devices are only one manifestation of a broader political culture of politico-military entrepreneurship. Central African power dynamics have overwhelmingly been characterised by the use of military might, public office and political power for personal enrichment on the part of both rebel leaders and those in public office. It is important to understand how these 'entrepreneurs of imposition'—a plethora of formal, informal, state or non-state actors exercising some form of power through imposition—generate revenues for their subsistence. In the CAR, state agents and elements of armed groups are either not paid, or paid very poorly. This implies that the generation of 'revenues' becomes a key concern for all. Each layer of their respective hierarchies can send agents to 'work the road' and generate revenues that they must send back up the hierarchy, while also offering these agents a means of survival. Positions in hierarchies of taxation systems are seen as a source of 'something to eat' (*ye ti tèngo* in Sango).[197] As a result, ex-Séléka armed groups and government agents share a strikingly similar overall approach to generating revenue from trade routes under their control. Each operates through a combination of roadblocks, centralized customs taxes and mandatory escorts on certain road sections.

E. Types of roadblock predation employed by non-state armed groups

As outlined above, there are three principle forms of revenue generated by armed group control over transit routes: tax revenues generated through roadblocks, 'free passage' authorisations issued by centralised clearance depots often located in transit or trade hubs, and mandatory escorts. Whilst the exact combination of these approaches can vary depending on the relative strength of the group employing them and the prevailing conditions in which they are employed, all are observable in every Central African commercial sector (minerals, cattle, coffee and other Sudanese trade goods). This renders "roadblock" predation a cross cutting issue in conflict financing.

1. Roadside taxation

Roadside revenue generation strategies employed by ex-Séléka armed groups mirror those of the State largely due to their occupation of abandoned state infrastructure and the simple adoption of its organizational structure at these posts. This sees the establishment of parallel state services — including FACA, Gendarmerie, Customs, Police, Municipality, Water and Forestry, and Phytosanitary services – to orchestrate the imposition of taxes. Indeed, April 2017 even saw the FPRC seek to enhance its human resources to maintain this kind of parallel administration by organising capacity-building training on "public administration and management".[198]

Ex-Séléka roadblocks are widespread mainly because roadblocks provide a periodic income to their foot soldiers. This aspect of roadblock management is core to the strategic value of roadblocks for the political economy of the CAR's conflict: without their revenues, however meagre these might sometimes be, armed groups would struggle to retain their rank and file.[199] In areas where they remain dominant, some anti-balaka fighters too have erected relatively static roadblocks with fixed transit fees. Thus, for example, anti-balaka roadblocks have been observed in certain anti-balaka strongholds in Bossangoa sous-prefecture, whilst access to the major gold mining area, Korompoko, is said to require transit over at

197 G. Ngovon, "Le contrôle des ressources de l'Etat, un enjeu des conflits en Centrafrique", in *Les Cahiers d'Outre-Mer*: 501-33, 2015, p.504.

198 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para 155.

199 See Conciliation Resources, *Perspective of Non-State Armed Groups in the Central African Republic*, December 2016, p.8, where it is stated that combatants report, "Small subsistence payments from group leaders or money extorted from traders and artisanal miners, … made life inside the group marginally more manageable than life outside it."

least 6 roadblocks following departure from the Bossangoa-Bossémbélé axe. Each of the latter reportedly levy 500 FCAF per motorbike, plus extra for luggage.[200]

Roadblock taxes are more or less fixed in accordance with the means of transport being levied, its cargo and the importance of the roadblock. Motorcycles in ex-Séléka controlled areas, for example, are usually subject to a fixed tax of around 1,000 FCFA per roadblock per day (paid once upon first passage). Cargo and baggage, by contrast, is subject to a variable regime. Taxes are generally less elastic at roadblocks along key trade routes. This is because in order to plan their route or calculate profitability, transporters need to know in advance how much they will have to pay along the way.

Roadblocks and the APRD: the start of a parallel administration

One of the first Central African armed groups to place significant strategic emphasis on control over road systems appears to have been the *Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie* (APRD). Established by ousted former president Patassé in 2005, the APRD established administrative divisions throughout its territory, which were controlled via a network of bases and static roadblocks. This network helped the group to monitor and filter information, persons and goods, as well as generate revenues.[201] Undeterred attacks by highway bandits referred to as *zaraguinas* (see below), enabled the group to extend its zone of influence over major transit routes such as the Batangafo-Ouandago-Kaga Bandoro road east of Paoua. It also controlled a large number of roadblocks on the Chadian border, the outskirts of government controlled cities and near FPR territory, as well as on the Pendé-Pougol-Ndim and Pougoul-Koundjouli axes. Much like current arrangements between ex-Séléka groups, the APRD even traded control over certain routes.

2. 'Free Passage'

Armed groups do not limit themselves simply to taxing passage at roadblocks. From the outset, they have also introduced parallel customs clearance systems, requiring transporters to go through the 'virtual roadblock' of the *comzone* to pay large sums for the right to circulate in their fiefdom.[202] This kind of customs clearance by ex-Séléka groups, often locally called 'free passage' (*libre passage*), is copied by different individual strongmen within these groups as they continue to fragment into increasingly discrete factions. This system is particularly visible in north-eastern CAR, where Sudanese traders are subjected to a series of customs duties levied by each of the ex-Séléka generals positioned along the few viable trade routes on that circuit (for example, the committee of Nouredinne Adam in Birao, General Hisséne in N'Dele, or General Damane in Ouadda). It is also observable in Bria, where artisanal miners are said to require a mission order signed by the relevant armed group leader to circulate in the vicinity of mine sites located in that group's zone of operations.

This system provides some means of monitoring what is going on and who is operating in local production and trade. Crucially, it also entails the capacity to impose drastic restrictions on who can circulate on trade routes in areas under an armed group's control. For example, on the Birao-Bria axis, the only transporters of goods are either commanders of the FPRC themselves, or Sudanese traders who retain intimate links to the movement (see below).

Similarly, this type of restriction on logistical actors is also visible in areas nominally controlled by the government. Here, monopolies are granted—mostly to French companies—for the transport and importation of certain key consumption goods such as fuel, sugar and beverages. Just as merchants linked to armed groups contribute to their financing, these companies represent a significant part of the

200 Interviews with mining operators visiting the site, Bangui, February 2018.
201 For a good overview of the group's strategic functioning see: E. Chauvin and C. Seignobos, "L'imbroglio centrafricain: État, rebelles et bandits", *Afrique contemporaine*, 2013/4, no 248/4, 119-148, p.140.
202 International Crisis Group, *The Central African Republic's Hidden Conflict*, December 2014, p. 18.

Central African government's revenue generation (see above). With this dual system (roadblocks and 'free passage') in place all over the country, the political economy of trade routes in the CAR obeys the same logic in areas under government control and as it does in zones controlled by ex-Séléka factions.

Nexus with arms trafficking

Control over trade routes is crucial for another reason: armed group logistics can also rely on roadblock levies to purchase weaponry. Moreover, control over trade routes also implies access to weaponry and ammunition, as well as the ability to cut off such supplies to rival armed groups. For example, 'General' Damane, a notable roadblock operator between Ouadda and Bria, reportedly purchased weaponry worth USD 21,000 from Sudanese suppliers in 2017.[203] All major armed groups therefore have an interest in controlling at least one trade route into a neighbouring country from which weapons can be sourced, or to retain allies on such routes.[204] Thus, for example, in addition to tax loss, the UPC struggled to sustain its supply lines following its loss of control over the Bambari-Alindao-Gambo axis – a fact that appears to have driven its expansion further east. This seems to have been one factor incentivising the group to engage with the Ippy negotiations finalised in October 2017.[205]



Transit checkpoint

203 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para. 173 and 177.
204 Notably, weapons, ammunition and minerals are also often conveyed over pastoralist routes, to avoid the denser controls along Central African roads.
205 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para. 139.

3. Mandatory escorts

Apart from roadblocks and 'free passage', armed groups as well as state forces and MINUSCA impose mandatory escorts on a number of main roads under their control. Ex-Séléka General Damane imposes escorts on the stretch of road between Ouadda-Mouka (see Chapter 6); the FPRC offers escorts to certain transporters between Kaga Bandoro and N'Délé; and a dedicated mix of state forces and MINUSCA provide escorts along the Bangui-Béloko corridor. Finally, MINUSCA offers free armed escorts on the main roads between Bangui and Kaga Bandoro, Bangui and Bambari, and Bambari and Bria.

It should be noted however, that such escorts are not solely restricted to CAR's principle trade axes. They can likewise apply to more local routes, especially in areas with high levels of insecurity. Thus, for example, miners around Bria can be required to hire armed escorts for site visits to their mines to ensure their "security".

Human rights dimensions of checkpoints and "security provision" on transit routes

High levels of poverty and criminality in the CAR render banditry on transit routes a frequent phenomenon. As such, armed groups can purport to provide a service in escorting vehicles through particularly bandit-affected territory for their protection. However, such "protection" is not always simply defensive. Where losses to convoys are sustained, it can often entail retributive violence meted out against civilians associated with those deemed to have occasioned the loss. Thus, for example, anti-balaka attacks against convoys under armed group protection can result in the targeting civilian populations, as illustrated around Mbres in August 2015, when the villages of Lakouetene and Ndjangala were burned in retaliation for the looting of UPC escorted vehicles.[206] Moreover, since the 1990s attacks on armed Fulani herders have frequently been followed by retaliation attacks against civilian populations from which assailants are believed to have originated (for more see Chapter IV).

As outlined in Chapter I, this trend continues today and is in evidence in the correlation between transhumance and violence against civilians. Indeed, after anti-balaka, ex-Séléka groups (collectively) and the LRA, armed Fulani were the fourth most implicated actors in reporting on violence against civilians in 2015 and 2016.

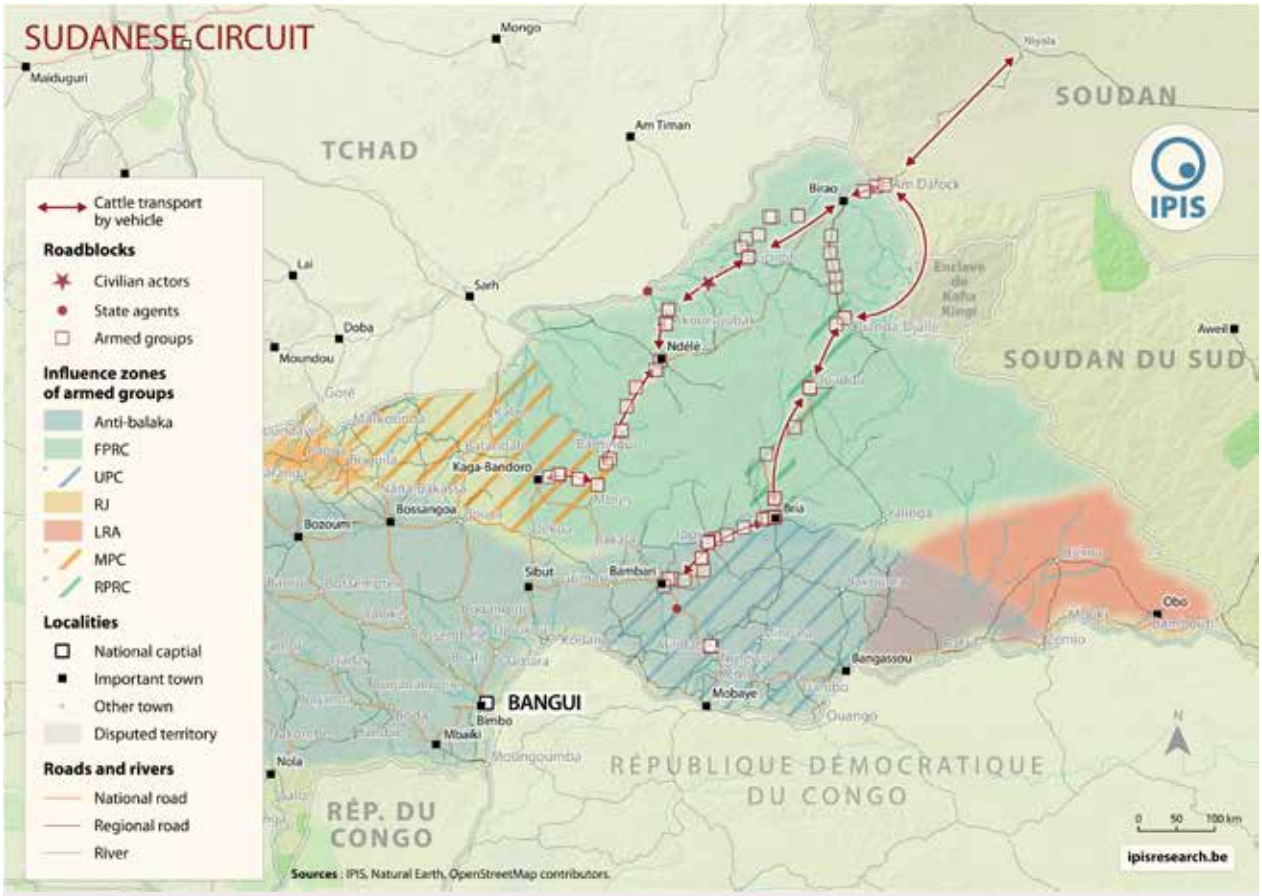
Moreover, the establishment of illegal roadblocks not only drives up the prices of local goods, generating hardship among communities trying to access basic commodities and pursue local livelihoods. It can also often be associated with harassment and physical abuse, including torture and rape, against those passing through such checkpoints.[207]

F. Roadblocks in operation: the Sudanese trade route

The 'Sudanese circuit' consists of those trade routes in the CAR that are utilised by Sudanese merchants. These trade routes enter the CAR from Sudan and split off into the directions of Bria/Bambari and N'Dele/Kaga Bandoro. Over these routes, manufactured goods from Sudan (basic necessities, but also weapons) are exchanged for Central African natural resources (mainly coffee, but also bamboo and minerals).

206 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, para.157.

207 See, for example, UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para.150 (assaults on passengers subject to river block taxation by anti-balaka); local reports of exactions at checkpoints against traders and other civilians by UPC fighters around Nzako (Confidential UN report, June 2016).



Sudanese circuit from roadblocks report

As Sudanese trucks and their cargo are attractive objects of predation, various ex-Séléka factions vie for control over obligatory passage points along these trade routes where taxation is particularly effective. Sudan is also a pivotal source of ammunition for armed groups, increasing the strategic importance of control over these trade routes. Both routes are currently controlled by an FPRC/MPC alliance, with the exception of the stretch between Bambari and Bria, which is coveted by the UPC, FPRC and anti-balaka.



Cargo in transit

Table 3. Taxes paid by Sudanese trucks along the coffee circuit

Location	*Actor levying the tax*	*Bambari —> Sudan*	*Sudan —> Bambari*
Production zone (Kouango/Alindao)	Darassa (UPC)	800,000-1,000,000 FCFA (1,600-2,000 EUR) [208]	
Bambari	Babou (UPC)	150,000-750,000 FCFA (300-1,500 EUR)[209]	150,000-300,000 FCFA (300-600 EUR): Customs tax
Bria	FPRC	100,000 FCFA (200 EUR)[210]	150,000-300,000 FCFA (300-600 EUR): Customs tax
Bria-Ouadda	Damane (RPRC)	600,000 FCFA (1400 EUR)[211]	1,250,000 FCFA (25,000 EUR): Customs tax
Mouka-Bria	Damane (FPRC)	75,000 FCFA (150 EUR)[212]	75,000 FCFA (150 EUR): Escort
Ouadda-Ouanda-Djallé	Chete Ali (FPRC)	100,000 FCFA (200 EUR)[213]	250,000 FCFA (500 EUR): Customs tax
Cost per truck over the entire route		***1,925,000-2,725,000 (2,935-4,155 EUR)***	***1,875,000-2,175,000 (2,860-3,315 EUR)***

About two trucks a week travel along the Ouadda-Bria-Bambari axe, solely during the dry season. Nonetheless, the different ex-Séléka groups along this route collect at least an estimated FCFA 192 million or EUR 300,000 per year at 32 roadblocks positioned along it. On the Birao-N'Dele-Kaga Bandoro axe, the FPRC and MPC controlled 18 roadblocks in 2017. These yield nearly 32.4 million FCFA (50,000 EUR) in taxes from Sudanese trucks during the dry season. The FPRC also imposes a 'customs' tax on Sudanese traders that brings in an additional 20 million FCFA (30,500 EUR) annually. Finally, the FPRC taxes the Sudanese-dominated bamboo trade around Birao for around 1.3 billion FCFA (2 million EUR) per year. As such, it might be estimated that in total, the Sudanese circuit contributes around 2.38 million EUR to financing ex-Séléka groups, though this excludes taxes on motorcyclists, small traders, and private passenger luggage along these routes, as well as the cattle sector.

Major conflicts surrounding roadblocks on the Sudanese trade route

Sudanese traders form a key supply line for weaponry, ammunition and other essential provisions to ex-Séléka factions along their routes. At the same time, their trucks are much coveted as a source of revenue. As such, it is unsurprising that positions along their routes consistently form loci for the eruption of violence. Already in 2014, the Panel had noted that politico-military alliances changed rapidly, and that these shifts were related to efforts to gain control over revenues from roadblocks and natural resources.[214] Yet it is particularly at the confluence of the Sudanese and cattle circuits—Bambari and Kaga Bandoro—that strategic interests concentrate.

208 This includes 600,000 FCFA for the circulation fee (per season) as well as 100,000 FCFA for passage at each barrier.
209 This includes "customs taxes" and various other taxes.
210 "Caisse café" to be paid at each roadblock.
211 This includes a "Caisse café" tax of 100,000 FCFA at the four roadblocks under the control of Damane, as well as 40,000 FCFA of taxes per barrier at all four barriers (this latter sum is composed of 10,000 FCFA for each of the "services" established by Damane in the name of FACA, Police, Gendarmerie and Water and Forests).
212 For an obligatory escort.
213 A "caisse café" tax of 100,000 FCFA is to be paid at two roadblocks.
214 See UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2014/762, paras. 58, 111-150.

According to analyses, fissures between UPC and FPRC Goula ex-Séléka factions in 2014 were the result of disagreements over roadblock revenue sharing around Bambari.[215] Clashes in Kaga-Bandoro in April 2016 were likewise reported to have centred around the management of the cattle market there.[216]

The FPRC controls most of the area covered by the Sudanese circuit, although their power in the area is fragmented. Coffee producing areas in Ouaka, end-point to one of the lines, have been controlled by the UPC for a long time. However, the advances of the anti-balaka in 2017 saw this control become more tenuous. By contrast, the road that connects this region to Sudan is under the control of the MPC/FPRC alliance. In order to guarantee their security as much as possible, Sudanese traders only travel heavily armed and have developed sophisticated security strategies to navigate these two axes.[217] They forge alliances with the various strongmen who reign on these Central African roads, accepting shifting tax regimes, partaking in the logistics arrangements put in place by armed groups, and supplying the latter with weapons and men.

G. *Coupeurs de route:* longstanding predation on Central African transit routes

Compounding direct control over roads through roadblocks, highwaymen (*coupeurs de route*) form another aspect of violent conflict around trade routes. As a practice, hold-ups, ambushes and road banditry for pillage are undertaken by a diverse range of actors in the CAR. Being transient in nature, these tactics are often used by more transient actors (poachers, transhumants, LRA), as well as localised actors seeking greater or lesser degrees of anonymity or lacking the strategic capacity to maintain control over static locales. Certainly, those targeted are rarely able to provide the identity of their assailants, a fact that has led some actors to try to disguise such activities as those of another group. Moreover, IPIS has encountered repeated suggestions that certain *coupeurs de route* may be explicitly financed by rivalling politico-economic entrepreneurs to target competitors.[218]

Particular mention must be given to anti-balaka operations in this context. As outlined, in Chapter II, the term anti-balaka has become somewhat amorphous since early 2015, being attached both to those forming part of a clear political agenda, local self-defence groups, organised criminals and other perpetrators of banditry. In some instances, this may lead attacks by "unidentified assailants" to be assimilated with anti-balaka activity.

Generally speaking, the anti-balaka *modus operandi* is typical of asymmetrical warfare. Here, a low-level arsenal (AK47s, hunting rifles, machetes) is deployed to disrupt enemy logistics and secure resources with maximal efficiency. Unlike other armed groups, anti-balaka do not often erect permanent barriers. This may well in part be due to the significant economic hardship that can be wrought by static checkpoints, rendering them extremely unpopular among the already impoverished constituencies that anti-balaka often claim to defend.[219] Instead, anti-balaka militias engage in *ad hoc* or opportunistic ambushes or acts of extortion. When threatened, they may sabotage enemy logistics by barricading or otherwise sabotaging roads and/or destroying bridges.[220] They generally erect roadblocks only as part of efforts

215 See UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2014/762, para. 64.
216 *Ibid*.
217 They are either armed or accompanied by armed Sudanese poachers (see UN Panel of Experts Final Report,S/2015/936, para.109), or ex-Séléka escorts (see below).
218 Interviews with traders in Bangui, September 2016.
219 The fragmented command structure of anti-balaka and their generally poor firepower are also of course factors to be taken into consideration.
220 See, for example, UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, paras 122 et 132. This phenomenon can particularly be observed in times of tension in Bangui.

to put pressure on enemy groups.[221] Although structural armed escorts by MINUSCA, which run mainly through anti-balaka territory, have largely thwarted their impositions, anti-balaka groups remain notorious for rendering particular routes extremely unpredictable and dangerous (for example, around Grimari). These groups can just as often be motivated by personal gain as by higher strategic purposes. Whilst in this respect they may closely resemble ex-Séléka factions, their more hit and run tactics have nevertheless more often seen their activities dismissed merely as criminal as opposed to strategic.[222]



Dog, Berberati

The legacy of CAR's highway banditry: *Zaraguinas*

It is worth understanding predation on transit in the context and legacy of the pre-existing conflict dynamics on which the current crisis was built. Attacks on travellers is an old phenomenon in CAR, though it saw a notable rise the 1980's, 90's and 2000's with the advent of the *zaraguina* phenomenon.[223] The *zaraguina* were bands of highly organised highway bandits composed of a mix of Arabic speaking Chadian ex-military, Oudda Mbororo,[224] and rogue local actors, including local business people acting as receivers or facilitators for funding and weapons.[225] They targeted all local travellers, but particularly Central African Fulani herders for the theft of cattle, goods and the kidnapping of children for ransom. Locating themselves in remote areas close to the Cameroonian border, their bases were strategically chosen to enable control over roads, certain markets and grazing lands without having a direct presence on the highway.

221 Thus, for example, rather than for revenue generation, anti-balaka forces reportedly established a checkpoint in Ndomété in September 2016 to have a bargaining chip to request the removal of the numerous checkpoints manned by ex-Séléka in Kaga-Bandoro (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para.193). MINUSCA's removal of that checkpoint saw these forces subsequently engage their adversary in armed clashes. This case may be seen to highlight the difficult position of MINUSCA in managing misperceptions about its neutrality in such contexts.

222 For more, see section on criminal groups forming part of the anti-balaka in Chapter II.

223 The phenomenon later spread to parts of Cameroon. See, C. Seignobos, "Le phénomène zargina dans le nord du Cameroun. Coupeurs de route et prises d'otages, la crise des sociétés pastorales mbororo", in *Afrique contemporaine*, 2011/3 (No 239), p. 35-59.

