



An Analysis of the Recurrence of Military Coups in Africa. A Probe into the Experiences of Central African Republic in the 21st Century

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Abstract: This article contends that, Central African Republic (CAR) is a tinderbox of political instability due to the perennial problem of coups in the country. With this in mind, the research was motivated by the desire to answer the following questions: What characterises the coups in CAR? Why is Central Africa a theatre of coups? Who are the key players in the country and what can be done to bring back the legacy of statehood that CAR has lost? In an attempt to answer these questions, this study made use of published and unpublished material, key informant interviews and interviews by various regional and international news channels. While the study focused on the occurrences of coups in CAR, it made references to related experiences in Africa and the rest of the world. Additionally, the study kept in mind the time frame during which the state incurred a higher concentration of this political calamities, the study was not strict on this delimitation considering that the country as well as other African states have witnessed coups before, during and may continue to, after the period under study. The content analysis on this study obtained that the unconstitutional change of governments in CAR are profoundly a result of the continued existence of rebel groups in the country; the prevalence of the culture of political intolerance; the challenges of a massive population of Internally Displaced Population (IDPs); the government setup; the colonial legacy left across all Francophone countries in Africa; the geopolitical complexities in the region and the development of the threat of Violent Extremism and Terrorism in Africa and the rest of the world. To that end, the research recommends that there be enhanced efforts to strengthen the military in CAR; intensified effort towards thwarting local and regional militants; enhanced efforts to demilitarise and demobilise various armed groups in the country; build strong government institutions; promote democratic practices starting with the holding of free, fair and credible elections as well as fight religious intolerance among other recommendations.

Keywords: Coup-proofing, Military Effectiveness, State Fragility, Geopolitics, Authoritarianism

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the end of colonialism in Africa, the political topography on the continent has been characterised by a dramatic surge of rebellion and coups. In that order, the continent experienced at least 80 successful coups, 180 failed coups and 139 reported coup plots in 45 to 48 independent Sub-Saharan African states between 1956 and 2001 (Augustine et al 1993; McGowan 2003). CAR is not an exception to the problem of putsch, experiencing five successful coups since the end of the colonial rule in 1960 when David Dacko was crowned the first black President of the post French colonial rule. Military coups have been the major form of political progression in CAR, the first one being the 1965 coup led by a military strongman, Colonel Jean-Bedel Bokassa. Coups, just like other security paradoxes like terrorism, piracy and rebellion, have triggered interesting debates in the academic fraternity.

The phrase, coup d'état, is of French origin, traced back to the 18th century when Napoleon Bonaparte overthrew the Revolutionary Directory from power in 1799 (Olafsson 2020). Although the phrase is widely used in English literature on borrowed terms, the link between the French history and the occurrences of coup d'état in Africa is so visible. This study is of the view that although political instability has affected majority if not all independent African states, the manifestations of political coups in Francophone African states is more visible than the Anglophone states. That alone has made

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researchers to suggest that the French colonial legacy exposed its former colonies to the threat of rebellion, banditry, political coups and now, terrorism and violent extremism.

It is of paramount importance to note that, coups are not CAR dilemmas so much but dilemmas of poor states with sluggish economies and CAR has been in such an approving environment since post-independence. An analysis of CAR’s security conundrum demystify that coups are the principal form of regime change and they can be executed under any kind of political system, a functional democracy, a personalist civilian dictatorship or any already existing military junta. An analysis of political succession in Africa and CAR reveals that, unlike a rebellion, a coup is easy to execute as there is less need to acquire armaments and money to finance thousands of armed forces (Collier and Hoeffler 2005). The loyalty of the army is one of the major factors that is essential in executing a coup. The process of usurping power through a coup is elaborated by Ruth (1973) who states that, “get the keys to the military headquarters, turn out the armoury, take the radio station, the post station and the airport and arrest the person of the President and you capture the state”.