224 The Oudda Mbororo are a subgroup of Fulani nomadic herders – for more see Chapter IV.

225 For a more detailed outline see: E. Chauvin, and C. Seignobos, "L'imbroglio centrafricain: État, rebelles et bandits" in *Afrique contemporaine*, no 248 (4), 119-148.

They used effective command structures, communicated by mobile phone and even issued loans in anticipation of loot.[226] They operated with networks of co-opted or unwitting informants, located in the region's towns, villages and markets. Zaraguina activities were largely concentrated in north and north-western CAR, rendering this area "a hotbed of criminal activity" by the mid-2000s.[227] The essentially mercenary character of their activities rendered them reserve for the mobilization of "Chadian liberators" for Bozizé's seizure of power in 2003.

The significance of these activities to armed mobilisation in the CAR is worth noting. The pre-2013 protracted armed conflict occasioned by *Zaraguina* predation (in addition to conflict with Chadian transhumants) generated a rise in small arms proliferation in affected areas from the mid-90s as both herders and locals sought to protect themselves.[228] It led to the gradual departure of thousands of peaceable central African herders, as well as the formation of numerous armed militia in response to exactions.[229] These included early anti-*zaraguina* brigades composed predominantly of Central African Mbororo, the APRD (see above) and later, Miskine's FDPC, originally established as part of then-President Patassé's response to the *Zaraguina* crisis.[230] Indeed, the incorporation of former *zaraguina* into Baba Ladde's *Front populaire pour le redressement* (FPR) in northern CAR, allegedly saw groups such as the FDPC and APRD later resist disarmament citing the former's continued presence. These, and other armed actors involved in CAR's "Bush War" between 2004 and 2012 were subsequently co-opted as part of the Séléka movement that took Bangui in March 2013. The loose rural networks activated by Bozizé's own attempts to tackle highway robbery in 2008 through the establishment of *comités d'autodéfense villageois* were also subsequently reactivated shortly before his overthrow. These groups formed part of the mainstay of local anti-balaka groups, some of whom appear to have been pushed towards a "if you can't beat them, join them" tactic.[231]

Given the diversity of actors involved, the phenomenon of highway banditry is not restricted to areas of CAR with an anti-balaka presence. In the far north-east, bands of independent marauders (Sudanese or Chadian), who are sometimes loosely connected to ex-Séléka factions, are also known to engage in hold-ups and hijackings, whilst LRA ambushes have likewise targeted certain mineral rich axes in their areas of operations. Even southwestern CAR, nominally under government control, is not spared by highwaymen. Traffic along the Bangui-Garoua-Boulai corridor, the lifeline of Bangui, is still in need of permanent armed escorts and trucks moving outside of the convoys were frequently robbed or attacked in 2016 and 2017. In fact, the dividing line between rebellion (for political purposes) and banditry, supposedly for economic reasons, is today blurrier than ever.

This has notable economic and security consequences for much of the country's population. Indeed, just as pastoralists have become increasingly armed, so too has traffic in the CAR become heavily militarized. Travel over long distances is generally accompanied by weaponry, whether it is the movement of

226 Ibid.

227 C. Seignbos, "Le phénomène zargina dans le nord du Cameroun. Coupeurs de route et prises d'otages, la crise des sociétés pastorales mbororo", Afrique contemporaine, 2011/3 (No 239), p. 35-59, p.40.

228 L. de Vries, "Navigating violence and exclusion: the Mbororo's claim to the Central African Republic's margins" Geoforum, In Press, 19 March 2018, p.7.

229 See F. Hilgert and S. Spittaels, *Mapping Conflict Motives: Central African Republic*, IPIS, February 2009, p.16 and p.37, and Chauvin et Seignobos, op cit p. 131, M. Dufumie and B. Lallau, "*Impossible d*éveloppement agricole en Republique centrafricaine?", *Les Cahiers d'Outre-Mer*, 535-55, 2015, p. 543.

230 Predation on transit in eastern CAR, likewise saw local self-defence groups erect roadblocks to protect their own access to resources, as well as prevent incursions by the Sudanese poachers and pastoralists responsible for banditry. Note that in the east, the impact of banditry in reducing trade and increasing roadblocks is said to have rendered municipal boundaries more rigid, particularly an ethnic basis. See E. Chauvin, and C. Seignobos, "*L'imbroglio centrafricain: État, rebelles et bandits*" in *Afrique contemporaine*, 2013/4, (no 248 (4), p. 129.

231 It should be noted that the *zaraguina* were not alone in committing highway banditry with numerous less organised and more opportunistic actors also joining in the fray.

pastoralists, traders, or MINUSCA-escorted humanitarians.[232] The few urban road sections designated 'weapon-free zones' by the UN form nearly the only exception to the militarization of road space across the country.[233]

Attacks on humanitarians

Humanitarian logistics is one structural victim of abuse by armed groups. Since the beginning of the crisis in 2013, armed groups have imposed taxes on aid organisations passing their roadblocks.[234] The very high frequency of attacks on humanitarian workers by armed groups in the CAR means that levels of outsourcing in humanitarian logistics is high. Officially, under the contractual terms with their IGO and NGO clients, transporters are prohibited from paying illicit fees or taxes at roadblocks. However, armed groups are aware that these transporters are well paid by their international clients and therefore, in practice, many are forced to pay the regular roadblock taxes for their security.[235]

Indeed, the situation of humanitarians in CAR is particularly acute, with the CAR first entering the top five ranking of contexts with the greatest number of attacks on aid workers in 2014.[236] This situation has worsened since 2016: between January and September 2017, there were an unprecedented 265 security incidents involving NGO humanitarian actors alone, in which 13 aid workers lost their lives.[237] This is a higher number of humanitarian fatalities than those occasioned at the "peak" of the CAR's conflict in 2014 (then totalling 12). Many attacks perpetrated on humanitarian operators of all kinds take place during transit.

As outlined in Chapter II, this targeting of humanitarians is in part a reflection of the humanitarian crisis unfolding in the country.[238] Being the only actors left in the formal economy in numerous difficult to access areas these aid agencies risk being perceived as a resource. The need to manage both security and reputational risks impedes collaboration among such agencies in the delivery of aid, including on addressing the very issue of security itself.[239] Moreover, some humanitarian organisations were forced to suspend their activities and even withdraw from certain towns in 2017, including in Bangassou, Bria and Batangafo, involuntarily reducing humanitarian access for populations in desperate need.

H. Concluding observations

The importance of roadblocks goes well beyond financing armed groups. The system of roadside taxation has reached such an extent that it has become a kind of 'economic asphyxiation'. It is notable that roadblocks were consistently among the main grievances cited by the Central African population during the 2015 Bangui Forum.[240]

Given the CAR's landlocked position and the role of highways in providing armed groups with both motive and means, its road network is crucial to both its economic development and the restoration of security. With little domestic industry to speak of, the CAR is heavily dependent on imports, including for

232 Y. Weyns *et al, Mapping Conflict Motives: The Central African Republic,* IPIS, November 2014, p. 68; and UN Panel of Experts Report, S/2016/1032, para.74 and S/2015/936, para.109.
233 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para.13.
234 See UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2014/762, paras.194-195.
235 Interviews with multiple humanitarian agents and logistical subcontractors in Bambari, Bangassou, Kaga Bandoro, Bangui between June 2016 and December 2017.
236 Humanitarian Outcomes, *Aid worker Security Report 2015: Figures at a glance*, 23 June 2016.
237 E. Picco and T. Vircoulon, *The Humanitarian System in the Central African Republic: A Time of Challenges*, December 2017, p.6.
238 For more on the situation of humanitarian actors in the CAR's prevailing conflict dynamics, see Chapter II, "Anti-balaka operations and humanitarian activities".
239 Ibid, p.16.
240 See *Rapport Général du Forum National de Bangui*, Bangui, May 2015.

food security. Even before the 2013 crisis, consumer goods were largely imported resulting in around 72% of household expenditure going to foodstuffs purchased at markets. This led the World Food Program to observe that, "in this context, the functioning of markets and the evolution of prices have a direct impact on the capacity of households to meet their level of subsistence."[241] Since 2013, insecurity and predation on distribution networks has further ravaged CAR's food security, with 6 in 10 households facing food shortage amid massive price hikes and falls in crop production.[242] As observed throughout the history of the CAR's armed movements, the challenge of meeting these subsistence needs generates a further push factor for young men to engage in armed group activities or banditry.[243]

241 C. Tessandier et al, *Analyse du fonctionnement des marchés en relation avec la sécurité alimentaire des ménages en République Centrafricaine*, WFP, November 2011, p. 22.

242 *Ibid*, p.3.

243 In its 2017 National Commune Monography Survey, the World Bank noted that a certain percentage of working age men (21 to 40 years old) appear to be missing from its survey sample. See, *Central African Republic: 2016 National Commune Monography Survey*, February 2017, p.23.

CHAPTER IV
PASTORALISM AND SECURITY IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

A. Introduction

Pastoralism is a relatively recent phenomenon in the CAR, though it has profoundly shaped the country's economic, ethnic and security landscape since its advent in the early 1920s.[244] Some estimates suggest that the cattle sector represented around 15% of the CAR's GDP in 2008 and it has played an important role in food security even since the crisis.[245] However, since the late 1980's and 90's pastoralism has become increasingly conflict-affected. Indeed, since the 2013/2014 crisis, conflict dynamics around pastoralism have become even more complex with the advent of systemic predation on the sector and subsequent collisions of interests. Today, transhumance touches on the root of some of the most violent identity- and resource based clashes currently taking place in the country. Here, the predominantly nomadic nature of pastoralist life has seen the phenomenon become a conduit for broader regional ecological, socio-economic and politico-military dynamics, against which CAR's sparsely inhabited wilderness no longer provides a buffer.

This chapter first contextualises current conflict surrounding the CAR's pastoralist sector by outlining its evolution up to the current crisis. It then demonstrates how predation on cattle has contributed to both insecurity and armed group revenues, before explaining how the pastoralist landscape throughout the CAR has adapted to these circumstances between 2013 and 2017.



Cattle in Kaga Bandoro

244 J.B. Suchel, "L'élevage des bovins en République Centrafricaine", *Les Cahiers d'Outre-Mer*, Paris, 1967, p.137.

245 Interviews with transhumance experts, September 2016. See also, J. R. Betabelet *et al*, "Elevage bovin et conflits en Centrafrique", *Les cahiers d'Outre-Mer*, n° 272, October-December 2015, p. 558.

B. CAR's pastoralist landscape: Evolutions and actors

Cattle herders only arrived in the CAR from the 1920's onwards, with successive waves of pastoralist migrations entering the country from the 1930s. Since then, Central African pastoralism has evolved over four principle phases:

1. An initial period of gradual herder migrations, principally from Cameroon and Nigeria, and the relatively peaceful integration of pastoralist communities into Central African life between the 1930s and 1970s;
2. Further waves of migration, principally from Chad, as well as Sudan, entailing the emergence of rising conflict surrounding transhumance between the 1970s and 1980s;
3. A period of rising predation on pastoralist communities with the emergence of the Zaraguina phenomenon in the 1990's to 2000's; and
4. The current era of high pastoralist conflict and intense predation on the sector beginning since the start of the crisis in 2013.

Being the pioneers of the CAR's herder populations, Fulani breeders have traditionally dominated pastoralism and remain important players today. From the 1970s, these pioneer herders were joined by breeders from other minority ethnic groups, particularly Arab (and other Fulani) groups from Chad and Sudan, as well as Hausa and Borno pastoralists in eastern CAR.[246] Whilst Fulani continue to make up the majority of Central African cattle herders, their ownership of cattle has been reduced by insecurity over the last years.

Understanding the term "Fulani"

The Fulani are one of the largest ethnic groups in the Sahel and West Africa, and are comprised of numerous subgroups sharing a common language (Fula) and religion (Islam), as well as historical and cultural roots. One third of Fulani are pastoralist and their pastoral nomadism has driven their presence in the Central Africa region.[247] Estimates of the CAR's Fulani population vary considerably with some estimating 180,000, and others 400,000 to 750,000 people.[248]

Nomadic Fulani pastoralists are called "Mbororo", a term denoting their nomadic lifestyle. They are composed of numerous clans (hereafter subgroups) whose shared development renders them more or less distinct from one another in culture and practice. For example, the Djafuun, Wodabe, Dnadji (also called Aku), Oudda, Biibé-woyla, Hontorbé and Hanagamba are all different Mbororo subgroups whose different migratory trajectories in arriving in the CAR have shaped their modes of survival and spheres of influence.[249] Thus, some sub-groups (like Djafuun, Wodabe and Dnadji) are more often viewed as Central African Fulani due to their use of Sango as well as Fulani, their inter-marriage with other ethnic groups and their development of more conciliatory migratory customs. Meanwhile, groups more recently hailing from Chad (like the Oudda and Biibé-woyla), speak Arabic instead of Sango, and reportedly exhibit more combative/aggressive behaviour and a tendency towards criminality, generally engaging in militarised transhumance. This is believed to be the result of their greater historical exposure to conflict with Arabic herders and bandits further north in Chad and has often seen them viewed as violent "outsiders" or " foreign invaders".[250]

246 I. Tidjani, *Impact de la crise politico-militaire de 2013-2014 sur le pastoralisme et la transhumance en République centrafricaine. Rapport d'étude socio-anthropologique du conflit*, Catholic Relief Services, January 2015, p. 12.

247 For analysis of the security impacts of pastoralism in the wider Central Africa region, see: International Crisis Group, *The Security Challenges of Pastoralism in Central Africa*, Africa Report N°215, April 2014.

248 AIDSPC, *Les Peuhls Mbororo de Centrafrique une communauté qui souffre*, June 2015, p.28.

249 Interviews with transhumance experts, December 2017 and February 2018. Of these, the Djafuun are said to constitute around half of the CAR's Fulani population. This subgroup group therefore has a higher number of sedentary members, as well as generally having higher levels of education and political organization.

250 Seignobos, C., "Le phénomène zargina dans le nord du Cameroun. Coupeurs de route et prises d'otages, la crise des sociétés pastorales mbororo", *Afrique contemporaine*, vol. no 239, no. 3, 2011, 35-59, pp.44-45.

Some Fulani pastoralists are also sedentary or semi-sedentary, practicing farming alongside pastoralism to supplement their income in response to shocks sustained by herd losses. These groups are often referred to as Foulbé. By the start of the crisis an estimated 15% of Central African Fulani had become sedentary or semi-sedentary.[251]

1. The advent and integration of pastoralism into Central African life

In the early 1930's, Mbororo and Foulbé herders occupied pastures along the CAR/Cameroon border between Bouar-Baboua (Nana-Mambéré) and Bocaranga (Ouham-Pendé). Driven by oppressive regulatory and tax impositions from traditional authorities further west, and attracted by optimal pastoralist conditions (sparsely inhabited grazing land, waterways, markets), the following years saw gradual herder expansions further east, including to Bossembele, Damara, Ippy, Alindao and Pombolo, as well as Yaloké, Carnot and Boda.[252]

Throughout this time, relations between herders and local populations were relatively peaceable.[253] In the 1960's this saw a rare opening for the social and political integration of Mbororo into Central African life through the establishment of rural municipalities (*communes d'elevages*) adapted to their lifestyles.[254] The growing economic significance and political enfranchisement of pastoralists saw the sector become increasingly organised with the 1974 establishment of the National Association of Livestock Breeders.[255] Charged with levying taxes and monitoring livestock health, including organising vaccination programmes, this union also began to institute herder migration management to channel seasonal movements to avoid conflict with farmers – a step beyond simply paying compensation for damage.[256]

2. The dawn of pastoralist conflict: new waves of transhumance (1970s-1980s)

Droughts and cattle sickness in the 1970s and 80s gradually altered the pastoralist landscape. Firstly, many herders lost cattle, pushing the most affected to combine herding with farming, or else contract themselves out to herd for wealthier individuals keeping cattle as an investment (often Muslim traders).[257] Most notably, however, the 1970s and 80s saw the arrival of new waves of cattle, this time from Chad. Severe droughts in 1972-73 and 1983-4, cattle epidemics and increasing land use competition from conservation programmes and cash crop farming drove these herders south into the northern reaches of the CAR.

251 Around half of all Djafuun (the largest Fulani subgroup in CAR) are now said to be sedentary (AIDSPC, *Les Peuhls Mbororo de Centrafrique une communauté qui souffre*, p.26.

252 Ibid, p.22-25.

253 Ibid, p.22. However, broader relations between Arabized Fulani and Central Africans were not: the 1928 Gbaya rebellion was largely an expression of discontent with the power given by French colonials to Fulani leaders and associated Muslim merchants over the less-well organized Gbaya in western CAR. See O'Toole T. "The 1928-1931 Gbaya Insurrection in Ubangui-Shari: Messianic Movement or Village Self-Defense?", *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, n°18: 329-344, 1984.

254 L. de Vries, "Navigating violence and exclusion: the Mbororo's claim to the Central African Republic's margins" Geoforum, In Press, 19 March 2018, p.4-5. Five livestock communities were established between 1962 and 1966, with another two additions in the 1980s. Official *communes d'elevage* include: Niem-Yelewa (Bouar, Nana-Mambéré), Gaudrot (Baboua, Nana-Mambéré), Koui (Ouham pende), Ouro-Djafoun (Bambari, Ouaka), Yaloké (Ombella M'Poko), Pombolo (Bangassou, Mbomou) and Ewou (Alindao, Basse-Kotto).

255 The *Fédération Nationale des Eleveurs de Centrafrique* (FNEC) is just one of a number of livestock-related institutions established during this time, though it is one of the most important (ibid., p.4).

256 Ibid.

257 Ibid, p.5.

Chad's role in pastoralist conflict in the CAR

In addition to providing excellent pasture, the CAR offers the opportunity to reduce burgeoning pastoralist conflicts in Chad. These can be challenging for the Chadian authorities to manage due to the ownership of sizable investment herds by certain high-level officials. Today, most cross-border transhumance from Chad is said to involve "*troupeaux des combatants*" belonging to senior Chadian military officers.[258] These droves are frequently tended to by Fulani herders who have contracted their services to these investors. This fluidity of affiliations has further entrenched the conflation of Mbororo, including Central African Fulani, with intrusive "foreigners" from Chad.[259]

The new wave of pastoralists included Mbororo herders from the Oudda, Biibe-Woyla, Hanagamba and Hontorbe subgroups, as well as Chadian Arab herders, often referred to as Mbarara.[260] Hardened by conflict over pastoral turf in Chad, these new groups engaged in miltarised transhumance and drove larger herds. Their seasonal visits represented not only competition for pasture with locally established Mbororo but also increased tensions with non-pastoralist populations.[261] Whereas pastoralist disputes such as crop damage were traditionally addressed through discussion and compensation to prevent or resolve retributive attacks on herds (failure to pay compensation could lead farmers to kill the animals responsible),[262] the advent of armed herders brought about a deleterious shift in dispute resolution dynamics. These new militarised troupes often ignored new official transhumance corridors, destroying crops and burning villages in response to retributive attacks upon their large herds. Possessing the force of arms and being transient, these groups had little need to manage local relations, staging deadly retaliatory attacks against those expressing discontent. Whilst pioneer Mbororo could originally be discerned from these newcomers by the fact that they were not traditionally armed and spoke the national Sango language, the new militarized troupes became increasingly difficult for some locals to distinguish from their predecessors.[263] This is in part because rising security challenges (see below) saw certain established Mbororo groups themselves become increasingly armed from the 1990s.

Further east, tensions between local populations, herders and poachers from Sudan had also been rising since the 1980s, particularly in Vakaga. Appreciation of the benefits of conservation and sports hunting for local communities, especially local Goula, had seen the establishment of an armed movement to control poacher and herder migrations in Tiringoulou in 1984. The killing of this group's leader in 2002 unleashed a vicious cycle of revenge attacks between Central African and Sudanese actors until 2005.[264]

3. The growth of Zaraguina and predation on pastoralists

Compounding the security impacts of new waves of transhumant herders, the growth of the Zaraguina phenomenon from the 1990s to the late 2000's further destabilized pastoralist regions.[265] Zaraguina

258 E. Chauvin and C. Seignobos, "L'imbroglio centrafricain. Etat, rebelles et bandits", *Afrique Contemporaine*, 2013/4, n°248, 119, p. 146. In the CAR, these herds are also referred to as "troupeaux prestige" in reference to the ownership of other Chadian "big men" of such herds.

259 Repeated reference was made to the contracting of Mbororo by Chadian military officials during interviews in Bangui in February 2018, including with transhumance experts and conservationists.

260 Mbarara is a term often used to describe both Arabic speakers and persons of Chadian Arab ethnicity in northern CAR. This has can cause confusion to the extent that it conflates different groups under a single identity. Indeed, in Sango, the term Arabou means both Muslim (religion) and Arab (individuals that migrated from Chad and Sudan mainly, or with lighter skin-color). De Vries notes that such confusion can have violent communal repercussions (L. de Vries, 2017, *op cit*, p.2).

261 C. Seignobos, 2011, *op cit*, p.46.

262 AIDSPC, *Les Peuhls Mbororo de Centrafrique une communauté qui souffre*, June 2015.

263 Despite the relative integration of Mbororo during the 1960s their nomadic lifestyles and cultural particularities nevertheless saw these communities subject to notable discrimination even among other Muslims (see L. de Vries, 2017, *op cit*, p.5).

264 Interview with ECOFAUNE, February 2018.

265 For more on the Zaraguina phenomenon see Chapter III.

particularly targeted Mbororo herders, whose cattle wealth allowed them to levy high ransoms for the return of abducted children.[266] As their operations continued, Mbororo youths from established communities too began to engage in such banditry – a response to their rising impoverishment.[267] Indeed, despite the establishment of a number of "self defence" groups, Zaraguina activities in the northwest intensified seeing many affected Mbororo seek sanctuary in Cameroon from 2006, resulting in the establishment of a refugee camp for these groups in 2007. This deteriorating security situation was accompanied by receding state intervention, furthering the emergence of armed groups purporting of offer locals "protection" from banditry (e.g. APRD, FDPC) whilst engaging in revenue generation, including on cattle migration routes. Among these groups, was Baba Laddé's FPR, established in the northern reaches around Kaga Bandoro in 2009. Composed predominantly of Oudda Mbororo who had formerly been Zaraguina, this heavily militarised group is said to have carved out pastures for its herds, whilst continuing to engage in criminal activities, including exactions on locals.[268] Its apparent disbandment in 2012 saw many of its members join the Seléka rebellion – most notably the UPC's Ali Darassa, Baba Laddé's former right-hand man.

4. The intensification of predation on pastoralism (2012 to present)

The 2013 crisis and its aftermath has seen the CAR enter a period of extreme hostility towards and predation upon pastoralism. The FAO estimates that since the start of the CAR's crisis, Fulani herders have lost between 50% to 77% of their cattle, with around 1 million Fulani cattle massacred or stolen.[269]

The involvement of certain Fulani herders in the Séléka movement and specifically in serious exactions on civilian populations[270] saw the CAR's entire pastoralist population further stigmatised by the wider Central African populous.[271] Séléka exactions in 2013 were seen by many – both pastoralist and non-pastoralist– as a means of conquering more territory for grazing. This further heightened antagonism with local communities during this period, contributing to the backlash of targeted killings against Fulani pastoralists as part of the anti-balaka's Muslim purge in late 2013 and 2014.[272]

These attacks emptied swathes of western CAR of most of their pastoralist populations.[273] Indeed, the seismic migratory shifts occasioned by the events of 2014 have deepened regional predation in three main ways:

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266 Some cattle traders too benefited from this predation purchasing valuable stock at lower prices due to the forced sale circumstances with which the sellers were faced. See S. Issa, "La Prise d'Otages aux Confins du Cameroun, de la Centrafrique et du Tchad : une nouvelle modalité du banditisme transfrontalier", 2006, Polis, vol.13, 119-145.

267 E. Chauvin and C. Seignobos, 2013/4, *op cit*, p.119; E. Chauvin *La guerre en Centrafrique à l'ombre du Tchad. Une escalade conflictuelle régionale?* Paris: AFD, 2018. The rising decapitalisation of Fulani from the 1980s and 90s gradually eroded Mbororo hierarchical structures pushing youths to break from the rule of increasingly impoverished elders. Moreover, the growing association of pastoralism with violence and pre-existing prejudice saw discriminatory discourse towards the Mbororo rise from the late 80s, compounding the distrust occasioned by growing ruptures in intercommunal pastoralist arrangements (L. de Vries, 2017, *op cit*).

268 E. Chauvin and C. Seignobos, 2013/4, *op cit*, p. 139-40.

269 M. Luizza, *Transhumant Pastoralism in Central Africa: Emerging Impacts on Conservation and Security*, U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, September 2017, p. 2

270 For example, on 1 May 2013, Séléka elements and armed Chadian herders attacked the village of Ouin, between Batangafo and Kambakota, killing 10 in retaliation for the killing of a Chadian herder by villagers. For further examples see: MINUSCA/ UNDP/ OHCHR, *Report of the Mapping Project documenting serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law committed within the territory of the Central African Republic between January 2003 and December 2015*, May 2017.

271 After assuming power, the Séléka too treated herding communities with suspicion. Under the Séléka regime, Fulani herders were forced to pay "illegal grazing rights" of between 500,000 to 10,000,000 CFAF per family depending on the livestock size – a sum ten times higher than the one imposed under Bozize (Fulani community memorandum extract 2014).

272 MINUSCA/ UNDP/ OHCHR, *Report of the Mapping Project documenting serious violations*, May 2017, p.134. For more on anti-balaka predation on the cattle trade during this time see: France 24, "Pénurie et trafic de bœuf à Bangui", 14 March 2014.

273 In 2015, CRS reported the absence of the Woodabe, Djaafun, Danedji (Mbororo) and Fulbe in Nana-Mamberé and Mambéré-Kadaï where they were historically dominant. See: I. Tidjani, 2015, *op cit*, p. 16-17; FAO-DRC-CRS, *Situation de la transhumance et étude socioanthropologique des populations pastorales après la crise de 2013-2014 en République centrafricaine*, March 2015, p. 9.

Firstly, they virtually emptied certain parts of western CAR[274] of their pastoralist communities. Here, social and environmental push factors in locales of refuge have driven numerous herders back into areas where they remain vulnerable to predation by still hostile and opportunistic groups, such as anti-balaka. This has increased both conflicts in these areas and the proliferation of herder self-defence militias.

Secondly, 2014 saw the development of a pastoralist concentration in northern CAR, especially around Ouham and Nana-Grebizi. This area came to host numerous Central African herders fleeing anti-balaka abuses in the south and centre, who had little appetite to venture further north due to the closed border and lack of pasture during the dry season. Indeed, despite the border closure, these areas continued to receive transhumance from Chad in pursuit of dry season pasture. This has rendered the region a reservoir for armed group revenue generation due to its high cattle concentrations and the importance of the Kaga-Bandoro market. Indeed, racketeering by offering herders 'protection' in exchange for ever-increasing taxes, has turned into a key revenue source and thus *raison d'etre* for armed groups.

Thirdly, 2014 also saw the south and east of the CAR become a refuge for pastoralists fleeing abuses further north and west. This pushed these herders deeper into rebel held territory and became a notable dynamic in the region's ethnic conflict in 2016 and 2017, which itself has induced further pastoralist migrations with attendant localised concentrations. These movements may have further implications for armed group operations and intercommunal violence in the future.

C. Conflict dynamics of predation on pastoralism



Cattle

The evolution of predation in the CAR has rendered the conflict dynamics of pastoralism increasingly complex. Here, traditional pastoralist conflicts in the most conflict affected parts of the CAR have evolved into full blown cycles of retribution, almost akin to localised bush wars, especially in the northwest. It has seen the establishment of new armed groups seeking to "protect" herders, as well as the adoption of similar rhetoric by others simply interested in financial gain. Here, motives are as much to secure control over cattle by armed groups themselves as to tax others for pasture and transit.

The rise of racketeering in the sector has likewise seen armed groups enter into complex rivalries and alliances to exert control over key migration routes and trade hubs. Such rivalries have turned violent in certain key locales. Thus, for example, the key cross-border transit hub of Bang and its surrounds (Koui, Bocaranga and Paoua) have seen regular clashes between MPC, RJ, 3R and anti-balaka with MINUSCA entering the fray in late 2017/early 2018.[275] Likewise, the area around Bambari – a key cattle trade hub due to its proximity to excellent pasture and numerous collection markets – also saw considerable contest between 2016 and 2017.

The territorial expansions and herder migrations that pastoralism-related predation and conflict have entailed, have also seen rising tensions with local populations. Not only have certain areas seen a rise in the number of "outsiders" present – both ethnic and national – but these "outsiders", who often seemingly

274 Mambéré-Kadei, Nana-Mambéré, Ombella-Mpoko, Lobaye.
275 Interview with confidential UN source, February 2018.

share certain religious or linguistic affiliations, have often challenged local access to resources, as well as bringing security threats. Indeed, the security dynamics of pastoralism has generated ties – whether by force or choice – between pastoralists and armed groups. The most well-known of these is that between the UPC and Fulani pastoralists, but other examples include the MPC, which is thought to be closely linked to herders managing herds for Chadian 'big men', thus giving the group a stake in control over migration and access to pasture. Moreover, as armed groups do not rely solely on pastoralism for their income, their presence is usually accompanied by racketeering in other local economic sectors.

Armed group spheres of influence and pastoralism

When looking at armed group spheres of influence some correlation may be observed between the ethnic and national identity of armed group members, their focus on pastoralism and the regions in which they operate.

For example, the MPC is composed of ethnic Arab and Fulani fighters, led by Mahamat Al Khatim, a Salamat Arab from southern Chad. Their territorial influence coincides with the agro-pastoral activities of certain Chadian and Sudanese Mbororo who arrived in Ouham and Nana-Grebizi in the 1980's,[276] as well as ethnic Arab[277] breeders and traders who have traditionally been dominant in Kabo, as well as having a presence in Batangafo.[278]

Likewise, the UPC's dominance in Ouaka correlates with strong pastoralist migrations to this area by various Fulani Mbororo from the 1940's. Whilst the Djaafoun Mbororo sub-group is particularly strongly rooted in Bambari, it is now outnumbered by Danedji and Oudda herders[279] – the latter being the Mbororo subgroup of Ali Darassa. Whilst the Djaafoun and Wodaabe remain the most representative Fulani subgroups in Ouaka and Basse-Kotto, the Danedji, Ngadjawa and Oudah are now increasingly important in terms of livestock dominance, with Oudah and Danedji also showing a strong presence in Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou. Indeed, transhumance in Haute Kotto is dominated by Oudda Mbororo since their arrival in 1988.[280] This may explain the acceptance of the UPC's presence around Bria since 2015 – an area that was at that time seemingly more removed from the group's main zone of operations.

D. Armed group predation on the CAR's cattle trade

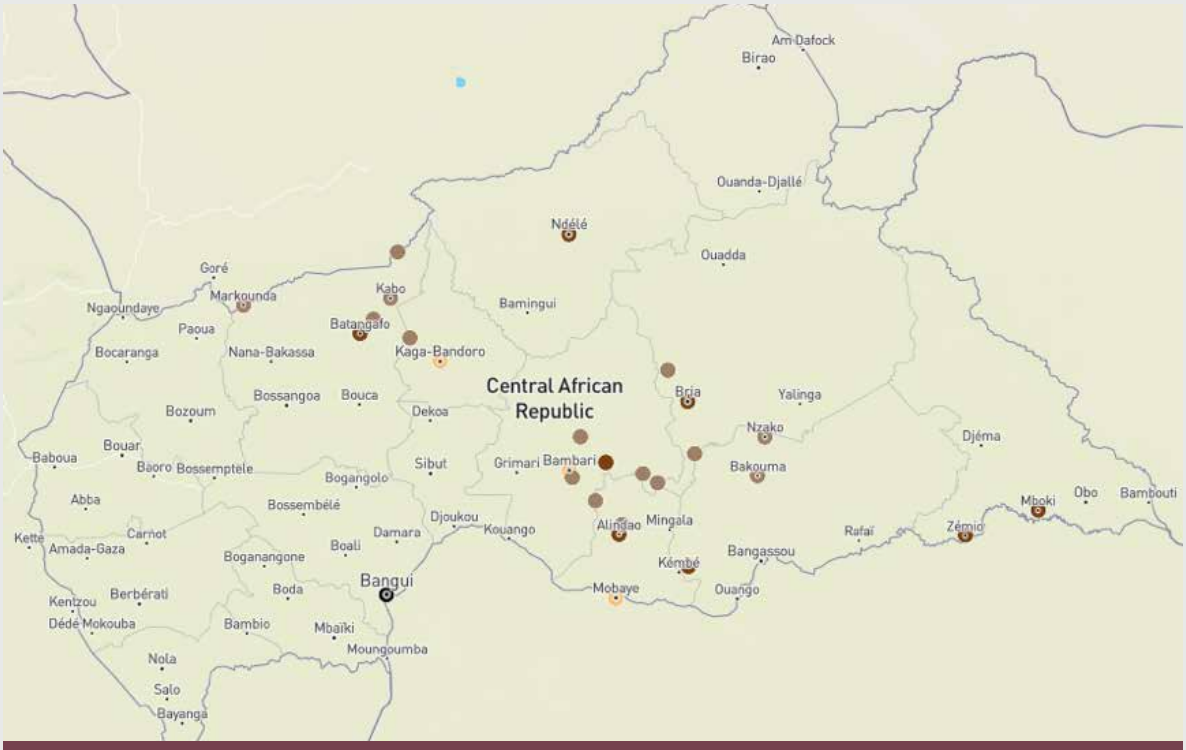
Within the broader political economy of pastoralism, the commercialization of cattle is subject to a particular set of impositions. The commercial trade circuit involves the movement of cattle from grazing areas towards Bangui, the centre of consumption of around 200 heads of cattle per day, or about 73,000 per year.[281] On this circuit, ex-Séléka groups have sought to maximize their control over the supply chain to Bangui, benefitting from the profit generated by the difference between the price of a head of cattle at the level of roaming herds upcountry (around 50,000 CFAF) and the price in Bangui (more than 500,000 CFAF).[282]

276 F. Goemans, *Rapport de mission sur la transhumance et l'agropastoralisme en République centrafricaine*, FAO, December 2017, p. 9 ; FAO-DRC-CRS, 2015, *op cit*, p. 16.
277 Composed of Arab ethnic groups such as the Salamat, Hawazmé, Matanine, Toundjour, Banissayid and Ouled-rachid, often referred to as Mbarara.
278 Interviews with transhumance experts, September 2016, December 2017 and February 2018.
279 Ibid.
280 I. Tidjani, 2015, *op cit*, p. 17. Arab herders and other Mbororo subgroups also have a presence.
281 P. Schouten *et al*, *The Politics of Pillage, the political economy of roadblocks in the Central African Republic*, IPIS, Antwerp, November 2017, p. 26.
282 Ibid.

The CAR's livestock distribution network[283]

Whilst most livestock breeders are Fulani, the cattle trade itself is historically dominated by Arabs, as well as some Fulani.[284] Cattle traders rely on collectors deployed to cattle production areas to ensure collection and follow up of conveyance to Bangui. Here, cattle is slaughtered and purchased by butchers who distribute it to end consumers. Conveyers (by vehicle) or herders are tasked with getting the herds purchased at collection and distribution centers safely down the supply chain and to the terminal market. Once in Bangui, brokers are generally used to facilitate sale and purchase between cattle merchants and buyers.

Bangui is the CAR's only terminal market, and is therefore where all cattle supply chains converge. It is home to the country's largest slaughterhouse, the *Société d'Etat des Abattoirs* (SEGA)[285] and meat consumption in the capital is high. Indeed, whilst the slaughter of beef plummeted during the crisis with estimates indicating an average of around 27 slaughters daily, reports suggest that this figure bounced back to an average of 122 daily slaughters by 2016, and a high 197 in the first quarter of 2017.[286] Bangui's status as a terminal market means that there is also a trade in derivative products.[287]



Central African cattle markets, distribution points and terminal market in 2017

283 The information in this segment was compiled through interviews with transhumance experts in December 2017 and February 2018.

284 Of the five livestock trader associations in the capital before 2013, only one appears to have had Fulani representation (Interview with confidential UN source, February 2018).

285 Translation: State Management Company of Slaughterhouses.

286 See Corbeau News Centreafrique,"*Centrafrique : Delocalisation provisoire du marche a betail dans l'enceinte de l'abattoir frigorifique de Bangui*", 14 April 2017. Interviews at slaughter facilities in Bangui have highlighted that around 10% of cattle brought to slaughter in 2016 were female cows in gestation. Such slaughter is not usually part of animal husbandry, suggesting that these cows are not being capitalized by breeders – a strong indicator that they are conflict herds. Chauvin notes that the sale of heifers, breeding cows, calves, bulls and other cattle normally used to develop a herd, allows the identification of breeders forced to give up their cattle. See E. Chauvin, *La guerre en Centrafrique à l'ombre du Tchad. Une escalade conflictuelle régionale ?* AFD, June 2018, fn.13, p.41.

287 For example, bovine hide is taken to Nigeria by truck once a month for manufacture into leather goods (Jeune Afrique, "Centrafrique : des abattoirs improvisés face à la faillite de l'économie", 5 December 2015).

Bangui is supplied principally by Kaga Bandoro and Bambari, though since 2014 river transit from Mobaye has also begun to form a notable part of the Bangui supply chain. These distribution centres also host slaughterhouses for local consumption and are serviced by numerous local collection markets in cattle production zones. Thus, for example, Moyenne-Sido, Markounda, Kabo, Gbazara and Ouandago all have collection markets feeding Kaga Bandoro, as do Batangafo and Ndele, whose markets are slightly larger. Collectors working for large traders will crisscross these production areas following the schedule of the local markets to buy animals, often also through brokers.

Bambari is likewise fed by collector markets such as Maloum, Alindao, Pombolo,[288] Bokolobo, Boyo, Ndassima, Bangui-Banda and Liwa though the first four are greater in size and activity. Sales can also take place at herder camps, which some traders traverse to buy at lower prices.

In the east, Bria was a big market before the outbreak of violence in 2017, though not quite the size of Kaga Bandoro or Bambari. The town is supplied by collector markets like Aigbando, Nzako, Irabanda and Bakouma,[289] the first two being the most significant. Zemio and Mboki are also large markets, which supplied Bangui directly before 2013, though now do so indirectly through Bambari. In Vakaga, livestock trade in Birao and Amdafok has become more for local consumption since 2013, with Amdafok being the larger of the markets.

The recent re-emergence of breeders around locales such as Gamboula, Noufou and Dilapoko has seen these locales become collection markets servicing trade to Berberati, which has a slaughterhouse for local consumption. At present, there do not appear to be reports of Berberati servicing Bangui. Likewise, though locales such as Besson, Sebewa, Koui and Niem continue to be collection markets for Bouar, livestock traded here also appears to be for local consumption.

Armed groups are involved at several points in the cattle supply chain. Firstly, they impose 'transhumance taxes' in grazing areas, which are estimated to yield over 1 million EUR per year.[290] Here, for example, they traverse pastoral camps demanding payment "in kind" for "protection" annually (e.g. 4 heads of cattle), whilst in communes such as Bambari, communal authorities are engaged in collecting levies for the benefit of groups. This has generated tensions between herders and their traditional representatives, though the latter are obliged to acquiesce to such demands to prevent any perceived opposition to armed groups.[291]

Secondly, armed groups impose taxes at and on the way to the main distribution hubs of Kaga Bandoro (controlled by FPRC/MPC), Bambari (UPC) and Mobaye (UPC) as well as regional or local collection markets like Kabo (MPC), Maloum (UPC) and Boyo (UPC). Market-based taxes at the principle cattle markets of Kaga Bandoro and Bambari alone are estimated to generate at least 1.9 million EUR annually.[292] In addition, at collection markets, like Maloum, both buyers and sellers are levied 5,000 CFAF each for a sale transaction.[293]

A series of roadblocks and river-blocks are also erected between these markets and Bangui in order to tax the transport of livestock. It is estimated that, together, roadblocks between Kaga Bandoro, Bambari and Bangui generate at least about EUR 420,000 per year in armed group financing. Previous research indicates that the total profits made by ex-Séléka groups from the cattle circuit amount to at least EUR 3.59 million per year.[294] This amount excludes profits derived by armed actors from cattle theft, direct participation in cattle trade, and levies at collection markets or pastoral camps.

288 This was a large market before the anti-balaka UPC confrontations in 2017.
289 Note that these towns are also important mining locales, highlighting the role of mining centres as key consumption markets affecting pastoralist localisation even during times of high insecurity.
290 P. Schouten *et al*, 2017, *op cit*, p.26.
291 Remote interviews with pastoralist operators, December 2017.
292 P P. Schouten *et al*, 2017, *op cit*, p.26.
293 Remote interviews with pastoralist operators, December 2017.
294 P. Schouten *et al*, 2017, *op cit*, p.27.

Indeed, the occupation of pastoral land between sites of production, collection markets and major cattle trading centres has rendered it increasingly difficult for herders to bring their own cattle to market. Racketeering on supply routes by different groups had by 2016 rendered such efforts economically prohibitive for most herders who are required to pay toll fees multiple times despite the issuance of receipts, which are not usually recognised between groups.[295] As a result, today it is increasingly difficult for herders even just to bring their own livestock to the major trading centres of Kaga Bandoro and Bambari. This and anti-balaka attacks, have often rendered it a virtual necessity for traders at these markets to contract the services of semi-trailer and other trucks to carry herds to the Bangui terminal market.[296] This is especially so where conveyance by foot is rendered impossible by security conditions. Vehicle conveyance can also entail other additional costs like payment for sand in trailers to prevent cattle from falling during long journeys down CAR's virtually unpaved and arduous highways.

As a result of the above, a large part of the difference in the price of cattle between grazing areas and Bangui is made up of both taxes imposed by armed groups and the additional cost of ensuring transit to market by secure means.[297]

Examples of cattle trade predation by different groups

All MPC roadblocks are on key transhumance corridors and Al Khatim often imposes armed escorts on transhumant herds in exchange for cash or a fixed number of cattle, depending on the size of the herd.[298]

MNLC leader, General Bahar had established a 'safe' corridor for cattle coming from Chad between Bémal and Paoua in late 2017, and sought to create another towards Cameroon. Along the way, his men levy hefty road and market taxes.[299]

Herder passage through N'Dele requires payment of up to 120,000 CFAF per herd to the "tax office" managed by Adome, a former FPRC Chief of Staff appointed by Nouredinne Adam.[300] FPRC mobile units are posted along transhumance routes, mainly around Ngolongosso and Ngarba, to levy such taxes.[301] It is estimated by the UN Panel of Experts that transhumance taxes levied by the MPC and the FPRC could amount to EUR 1 million per year.[302]

Meanwhile, the UPC is widely reputed to impose "tributes" on herders to guarantee their safety and free movement. These "tributes" are usually paid in kind (head of cattle).[303] The 3R group is also known to target, secure and control transhumance routes.[304] Herders prefer to comply with these impositions than expose themselves to killings and raids by anti-balaka, despite the fact that taxes are often increasing.

Pastoralist "protection" rhetoric has been adopted by virtually all groups, whether or not they play a genuine role in such protection or are simply interested in cashing in. Thus, for example, the Ndalé brothers have also sought to claim a desire to "protect" cattle migration, levying heavy taxes on cattle movement around Bouar.

The predation system around livestock commercialization is summarized in the following table.

295 Remote interviews with pastoralist operators, December 2017.
296 Ibid.
297 See also FAO/WFP, *Rapport Spécial: Mission FAO/PAM d'Evaluation des Récoltes et de la Sécurité Alimentaire en Republique Centrafricaine*, March 2016, p. 42 note 46. This study notes that, in October 2015, the price of livestock was 87% higher than before the crisis.
298 Communication with UN source, 2017; FAO, "*Bulletin de la campagne de vaccination*", 2016, p. 4.
299 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, paras 195ff
300 Interview in N'Dele, 2017.
301 See UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2017/639, annex 5.10.
302 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, para 172.
303 Interviews in Bambari, December 2016. See also UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2014/762, para 144.
304 See UN Panel of Experts Reports, S/2016/1032 para 216; S/2016/694, paras 98-101. Previously, the FACA in this area were paying 200,000 FCFA per month for the continuity of their deployment (Interview with FNEC, September 2016).

Table 2. Summary of taxes and costs in the cattle supply chain (figures for 2017)

Point in the chain	Price of an animal	Transporting cost	Taxes per animal	Profits for ex-Séléka per year
As part of a herd in Chad/north of the country	50,000 FCFA		None	
Border market	100,000 FCFA		5,000-10,000 FCFA (ex-Séléka)	182.5 million FCFA (278,000 EUR)[305]
Grazing and transfer to market		Transporter, unknown cost (ex-Séléka),	Transhumance/ security tax 5,000-10,000 FCFA	656 million FCFA (1 million EUR)
Bambari/Kaga Bandoro market	200-400,000 FCFA		34,000 FCFA (ex-Séléka)	1.241 billion FCFA (1.9 million EUR)
Bangui market (per animal)	(average tax	Truck, 50,000 FCFA (420,000 EUR)	10,000 FCFA per animal at roadblocks)[306]	275 million FCFA
Bangui	300-600,000 FCFA			
Total			***55,000 FCFA per animal***	***2.354 billion FCFA (3.59 million EUR) per year***

No doubt due partly the significance of the cattle trade to the CAR's GDP, as well its centrality to conflict in Ouham-Pendé, Ouham, Nana-Grebizi, Ouaka, Nana-Mambéré, and by extension Bangui, restoration of state authority over the cattle circuit has been a major preoccupation. Efforts towards this saw some limited success in Bambari in 2017 following the FPRC/anti-balaka alliance ousting of the UPC's Ali Darassa from the town. In Kaga Bandoro, however, the MPC/FPRC alliance rejected MINUSCA attempts to restore state control over the cattle market. The Ndalé brothers similarly clashed with FACA during attempted re-establishment of state control around the profitable cattle market of Bouar in September 2017,[307] whilst attempting to inhibit MINUSCA access to cattle hubs in Niem and Bocaranga.