Successful and attempted coups in CAR since independence

Year	Successful coups	Attempted coups
1966	Jean Bedel Bokassa overthrows David Dacko	
1974		Police General, Martin Lingoupou attempts to overthrow Bokassa
1975		Another attempt to overthrow Bokassa
1976		A group of army soldiers attempts to overthrow Bokassa
1979	Dacko overthrows Bokassa	
1981	André Kolingba overthrows Dacko	
1982		Patassé, Bozizé and Alphonse Mbaïkoua, attempt to overthrow André Kolingba
1996		Soldiers attempt to overthrow Patassé
2001		Bozizé tries to overthrow Patassé
2002		Bozizé tries to overthrow Patassé
2003	François Bozizé overthrows Ange-Félix Patassé	
2013	The Seleka Rebel Movement overthrows Bozizé	
2021		On 13 January 2021 around 200 rebels from the Coalition of patriots for change attacked the capital city, Bangui, in a failed attempt to overthrow the government

Source: Author 2022

2. CONCEPTUALISING COUP PROOFING

The problem of putsch bedeviling CAR can be attributed to lack of coup-proofing mechanism. Coup-proofing is a comprehensive process whereby government creates structures that minimise the probability that a country can provide fertile grounds to coups. This study argues that in an undertaking to thwart the threats of coups, states often undertake a plethora of strategies to protect their systems against overthrows. Coup-proofing is the totalities of strategies taken by authorities to prevent a coup. Pilster and Bohmelt (2011) contend that coup-proofing involves the effective exploitation of family, ethnic and religious loyalties for coup critical positions balanced with wider participation and less restrictive loyalty standards for the regime as a whole; the creation of an armed force parallel to the regular army; and the fostering of expertness in the regular military.

At regional level, this study notes that the Southern Africa region has been rocked by fewer coups ostensibly due to a number of coup-proofing strategies. The region remain safe from this threat

despite the instabilities in Mozambique that include the civil war of 1976 to 1991 as well as the on-going activities of the Ansa al Sunna terrorist militants in the Northern Cabo Delgado. In the same spirit, Angola also nursed a worrying post-independence civil conflict but was safe from the threat of a coup. In Zimbabwe, the 2017 change of power left the academic, military and political specialist failing to classify it as either a coup or a democratic change of power (Sixpence, Chilunjika and Sakarombe 2021). For South Africa, the country has been a victim of xenophobic disorders by its nationals without any decipherable ambitions to take over state power (Misago, Freemantle and Landau 2015). The experiences of Lesotho, however, remain a worrying case though heavily contained by the regional security mechanism as provided for by the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Such situation in the Southern African region, a region never colonised by the French, shows that there is an ingredient of poor coup-proofing mechanism in countries formerly colonised by France in Central, West and Northern Africa.

One of the most essential element of coup-proofing is the creation of institutional redundancy thereby, limiting inter-branch communication and basing promotion among members of the military on loyalty rather than expertise. State leaders fearing coups tend to intervene in the recruitment, promotion and assignment procedures of the military. They exploit family, ethnic or religious loyalties for recruiting soldiers to gain insurance against coups (Quinlivan 1999; Sixpence, Chilunjika and Sakarombe 2020). Pilster and Bohmelt (2011) buttress the above arguments asserting that, "Primary criteria for promotion of officers in coup-proofing systems are affiliation and loyalties not merit or expertise". This strategy has been used widely in Africa and beyond and, has, according to Sixpence, Chilunjika and Sakarombe (2020) promoted dynastic politics on the continent. While this is considered a working coup-proofing strategy, Ibid notes that post-election conflict resolutions are compromised by the desire to protect dynasties in power, citing the Khama of Botswana, Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ramgoolam of Mauritius and the Gnassingbe of Togo families as examples.

3. COUP INFLUENCE AND THE EXPERIENCES OF CAR

The factors that are making CAR a citadel of insurrection schemes and chaos are both domestic and international. Since CAR attained independence in 1960, it has been plagued by the Hobbesian nightmare security conundrum because of its fragility; the existence of hard-line authoritarianism; colonial legacy; geopolitics; and sectarian cleavages.

- **Military Ineffectiveness**

Military effectiveness of every state can be considered to be one of the key factors influencing the occurrence of coups. According to Pilster & Böhmelt (2011), military effectiveness entails a national army's "... leadership qualities, initiative, and the ability to coordinate different military units..." The army has been at the centre of all the successful coups in Africa, including but not limited to, Garbon (2019); Zimbabwe (2017); Sudan (2021); Mali (2021); Niger (2010); Egypt (2013) and even the most recent coup attempt in CAR (2020-2021). These and other cases show that when the military is not effective to coup-proof, there is a danger of some military leaders or units executing a coup or having the army overpowered by foreign forces leading to the execution of a coup. According to the Global Fire Power (2021), CAR is ranked number 131 out of the 140 countries considered for that review. The experiences of CAR clearly shows that the country's military effectiveness is compromised from all angles, a development that has paved way for the interferences by foreign forces from countries as Russia, Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon and Mali who in most cases are found providing financial and technical support to CAR.