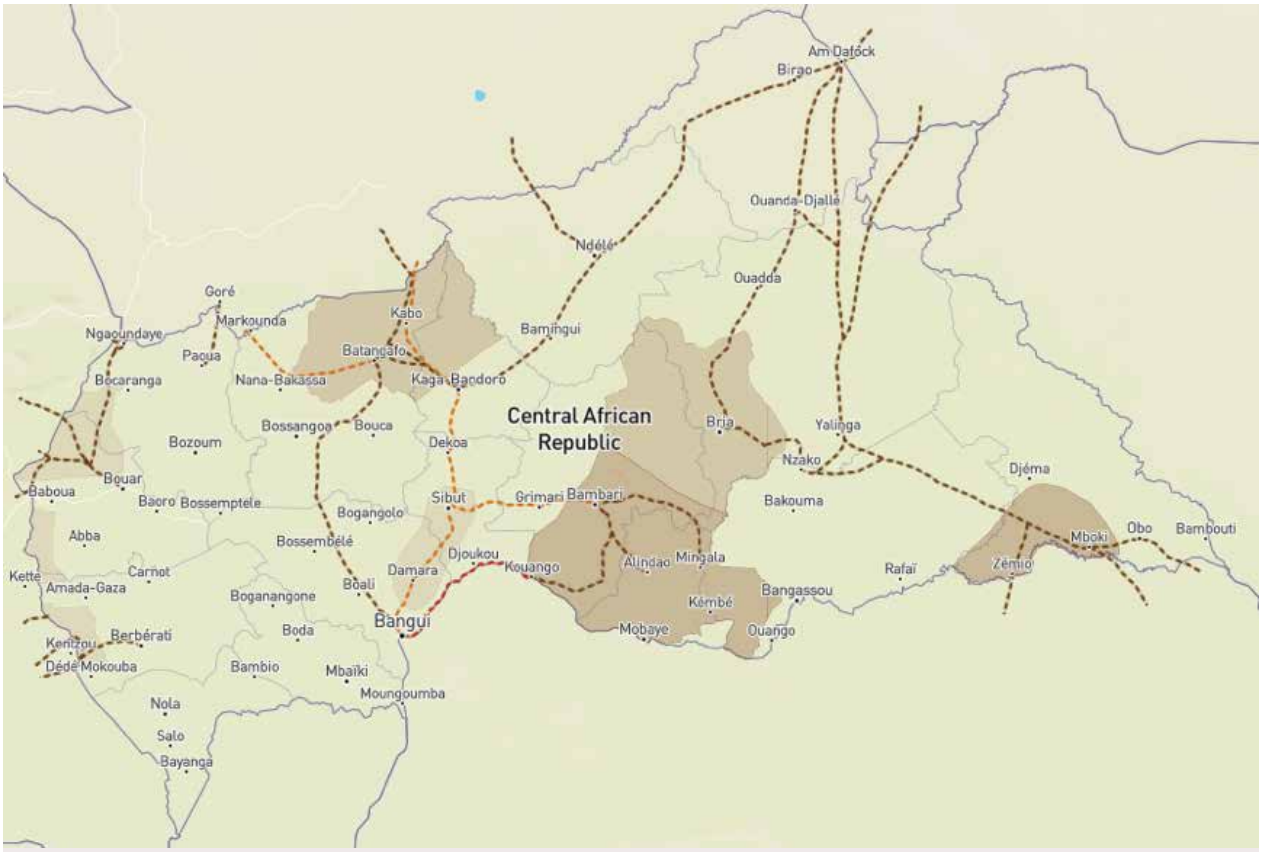
Trucks on Sudanese circuit

305 Basis for calculation: assuming that half of the cattle marketed in Bangui passes by this kind of regional market at some point, it can be estimated that 36,500 head of cattle costing at least 5,000 FCFA would generate around 182.5 million FCFA (278,000 EUR) per year. This is, however, a very conservative estimate as regional cattle markets around Mobaye alone generate a roughly similar level of profit for the UPC, without taking into account the numerous other border or regional markets. The exchange rate used in this report is 1 EUR for 656 FCFA (November 2017 rate).

306 This average is calculated on the tax levied on trucks divided by the average number of cattle (15).

307 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para 206

E. Pastoralist responses to predation and crises since 2013



SERT CHIV P2: "Cattle concentrations and major pastoralist migration routes in 2017"

1. Pastoralist dynamics in west and north western CAR

Many pastoralists fleeing anti-balaka exactions in western CAR in 2014 crossed the Cameroonian border with their cattle to stay around Garoua-Boulai, Kenzo and Yokadouma.[308] Some, mostly Foulbé, stayed in Koui, whilst others remained in Besson and Niem-Yelewa.[309] However, push factors such as overcrowding and the need for dry season pastures, as well as conflicts with Cameroonian pastoralists and famers have instigated a number of returns to western CAR, especially since 2016.[310] These migrations have been accompanied by predation on returnees by anti-balaka in the form of both cattle rustling and racketeering, sometimes in collaboration with certain administrative authorities and livestock services.

308 Interview with transhumance expert, February 2018.
309 Remote interviews with pastoralist operators, December 2017.
310 For more on returns to diamond mining areas see Chapter V.

Predation on pastoralists by anti-balaka groups

In the north-west of the country, returns of herders pushed from Cameroon's northern pastures since 2015 have seen a concentration of pastoralists around Koui-Niem-Yelewa-Sabewa, in Nana-Mambéré. These communities have since been subject to cattle thefts at the hands of anti-balaka. In late 2015, this saw the establishment of the 3R armed group,[311] operating close to the Cameroonian border. 3R claims to protect cattle herders, though it has perpetrated severe human rights exactions that clearly fall beyond this aim[312] and appears engage in roadblock taxation between Cameroon and Niem-Yelewa.[313] Bouar-based anti-balaka led by the Ndalé brothers have especially targeted cattle movements and herder camps in these communes, selling stolen cattle in Bouar. In 2016/17, attacks by Ndalé anti-balaka were often followed by 3R attacks, with serious abuses visited on civilians by both sides. Cases of cattle theft and subsequent reprisals in the Baboua area in April 2016, for example, led to a vicious cycle of violence in the Niem-Yelewa locality. Indeed, they continued to render a number of areas in Nana-Mambéré 'no-go' zones in 2017.[314] Despite this, 2017 saw further migration to Niem-Yelewa due to concerns about overcrowding as the resumption of cross-border seasonal transhumance from Chad and Cameroon occasioned more arrivals in Besson and Koui.[315] Today, this area remains one of high insecurity in part due also to increased predation by other armed groups such as Siriri and the FDPC.

Negotiations for securing a gradual and limited return of pastoralists to Mambéré-Kadei in southwestern CAR began around February 2016. During 2017, around 6,500 pastoralists reportedly returned to the region, including to areas like Gamboula, Nassolé, Dilapoko and Noufou.[316] However, returns have often been subject to "conditionalities" that returnees are generally unwilling to discuss.[317] "Conditionalities" are characterised by racketeering by anti-balaka groups – particularly those maintaining a presence between Gamboula and Amada Gaza. These groups follow returnees to camps and extort money or livestock in return for "security". Some estimate the cost of return to be around 50,000FAFC per herd, and by the end of 2017, around 130 oxen were estimated to have been stolen during the returns process.[318] As in the northwest, this situation saw the birth of a new Mbororo self-defence group calling itself Siriri in late 2017 (for more, see Chapter II). In other cases, herders have tried to access pastureland using the road from Gamboula, along which 2017 MINUSCA patrols offered at least some limited protection from anti-balaka attacks. However, in a number of cases, returns to areas of origin are rendered impossible due to continuing hostility. As such, there is some effort going into local mediation in the southwest (see Chapter V). Here, aside from anti-balaka harassment, outstanding issues include the continued occupation of land and property belonging to members of the wider Muslim community, as well as the cultivation of areas that were former grazing lands, return to which risks igniting further conflict.

In Ouham-Pendé, notable transhumance continues from Chad, especially to the Koui sous-prefecture. This has pushed some internal transhumance south towards Nana-Mambéré to avoid over grazing in the commune. Further east, Paoua saw violent conflict between RJ and 3R in late 2017, rendering security severely volatile. Since May 2016 collaboration with RJ had enabled MNLC leader, General Bahar (at the

311 Said to be composed largely of former herders and their sons decapitalized by the events of 2013.
312 Human Rights Watch, "République centrafricaine: un nouveau groupe armé sème la terreur. Le groupe 3R a perpétré des meurtres et des viols dans le Nord-Ouest du pays", December 2016 ; UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2017/639, para. 119
313 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para. 199.
314 For a fuller assessment of the security dynamics see: T. Vircoulon, *Assessment of Conflict Dynamics in Nana-Mambéré Prefecture*, 2017. High volatility means incidents in this area are extremely under reported or often reported generically, in part due to the inaccessibility of the region to outsiders.
315 IPIS phone call with FNEC representative, December 2017. Fulani pastoralists are said to have left Garoua-Boulai (Cameroon) for Besson, and Chadian herders headed for Koui via Bang or Ngaoundai.
316 Interview with mediation expert, October and December 2017.
317 Remote interview with a pastoralist representative, December 2017.
318 Remote interviews with pastoralist operators, December 2017.

time still with MPC) to secure control over the road axis between Paoua and the Chadian border, attracting Chadian transhumance to his MPC-controlled cattle market near Paoua.[319] In July 2017, Bahar elements went on to secure control of Bang, a key strategic entry point to the CAR for Chadian, Cameroonian and Nigerian transhumance due to its situation at the territorial juncture of the CAR, Cameroon and Chad. MINUSCA ousted the group from the city in October 2017. Following fierce fighting between the MNLC and RJ in Paoua and Markounda since late December 2017, MINUSCA likewise engaged in security operations around Paoua in early 2018 in a bid to restore security.

2. Pastoralist dynamics in northern CAR

The outbreak of conflict in 2013 saw Ouham prefecture largely emptied of its cross-border transhumant population, leaving only limited cross border and internal pastoralism around Kabo, home to sedentary Arab breeders, and Batangafo, home to both Mbarara and Fulani groups.[320] However, 2014 saw a massive influx of Fulani pastoralists to northern Ouham and Nana-Grebizi in a bid to escape anti-balaka exactions in Bossangoa, Nana-Bakassa, Bouca, Bogangolo, Sibut and Damara. This saw rising localised concentrations of cattle in the region. Moreover, whilst the closure of the Chadian border occasioned a restriction on international transhumance, a number of Chadian pastoralists nevertheless continued to enter northern CAR via unofficial routes north of Kabo or through Bamingui-Bangoran.[321] Indeed, pastoralists from Bamingui-Bangoran also continued their internal transhumance to pastures in Nana-Gribizi. Bamingui-Bangoran is a transit route for pastoralists seeking to access the Kaga Bandoro market from Vakaga and even Sudan.[322]

The significance of the Kaga-Bandoro market, and the impact of such high cattle concentrations on local trade, saw the town and the wider region become the particular focus for ex-Séléka attention in 2015. Thus, whilst Al-Khatim's MPC secured control over the key Sido-Kabo-Kaga-Bandoro axe taxing passing herders and merchants,[323] the FPRC relocated its headquarters there in mid-2015. Early UN expert panel estimates of FPRC revenues from cattle merchants were around US$1.2 million in 2015, based on 20,000 FCF a per head of cattle, with 80 to 100 cows estimated to pass through Kaga-Bandoro daily.[324]

Despite the existing high cattle concentration, difficult climatic conditions and escalating conflict in centre, south and eastern CAR in 2016 and 2017[325] have added to the number of herders in this northern zone. Ecological and wider regional conflict drivers[326] increased cross-border transhumance from Chad to Batangafo and Kabo from 2015. This has been accompanied by a rise in "forced transits" through hostile anti-balaka territory to reach better pasture or even Bangui's PK45.[327] These heavily armed troupes seek to avoid villages to minimise attacks, though their transit has notable implications for conflicts with local farmers. For unarmed or unwilling pastoralists, mostly internal, Bangui remains inaccessible. As such, they prefer to rely on the Kaga-Bandoro market to sell their cattle, despite the heavy taxes imposed by MPC and FPRC.[328] Indeed, whilst transit to Bambari remained intact after 2014, volatility around Bakala in

319 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, December 2017, para. 195-196.
320 Interview with transhumance expert, February 2018.
321 Ibid.
322 Ibid.
323 E. Chauvin, "Pour une poignée de ressources. Violences armées et pénuries des rentes en Centrafrique", *Les cahiers d'Outre-Mer*, n° 272, 2015, p. 489.
324 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, para 171.
325 Conflicts in Sibut, Kaga-Bandoro, Mbrés, Bambari and Bria have seen arrivals of Fulani and some Arabic herders from these locales.
326 Here, the regional implications of heightening pastoralist conflict in Nigeria has potentially significant ramifications for stability in this northwestern zone. Since 2013 Boko Haram has targeted Mbororo communities in Northern Nigeria, stealing cattle and killing herders, to the extent that cattle are now a major source of income for the group. These activities have displaced herders into Chad and the Nigerian mid-belt, generating conflict between Fulani herders and Nigerian farmers. By the end of 2017, this conflict appeared to be escalating rapidly. For further on the latter see: SB Morgen Intelligence, *The Pastoral Conflict takes a deadlier turn*, January 2018.
327 Remote interviews with pastoralist operators, December 2017.
328 P. Schouten *et al*, 2017, *op cit*, p. 26.

2016/2017 saw this route effectively severed.[329] As such, cattle were simply directed towards Sibut and Damara for access to Bangui.[330]

Whilst Bamingui-Bangoran did not appear to exhibit a sudden rise in herder presence in the wake of 2014, it has nevertheless also seen a gradual rise in cattle concentrations since 2015. Illicit border crossings from Chad into Bamingui-Bangoran have seen higher concentrations of cattle around Ngolongosso and Ngarba routes. Moreover, following available watercourses, herders also arrive from Sudan via Vakaga, leading to a growing presence of pastoralists close to protected areas during migration periods. Conservationists state that pastoralism is currently the single largest threat to conservation efforts in these northern reaches due to its potential for habitat destruction, though they remain optimistic about the potential of managed migration.

3. Pastoralist dynamics in south east and eastern CAR

As outlined above, 2014 saw the east and southeast of the country become somewhat of a refuge for Central African herders. Consequently, most of the CAR's cattle came to be concentrated in one cross-prefectural area that includes Bambari, Ippy, Kouango (Ouaka), Bria, Yalinga (Haute-Kotto), Alindao, Mobaye, Kembé, Zangba, Mingala (Basse-Kotto), and Bangassou, Rafaï, Gambo (Mbomou).[331] These migrations had pushed pastoralists further into rebel controlled territories whilst also putting relations with local populations under stress. This was a notable forerunner to instability and ethnic conflict in these regions in late 2016 and 2017.

Before 2016, east and south-eastern CAR had been relatively spared protracted armed violence,[332] due largely to a low anti-balaka presence and uninterrupted ex-Séléka reign. Whilst the UPC dominated much of Ouaka, Bas-Kotto and parts of Mboumou from its headquarters in Bambari, the FPRC was likewise the dominant presence in Haute Kotto, with the remote reaches of Haut Mboumou left largely as roaming turf for weak LRA factions.

In south eastern CAR, the major Bambari supply market, and nearby *communes d'élevages* collection markets (e.g. Maloum, Boyo, Baidou and Bangui-Banda), have generally enjoyed close proximity to high cattle concentrations due to good local pasture. Indeed, pastoralists in Basse-Kotto and Mbomou usually execute only short internal transhumance as the quality of grazing lands in the *communes d'élevage* of Ewou (Basse-Kotto) and Pombolo (Mbomou) is guaranteed the whole year and rivers remain abundant.[333]

In 2014 herds already present in these regions increased further with the arrival of western pastoralists seeking refuge from anti-balaka abuses.[334] Indeed, the Séléka withdrawal to the east saw the development of a new ex-Séléka/anti-balaka frontline down the centre of the country, encompassing Nan-Grebizi, Kemo and southwest Ouaka. Thus, whilst internal pastoralists continued to be able to move south to Kuaongo, a key locale for river transit to Bangui, accessing the capital over the Bambari–Grimari–Sibut axis now required protected truck convoys or lengthy diversions, due to an aggressive anti-balaka presence in Grimari.[335] Indeed, 2015 saw a dramatic heightening of tensions between UPC and anti-balaka in the regions between Bambari, Grimari and Kuango.[336]

The rise in cattle concentrations occasioned by the 2014 influx of herders in Bass-Kotto saw internal transhumance towards this area limit itself, with some cattle movements from Bambari to Alindao, or

329 Interview with transhumance expert, February 2018. For examples of insecurity in the region, see UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2017/639, para. 52.
330 Note that an apparent "reconciliation campaign" between the UPC and the FPRC has since seen some Fulani breeders (mainly Oudda) start to descend from Kaga-Bandoro to Bambari (and even Bria), with most positioning themselves at Ndassima (Remote interview with pastoralist operator, February 2018).
331 FAO-DRC-CRS, 2015, *op cit*, p. 16.
332 Note however, Ali Darassa's return to the region, allegedly on the request of local Fulani communities due to exactions against them, perpetrated by a number of entities.
333 Interview with transhumance expert, February 2018.
334 I. Tidjani, 2015, *op cit*, p. 18.
335 Interview with transhumance expert, February 2018.
336 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, para. 55 and 67.

continuing further down to Zangba.[337] Moreover, increased herd numbers in Basse-Kotto, particularly Ewou, encouraged some pastoralists to extend east to Mboki,[338] whose market and the pasturelands have historically hosted local Fulani and South-Sudanese pastoralists. At this time, cross-border transhumance persisted predominantly only in Mbomou prefecture with the arrival of Sudanese pastoralists through the Chinko protected area. [339] Chadian herders who used to venture to Ouaka and Basse-Kotto as part of their seasonal transhumance had found themselves blocked by insecurity in the north.

Despite this, 2014 and 2015 saw internal transhumance intensify around Yalinga (Haute-Kotto) and Nzako and Bakouma (Mbomou), with concentration points along the Kotto river, in Aîgbando, Ngoundja and Akpo and along routes to Nzako and Yalinga.[340] Cross-border transhumance was usually undertaken by Sudanese Fulani travelling in familial troupes from Toulousse (Sudan) to Bria.

Vakaga – a haven from armed group racketeering?

Most pastoralists in the Vakaga prefecture are Arab, though there is also an important Fulani community. Arab herders predominantly locate themselves around Birao, in the communes of Ridina and Ouandja.[341] Fulani communities by contrast – seeking to avoid tensions with Arab herders – avoid cohabitation, basing themselves further south around Ouanda-Djallé.[342] Migration is seasonal and generally sees groups spend around nine months of the year in the CAR before returning to Sudan for the dry season.

Sudanese herders in Birao are powerful and well protected. As such, whilst they pay a voluntary tax of 15,000 CFAF to the Ridina communal authorities, unlike in other parts of the CAR they are not subject to racketeering by armed groups. However, despite Vakaga's relative security (partly due to undisputed FPRC rule), cattle theft around Birao and Amdafock has caused the decapitalization of local pastoralists and agro-pastoralists. Local populations are said to accuse Arab pastoralists of stealing in connivance with the FPRC and Sudanese strong men.[343] They consequently arm themselves to protect their cattle and have limited movements to a maximum 15 heads of cattle per herd.[344] The return of cameleers to the region around Bilbili in 2016 is another source of tensions. Around 10,000 camels are said to have crossed the border[345] despite many demands for their prohibition from both local populations and pastoralists.[346] Not only do these troupes ignore established migration routes designed to minimise conflict,[347] but they are accused of destroying both crops and the local ecosystem by feeding their animals shea and jujube trees. These groups are said to engage in poaching wildlife in national parks,[348] as well as stealing cattle for trade in Sudan.[349] Indeed, they had been known to enter both Vakaga and Bamingui-Bangoran some years previously, though were originally pushed from the region by armed rangers based in Birao.[350]

337 Interview with transhumance expert, February 2018.
338 FAO-DRC-CRS, 2015, *op cit*, p. 14.
339 Interview with transhumance expert, February 2018.
340 I. Tidjani, 2015, *op cit*.
341 Interview with transhumance expert, February 2018.
342 Remote interviews with pastoralist operators, December 2017.
343 Ibid.
344 Ibid.
345 Ibid.
346 Ibid.
347 In the Vakaga region, these routes are generally respected by herders who have followed the same courses for generations.
348 The return of this phenomenon since the 1990s may pose a potential threat to conservation efforts in Bamingui-Bangoran, as these protection areas were formerly targeted by such herders for their pastureland and bush meat supply. Whilst cameleer's have not yet pushed this far into the CAR's interior, 2016 efforts to re-enter the territory may see them attempt to do so. In the past they have also reportedly secured access to these parks via northern trails through Chad.
349 Remote interviews with pastoralist operators, December 2017.
350 Interview with ECOFAUNE, February 2018.

Violence in Bria between the UPC and the FPRC in late November 2016, allegedly over "road taxes" around mining areas and Fulani migration routes spilled into inter-ethnic conflict in the city's outskirts. Here, armed Fulani and UPC fighters targeted non-Fulani civilians as armed non-Fulani actors attacked Fulani civilians.[351] These events marked the start of a series of clashes between these two groups and ethnic communities throughout the east and south east throughout the dry season. By March 2017, the overwhelming majority of herders in Haute-Kotto had fled to Sudan, DRC, and Mbomou (specifically Mboki). During this period of fighting, the FPRC and MPC are reported to have stolen Fulani pastoralist herds in Haute-Kotto *en masse*, driving them to the Kaga-Bandoro market for sale to Arab traders.[352] By mid-2017, the level of predation was said to be so high that Bria and surrounding markets experienced a shortage of meat, and one head of beef was more expensive than in Bangui (around 500,000 FCFA and 700,000 FCFA respectively).[353] Many Bria-based herders and traders fled to Bangui and Bambari as a result of the violence here, with only some cattle remaining around the mining hub of Aîgbando. Many pastoralists reportedly lost their livliehoods during these events, which have destroyed both the local cattle industry and socio-economic fabric of the town.[354]

Further south, devastating "self-defence group" attacks on Nzako (multiple in 2016),[355] Bakouma (March 2017)[356] and Pombolo (October 2017),[357] amongst others, pushed pastoralists to flee towards Haut-Mbomou and Sudan.[358] Mid-distance transhumance was drastically restricted. Pastoralists from Bambari, who used to travel set routes via localities like Maloum and Mingala to Kembé and Pombolo were now obliged to stop in Alindao.[359] Numerous herders from Alindao and Mobaye (Basse-Kotto) also sought refuge from self-defence group attacks by fleeing to Ouaka, compounding high cattle concentrations there. These high cattle concentrations saw Maloum dominate local collection as a secondary market in 2017. Moreover, a new secondary market was reportedly opened in Ndassima to supply the surrounding gold mines with meat. Besides Maloum, cattle concentrations also rose in Baidou and Boyo,[360] as well as Bangui-Banda (until "self-defence groups" attacked this local collection market in March 2017).[361]

Fearing the anti-Fulani rhetoric of self-defence groups in Mboumou, Sudanese pastoralists frequenting protected areas close to Bakouma in 2015 and 2016 also reduced their crossborder transhumance, with those still entering the territory said to be taking extra precautions. Leaving Toulousse (Sudan), these groups followed riverways up to around Derbissaka before heading to Mboki or Zemio, being careful to avoid Dembia, Rafaï and Bangassou.

Having lost sizable revenues to conflict in early 2017, the start of the subsequent dry season saw the UPC and FPRC sign the Ippy ceasefire agreement in October 2017. This agreement – to which pastoralism was paramount – enabled the reopening of transhumance corridors towards Baidou, Maloum and Bokolobo, as well as the end of barriers on the Bria-Bambari-Grimari axis.[362] A high anti-balaka presence around Grimari means that pastoralists continue to avoid this axis, preferring to reach Bangui by boat. Nevertheless, an apparent "reconciliation campaign" between the UPC and the FPRC has since seen some Fulani breeders (mainly Oudda) start to descend from Kaga-Bandoro to Bambari, and even Bria.[363]

Since 2017, sizable Fulani herder populations fleeing FPRC and anti-balaka violence in the Southeast (Bambari, Kouango, Alindao, Mobaye, Ippy and Bria) have moved to Sibut and Damara.[364] These herds

351 Human Rights Watch, "Central African Republic: Civilians Killed During Clashes Minority Peuhl at Risk, Better UN Protection Needed", 5 December 2016.
352 Remote interviews with pastoralist operators, December 2017. This may account for higher daily average slaughter rates in Bangui in the first quarter of 2017 (see above).
353 Remote interviews with pastoralist operators, December 2017. Reports indicate that the looting also affected other sectors such as fishing and small cattle herding, with goat prices being pushed to 70,000CFAF – the same as a cow a year or two before the crisis.
354 Interview with transhumance expert, March 2018.
355 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2016/694, Annex 17.
356 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2017/639, para.87.
357 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para. 75
358 Interview with transhumance expert, February 2018.
359 Ibid.
360 Interview with transhumance expert, February 2018.
361 Ibid.
362 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para. 135-137 and annex 5.1.
363 Telephone interview with transhumance expert, April 2018.
364 Remote interviews with pastoralist operators, December 2018.

now join migratory herds from Chad and Kaga Bandoro on the latter's target pastures. This uptick in herder presence in Kemo and Ombella-M'poko prefectures has considerably boosted the Damara (Ombella M'poko) and Amou (Kemo) markets, further stimulating pastoralist activity and trade. In a bid to manage the burgeoning conflict that such influxes have generated in other regions, the local and national authorities have welcomed these transhumants and organised meetings and sensitisation sessions locally.[365]

F. Concluding Observations

Pastoralism and cross-border transhumance has played a defining role in the CAR's security landscape, even before and especially since the 2013/14 crisis. This highlights management of this sector and engagement with those actors involved in it – armed, entrepreneurial and civilian – as key to stabilising the most conflict affected parts of the CAR. Such engagement requires a regional focus extending beyond even the CAR's immediate neighbours as wider environmental and politico-military drivers can be expected to continue intensifying pressure on the CAR's pastoral resources. Moreover, the considerable interest of armed groups in the sector both in terms of financing and protecting the communal interests of their members merits particular focus in discussions with such groups.

365 Ibid.

CHAPTER V
MINING AND SECURITY IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

A. Introduction

Prior to 2013, minerals were the CAR's third largest contributor to government coffers, after agriculture and forestry. Diamond exports alone accounted for 11% of fiscal revenues in 2010,[366] a contribution well below the sector's actual value. Even at that time, at least around 30% of diamonds left the CAR illegally – most of them the high quality stones constituting the bulk of the sector's worth.[367] Indeed, whilst CAR's diamond production is not as prolific as neighbouring DRC's, the country ranks among the top producers globally for the high quality of its stones.[368] The CAR's gold sector, whilst likewise promising, has long been even more entrenched in informality with 95% of production leaving the country unofficially even before the crisis.[369]

The high value, low weight ratio of much of the CAR's mineral wealth, high levels of informality and institutional mismanagement have long seen the mining sector dogged by links with conflict.[370] Since 2013, however, these links have become more acute with both ex-Séléka and anti-balaka groups engaged in highly lucrative minerals predation. Mine sites are thus jealously coveted by all parties to the conflict. In addition to UN sanctions prohibiting the financing of armed groups operating in the country,[371] this predation saw the imposition of a Kimberley Process (KP)[372] embargo in June 2013 to prevent the flow of conflict stones entering the world market. Despite these efforts, conflict gold and diamonds have continued to flow from the CAR.[373] Whilst the 2016 partial lifting of the KP embargo on certain compliance zones meeting specific security criteria has aided to create official channels through which conflict-free diamonds might be exported, challenges remain in ensuring not only that conflict stones do not infiltrate the system, but also that all stones produced in compliance zones do in fact enter the formal circuit. Certainly, KP-related monitoring indicates that 2017's exports represented only 36% of that year's annual production from compliance zones.[374] Thus illicit trading remains a serious competitive threat for the Central African Government.

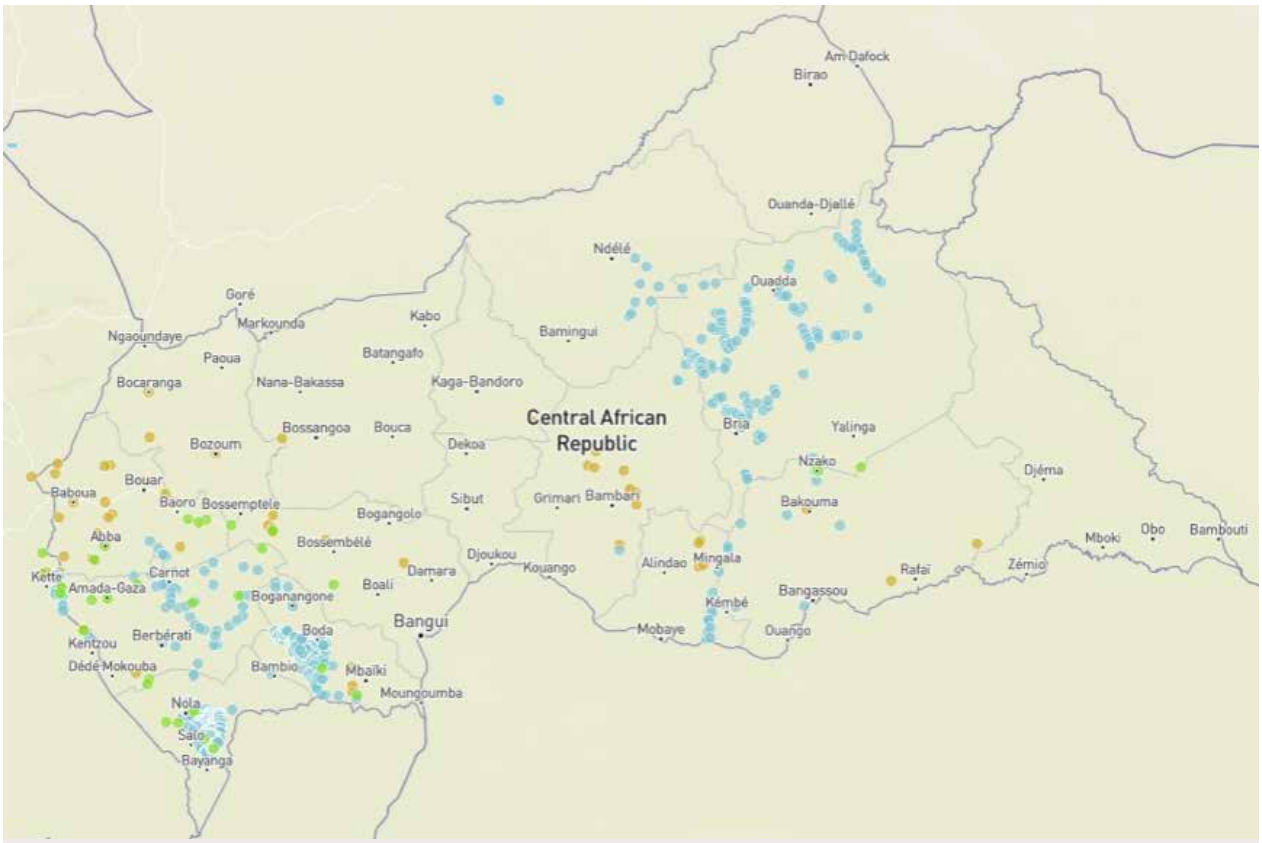
It is in this context, that the Central African authorities are faced with two major challenges in respect of the minerals sector: (1) addressing its role in insecurity and conflict financing; and (2) combatting illicit flows as a means of reducing conflict financing and improving government revenues. In doing so, addressing issues of capacity, corruption and the habitual opacity of the sector will prove key to the government's success.

366 K. Matthysen and I Clarkson, *Gold and Diamonds in the Central African Republic*, IPIS/ ActionAid/ Cordaid, February 2013, p.6.
367 *Ibid,* p.7.
368 T.J. Chupezi, V. Ingram and J. Schure, *Impacts of artisanal gold and diamond mining on livelihoods and the environment in the Sangha Tri-National Park landscape*, CIFOR/ICUN, 2009, p.15.
369 K. Matthysen and I Clarkson, *Gold and Diamonds in the Central African Republic*, IPIS/ActionAid/Cordaid, February 2013, p.6.
370 For a more comprehensive background see, International Crisis Group, *Dangerous Little Stones: Diamonds in the Central African Republic*, December 2010.
371 For latest see UN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2339 (2017) and S/RES/2399 (2018).
372 The Kimberley Process in an international certification system intended to prevent diamonds used to fund conflicts against legitimate state authorities entering into the formal diamond supply chain. See, F. Southward, *Kimberley Process: Observations from the Sidelines*, IPIS, November 2013.
373 Whilst the Central African Republic is a member of the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), this body's Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources (RINR) and its Regional Certification Mechanism, designed to stem the flow of conflict minerals, including gold – an issue also acutely affecting the DRC – has yet to be implemented in the Central African Republic.
374 Chirico, P.G, Bergstresser, S.E., and DeWitt, J.D., *Artisanal and small-scale diamond mining assessment of the Central African Republic*, 2017. Report presented to the Kimberley Process CAR Monitoring Team at Kimberley Process Plenary Meeting, Brisbane, Australia, 11 December 2017.

This chapter provides a brief overview of some of the main trends observable in the CAR's mining sector before addressing the role of mining in both security and conflict financing since 2014. In doing, so it will highlight some of the key differences between the more conflict-affected and rebel-held east of the country and the CAR's more stable westerly production areas. It will then outline some challenges that will need to be overcome if the CAR is to tackle the deleterious impact of illicit minerals trading on security and development.

B. Key trends in the CAR's minerals sector since 2014

Despite an initial drop in mineral production in western CAR in 2014,[375] interviews with mining officials today suggest that there is now an overall increase in production throughout the country. This observation is born out in recent mining data gathered by both the Central African Mining Ministry and the US Geological Survey (USGS),[376] as depicted on the interactive map. This data highlights not only a rise in gold mining but also a growth in (or greater awareness of) mineral exploitation beyond diamonds and gold, including cassiterite, iron and other ores.[377]

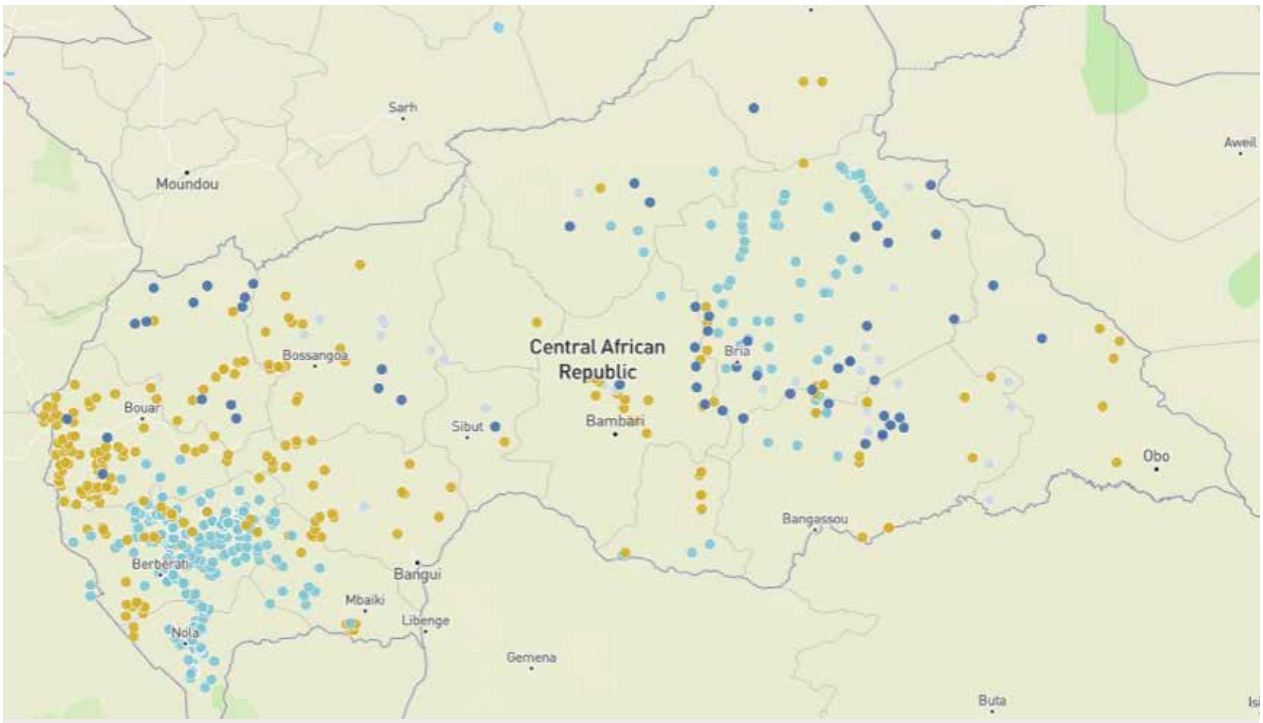


Estimated artisanal mining sites (diamond, gold and both) in 2014 (Source: Central African Ministry of Mines, USGS, USAID)

375 See UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2014/452, para. 63. See also, IPIS, *Diamonds in the Central African Republic*, December 2014, p.6.

376 The United States Geological Survey (USGS) is a government scientific agency that has been assisting the Kimberley Process to monitor Central African diamond production since the start of the crisis. See the Operational Framework for Resumption of Exports of Rough Diamonds from the Central African Republic (Section II(D)(iv)) and the CAR Monitoring Team Terms of Reference, Section VI.

377 Interviews in 2016 and 2018 found repeated references to small scale exploitation of other minerals. For example, coltan mining around Paoua is said to have attracted Chadian interest.

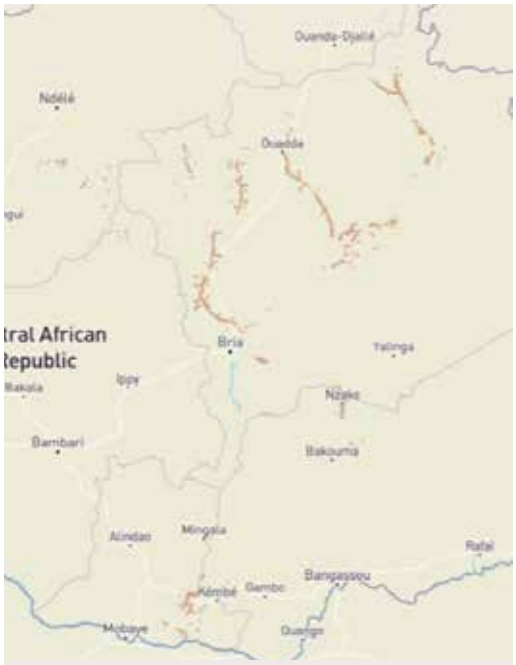


Estimated artisanal mining sites (diamond, gold and other) in 2017 (Source: Central African Ministry of Mines, USGS, USAID, IPIS)

Moreover, remote monitoring indicates the intensification of mining in ex-Seleka controlled eastern CAR since 2013 – a testament to the encouragement of such activity by groups like the FPRC and RPRC.[378]

In eastern CAR mining continues along alluvial valleys around Bria, Dimbi (Kémbé), Nzako, Ouadda and Sam-Ouandja. Here, lack of institutional infrastructure, difficult terrain and high insecurity render production monitoring extremely difficult. Despite this, USGS analysis of satellite imagery from 2013 to 2016 has enabled estimates on the localisation and intensity of active mining in these areas, highlighting an increase in both space and density, especially around Bria and Nzako.[379]

In western CAR, USGS analysis suggests that the highest density mining has shifted somewhat from the Nola region towards Carnot, Berberati and other parts of Boda, as well as indicating increased activity close to the Cameroonian border. This migration is no doubt partly due to the proximity of these areas to sources of pre-financing in Cameroon and KP compliance zones, though it may also coincide with increased artisanal interest in gold exploitation since 2014.[380]

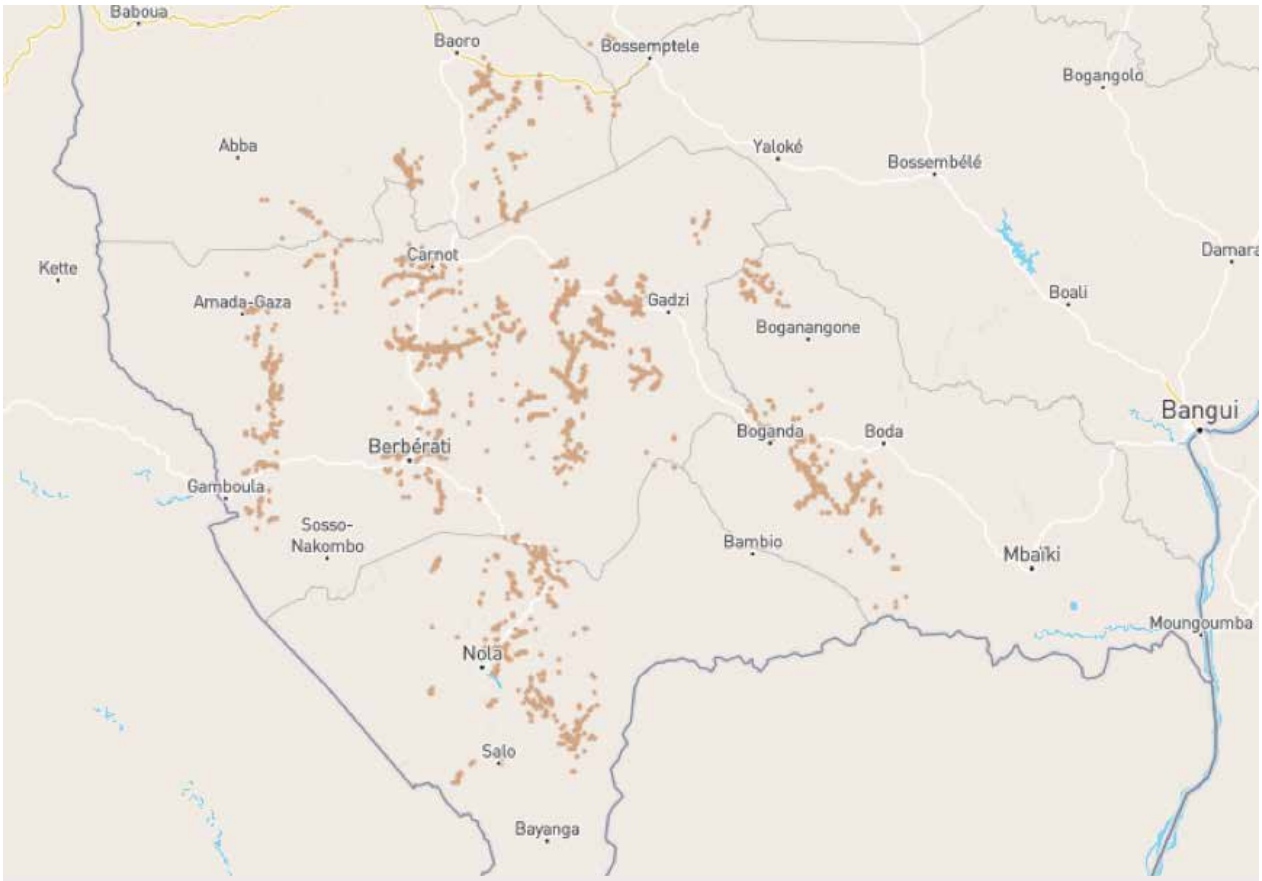


Heat-map of mining activity on the Mouka-Ouadda sandstones in eastern CAR between 2013 and 2017 (Source: USGS)

378 See J.D DeWitt, P.G. Chirico, and S.E. Bergstresser, *The Central African Republic Diamond Database – A Geodatabase of Archival Diamond Occurrences and Areas of Recent Artisanal and Small-scale Diamond Mining,* U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 2018-1088.

379 Ibid, p.63.

380 Between 2013 and 2016, the USGS identified 2,560 active and recently active mine sites in the CAR, focusing on localities known to be diamond mining areas. Gold and diamonds are often found in close proximity to each other in a number of locations and so certain sites can encompass both minerals.



Heat-map of mining activity on the Carnot sandstones in western CAR between 2013 and 2017 (Source: USGS)

The growth of artisanal gold mining is partly due to a reduction in diamond exploitation caused by pre-financing shocks linked to Muslim departures and the KP embargo. These shocks have pushed miners to apply their skills in the highly informal gold sector.[381] Here, mining and trading are more accessible in the absence of specialist networks, tools or expertise, and more predictable pricing renders revenues more stable.

A Central African gold rush?

Before the crisis, gold mining was seen as a marginal activity compared to diamonds, with many gold diggers being women and children.[382] 2015 and 2016 however saw rising artisanal interest in the sector, particularly in Ouham prefecture. Central African mining officials report a consequent spike in gold production and some currently view the sector as having greater State revenue potential than diamonds.[383] In Ouham, the Koro-Mpoko area (50 km south of Bossangoa) has become a major artisanal mining venue. It is home to "Wili", western CAR's largest gold mine in 2017, where miners dig using spades and metal detectors.[384]

381 This trend was also an observable response to the *de facto* embargo on Congolese 3T production in the DRC, highlighting gold's significance to local survival strategies, as well as challenges to regulating the sector. For further see: IPIS, *Mineral supply chains and conflict links in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: Five years of implementing supply chain due diligence*, November 2015.

382 Interview with BECDOR, January 2018.

383 Interview with CAR mining officials, February 2018. This is no doubt also due to considerable interest in industrial gold mining in the CAR, where mining authorities hope to extend State presence and regulatory control to the gold mining sous-prefecture of Bambari. In addition to Bambari's hard rock industrial potential, there are unconfirmed reports of dragues operating in the area.

384 Interviews with mining operators accessing the site, December 2017 and February 2018. Miners are reportedly expected to share half of their production with the sites founder, though in practice site controllers can be co-opted into under-declaration of production.

Site operators estimate that Koro-Mpoko can attract up to a thousand miners daily, though such estimates have also been contested and are difficult to verify due to seasonal fluctuations and daily in-flows and departures.[385] Numerous miners are said to hail from mining areas in the southwest, northwest and even central-eastern CAR, driven by insecurity or mineral depletion. The second largest goldmining area in Ouham in late 2017 was Ben Zambé (50km northeast of Bossangoa). Here, the largest production site was Bolakaba (15km from Ben Zambé), discovered around March 2017. Unconfirmed reports suggest that this site is also capable of attracting many hundreds of workers, including whole families, who work onsite together.[386] Mining appears to be open pit and haphazard, with diggers using shovels, basins and metal detectors to extract ore.[387] Both of these sites are said to have an anti-balaka presence, though there is no such presence in more impoverished western gold mining communities. These include communities along the Ouham[388] and Digoro rivers in Ouham-Bac, where yields appear to be low and most workers (around 60%) are local children digging and panning for gold.