To this end, these countries usually use this to influence the execution of coups in CAR. For instance, Almandini I and II agreements of 1996 arguably left France with more influence in the army of CAR after having paid the mutinying soldiers and returned them their weapons against the wishes of the president of CAR, their commander in chief. In the same track, in 1979, French troops helped Dacko to overthrow Bokassa through a coup. In 2003 Chad helped Bozize to remove Patasse from power. The above political condition shows that there has been a perennial problem of military capability thereby exposing the country to security exploitation. As Powell (2012) argues, coup-proofing strategies are effective deterrence of coup activities and more generally the characteristics of the military appear to be far more important than economic influence on coup.

Biddle (2004) argues that, the state military is effective to the extent that it employs its force to destroy the enemy's military while preserving its own troops. This study noted that, the military in CAR is not able to employ force to drive out ragtag rebel groups and bandits that are taking safe haven in CAR. In the 1960s, the military failed to stamp its authority in driving out the Lumumbist and Anyanya rebel groups that were using the country as their sanctuary. It is of utmost standing to note that, the notorious Lord Resistance Army (LRA), a Christian radical militant group led by Joseph Kony, considers CAR as its safe haven in addition to Uganda, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The LRA has been accused by Uganda for assisting different rebel groups with military strategies including the formation of the Seleka (alliance) of CAR which subsequently overthrew Bozize in 2013. As Luttwak (1968) observed, a coup consists of the infiltration of a small but critical segment of the state apparatus which is then used to displace the government from its control of the remainder.

In addition, military capability is measured by the number of troops, supplies and equipment. An analysis of the military apparatus in CAR shows that it has few military troops, equipment and supplies and, thus, making it difficult for the government to thwart an insurgent. From its independence, CAR has been relying on France to augment its military troops. In 1981 France withdrew its troops from CAR and eventually, there was a coup. Besides France, CAR has also depended on countries like Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Mali, Rwanda, Russia and South Africa. For instance, during the reign of the former president of CAR, Bozize, CAR and South Africa signed an agreement in 2007 in which South Africa was to offer military training and capacity building to the Central African Armed Forces. In that vein, approximately 200 forces from South African Defence Forces (SADF) were in CAR, fighting alongside the Central African Armed Forces. During the same time, it was reported that the president of CAR, Bozize, was being guarded by Special Forces from Chad, the very force that assisted him to attain power through a coup in 2003 (the Conversation 2021; Compbell 2013). What it means politically is that these countries have a direct influence on the political and security developments in the country making it vulnerable to military infiltration and penetration by these countries.

- **Geopolitics**

Geopolitics, according to Petta (2019), refers to the power struggle over strategic territories for the purpose of political control over space. Geopolitics is the influence of factors such as geography, demography and economics on the politics in particular the foreign policy of a nation. With that in mind, this research noted that there are five emerging components of geopolitics which are prevalent in CAR problem. The five components are: continental, regional, resource, international and identity geopolitics. The coups in CAR were fuelled by the changing geo-strategic rivalries and competition as they have dramatically increased after the end of the Western state intervention.

Resource geopolitics in CAR has been fronted by the scramble for natural resources. Super powers are involved in CAR because the nation is endowed with natural resources and this plagued the country into an economic quagmire. The research observed that, countries that are interested in plundering natural resources in CAR include Chad, United States, China, France, Uganda and South Africa. The major natural resources which had caught international attention are diamonds and oil. Different oil companies from the interested states are present in CAR. China has become a pivotal player in oil exploration in CAR and a turning point in France-CAR relations was apparently reached when the then president of CAR, Bozize, granted oil exploration rights to the Chinese in 2009. Bozize revealed that his offer of the same exploration rights to France has been rejected by Total oil, an international energy company owned by French nationals. When Bozize was removed in 2013 France subtly refused to intervene to save Bozize as it did previously in 2006 and 2007 apparently because Bozize refused to grant them oil exploration rights (Lompard 2014).

Regional geopolitics is another phenomenon that is emerging in CAR. Chad has been involved in CAR politics for a long time. The President Chad, Idris Derby, assisted Bozize to overthrow Patasse in a coup in 2003. Chad has historical strategic interest in CAR for example, after the 2003 coup, Chad capitalised on the power grab by enabling its forces to operate in the Northern regions of CAR to annihilate Chad's rebel groups which were based in CAR. Chad is interested in CAR because of regional security and there have been a lot of activities done by the Chadian rebels in CAR and some

of the activities were even associated with CAR rebel groups which subsequently formed the Seleka movement that eventually overthrew Bozize in 2013. It is also alleged that, Chad supported the Seleka in order to draw the Chadian elements of the group deeper into CAR and, thus, stopping them from launching attacks into Chad. The paper also noted that CAR is located in the “problem region”, one of the most vexing problems in Central African Region and Great Lakes Region (GLR) is the existence of warlords and rebel groups. The notorious LRA used CAR as its safe haven and the group was allegedly instrumental in the formation of the Seleka. Herbert, Nathalia, and Marielle, (2013) stipulates that, CAR has become a state whose borders exist only on maps, where government control is restricted to the 25 square miles occupied by the Capital Bangui.

The location of CAR explains a lot towards the continuation of coups in that country. The country neighbours Cameroon, Chad, South Sudan, Sudan, DRC, and Congo whose political and security situation exposes CAR to similar or related challenges of political and human insecurities. For Chad, the culture of political coups is not novel and is proving to remain fresh and advancing. Chad is among the countries to have experienced the latest coups in the region after the military in that country abrogated the national constitution, dissolved parliament and government and installed the son to the late president, Idis Debby, Mohamat Debby, the president and leader of the Transitional Military Council (TMC) in 2021. The military takeover of power in Chad followed a number of attempted coups for the past 30 years since Debby took over power through a military coup against Hissene Habre in 1990.

Also neighbouring CAR is Sudan. Sudan was swamped by civil conflicts since the turn of the millennium which resulted in the breakaway of Southern part of the country into South Sudan in 2011. Since its independence in 1956, the country witnessed a total of 16 attempted putsches and 5 successful military coups one of which being the 25 October 2021 military coup (Harshe 2021). In the latest development, the coup leader, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, arrested Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, dissolved the government and postponed elections formerly slated for 2022 to 2023. These developments make it difficult for Sudanese authorities to nurse the wounds of coups in CAR for they are a victim of similar if not worse circumstances.

South Sudan, another neighbour of CAR has never tested peace since its establishment in 2011. The country remains a theatre of political violence reflecting ethnical and regional conflicts traced back to beyond the birth of the country in 2011. The independence of the country failed to put to rest the fight between the largest ethnical group, the Dinka and the second largest group, the Nuer. To date, the former continue to support the first president of South Sudan, Salva Kiir against the former Vice President, Dr Riek Machar, who is supported by the Nuer in the conflict. South Sudan is a host to a multiple of armed rebels who are at the centre of the proliferation of small arms in the region as well as training of other militiaman banditry groups including armed groups from CAR. (Dawnie 2013)

The existence of the resource rich DRC as one of the neighbours of CAR has done more harm than good to the situation in CAR. This research noted that while the DRC has had challenges in having an effective government for decades, the situation in the North-Eastern provinces, particularly Ituri and North Kivhu, is critical for an understanding of the continued occurrence of coups by armed groups in CAR and other regional states. This study noted that the North-Eastern DRC hosts dozens of armed groups which operate not only in the DRC but in other regional countries including but not limited to CAR. To make matters worse, the DRC has been reported to be the host to the Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP) linked to the Ansa al Sunnah terrorist group operating in the Cabo Delgado province of Mozambique. Instabilities in the DRC have also affected other countries like Rwanda and Uganda.

The conflict going on in Cameroon since 2016 between the government and the separatists from the British Southern Cameroons, the Ambazonia governing council (AGovC) has since been declared a humanitarian crisis (Takambou 2021). Although there is no much link between this conflict and the military activities in CAR, it can be argued that the relevance of Cameroon in the conflicts of CAR become less intense considering the former has a lot to do at home in its endeavour to thwart the secessionist uprising in its North-West and South-West English speaking provinces.

For Gabon, the conflict in CAR serves as a political career springboard for the political elite back home who take the conflict as a source for gaining military and diplomatic experience. The demographic status of Gabon makes it a weak power in the region with less than 7000 troops (The conversation 2017) and, therefore depend largely on defence diplomacy through deploying its security forces in regional and international missions. In the case of CAR, Gabon has been present in a wide range of missions in CAR since 2003 when it had 450 soldiers under the United Nations Mission in Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Thereafter, its forces has been active in operations including but not limited to the Multinational Forces for Central Africa deployed by the Central Africa Economic and Monetary Community in 2002; the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in CAR (2008); the International Support Mission to CAR (2013) and is part of the French Force of Operation Sangaris. Such commitment by Gabon, a small and militarily weak nation in the region shows that the continued conflict in CAR is of political relevance to them and would do anything possible to ensure chaos continues.