In Ouaka, Ndassima (50km north of Bambari) also produces notable quantities of artisanal gold. Here, diggers operate both open pit and tunnel mining in a zone that previous industrial sampling indicates could prove highly lucrative.[389] Whilst mining here generally entails hard rock extraction, which requires industrial capacity, 2013 and 2014 saw at least 55 miners die in two pit collapses trying to access deposits.[390] Intense armed group contest over Ndassima (and nearby Bakala) in 2016 and 2017 suggests that this site continues to be highly profitable.



Mining encampment at Korompoko

Another potential factor affecting production levels in the CAR is the impact of displacement due to insecurity and economic hardship.[391] Sixty-eight percent of urban and 61% of rural households in the CAR have experienced displacement since 2012, with regions most affected including those with recent gold (e.g Ouham) and diamond (e.g. Haut Kotto) mining increases.[392] There may be some indication of possible vocational migration to the mining sector from other livelihood sectors, though if this is the case, the extent of it is unclear and it is likely to be seasonally bound.[393] Certainly, insecurity and predation on distribution networks (see Chapter III) have ravaged the CAR's food security, resulting in 6 out of 10 households facing food shortages amid massive price hikes and falls in crop production.[394] In this context, the mining sector's cash economy is an important survival source, with households in communes with

385 Interviews with mining operators and visitors to Koro-Mpoko, December 2017 and February 2018.

386 Interviews with mining operators from Bossangoa sous-prefecture, December 2017 and February 2018. Bolakaba was home to thousands of IDPs fleeing insecurity and living in deplorable conditions in 2015, with only 2% having access to land due to fears of attack. The local population was then estimated at around 16,300 (ACF, Rapid Response Mechanism evaluation report, February 2015).

387 As in Koro-Mpoko, miners are reportedly expected to share half their production with the site's founder and production sold to a Chinese buying house in Bangui.

388 For example, the villages of Bavara, Bowé, Gbangba and Boassi.

389 Interview with former AXMIN employee, February 2018.

390 "AXMIN comments on Passendro mine collapse deaths", Stockwatch Daily, 27 June 2013; "AXMIN comments on reports of mine collapse in the Central African Republic", Marketwire, 26 August 2014.

391 Interviews with mining operators, December 2017 and February 2018.

392 World Bank, *Central African Republic: 2016 National Commune Monography Survey*, February 2017, p.24-25.

393 The World Bank highlights the absence of a certain percentage of men of working age (21 to 40 years old) from its survey sample, which did not include coverage of informal mining settlements (ibid, p.23). Mining and armed group mobilisation present possible alternative survival strategies that may explain this absence. However, it should be noted that mining and agriculture can often be practiced in tandem with seasonal migrations from mine sites to field work.

394 World Bank, *Central African Republic: 2016 National Commune Monography Survey*, p. 3.

active mining sectors found to enjoy better levels of food consumption.[395] These socio-economic factors are important context in considering relative levels of insecurity and armed group predation, as well as strategies for challenging them.



Gold mining encampment, Ouham Province

C. The role of mining in security and conflict financing in CAR

1. Security dynamics in the CAR's mining sector

Eastern CAR: The venue for major conflict events in mining areas

Differences in the general security dynamics characterising the west, center and east of CAR are generally born out in stability in and around mining areas. Armed groups and local communities directly reliant on mining seek to minimise disruptions to production due to its impact on revenues. Until late 2016, for example, eastern CAR's key diamond production hub, Bria, had remained relatively untouched by major conflict events despite the active presence of at least three armed groups, who had opted to engage in minerals predation via informal revenue sharing.[396] Moreover, whilst low level contest over key mining locales was on-going between ex-Seléka and anti-balaka groups in the conflict-affected central region,[397] it was not until late 2016 that mining locales became a major venue for armed conflict.

395 Ibid, p. 32. Notably, these communities do not seem to benefit from any greater wealth, indicating that conditions in the sector currently limit its livelihoods potential to mere subsistence living.

396 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, para.104-8. Some skirmishes still occurred, however.

397 See, for example, events in Balaka (December 2014) and Mbrés (February 2015).

Since then, intense fighting over these areas between the UPC, FPRC, MPC and anti-balaka rendered them some of the deadliest in 2017. This attests to the significance that armed groups place on securing control over mining resources.[398] By mid-2017, armed group clashes for control over mining locales had become heavily imbued with identity discourse (Muslim/non-Muslim, autochthone/foreigner, Rounga/Gula), which is often prevalent in local tensions over resource access, especially in mining. In Bria – the epicentre of such violence – minerals were explicitly reported as one trigger of major conflict events on at least two occasions.[399]

Major conflict events in Central African mining locales in late 2016 and 2017

- **Bakala** (gold mining area): major clashes in December 2016 – reports of nearly 200 fatalities[400]
- **Ndassima** (gold mining area): intense clashes in February and December 2017 – dozens of reported fatalities
- **Nzako** (diamond mining area, some gold): intense clashes in March, May, June and July 2017 – death toll unclear
- **Bakouma** (diamond mining area, some gold): intense clashes in March and June 2017 – dozens of reported fatalities
- **Bria** (diamond mining area): intense clashes in November 2016 and May, June, July, August and November 2017 – reporting suggests around 130 fatalities in November 2016 alone and over 300 in 2017.

Aside from major conflict events, abuses against civilians (taxation, extortion, harassment, forced labour, extra judicial killing) are also often exacted in connection with mining. This can render mining areas key venues for the perpetration of such acts, which are much less reported than conflict events.[401] Moreover, mining communities are a key target for acts of pillage/banditry. Thus, for example, communities around Bria, Sam Ouandja and Nzako have experienced numerous LRA incursions since 2013. Moreover, there have also be reports of assaults by armed herders on artisanal miners in western CAR as cross-border transhumance starts to encroach into mining areas.[402]

Links between mining and pastoralism

The LRA targeting of civilians often focuses on both mining and pastoralist communities in eastern CAR. Indeed, the links between these communities mean that they are often located in close proximity to one another. This is because artisanal miners are key meat consumers, reliant on passing herders to meet local protein needs. As a result, mining areas such as Aigbando, Ndassima and Bakouma have often retained a cattle presence even during periods of notable conflict. The frequent use of minerals (often gold) as a form of exchange, especially in pre-financing arrangements and isolated areas with restricted cash flows can render passing herders one conduit of illicit minerals flows.

Western CAR: Fragile stability in a highly militarised mining sector

A continuing lack of state presence beyond major municipal centres in western CAR and high levels of banditry mean that mining communities in the west continue to seek security assurances either by

398 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2017/639, para.72.
399 See events in Bria on 21 November 2016 and 20 November 2017 on the interactive map.
400 All reported fatalities are likely to be underestimates. For more information, see interactive map.
401 For example, see UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.232.
402 Interviews with locally operating mediation NGO and PRADD, December 2017 and February 2018.

arming themselves or paying others, often current or former anti-balaka, to provide security at sites. As such, artisanal mining is highly militarised even in areas not ostensibly under armed group control.

For example, Ngouré site, 20km upstream from Carnot on the Mambéré river, has become a notable gold production site attracting hundreds of former diamond diggers, including demobilised anti-balaka. As one of the larger gold sites near Carnot, Ngouré is located in a KP compliance zone. Whilst there is no ostensible anti-balaka presence on site, miners in the area are nevertheless commonly seen carrying homemade rifles for self-protection due to the unavailability of state security around this site.[403] In 2016, such security arrangements were reportedly occasioning greater recourse to arms during miner disputes, with MINUSCA intervening in at least one such event near Carnot in February 2016.[404]



Gold mine near Carnot

Miners carrying slingshots and hunting rifles to protect against bandits at a diamond site in between Nandabo and Amada Gaza

IPIS' research on the CAR's gold sector highlights the presence of fire arms at virtually all major gold sites. Moreover, interviews with diamond mining operators indicate that major diamond sites, particularly in the east, and sites closer to problem zones like Amada Gaza are also militarised.[405] Indeed, despite "security provision" by both gendarmes and anti-balaka at the Wili gold mine, numerous actors not forming part of these security arrangements are nevertheless said to carry weapons on site, including miners. Interviews with personnel from the Central African Special Anti-Fraud Unit indicate that these high armament levels render it generally impossible for them to regulate activities on site, particularly given their lack of means.[406] As such, controls are restricted to transit hubs. Security provision is not seen as part of this force's remit. This renders those seeking to access sites vulnerable in the absence of their own security arrangements. Events at Koro-Mpoko highlight that weapons are also used to protect local interests at a site. Here, prospectors seeking to take over site management have been met with expressions of disapproval and intimidation with the firing of weapons in the air by miners and anti-balaka on several occasions.[407]

403 Interviews with mining operators visiting this site, December 2017 and February 2018.
404 Interview with MINUSCA representative in Carnot, March 2016.
405 In March 2016, IPIS visited some smaller diamond sites in the Nandobo area and observed no firearms, though visits to sites between Amada Gaza and Nandobo in late 2017 indicated that miners worked with home-made weapons at sites closer to Amada Gaza.
406 Interviews with *Unité Spéciale Anti-Fraude* (USAF) personnel in Berberati, March 2016. These reports were again confirmed during interviews with mining operators in February 2018.
407 Interviews with mining operators visiting this site, December 2017 and February 2018.

Moreover, where anti-balaka maintain a presence at mine sites (particularly gold sites), they are often seen more as local security providers than militia,[408] sometimes even operating in collaboration with or as an auxiliary to local authorities.[409] Whilst anti-balaka elements continue to profit from mining in western CAR, their combat activities in mining areas have dramatically fallen since 2014. One key exception is in Amada Gaza, where conflict over mines between anti-balaka and armed Fulani has been ongoing throughout 2013 to 2017.[410] Here, the Wisambo gold and diamond mine in the Noufou sector is reportedly a particular focus of contest. Whilst previously occupied by anti-balaka, since late November 2017, armed Fulani reportedly took over the site, allegedly bringing miners from Cameroon and trading production with partners in Gbiti, Kentzou and Bertoua. Whilst anti-balaka have launched offensives to retake the site, the Fulani occupants have allegedly benefitted from reinforcement by FDPC elements from Zoukombo.[411] Despite their loss of Wisambo gold mine, anti-balaka continued to mine peripheral gold and diamond sites in Amada Gaza in late 2017. Here, digger populations were said to be highly impoverished with more children than adults due to a lack of local schools.

Anti-balaka gains from its 2013 offensive in gold mining areas

Most major 'new' gold mining locales were recognised as secondary trading centres for gold even before the crisis. These locations, including Koro-Mpoko, Ben Zambé, Zéré and Ouham-Bac, were targeted as part of the anti-balaka offensive to clear the west of Muslims in 2013.[412] Like the major gold town of Yaloké,[413] they have remained under anti-balaka influence since. This has seen a considerable shift in the trading demographic for gold in the CAR, as well as the emergence of Bossangoa, a Bozizé stronghold, as a major gold hub rivalling Yaloké.[414] Bossangoa itself continues to be under the strong influence of anti-balaka elements, who are said to run their own parallel administration, including a justice authority that is frequently resorted to by local inhabitants due to the inefficacy and slow response of state-run services.[415] Whilst most anti-balaka have converted back to civilian life, in these areas they remain particularly susceptible to remobilisation.

An overall drop in major anti-balaka incidents in southwestern CAR since 2014 suggests the demobilisation of many fighters in this region. However, prevailing anti-Muslim sentiment and tensions surrounding refugee returns to mining areas can risk the remobilisation of latent anti-balaka elements if not managed. Indeed, 2015 saw the documentation of several security incidents in Mambéré-Kadeï in which Muslim diamond collectors were specifically targeted by locals, including anti-balaka.[416] Here, the role of KP compliance zones is worth mentioning.

In 2016, five sous-prefectures were designated by the KP as "compliance zones"[417] deemed to meet the criteria set out under the Kimberley Process Operational Framework for the Resumption of Exports of Rough Diamonds from the CAR. These criteria include: (1) appropriate and sufficient CAR Government control within compliance zones; (2) no evidence of systematic rebel-based or armed group activity impacting diamond production or trade; and (3) an overall security situation enabling the free movement of goods and persons.

408 Interviews with miners operating on gold sites in Ouham prefecture, December 2017.
409 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.231.
410 Interviews with UN Personnel and mining officials in Berberati in March and July 2016.
411 Interviews with locals from Amada Gaza and UN experts, February and April 2018.
412 See Human Rights Watch, *Muslims Forced to Flee: Christian Militias Unleash Waves of Targeted Violence*, February 2014.
413 IPIS visits to Yaloké in June 2016 confirmed continued anti-balaka control over major production sites in that area despite the presence of state mining officials in the town.
414 Collectors in Yaloké claim that there are currently around 30 sites in the area. Around 10 to 15 collectors operate here. Interview with local mining official, June 2016, and collector, February 2018.
415 Interviews with locals from Bossangoa, February 2018.
416 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2015/936, para.225.
417 Berberati, Carnot, Nola, Boda and Gadzi sous-prefectures.

The establishment of these compliance zones and the consequent resumption of exports from these areas are intended to restimulate local production and bring it back within formal channels, whilst ensuring that diamonds produced in these areas remain conflict-free. As indicated above, the extent to which this has been successful (including regarding state control and free movement) remains a work in progress. Nevertheless, the existence of these zones suggests that, where properly monitored and managed, they may aid to incentivise higher levels of stability in these areas by entailing economic benefits for communities that stave off armed group predation and maintain local security.[418] Certainly, their designation is believed to have instilled greater confidence among Muslim refugees to return to their areas of operations since 2016. Whilst at the time of their designation, the free movement of Muslims beyond major municipal centres remained highly questionable, for now, that range of movement appears to be gradually broadening.[419] Indeed, the mere presence of Muslims in western CAR is an essential first step to national reconciliation, which until 2016 was often being attempted in the absence of one of the parties.[420]

The gradual return of Central African Muslims to the mining sector has not been welcomed by all, however, especially those benefitting from the status quo. Berberati[421] and Sosso-Nakombo,[422] for example, witnessed numerous attacks on returning refugees in 2016, some of which were allegedly sponsored by local diamond traders seeking to ward off competition.[423] Moreover, in 2017, Muslims seeking to venture beyond regional capitals continued to be subject to significant harassment, racketeering and demands for "security" payments. Such generalised harassment has taken place at the hands not only of "anti-balaka" (particularly in Sosso Nakombo) but also national security forces, as well as local authorities.[424] Quite aside from outstanding property rights disputes, such factors can restrict mine site access only to those able to withstand such extortion and incentivise illicit trading.[425] Pastoralist returns to the area have further complicated this situation, seeing a rise in anti-balaka predation on returnee herders and the emergence of a new armed group claiming to defend them.[426]

Anti-balaka mobilization and economic opportunism in the minerals sector

The instrumentalisation of armed group mobilisation, more recently anti-balaka, for private economic agendas has been particularly reported in the minerals sector.[427] Examples include the alleged organisation of attacks on returning Muslims in Berberati and Sosso-Nakombo by local diamond collectors and miners in 2016 – allegedly a bid to prolong their competitive dominance.[428] Likewise, financial aid is also said to have been rendered to anti-balaka operating in Bangassou by influential artisanal miner, Yvon Nzélété, allegedly to facilitate the takeover of mining businesses belonging to Central African Muslims.[429]

418 The concentration of the diamond trade occasioned by entrenched illicit networks since 2013/14 has worked to depress both prefinancing and diamond pricing to the detriment of miners.
419 For example, Muslims enclaved in Carnot's Catholic Church (observed February 2016) have since relocated and are said to enjoy greater range of movement.
420 This was observed in Bouar in June 2016, for example, where some agencies were engaged in reconciliation work without any ostensible contact with absent Muslim communities.
421 See the UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, Annex 7.4.
422 In June 2016, IPIS heard reports of two Muslim miners in Sosso-Nakombo being intercepted and tortured, allegedly under the instruction of another local diamond operator.
423 One such trader was allegedly Ali Hassan Farwaz (UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para. 231-232). During pre-DDR talks in 2015, Mr Farwaz was also said to finance anti-balaka in Berberati, where he was the leading diamond collector in 2016 (confidential report).
424 For examples see UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, Annex 7.1.
425 See for example, UN Panel of Experts Reports, S/2016/1032, paras. 230-238; S/2017/639, paras. 125-126, and S/2017/1023, paras.227-228 and 241.
426 For more, see Chapter IV.
427 See also, IPIS, *Diamonds in the Central African Republic*, December 2014, p.5 to 9.
428 Interviews with NGOs, mining officials and UN personnel in Berberati and Bangui in June 2016.
429 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.98.

To address such security issues and protect the status of KP compliance zones, the Central African Ministry of Mines has begun a collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs and National Reconciliation to establish Local Committees for Peace and Reconciliation.[430] Being piloted in the Berberati sous-prefecture, executive offices have already been established at communal level, and three intercommunity dialogues on peace and conflict management conducted by mid-2018, with another three pending. Having started in August 2016, the progress of this inter-ministerial collaboration has been hindered in part by resource issues – a factor also likely to determine whether such conflict management can be extended to other existing compliance zones. Nevertheless, it highlights the potential role of the KP Operational Framework in attracting both engagement and resources to address security concerns in diamond mining areas collaboratively. Indeed, it may highlight a unique opening for addressing local and intercommunal grievances over resource access in this sector – key to progressing post-conflict transition in the CAR.



Butterflies on mineralised gravel

2. Conflict financing in the CAR's mining sector

The complex nexus between mining, security and conflict financing in the CAR is illustrated in the role of mining in the events of 2015, 2016 and 2017. Here, armed group predation on mining has continued to be characterised by (1) looting and extortion; (2) security provision; (3) taxation and parallel mining administrations; (4) and involvement in mining and trading.

Looting and extortion

Until the mid-2000s much predation on mining in the CAR was characterised by looting or extortion: both Damane's UFDR in late 2006 and early 2007, and Hissène's CPJP between 2008 and 2010, relied more on these tactics at the start of their operations.[431] Today, these tactics are more often used by transient armed actors such as the LRA (in Haut Kotto and Haut Mboumou)[432] and armed transhumant herders (Haut Kotto and Mambéré-Kadeï). Notably, a surge in LRA incursions on mining and pastoralist communities in the Bria, Yalinga and Sam Ouandja triangle, and around Nzako and Bakouma, from late 2015 contributed to

430 PRADD presentation on the implementation of the KP Operational Framework, Antwerp June 2018.
431 International Crisis Group, *Dangerous Little Stones*, December 2010, p.16 and 18-19.
432 P. Ronan, "Kony to LRA: Bring me ivory, gold, and diamonds", Resolve, November 2014.

the conditions precipitating protracted conflict in mining areas from late 2016.[433] Not only did it see a rise in criminal opportunism and the growth of local self-defence groups from mid-2015, but leveraging popular discontent and the local security crisis, ex-Seleka groups extended their presence into mineral rich areas under the guise of protecting local communities from attack from early 2016.[434]

Providing "security" and ancillary services to miners, traders and mining communities

Both ex-Séléka and anti-balaka seek to maintain the legitimacy of their presence at and around mine sites through "security provision". This is a key consequence of the State's absence from most of the CAR's interior. In the west, it is observed at gold mines around Amada Gaza, Koro-Mpoko, Ben Zambé and Zéré, where "compensation" comes either through payment by a site owner, a percentage of produce or payment of site access fees. At Bolakaba, for example, Ben Zambé's anti-balaka are paid 500 FCAF per gram sold to secure the site, whereas at one site closer to Zéré they are said to be paid by the site owner.[435] In Amada Gaza, whilst some anti-balaka work as miners, others are paid for security provision by commissions levied on production.[436] In certain instances, anti-balaka "security provision" is simply extortion, as with the forced imposition of anti-balaka "security providers" on returning refugees seeking to access sites around Bania in Mambéré-Kadeï.[437]

In the east, ex-Seleka assertions of authority as "security providers" is pervasive in all economic sectors.[438] In the minerals sector it has been known to entail payment of fees for guarding collector premises in Bria and Sam Ouandja, requiring escorts to and from sites around Bria, and security taxes and "contributions" for responding to incidents around Ndassima.[439] Eastern CAR's LRA security crisis saw the FPRC and the UPC particularly leverage this pretext to expand their territorial reach. Thus despite a fall in LRA activities from March 2016, the FPRC continued to appeal to civilian protection needs to raise its presence on the mineral rich Bria-Yalinga axe throughout early 2016.[440] By April, it was augmenting control over mine sites by recruiting local elements.[441] Meanwhile, despite the reinforcement of LRA Task Force units in Nzako, February 2016 saw UPC elements establish a base here, also allegedly to prevent further LRA attacks.[442] It stayed despite repeated community requests to leave[443] and by mid-2016 had expanded to Bakouma, Gambo and Ouango.[444]

Taxation and parallel mining administration arrangements

In areas where armed groups have the monopoly of violence, security provision is often closely linked to taxation of miners and traders. Taxation is certainly the core predation tactic used by ex-Séléka groups[445] and where higher levels of coordination and local control are exercised, this tactic is often quickly extended to taking over government functions by establishing parallel mining administrations.

In the centre and east, the imposition of parallel administrations is particularly acute in areas under firm ex-Séléka control. In Ouaka, the UPC has long issued digger cards, artisanal mining licences and collector authorisations to gold operators around Ndassima, estimated to generate around 150,000 USD per year

433 Confidential report, June 2016. This trend is observable on the interactive map by isolating LRA incidents in the incidents tab and combining it with the recent mining activity layer.
434 Ibid.
435 Interviews with mining operators visiting these sites, December 2017 and February 2018.
436 Interview with a local and a miner from Amada Gaza, December 2017.
437 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para.233.
438 For a more detailed overview see, IPIS, *The Politics of Pillage; The Political Economy of Roadblocks in the Central African Republic*, December 2017.
439 UN Panel of Experts Final Reports, S/2015/936, para. 128 and S/2014/452, para.70; interviews with miners around Bria, December 2017.
440 Confidential report, June 2016.
441 Ibid.
442 Ibid.
443 Confidential report, June 2016, and interview with miner from Nzako (February 2018).
444 Confidential report, June 2016.
445 Anti-balaka also engage in some taxation: for example, anti-balaka controlled gold and diamond sites around Amada Gaza charge access fees, and access to Koro-Mpoko reportedly entails passage over at least half a dozen roadblocks, each demanding 500 FCAF per motorbike (Final Report of the UN Panel of Experts, S/2017/1023, para.240, and interviews with mining operators, December 2017 and February 2018).

even before the CAR's gold rush in 2014.[446] The revenues generated here saw it and other nearby locales become the theatre of bloody violence in 2017, disrupting a lucrative source of UPC income. Having been ousted from the site by an FPRC/anti-balaka coalition in February 2017, a later UPC/FPRC coalition nevertheless retook the site December 2017, and has since engaged in revenue sharing.[447] Indeed, the FPRC and the RPRC have also long been running parallel mining administrations in Ndélé, Sam Oundja and Bria, issuing licences, authorisations and purchase slips, as well as maintaining a mining brigade.[448] The FPRC's claims to statehood in engaging in such activities saw it organise trainings on public administration in April 2017 – a bid to further institutionalise such practices.[449]

A precursor to such parallel administrations, ex-Séléka territorial expansion in eastern CAR in 2016 was at minimum often accompanied by taxation.[450] The UPC presence around Nzako saw it establish checkpoints on the roads leading out of the city, taxing miners and traders, and harassing locals by mid-2016.[451] The withdrawal of Ugandan troops from the city in August 2016 saw it strengthen its control over diamond sites here, claiming an official air to its authority.[452] It was subsequently ousted from Nzako by FPRC and anti-balaka elements in March 2017. The FPRC too then began to exert control over mine sites in Nzako, later coming into conflict with local self-defence groups, which continued into 2018, and was allegedly centred around revenues and FPRC intimidation of self-defence group members.[453]

Pre-financing, mining and trading

In western CAR, anti-balaka continue to generate revenues as mining operators. At Koro-Mpoko anti-balaka engage as site managers, artisanal miners, diggers and buyers,[454] a pattern of activity also observed at Wisambo and, since its loss, on other peripheral sites in Amada Gaza in late 2017.[455] Numerous anti-balaka, being former artisanal miners, continue to seek mining licence renewal as both diggers and artisans.[456] Whilst stricter registration vetting can help to prevent this, close monitoring of anti-balaka involvement locally in support of such vetting can often be compromised by cooperation between local authorities and anti-balaka. Moreover, lesser known anti-balaka elements and registration through friends and associates renders detection likewise difficult.

Whilst ex-Séléka groups are also known to engaging in mining, their proximity to collectors sees them more associated as artisans and traders. Despite the death of notorious diamond collector Oumar Younouss,[457] FPRC leaders like Abdoulaye Hisséne, Norredine Adam and Zacharia Damane continue to engage in minerals trading.[458] UPC involvement in commercial minerals activities has also been highlighted.[459] Ex-Séléka control over access in mining areas has seen them develop what appears to be strong trading partnerships with collectors in places like Bria and Sam Ouandja.[460] This has even seen fighters force plane crews to allow collectors to board flights.[461] As any collector operating around Bria in 2017 was wholly dependent on ex-Séléka protection such agents were clearly acting in violation of UN sanctions.

446 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2014/762, para.141.
447 Interviews with UN Personnel, February 2018.
448 UN Panel of Experts Reports, S/2015/936, paras.127-129; S/2016/1032, paras.169-171.
449 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.155.
450 Confidential report, June 2016.
451 Ibid.
452 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para.126.
453 Interview with local miner from Nzako, February 2018.
454 Final Report of the UN Panel of Experts, S/2017/639, para.96.
455 Interviews with locals from Amada Gaza, December 2017.
456 UN Panel of Experts Reports, S/2015/936, para.224; S/2016/1032, para.228.
457 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2016/694, Annex 36.
458 For most recent coverage, see UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2017/639, paras.42-50.
459 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2014/452, para.70.
460 Interviews with residents in Bria, December 2017.
461 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, para.168.

Bria: A case study on the interplay of predation and conflict

The significance of Bria's mining trade to revenue generation saw the city become the epicentre of conflict between the UPC, FPRC and RPRC factions in June and November 2016, and later in March 2017.[462] Throughout that time, the FPRC's parallel administration and taxation system continued to operate around the major production zone of Aigbando, controlling access to the vicinity.[463]

Inter-ethnic tensions and FPRC in-fighting, rendered Bria the venue of major clashes again in May/June and November 2017. By December 2017, the city was divided into four blocks, dramatically restricting mobility along ethnic and territorial lines.[464] In this climate, movement beyond 5km of the city's periphery was said by residents to risk "certain death" in the absence of armed protection, rendering access to fields difficult and elevating food prices locally.[465] Nearly all mineral traders previously frequenting Bria had reportedly abandoned the city by late 2017, leaving armed groups and their partners as the only trading option on the local minerals circuit.

Despite these difficult conditions, mining continued around Bria.[466] Those involved locally throughout 2017 report that no one could engage in mining or trading without armed group authorisation and security provision.[467] Miners report often being forced to sell to armed groups and their partners in order to maintain good relations and benefit from their protection.[468] Miners seeking to visit their sites must accompanied by fighters from the group controlling the area in which the site is located. For example, in December 2017, the Ndelé-Bria axe via Aigbando was said to be under the control of General Azor's Gula FPRC faction. A visit to a mine on this axe required a mission order from Azor (5,000 CFA, valid for 10 days), as well as the employment of one of his combatants for "safety" during the visit. As some combatants are also motorcycle owners, their services are often used to cut costs.[469]

Identity politics are deeply embedded in local mining dynamics in the Yalinga-Bria-Sam Oundja triangle. Many ex-Seleka commanders are personally involved in mining and trading in their native localities, including through friends and family. The dominance of Zacharia Damane, in his native region from Ouada to Mbangana and Sam Ouandja, is well known.

Likewise, General Hamza (Gula), a native of Mbangana was formerly dominant on the Mbangana-Bria axe, though in December 2017, this axe was occupied by Abdoulaye Hisséne. Hisséne's control over mines in this area is a strong source of discontent among local Gula and Banda populations who view his "non-native" fighters[470] as "invaders".[471] This saw Gula and Banda fighters (FPRC (Gula)/RPRC and anti-balaka) join forces to defend their interests in 2017 – a coalition countered by UPC, armed Fulani and Hisséne's FPRC fighters collectively.[472]

462 UN Panel of Experts Interim Report, S/2017/639, para. 52-63.
463 UN Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2016/1032, para. 169-170. Even after the June 2016 clashes that pushed the UPC from Bria, 15 UPC elements nevertheless retained a presence here also.
464 Interviews with residents of Bria, December 2017.
465 Ibid.
466 Ibid.
467 Interview with miner, December 2017.
468 Interviews with miners from Bria, December 2017.
469 Interviews with miners from Bria, December 2017.
470 Rounga, Youou and Kara elements, as well as ethnic Chadians (Sara and Salamat).
471 Interviews with residents and miners in Bria, December 2017.
472 RJDH, "*Centrafrique : La coalition FPRC et UPC assi*ège le village Ngoubi, *une localit*é de la Haute-Kotto", 28 November 2017.

D. The Illicit trade in Central African Minerals

1. The minerals trading landscape

The mineral supply chain in the CAR's artisanal sector is comprised of five main parties: diggers, artisanal miners, collectors, cooperatives and buying houses.[473] Artisanal miners employ diggers to extract minerals, sometimes with or without an exploitation license. Diggers are often remunerated with a share of production as well as a stipend to meet basic living costs during extraction (a cost later deducted from sales). Some artisanal miners may operate as cooperatives, which have the benefit of entitlement to export. Generally, however minerals are sold on to collectors operating independently or employed by buying houses who ultimately purchase and export the goods. Collectors and buying houses can often be involved in pre-financing, especially in the diamond sector.

Whilst KP requirements meant that there was already some formalisation of the diamond sector before 2013, this did not usually extend to gold, and was in any case wholly compromised by the events of 2013/14. Since early 2016, however, the Central African mining authorities in partnership with PRADD,[474] have been taking notable steps towards bringing the mining sector closer to formalisation with a particular focus on diamonds and a growing awareness of gold. Formalisation efforts have included active registration drives, as well as making artisanal mining licenses more accessible. Moreover, 2017 saw 290 collectors registered – more than in any previous year and overwhelmingly in Mambéré-Kadeï prefecture.

Whilst most of the CAR's newly officialised collectors appear to be of Central African origin, foreign collectors, particularly Lebanese and Mauritanian, reportedly continue to dominate western CAR's diamond trade, with many eastern collectors said to be Mauritanian or Malian.[475] Whilst there appears to be a greater presence of Central African collectors in the gold sector, numerous unofficial Cameroonian collectors are also said to be making forays into western CAR to undercut local buyers on gold prices. Indeed, for collectors of both minerals, buying in CAR and selling in Cameroon can prove highly lucrative.

2. Illicit gold trading

Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan appear to be particular exit points for trafficked Central African gold. However, much gold produced in western CAR is also sold to Bangui-based buying houses who either dispatch representatives to major hubs, like Yaloké, or receive collectors at their offices. Two collectors spoken to stated that they sold their gold to Chinese buyers in Bangui but lamented the fact that prices for gold in the capital tend to oscillate between 20,000 FCAF and 23,000 FCAF per gram. They, like most of the main gold collectors in Bossangoa, therefore prefer to sell in Garoua-Boulai where high levels of competition render prices stable at 25,000 FCAF per gram.[476] As gold prices at sites such as Koro-Mpoko and Bolakaba are relatively stable at 15,000 FCAF, varying between 11,000 and 15,000 FCAF in more remote and less productive locales,[477] the price differential between Bangui and Garoua-Boulai can have a notable impact on margins. For Cameroonian buyers with the resources to buy in bulk this can prove highly lucrative.[478] Indeed, it can render them fiercely competitive, with collectors in Yaloké

473 See: World Bank, *A Comprehensive Approach to Reducing Fraud and Improving the Contribution of the Diamond Industry to Local Communities in the Central African Republic, Report No. 56090-CF,* November 2010. Note that a number of observations in the paper continue to hold merit.

474 The Property Rights and Diamond Development project is a joint USAID/Department of State initiative to assist the governments of the Central African Republic (CAR) and Ivory Coast to fulfill their commitments to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS).

475 Interviews with mining officials and artisanal miners operating in Bria and Nzako, June 2016, December 2017 and February 2018.

476 Interviews with mining operators, December 2017 and February 2018. Note that one collector selling gold further south in Gamboula stated that prices were generally around 22,500 FCAF in this locale, though this could not be verified.

477 This is nevertheless said to be up to three times higher than diggers sold gold for before the crisis, highlighting rising gold prices (especially in 2016) as another driver of increased production.

478 At least two operators indicated that Cameroonian collectors were being financed by Dubai-based buyers operating from Cameroon.

complaining that even when they offer artisans 20,000 FCFA, they can still sometimes be undercut by illicit Cameroonian collectors offering 21,500 FCFA per gram.[479]

Another factor incentivising illicit trading may be the CAR's export tax rate for gold, which is at 5.25% as compared to Cameroon's 2.5% tax rate. Aware of the potential impact of this differential Central African authorities have tried to compensate by taxing exports on a fixed value of 15,000 FCAF/gram, as opposed to Cameroon's 25,000FCFA/gram price.[480] Despite this, whilst official gold exports have increased over the last years, BECDOR estimates that 90% of production continues to be trafficked.[481]

3. Illicit diamond trading

The volume of trafficking in the diamond sector appears to be only marginally better than for gold. Here, 82% of the CAR's entire estimated diamond production by volume is said to leave the country illicitly.[482] This shows that those operating in the diamond sector appear to be exhibiting a higher level of conformity with physical and documentary controls – a crucial precursor to augmenting official flows. However, this figure also suggests that all but a fraction of the CAR's current diamond production in value continues to be smuggled.

A note on illicit diamond flows

The complexity of diamond valuation renders estimating bulk diamond values challenging at best. However, analyses of illicit diamond flows that refer solely to volumes inadvertently obscure the true extent and significance of those flows. This is particularly problematic for high value, low production countries like the Central African Republic. Not only does it make it more difficult to appreciate the state revenue losses and conflict financing gains entailed by illicit flows, but it also precludes a clear understanding of where in the international diamond pipeline this quality of stone is more prone to appear – namely, in countries specialising in the cutting and polishing of higher quality stones. This understanding is important because these locales can become choking points for Central African flows, rendering due diligence by industry actors here particularly important. Central African diamonds are generally of exceptionally high quality.[483] Moreover, most stones (85-90%) produced in CAR's rebel-held eastern plateau are reportedly of high to medium quality, and are often larger than those in the west, with 3 to 4 carat stones more common and larger stones (up to 10 carats) not uncommon.[484] Whilst rebel controlled eastern production may constitute only 24% of the CAR's annual production in volume[485] the value of this 24% is thus extremely significant. Indeed, at the KP's inception, Central African diamonds officially ranked 5th in value out of 21 KP producer participants. At this time, the Bozizé regime had firmer control over the sector with higher KP and EITI[486] compliance due to international concern about the impact of diamonds on the CAR's political stability at the time of Bozizé's ascent to power.[487]

479 Interviews with mining operators from Yaloké, June 2016 and February 2018.
480 Interview with BECDOR, February 2018.
481 Ibid. Gold exports for 2016 were 20kg, rising to 108kg in 2017.
482 Chirico, P.G, Bergstresser, S.E., and DeWitt, J.D., *Artisanal and small-scale diamond mining assessment of the Central African Republic*, 2017. Report presented to the Kimberley Process CAR Monitoring Team at Kimberley Process Plenary Meeting, Brisbane, Australia, 11 December 2017.
483 See also, K. Malpeli and P Chrico, "A Sub-national scale geospatial analysis of diamond deposit lootability: The case of the Central African Republic", in *The Extractive Industries and Society* 1, 249-259, 2014, p. 250.
484 D J.D DeWitt, P.G. Chirico, and S.E. Bergstresser, *The Central African Republic Diamond Database – A Geodatabase of Archival Diamond Occurrences and Areas of Recent Artisanal and Small-scale Diamond Mining*, U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 2018-1088.
485 Ibid.
486 The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) is the global standard to promote the open and accountable management of oil, gas and mineral resources through the provision of information regarding extractives sector activities.
487 International Crisis Group, *Dangerous Little Stones: Diamonds in the Central African Republic*, December 2010, p. 4 and 6.

Whilst the country continued to rank 6th out of 22/23 producers from 2005 to 2007, as well as in 2009, a rise in illicit flows due to rebel and government predation from 2009 saw steady falls in its value ranking up to 2013.[488]

One reason for the high levels of smuggling in the diamond sector is the existence of numerous illegal buying houses offering preferential rates in locales such as Gamboula, Kentzou and Garoua-Boulai.[489] In Gamboula, for example, two "clean" carats can reportedly fetch 1.2 million FCAF, as opposed to 800-850,000 FCAF offered in Bangui, which includes CAR taxes.[490] Indeed, whilst Cameroon technically imposes advantageous export taxes on diamonds, all Central African stones appear to be evading official Cameroonian flows and therefore taxes (see below). This competitive advantage may explain why, despite the registration of 17 buying houses in Bangui by the end of 2017, few appear to be "officially" active – a frequent observation encountered by IPIS throughout 2016 and 2017. Given the considerable expense that registration as a buying house in the CAR entails, this raises questions about these apparently "inactive" buyers, particularly where they have ties through subsidiaries or affiliates in neighbouring countries. There thus appears to be a clear need for stricter accountability and oversight of such operators.

Indeed, whilst Kimberley Process statistics indicate that the value of KP certified Cameroonian exports has remained relatively constant since its joining the KP in 2012, the value of diamond imports from Cameroon in UN comtrade statistics nevertheless indicate a sharp spike in diamonds coming from Cameroon in 2015 to around three times its ordinary export value (over 1,500,000 USD).[491] Moreover, whilst official KP registered production and exports from Cameroon appear to have been declining since 2015, comtrade data likewise indicates that rough diamond exports for 2016 were in fact slightly higher than pre-2015 levels (around 600,000 USD). Whilst imports from Cameroon might initially appear to have dropped closer to KP figures under comtrade for 2017, at time of writing these figures excluded import data from South Korea and the United Arab Emirates, two of Cameroons largest annual rough diamond importers by value under Comtrade between 2014 and 2016.

4. Internal factors driving artisanal mineral trading underground

In addition to profit incentives, interviews with operators and officials in the mining sector highlight that corruption and racketeering are also major factors driving mineral trading underground. Here, IPIS heard reports of systematic racketeering of artisanal miners and traders by certain state actors at a local level, including tax and customs authorities (reputed to engage in the systemic application of penalties), and police and gendarmerie. These activities lead many artisans and traders to try to avoid interactions with officials by operating clandestinely and put additional pressure on the need to maximise margins.

Interviews with members of the Special Anti-Fraud Unit – established in 2009 to combat violations of the mining code – highlights that these units suffer from serious capacity shortages regarding man-power, equipment and logistics.[492] However, IPIS also encountered reports that agents from this unit too can engage in the types of corrupt activities that drive or enable illicit trading.[493]

It should be noted that IPIS also encountered unconfirmed reports of some international peacekeepers seeking to benefit from the illicit minerals trade through trading or providing services to collectors operating informally. The veracity of these claims is unclear, though they have been echoed during investigations by other entities into illicit minerals trading and may therefore merit further enquiry.

488 See official KP statistics summaries for this period on the KP Rough Diamond Statistics website.
489 See also, Partnership Africa Canada (now Impact), *From Conflict to Illicit: Mapping the Diamond Trade from Central African Republic to Cameroon*, December 2016.
490 Interview with collectors June 2016 and February 2018.
491 DESA/UNSD, United Nations Comtrade database.
492 Interviews with *Unité Spéciale Anti-Fraude* (USAF) personnel in Berberati, March 2016.
493 Interviews in Berberati, March and June 2016, and with mining officials November 2017 and February 2018.

5. Need for greater clarity about industrial mining and cooperative operations

The arrival of industrial gold and diamond mining companies in the CAR and lack of clarity about their operations appears to have generated some confusion and suspicion about their activities in Bangui and locally in 2017.[494] Tension has particularly centred on the apparent arrival of Chinese industrial miners in the country since late 2015. Some interviewees viewed this presence as illegal and benefiting only a few top-ranking officials, often citing arrangements in Sosso-Nakombo and Abba.[495] Information made available by the Central African authorities has helped to provide some clarity surrounding such arrangements.[496]



Industrial operations, Abba

Some industrial operators are alleged to be working with cooperatives linked to high ranking local officials in Sosso-Nakombo and Carnot.[497] Whilst this study did not seek to verify these claims, operators frequenting Koro-Mpoko stated that would-be investors had visited this locale on at least four occasions last year, offering to take over site management and pay workers a wage.[498] Foreign investor involvement with mining cooperatives is not a violation of the mining code *per se*, as cooperatives can look for partners to provide technical, financial and material support. However, some have queried the implications of such arrangements for beneficial ownership and operational control. This highlights a need for greater clarity on what a cooperative's relationship with an industrial miner can rightly be.[499] Being intended to benefit artisanal miners, cooperatives can only be established by Central African nationals as only nationals are entitled to register as artisanal miners. In practice, however, some foreigners are alleged to circumvent such rules through the purchase of false identity documents.[500] Regardless, even where

494 Interviews with members of the National Assembly's Commission on Natural Resources, Sustainable Development and Environment and mining operators in western CAR, February 2018. In Carnot, for example, the placement of markers near the Ngouré site reportedly heightened local tensions in late 2017.

495 Lack of clarity about the activities of industrial miners around Abba in late 2017 had led some locals to believe these operations were being conducted by a fictional company operating from Cameroon without a license. Thien Pao, Zhigou Mining and IMC appear to be operating in this area under research permits referred to on the Central African Ministry of Mines website.

496 See concession layer on interactive map.

497 See the UN Panel of Experts coverage of the Camsona cooperative's controversial activities in Sosso-Nakombo, which are alleged to be illegal in a number of respects (Un Panel of Experts Final Report, S/2017/1023, paras.235-239).

498 Interviews with mining operators visiting Koro-Mpoko, December 2017 and February 2018.

499 See for example the relationship between GETRAD and the *Coopérative Minière de la Commune de Lobaye* (CMC), General Trade and Diamond, *Evaluation du Potentiel Permis Getrad (Region de la Lobaye)*, 2005.

500 Interviews with mining operators and officials, June 2016 and February 2018.

cooperatives are registered by true Central African Nationals, where there is foreign financial or technical support, questions have been raised about the arrangements behind such partnerships. This includes respective rights, obligations and benefits; who the operational head of a cooperative really is; and the extent to which arrangements are truly intended to benefit artisanal mining communities themselves.[501]

Moreover, most industrial miners currently in the CAR possess only research permits which do not entail exploitation rights. Some junior mining companies and cooperatives possess semi-mechanised artisanal exploitation licences. However, whilst these licences allow for the sale and export of production, only a handful of permit holders have ever submitted production for export through official channels themselves. This raises questions about where such production is going and highlights a need for greater accountability from permit holders about their activities and the role of technical partners.

Tensions between artisanal miners and industrial miners

Artisanal mining communities in places like Ngoré and Koro-Mpoko have expressed strong concerns about being dispossessed of their means of subsistence by incoming industrial miners. However, in other areas, industrial miners, including Chinese miners, appear to have managed to secure a social license to operate locally. For example, the Chinese Dewei mining company, operating 20km from Gadzi, is a junior miner that appears to be operating transparently.[502] Dewei reportedly made its first appearance around June 2017 and has a semi-mechanised artisanal exploitation permit, which has seen it dredging for diamonds on the Lobayé river. The company clearly signals its identity to passers-by and held an inauguration ceremony on 8 October 2017 in the presence of mining officials and representatives of the local population.[503] It has pledged to "carry out community development projects including the construction and rehabilitation of health centres, schools, and roads among others"[504] – an apparent response to local community requests for development. Dewei operations appear to employ about 40 people in total, including four state security providers, interpreters and geological engineers. Though some locals feel that this employment level is too low, the Mining Minister has expressed intent to ensure delivery on Dewei's development pledge, reportedly establishing a mechanism for the company to liaise with stakeholders. Similar such development pledges have been made by other industrial miners.[505]

Clarity concerning interactions between the industrial and artisanal mining sector in neighbouring countries is likewise important to better understanding the risk of supply chain contamination from cross-border flows in countries like Cameroon. Indeed, given the considerable volume of gold and diamonds that flow into eastern Cameroon from western CAR, companies operating close to the Central African border and with a presence in or close to key trafficking locales like, Gamboula Bertoua, Kentzou, Kette, Betaré-Oya and Garoua-Boulai among others, face extremely high risks of supply chain contamination from illicit flows.

6. Observations on trafficking via non-KP member states

Much of eastern CAR's gold and diamond production is reportedly smuggled via Chad, Sudan and South Sudan, none of whom are KP members. Here, one major destination has been Nyala in Sudan.[506] Whilst

501 For example, some cooperative names suggest a strong foreign influence, such as the Chinese-named Tian Di Ren cooperative and the PPN Consulting cooperative.

502 Also spelled Dewy and Dewey. See La Tribune Afrique, "RCA : la chinoise DEWEY se lance dans l'exploitation d'or et de diamant", 13 October 2017.

503 Ndjoni Sango, "Centrafrique: exploitation de diamants, la société chinoise DEWEY s'installe à Gadzi", 10 October 2017.

504 Ibid.

505 See, for example, pledge made by Thien Pao in Ndjoni Sango, *"Centrafrique : le ministre Mboli-Fatran signe une convention minière avec l'entreprise chinoise Thien Pao Sarl"*, 11 April 2017.

506 See, International Crisis Group, *Dangerous Little Stones: Diamonds in the Central African Republic*, December 2010 and UN Panel of Experts report,

Sudan is one of Africa's top three gold producers, its status as regards diamond production has long been unclear. In December 2013, Sudan's official State news agency claimed that the Russian Siberian mining company was awarded a franchise for the "exploration and production of diamonds in Sudan" as part of Sudan's bid to diversify its minerals policy.[507] The veracity of this claim is uncertain, and Siberian mining company appears to be a gold mining company, not a diamond mining company. However, in May 2018, the same news outlet reported that "Saudi Arabia's Golden Scarf Company … has expressed desire to invest in diamonds, gold, precious and semi-precious stones" after "the discovery of large quantities of diamonds" in the country.[508] Not much information is available on Sudan's diamond sector, though, to date, experts have suggested that the country's topography renders the existence of sizable diamond deposits questionable.[509] Regardless, the shipment of diamonds from Sudan, or indeed, Saudi Arabia, to any KP member state would represent a base violation of the Kimberley Process, under which trade with non-KP countries is strictly prohibited.