- **State Fragility**

The researcher observed that CAR is a landlocked country which has been an epicentre of political and economic instability due to the perennial problem of weak government system in that country. Using the Rotberg (2003) classification of states, CAR can be deemed a collapsed state. An analysis of literature on peace building indicates that collapsed, weak and pariah states are likely to face coups and civil wars than their counterparts. The challenges facing CAR since its independence are multiple and have made it difficult for any authority to have much time to establish a stronger governance system. Some of the perennial challenges have included but are not limited to colonial legacy left by the French; the deliberate move by various authorities to keep the state security weak for fear of mutinies; the occurrence of too many coups in a very short space of time; regional imbalances and, now, the threat of radicalisation and violent extremism (Sixpence, Makoni and Moyo 2021).

This study further notes that there has been a huge influence of the French military on the security weaknesses visibly existing in CAR. For instance, this study noted that French military and government were directly or indirectly involved in either stimulating or proofing at least thirteen coups that hovered CAR in over 60years. Correspondingly, this paper noted that France has the impertinence to destabilise CAR, Mali, Ivory Coast and other Francophone states in its endeavour to promoting its political and economic interests. France also employed counter revolutionary strategies of removing or facilitating the removal of leaders who does not serve their interest in the same countries.

- **Authoritarianism**

The study also noted that political instability in CAR is exacerbated by the innate problem of authoritarianism. Since the country acquired independence in 1960, it has been ruled by despotic leaders. The abusive tendencies of leaders in CAR has been prevalent to the extent that it fails to respond to the third wave of democratisation. In 1993 there was a significant trajectory in CAR when Patasse became the first President to be elected in an arguably free, fair and credible election. However, the government of Patasse failed to consolidate democracy in the country and, ten (10) years later, the country retarded to military rule. Using the Tool for Empirical Research on Democratic qualities, it can be noted that democracy in CAR does not conform to the standards encapsulated by Morlino (2009).

In CAR, democratic consolidation has been stifled by the continued culture of political intolerance, breakdown of the rule of law, human rights abuse as well as successful despotic takeover of power. A synthesis of literature on coups shows that authoritarian regimes are likely to experience military coups than democratic regimes. For instance, Botswana and Senegal have never experienced military coups and it is argued that it is because they are mature democracies. The negation of the democratic ethics in CAR has been necessitated by self-rule, involvement of the military in politics and the promotion of the political culture of fear. During his reign in the 1970s, Bokassa proclaimed himself as the Emperor of CAR. Van de Walle (2000) observed that, the factor that is responsible for the diminishing of democracy in Africa is the extent to which neo-patrimonial politics dominate African politics since independence. The paper noted that CAR is not an exception to the problem of politics of patronage and cronyism.

The study further noted that an analysis of democracy in CAR must also include an analysis of elections as democracy and election are interrelated. The quality of elections held in CAR has been very problematic and are further weakening democratic consolidation. Using Elklit and Reynolds (2005) Framework for the Systematic Study of Election Quality, it can be observed that elections in CAR are held as a mere formality as they do not conform to the Framework of Election Quality. The flawed elections and constrained civil liberties have been prevalent in CAR during the last four decades of its independence and this exemplifies a widespread pattern of electoral irregularities and violations of freedom in the country. The elections in CAR have been marked by voter apathy and voter intimidation that caused electoral disputes. Electoral disputes have degenerated into armed conflicts.

In the same vein, it can be argued that the political and security volatility in CAR are also a result of failure by those in power as well as the regional and international organisations to which CAR subscribe to, to come up with a working post-election conflict resolution mechanism. According to Sixpence, Chilunjika and Sakarombe (2021), a slight failure to resolve post-election conflicts are a key ingredient to political and security instability in most parts of the world. Ibid further notes that frozen conflicts on the continent are much to blame for the political and security misfortunes common in most African countries.

- **Sectarian Cleavages**

The 2013 coup in CAR was unique in the sense that it was the only coup which was triggered by identity politics. Some literature regards the 2013 coup as supporting the Clash of Civilisation Theory propounded by Huntington (1993). The conflict is regarded as a clash between the minority Seleka (Muslims), constituting 15% of the total population, and the majority Anti-Balaka or Anti-Seleka (Christians). Kane (2015) posits that, Seleka are considered to be Muslims from the Northern region of the country and neighbouring countries like Chad, Nigeria and Sudan and in opposite is the Anti-Balaka, a group which is predominantly made up of locals who are Christians. The diamond-rich Northern part of CAR has been historically marginalised by the central government apparently because most of the leaders of CAR come from the Southern region. Conflict management literature indicates that marginalisation has been at the epicentre of triggering hatred among people in the same country. In that case the 2013 coup was also triggered by real or perceived marginalisation of the Muslim dominated northern region.

The study argues that, in political horizons characterised by perceived and actual marginalisation, the marginalised groups end up clamouring for secession, autonomy and self-determination as was witnessed in Sudan leading to the formation of South Sudan in 2011. The same has caused conflicts in countries like Zimbabwe, Angola, Cameroon, Nigeria, Mali and many more African states. The obvious implication of such confrontation is that either the central government will agree to the will of the marginalised groups or they will be further confrontation plunging the state in the state of nature. The Seleka is a radical Islam which share a sense of communal identity and seeks to avenge the actions of the CAR's previous governments which were dominated by Christians. The whole Muslim population from the vicinity of the country were supporting the Seleka and were aggressive to Christians. The anti-Christian bias reached a crescendo when the Seleka usurped power. Arrieff and Husted (2015) state that, once in power the Seleka leaders ordained over the collapse of an already fragile nation that oversaw cruel attacks on rural Christian communities in the North-West. In response the Christians formed the Anti-Balaka to retaliate the actions of the Muslims.

- **Regional Marginalisation and Imbalances**

The weakness of the security apparatus in CAR has been compounded by marginalisation of other cities by the government. Resources are concentrated in the capital city and other strongholds of the government. Herbert, Nathalia, and Marielle (2013) argue that, just like other weak and failed states, CAR exhibits a core-periphery pattern. The implication of marginalisation on security is that those marginalised groups will be prepared to revolt against the government. The paper draws lessons from the Frustration and Aggression Theory propounded by Dollard and Sear (1939), who alluded that frustration is a condition that surfaces when circumstances interfere with a goal response and they will traverse to aggression.

- **Radicalisation and Violent Extremism**

This study also realised that regionalism and religious intolerance in CAR remain at the centre of factors influencing the occurrences of coups and political instability. The alignments of the main political players in the country to the pitting Christian and Muslim communities have not been spared in explanations on the occurrences of coups in CAR since 1960. Beyond CAR, it can be noted that religious intolerance and radicalisation has affected peace efforts in countries as Sudan (prior to 2011), Mali and Nigeria among many other in the same region. In light of the foregoing, the AU (2014) noted that terrorists groups exploit and capitalise on social grievances, frozen conflicts, identity claims, history, religion, exclusion and marginalisation to propel an ideological narrative that creates an enabling environment for radicalisation and recruitment of terrorist fighters. For CAR, this study noted that the country has not been spared by the activities of the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) led by Joseph Kony whose Transnational Organised Criminal (TOCs) activities particularly poaching have attracted the hearts of many unemployed youths in the region.

Elements of violent extremism in CAR are driven by a wide range of reasons ranging from local to sub-regional factors. According to Lister (2013) regional radical groups such as the Christian dominated LRA from Uganda but based in the DRC; the Muslim dominated Boko Haram from Nigeria and the Militant Muslim Janjaweed (MMJ) from Sudan all have presence in CAR. By 2013, CAR witnessed the rise of the loosely organised Muslim militia, formed few years back to resist the marginalisation; human rights abuse and torture of prisoners in the Muslim dominated and diamond rich North-Eastern parts of the country by the then Christian dominated government of president Bozize. The Seleka, led by Michael Djotodia continued to target the Christian community and played a critical role in all the coups witnessed in CAR since 2013.

A close look at the militant groups operating in CAR, provides that these militant groups plays a critical role in supporting the loosely organised local groups such as the Saleka and the anti Saleka militants to destabilise the country and push for unconstitutional change of governments by various ambitious individuals and groups in that country. Ibid notes that the threat of radicalisation and violent extremism in the country is also persuaded by the desperate levels of poverty in a country with 2/3 of its population living below the Poverty Datum Line (PDL); more than ½ a million Internally Displaced People (IDP); with ¼ of its total population without access to food and a dire life expectancy of 48years for both men and women. According to Sixpence, Makoni and Moyo (2021), these are among the key factors promoting radicalisation and violent extremism in Africa.

4. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that in Africa and CAR in particular the factors that are triggering instability are authoritarianism and mismanagement of the economy that then promote social inequality among the various regions in the country. More so, this study also concludes that the spongy security situations in most parts of African boundaries are a key factor enabling militants to operate in more than one country undetected. Arms proliferation becomes common in such situations and, thus, it becomes difficult for authorities to thwart banditry and stop unconstitutional change of governments. The paper observed that in CAR there were commonalities in the causes of all coups witnessed since 1960 when the country attained its independence and there is a possibility of the continuation of this culture. Although most literature would like to equate the crisis of coup in most francophone African states, this paper realises that there are varied reasons to that cause and it may not be just to solely blame colonial legacy for the unfortunate developments in Africa. More worrying again is the relationship between political instability in most African states to the threat of radicalisation and violent extremism, a new development likely to succeed the current crisis in most African states and CAR in particular.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Pursuant to the foregoing discussion, this paper makes the following recommendations:

- The establishment of a functional and capacitated army that can be able to thwart the varied militia groups operating in the country as well as protecting the country from penetration and infiltration by the regional militants such as Boko Haram, Janjaweed and the LRA;

- The paper also suggests that peace building is also essential in mitigating the current security impasse and promoting peace in future. Peace building can be initiated by pursuing a holistic Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (DDRP). Currently there are more than 14 rebel groups with as well as more than 15 000 armed men concentrated mostly in the Northern provinces housing the Seleka rebels. Disarmament will give the central government a leverage to control and prevent uprisings and coups.
- Considering the level of hate accumulated by series of clashes between the Muslim and the Christians in the country, there is need for the setup and establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission which should promote peace and reconciliation in the country. Granting amnesty to members of the rebel groups is also crucial as the strategy was effective in Niger. In future there is need to charge leaders of those rebel groups for war crimes and crimes against humanity and this can be facilitated by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Transitional justice can also be enhanced by creating an international tribunal as was with the International Criminal Tribunal of the Former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1993-2017) and the International Criminal Tribunal of Rwanda (1995 to present).
- Nation building is also crucial in CAR as currently CAR is a nation without a state. Nation building can be enhanced by promoting democracy and creating strong institutions of democracy. The principles of rule of law, separation of powers and other democratic ethic should be respected in the country. Elections can also be used to consolidate democracy in the country and this can be done by ensuring that there is electoral integrity. The Electoral Management Body must be capacitated so that it will be impartial. Electoral disputes in the country have been identified as one of the triggers of instability. There is also need to improve the legal framework on election, halt voter intimidation and other unethical conducts during and after elections. The culture of blocking other candidates from participating in elections should also be avoided as it is inconsistent with free, fair and credible elections.
- CAR need to come up with economic policies that steer the country to prosperity. Considering that the country is rich in natural resources, there is therefore a need to have transparency in natural resource governance. There is the need to formalise mining in the country since the major form of mining in the country is Artisanal Small Scale mining which is prone to conflicts. There is untapped revenue from natural resources in the country hence a comprehensive reforms on mining will ensure that the country will raise more revenue on minerals. The search for natural resources in CAR has resulted in a deplorable state of human rights and breakdown of the rule of law. Hence formalisation of the mining sector will likely minimise human rights abuse in the mining sector. The paper argues that, one of the major problem of natural resources management in Africa is the lack of goodwill from the elite to formalise the sector apparently because they benefit from the ragtag mining. Sierra Leone, Angola and Zimbabwe are some of the cases which indicate that there is need for a holistic reform in the extractive sectors. In Zimbabwe recently there is a surge in machete gang because of the security conundrum that engulf the mining sector.
- The government of CAR should also invest in programs that promote religious tolerance as a way of combating the threat of radicalisation and violent extremism as well as terrorism. This is so considering that the country have already proven to have a fertile grounds for a real crush of civilisation pitting Christians from one side and Muslims from the other. The existence of militarised groups formed along religious lines like the Seleka and the anti-Seleka is a time bomb to the peace and security in CAR.
- There is also need for enhanced regional and international interventions to the crisis of CAR. These interventions should be developed from both civilian and military angles to allow for sustainable peace and development beyond the era of coups in that country.

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