E. Concluding observations

The Central African minerals sector exhibits a cyclical relationship with security to the extent that competition over access to mineral revenues can be a driver of insecurity and predation, whilst such insecurity and predation can intensify reliance on the sector for those struggling to meet their basic survival needs. Getting control over mining and trade, particularly in the west, is a key challenge for the Central African government in both stabilising the country and restarting the formal economy. In the diamond sector, the Kimberley Process may offer some potential avenues for engagement, including a possible Central Africa regional approach to addressing cross-border trafficking. The extent to which the ICGLR can likewise play a role regarding gold merits further enquiry. Indeed, it seems clear that putting a check on illicit flows will in both cases require collaborative efforts, not only from neighbouring states but key countries in the minerals supply chain from the CAR.

507 Sudan News Agency "Russian to Start Diamond Mining in Sudan", 7 December 2013.
508 Sudan Vision, "Saudi Company Expresses Desire to Invest in Diamonds, Gold and Precious Stones", 6 July 2018.
509 For example, no reference is made to diamonds in the 2013 or 2014 USGS Minerals Yearbook for Sudan, though the 2014 edition points out that, "Many of Sudan's mineral resources have yet to be explored and developed".

CONCLUSION

As highlighted in IPIS' 2014 report, factors traditionally associated with what has previously been termed "greed motives" have played a dominant role in the Central African conflict. However, this study affirms the now widely accepted notion that to dichotomise underlying drivers as simply greed or grievance-based is no longer appropriate to the extent that it obviates the crucial, interconnected and complex contours of the dynamics at play.

It is clear that in this resource rich but deeply impoverished country – seen (and treated) as a mere hinterland by its neighbours – the predominant driver of both armament and conflict is access to resources. All armed groups operating in the CAR are engaged in predation on one or (usually) more economic sectors. Such predation is not only a key determinant of an armed group's movements and activities, but provides essential sustenance to its rank and file. It has in many areas moved beyond the opportunistic operational strategies that characterised its beginnings to become systemic and even institutionalised, a fact used by armed groups to lend them an air of legitimacy with both members and locals. The above chapters on roadblocks, pastoralism and mining illustrate this trend clearly. It is in this context that armed groups themselves have become increasingly fractured along ethnic lines. Here, claims to legitimacy of action and access (based on identity and belonging) have begun to arise during conflicts concerning the daily management of predation operations in areas where there is no third party, like the State, to play a mediating/regulating role.

The impact of such armed predation on the central African economy and thus Central Africans has been hugely deleterious. Indeed, it has helped to push ordinary economic actors and civilians towards higher levels of militarisation in a bid to protect their continued access to livelihoods and survival. This is done sometimes independently, sometimes by proxy and sometimes by collaborating with or joining armed groups. Here, "greed" is better understood as securing access to means, and the dichotomy between this and grievance is not always readily discernible. What is clear is that this trend of rising militarisation and the erosion of communal structures and relations that previously enabled the mediation of access disputes paves the way for further violence both between civilians and between armed groups.

Thus, the extent to which any ultimate peace deal or strengthened Central African state authority can move the country beyond violent conflict is likely to be determined by how sustainably they deal with resource access threats for both armed groups and civilians in a context where weaponry is the primary means of access. Here, the legitimacy of the Central African state in acknowledging and protecting the claims of all stakeholders (not just armed groups but civilians) is key. Establishing trust between citizen and State is crucial in this context. Areas currently under state control can be seen as a litmus test in this regard. Moreover, understanding the practical regional dynamics of the crisis, particularly the roles of Chad, Cameroon and the DRC, will likewise be vital to managing structural drivers to the conflict by securing the crucial assistance of those states in ending the Central African Crisis.

EXECUTIVE SUAMMARY
Central African Republic: A Conflict Mapping Resumé

A. Introduction

The present report accompanies IPIS' interactive web map depicting conflict relevant data as at late 2017.[510] This report is an attempt to provide an overview of the development of conflict dynamics since the events of 2013 and 2014, following on from a similar such report produced by IPIS in November 2014.

The report is composed of an overview of security trends since 2014 (Chapter I) and four thematic segments as they pertain to security dynamics in the CAR: armed group evolutions since 2014 (Chapter II), armed group predation on transit routes (Chapter III), pastoralism and security (Chapter IV) and mining and security (Chapter V). It is hoped that this overview may help to provide some insight into an increasingly complex and highly dynamic conflict.

B. Chapter I: Overview of security trends

By late 2014, armed conflict between ex-Séléka, and anti-balaka groups had carved a conflict-prone fault line down the country and seen most of western CAR emptied of its Muslim inhabitants. Nevertheless, the CAR's security situation appeared to improve from early 2015 following interventions from international and French forces, progressing the political transition process with the hosting of a constitutional referendum, and legislative and presidential polls that saw the election of the Touadera government in March 2016.

Whilst this period of relative progress towards stability initially fostered a sense optimism, it appears to have been short-lived. From June 2016 clashes in the centre and north of the country began to emerge, intensifying from September as warring ex-Séléka factions vied for dominance over key economic and strategic locales. Continuing into 2017, these inter-armed group clashes spilled over into inter-communal violence throughout the centre, east and southeast of CAR. Moreover, attacks on civilians, international forces and aid workers intensified over this period, rendering 2017 the deadliest year for both humanitarians and peace keepers since the start of the crisis.

Following the establishment of a fragile truce between opposing factions in late 2017, the outbreak of protracted violence in Bangui in April 2018 has seen renewed attempts to revitalise the former Séléka alliance. In addition, vicious confrontations between ex-Séléka and anti-balaka in Bambari have rendered this city the epi-centre of considerable conflict since the middle of the year.

Incident data gathered over 2012 to 2017 suggests that since September 2016 levels of insecurity in the centre and east of the CAR have reached and possibly exceeded 2014 levels. Here, whilst the central region of the CAR has remained a key area of insecurity throughout 2014 to 2017, eastern CAR became the major venue for hostilities from late 2016. To date, incidents involving conflict between armed groups have often centred on the key municipalities of Bria, Bambari, Batangafo, Kaga Bandoro, Mbrés and Bang/Ngayoundae, with key mining and pastoralist locales seeing particularly intense fighting. The geolocalisation of such incidents highlights the significance of revenue generation to ex-Séléka operations.

Civilians are the primary victims of conflict in the CAR with two thirds of all reported incidents characterised predominantly by violence against civilians. Again, such incidents appear to be particularly acute in key pastoralist and mining locales.

C. Chapter II: Armed group evolutions since 2014

Since 2015, the *Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique* (FPRC), the *Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique* (MPC) and the *Union pour la Centrafrique* (UPC) have been the dominant ex-Séléka

510 Available here: http://ipisresearch.be/mapping/webmapping/car/v2ref.html.

forces controlling central and eastern CAR. 2015 and 2016 saw ex-Séléka groups consolidate and extend their operational reach and predation strategies, leading 2016 and 2017 to be marked not only by a rise in armed group fragmentation but inter- and intra-group clashes as territorial and political ambitions came into conflict. Since late 2017, this period of inter-armed group hostility appears to be giving way to increased rapprochement between these groups, including renewed attempts to reunify the Séléka by the FPRC.

Since late 2014, the FPRC has consolidated its hold over existing territory whilst reinforcing its presence in key economic hubs. It has developed diverse and sophisticated revenue generation strategies focused largely on transit, minerals and the cattle trade, over which it engages in taxation and parallel administration. It has often engaged in revenue sharing and collaboration with other ex-Séléka groups and continued to push for Séléka reunification from mid-2016. Military coordination with other ex-Séléka and even anti-balaka groups against the UPC in 2017, however, had a deleterious impact on the group's internal cohesion, as well as interrupting revenue flows. Nevertheless, the FPRC's ability to garner at least some alignment with ex-Séléka groups like MPC in Kaga bandoro in mid-2018 is a testament to its continued influence over its former allies.

Factioning from the FPRC in July 2015, the MPC has maintained good relations with the FPRC despite generally rejecting its broader political agenda to reunite the Séléka and partition the country. MPC was nevertheless subject to a number of leadership splits in 2017, including the departure of founding leader, Ahmat Bahar, who is alleged to have re-joined the FPRC. The MPC continues to maintain control over key pastoralist and transhumance zones in northern CAR.

Since 2014, the UPC had likewise consolidated its control in its zone of influence, benefitting from diverse and sophisticated revenue streams. From late 2015 it adopted a particularly expansionist agenda pushing into the southeast and north of the CAR. Having thereby ignited tensions with locals and other armed groups, the UPC was the target of fierce attack from late 2016, compromising its income generation and territorial gains. The increasingly homogenous Fulani makeup of the group and its appeals to serving Fulani populations contributed to wider intercommunal violence in the southeast in 2017, which particularly targeted Fulani, as well as the broader Muslim population.

As a movement, the anti-balaka remains deeply divided and is best understood as a loose network of militias with mainly local agendas. These miltias may either be explicitly affiliated with one of the two principal Bangui-based anti-balaka coordination branches, who continue to present as interlocutors for the movement, though are increasingly thought to represent more personal agendas, or else be associated by default. As such, the term "anti-balaka" has come to encompass a broad range of armed actors, including criminal gangs. 2016/17 saw this movement appear to extend its territorial reach with the emergence of so-called "self-defence" groups, closely resembling anti-balaka and in some cases having express ties or affiliations with the movement. This emergence and the rise of anti-balaka activities in Bangui and elsewhere highlights the sensitivity of youths and latent anti-balaka to broader security events. This renders them vulnerable to mobilisation by political or business actors seeing to instrumentalize local and national security dynamics for personal gain. The presence of anti-balaka in an area can have particular implications for humanitarian operations by rendering places of refuge venues for conflict and targeting of and between anti-balaka groups. Whilst anti-balaka groups are generally poorly armed, in north-western CAR these groups appear to have better access to conventional weaponry.

Whilst groups that are not aligned to either the ex-Séléka or the anti-balaka often play a more localised role in conflict dynamics, these groups can have significant security implications, including in the role they play in the territorial expansion of stronger groups. For example, *Revolution et Justice* (RJ) appears to have expanded both its own and MPC's zone of operations through mutual operations, whilst collaboration between the newly formed Siriri herder self-defence group operating in southwestern CAR and the longstanding, though weakened *Front Démocratique du Peuple Centrafricain* (FDPC), appears to be expanding their respective territorial reaches. Increased coordination between unaligned groups operating along the Cameroonian border, as well as their links to ex-Séléka factions, may require further monitoring. Finally, whilst the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been considerably weakened, its factions continue to operate in the far reaches of eastern CAR. Here a dramatic spike or LRA attacks on mining and

pastoralist communities in 2016 had notable implications for local security and armed group expansion in these areas, though 2017 has since seen LRA incidents re-stabilize to around pre-2016 levels.

D. Chapter III: Armed predation on transit routes

The centrality of trade and transit to the CAR's political economy renders control over transit a key means of revenue generation for both the state and armed groups. They allow both the imposition of taxes as well as control over profitable commercial activities, with roadblocks, obligatory escorts, and 'free passage' authorisations/customs levies being the key means of revenue generation. Whilst the exact combination of these approaches can vary depending on the relative strength of the group employing them and the prevailing conditions in which they are employed, all are observable in every Central African commercial sector (minerals, cattle, coffee and other Sudanese trade goods). This renders transit predation a cross cutting issue in conflict financing.

Three key circuits have survived the 2013 crisis, each associated with specific kinds of trade: the cattle circuit, the Sudanese commercial circuit and the 'legal' circuit. The *cattle* circuit is composed of livestock trade routes, roughly between the north of the country and Bangui, passing through major cattle markets like Kaga Bandoro and Bambari. The *Sudanese* circuit principally concerns the trade routes used by Sudanese traders between Birao, Kaga Bandoro and Bambari. The *'legal'* circuit concerns supply chains in the government-controlled west of the country, in particular the Bangui Garoua-Boulaï corridor and the Ubangi river.

In 2017, 290 roadblocks were identified in CAR. Of these, 117 (40%) were operated by government forces, 149 (51%) by ex-Séléka groups, and 46 (16%) by anti-balaka. Estimates of the scale and sums of levies at these checkpoints enable a conservative estimate that ex-Séléka factions together generate at least EUR 3.59 million a year from their taxation of the cattle circuit, and another EUR 2.5 million along Sudanese trade routes. In 2017, the State largely controlled the 'legal' circuit which was projected to generate around 75 EUR 150 million in total revenues for 2017.

Roadside revenue generation strategies employed by ex-Séléka armed groups mirror those of the State largely due to their occupation of abandoned state infrastructure and the simple adoption of its organizational structure at these posts, providing a periodic income for the rank and file of armed groups. Many ex-Séléka groups have also introduced parallel customs clearance systems, requiring transporters to go through the 'virtual roadblock' of a *comzone* to pay large sums for the right to circulate in their fiefdom, particularly in north eastern and eastern CAR. Control over these routes can therefore become a major point of contest and collaboration between armed groups.

Highwaymen (*coupeurs de route*) form another aspect of violent conflict around trade routes. As a practice, hold-ups, ambushes and road banditry for pillage are undertaken by a diverse range of actors. This phenomenon builds on pre-existing dynamics in north and northwestern CAR where highwaymen (*zaraguina*) have operated for decades. Moreover such predation can also be more prevalent among anti-balaka groups than static predation over transit routes, due to their availability to actors with a low-level arsenal and higher degrees of mobility. As such, anti-balaka remain notorious for rendering particular routes extremely unpredictable and dangerous.

The importance of roadblocks goes well beyond financing armed groups. The system of roadside taxation has reached such an extent that it has become a kind of 'economic asphyxiation' that has likewise significantly undermined food security, contributing a further push factor for young men reverting to militarisation through armed group membership or banditry as a survival strategy. Notably, roadblocks were consistently among the main grievances cited by the Central African population during the 2015 Bangui Forum.

E. Chapter IV: Pastoralism and security in the CAR

Pastoralism is a relatively recent phenomenon in the CAR, though it has profoundly shaped the country's economic, ethnic and security landscape since its advent in the early 1920s. Central African pastoralism has evolved over four principle phases:

1. an initial period of gradual herder migrations and the relatively peaceful integration of pastoralist communities into Central African life between the 1930s and 1970s;
2. rising conflict surrounding transhumance following new migratory waves into the CAR, especially from Chad, between the 1970s and 1980s;
3. a period of rising predation on pastoralist communities with the emergence of the zaraguina phenomenon; and
4. the current era of high pastoralist conflict and intense predation on the sector beginning since the start of the crisis in 2013.

The events of 2013/14, in particular anti-balaka attacks on pastoralist communities, emptied swathes of western CAR of most of their pastoralist populations, having a notable impact on the vulnerability of pastoralists to predation in three main ways:

1. social and environmental push factors in locales of pastoralist refuge have driven numerous herders back into areas where they remain vulnerable to predation by still hostile and opportunistic groups, such as anti-balaka. This has increased both conflicts in these areas and the proliferation of herder self-defence militias;
2. herder flights from more southernly locales in response to anti-balaka exactions in 2014 saw the development of a pastoralist concentration in northern CAR, especially around Ouham and Nana-Grebizi, rendering the region a reservoir for armed group revenue generation due to its high cattle concentrations and the importance of the Kaga-Bandoro market;
3. 2014 also saw the south and east of the CAR become a refuge for pastoralists fleeing abuses further north and west, pushing herders deeper into rebel held territory and becoming a notable background factor in the region's ethnic conflict in 2016 and 2017. That later conflict itself has induced further pastoralist migrations with attendant localised concentrations, which may have further implications for armed group operations and intercommunal violence in the future.

Since 2015, ex-Séléka groups have sought to maximize their control over the cattle supply chain to Bangui, benefitting from the profit generated by the difference between the price of a head of cattle at the level of roaming herds upcountry and the price in Bangui, the CAR's only terminal market for cattle. Bangui is supplied principally by Kaga Bandoro and Bambari, though since 2014 river transit has also begun to form a notable part of the Bangui supply chain. These distribution centres also host slaughterhouses for local consumption and are serviced by numerous local collection markets in cattle production zones.

Armed groups are involved at several points in the cattle supply chain, imposing 'transhumance taxes' in grazing areas, taxes at and on the way to the main distribution hubs and regional or local collection markets, as well as offering protection escorts. Whilst previous research indicates that the total profits made by ex-Séléka groups from the cattle circuit amount to at least EUR 3.59 million per year, this excludes profits derived from cattle theft, direct participation in cattle trade, and levies at collection markets or pastoral camps.

The impact of fighting around Bria in 2017, had major repercussions for meat prices in this mining hub, with many Bria-based herders and traders fleeing the region and only some cattle remaining around the mining town of Aîgbando. Insecurity and armed group targeting of herders during these events saw many pastoralists reportedly lose their livelihoods, destroying both the local cattle industry and the socio-economic fabric of the town.

The significance of the cattle trade to the CAR's GDP, as well its centrality to conflict in Ouham-Pendé, Ouham, Nana-Grebizi, Ouaka, Nana-Mambéré, (as well as other regions) and by extension Bangui, has seen restoration of state authority over the cattle circuit become a key preoccupation.

F. Chapter V: Mining and security in the CAR

The high value, low weight ratio of much of the CAR's mineral wealth, high levels of informality and institutional mismanagement have long seen the country's mining sector dogged by links with conflict. Since 2013, however, these links have become more acute with both ex-Séléka and anti-balaka groups engaged in highly lucrative minerals predation. The illicit trade facilitating such predation remains a key competitive threat to efforts to get control over the sector. In this context, the Central African authorities are faced with two major challenges: (1) addressing the role of minerals in insecurity and conflict financing; and (2) combatting illicit flows as a means of reducing conflict financing and improving government revenues.

Since 2014, the CAR has seen an overall increase in minerals production characterised by, inter alia, a rise in gold mining and a greater awareness of other potential minerals, such as cassiterite. Whilst in western CAR, the highest density mining has shifted towards KP compliance zones and the Cameroonian border, in the east, remote monitoring indicates the intensification of mining in ex-Seleka controlled areas since 2013 – a testament to the encouragement of such activity by armed groups.

2015 and 2016 saw rising artisanal interest in gold, particularly in Ouham prefecture, as well as in eastern CAR. Central African mining officials report a consequent spike in gold production and some currently view the sector as having significant State revenue potential. In the west, Koro-Mpoko and BenZambé appear to have attracted notable artisanal attention, whilst in the centre (Ouaka) Ndassima and Bakala gold mining areas continue to attract diggers. Most major 'new' gold mining locales in western CAR were recognised as secondary trading centres for gold even before the crisis and have often remained under anti-balaka influence since the targeting of Muslims in these areas in 2013/14. This has seen a shift in the trading demographic for gold in western CAR, as well as the emergence of Bossangoa as a major gold hub.

Differences in the general security dynamics characterising the west, center and east of CAR are generally born out in stability in and around mining areas. Whilst major conflict events in mining areas in the center and east were relatively low up until late 2016, from that time, intense inter-armed group clashes over these areas rendered them some of the deadliest in 2017. This attests to the significance that armed groups place on securing control over mining resources. Aside from major conflict events, abuses against civilians can also often be exacted in connection with mining. This can render mining areas key venues for the perpetration of such acts, which are much less reported than conflict events.

A continuing lack of state presence beyond major municipal centres in western CAR and high levels of banditry mean that mining communities in the west continue to seek security assurances either by arming themselves or paying others, often current or former anti-balaka, to provide security at sites. As such, artisanal mining is highly militarised even in areas not ostensibly under armed group control. Where anti-balaka maintain a presence at mine sites, they are often seen more as local security providers than militia, sometimes even operating in collaboration with or as an auxiliary to local authorities. The area of Amada Gaza has seen ongoing conflict over control of mine sites throughout 2013 to 2017, with Fulani groups said to be vying for control against anti-balaka militias.

Prevailing anti-Muslim sentiment and tensions surrounding refugee returns to mining areas can risk the remobilisation of latent anti-balaka elements if not managed. This has been indicated in attacks and predation upon returning refugees in 2015 and 2016, as well as harassment, racketeering and demands for "security" payments in 2017. Here, collaborative efforts to establish local peace and reconciliation committees may prove key to helping local communities to address security issues and protect the status of KP compliance zones through intercommunity dialogue.

Armed group predation on mining has continued to be characterised by (1) looting and extortion; (2) security provision; (3) taxation and parallel mining administrations; (4) and involvement in mining and

trading. In 2016, a spike in LRA activities targeting miners and herders saw the extension of ex-Séléka groups into new mining areas to offer "protection", as well as contributing to the formation of self defence groups. Security provision is often closely linked to taxation of miners and traders. Where higher levels of coordination and local control are exercised, this tactic is often quickly extended to establishing parallel mining administrations – a practice strongly associated with ex-Séléka groups in the centre and east of CAR. In western CAR, anti-balaka continue to generate revenues as mining operators (artisanal miners, diggers and security providers), whilst in the east, ex-Séléka control over access in mining areas has seen them develop closer relationships with collectors in places like Bria and Sam Ouandja.

Some notable steps towards bringing the mining sector closer to formalisation have been undertaken by the Central African authorities in collaboration with development partner, USAID. These steps have had a particular focus on diamonds due to the need for KP compliance though is also developing a growing awareness of gold. Efforts have included active registration drives, as well as making artisanal mining licenses more accessible.

Foreign collectors reportedly continue to dominate the CAR's diamond trade, and whilst there seems to be a greater presence of Central African collectors in the gold sector, numerous unofficial Cameroonian collectors are also said to be making forays into western CAR to undercut local buyers on gold prices.

Oscillating (and often lower) gold prices in Bangui and stable higher prices in key gold and diamond trafficking locales on the Cameroonian border are said to render Cameroonian buyers fiercely competitive to their Central African counterparts. This is due to the notable impact of these price differentials on profit margins, compounded by the CAR's export tax rates for gold and diamonds, as well as intense corruption and racketeering around the sector by certain State agencies in the CAR. Whilst official gold exports have increased over the last years, it is estimated that 90% of Central African gold continues to be trafficked.

By contrast, 82% of the CAR's entire estimated diamond production by volume is said to leave the country illicitly. This shows that whilst those operating in the diamond sector exhibit a higher level of conformity with physical and documentary controls, all but a fraction of the CAR's current diamond production in value continues to be smuggled. Central African diamonds are generally of exceptionally high quality and most stones produced in CAR's rebel-held eastern plateau are reportedly of high to medium quality, and are often larger than those in the west. Thus, whilst these stones constitute only an estimated 24% of the CAR's annual production in volume, their value is extremely significant. Here, analyses of illicit diamond flows that refer solely to volumes inadvertently obscure the true extent and significance of those flows.

The arrival of industrial gold and diamond mining companies in the CAR and lack of clarity about their operations appears to have generated confusion, suspicion and localised tensions in 2017. This has raised questions about the relationship of these actors with artisanal miners, particularly cooperatives. It highlights a need for greater clarity on what a cooperative's relationship with an industrial miner should be, as well as a need for greater accountability concerning the operations of both parties, particularly concerning disposal of minerals discovered under both research and exploitation permits.

Clarity concerning interactions between the industrial and artisanal mining sector in neighbouring countries is likewise important to better understanding the risk of supply chain contamination from cross-border flows. This is especially so regarding companies operating close to the Central African border and with a presence in or close to key trafficking locales, such as those in Cameroon. Such companies face extremely high risks of supply chain contamination from illicit flows. The role of non-KP states in illicit diamond flows also merits further enquiry.

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