CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Muslims

Activity: 2014-2020

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- Séléka, an alliance of northern and mostly Muslim rebel groups, was formed in 2012. In March 2013, Séléka overthrew the government in a campaign that involved widespread violence targeted at Christian civilians. In response, armed animist/Christian militias were formed. Séléka was ousted from power in early 2014 amidst large-scale inter-ethnic violence (MRGI).
- Several sources report the emergence of separatist claims after the ouster of Séléka from power in early 2014. According to the International Crisis Group (2017), "the idea of a partition of the CAR, encouraged by some members of the then administration, has been on the agenda since the Brazzavilla summit of July 2014." In agreement with this, the Guardian reports that Muslim rebels called for secession in 2014, with their aim being the establishment of an independent Republic of Northern Central Africa. According to Kam Kah (2014: 41), the former CAR president and Séléka leader, Michel Djtodia, declared the northern CAR an independent state called "Dar el Kouti" in August 2014. Finally, according to Minahan (2016: 438), an independent North Ubangi was declared in February 2014 for the country's Muslim minority.
- According to several sources, FPRC (Popular Front for the Central African Renaissance) rebels declared an autonomous or even independent state in north-east CAR in December 2015. The self-declared state was variously referred to as the Republic of Logone or Dar El Kuti (Encyclopedia Britannica; Global Security; International Crisis Group 2017).
- A 2018 report suggests that the FPRC continued to make demands for regime change and, failing that, the partition of the CAR (IPIS & DIIS 2018: 21). The report also suggests that FPRC fighters are predominantly Fulani and Arab.
- The FPRC continued to remain active as of 2020 (UCDP/PRIO). [start date: 2014; end date: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- According to a report by Tih (2015), the Republic of Logone, which was unilaterally declared in December 2015, was meant to be an autonomous state. "What we want first is autonomy. The new will see how to move towards independence."
- However, several other sources suggest a secession claim. According to the International Crisis Group (2017), "the idea of a partition of the CAR, encouraged by some members of the then administration, has been on the agenda since the Brazzavilla summit of July 2014." The Guardian reports that Muslim rebels called for secession in 2014, with their aim being the establishment of an independent Republic of Northern Central Africa.
- According to the International Crisis Group (2017), the FPRC's claims – which seems to be the main group that has called for self-rule – are ambiguous and the group has made calls for both autonomy and independence, depending on the circumstances at any one time. In line with the codebook, we code the more radical claim throughout. [2014-2020: independence claim]

Independence claims

- See above. [start date: 2014; end date: ongoing]

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- Various actors have made self-rule claims, but the most prominent claim is from FPRC, a Muslim rebel group which declared the Republic of Logone/Dar el Kuti in 2015. Most sources do not specify an exact territory, referring only to the north-east. We code based on a map from Wikipedia, which is the best we could find: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Logone. This map suggests the claim refers to the following four prefectures: Nana-Grébizi, Bamingui-Bangoran, Vakaga, Haute-Kotto. We use GIS data from GADM for polygon definition.

Sovereignty declarations

- According to Minahan (2016: 438, 488), an independent North Ubangi was declared in February 2014 for the country's Muslim minority. Furthermore, according to Kam Kah (2014: 41), the former CAR president and Séléka leader, Michel Djtodia, declared the northern CAR an independent state called "Dar el Kouti" in August 2014. [2014: independence declaration]
- According to several sources, FPRC (Popular Front for the Central African Renaissance) rebels declared a state in north-east CAR in December 2015. It is not entirely clear whether the proposed state should be understood as fully independent, but in line with general coding rules, if there is ambiguity we code the more radical claim (Encyclopedia Britannica; Global Security; International Crisis Group 2017). [2015: independence declaration]

Separatist armed conflict

- The Central African Republic (CAR) has been consumed by violence between primarily Christian and Muslim militias since 2013 (MRGI). Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl (2019) code an ongoing civil war between 2013 and 2020 involving the government and UN forces on the one side and Séléka/former Séléka on the other. The rebels' motives are mixed, i.e., while rebel groups have made claims for secession, they also seek to overthrow the regime, hence we assign an ambiguous code. [2014-ongoing: HVIOLSD]
  - Note: UCDP/PRIO counts a lot of the violence as "non-state based" and, in 2016, UCDP/PRIO does not record any state-based violence. Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl report significant numbers of casualties throughout 2014-2020, with the likely main reason being that SSW count violence emerging from fights between Muslim Séléka forces and Christian/animist anti-balaka groups while UCDP/PRIO classifies these as non-state violence.
  - In v22.1, UCDP/PRIO added a territorial armed conflict over Logone, with the FPRC as the rebel group. The conflict is active in a single year, 2015 (27 deaths). Additional battle-related deaths are reported in 2017 (17), 2019 (6), and 2020 (14).
  - It follows that UCDP/PRIO treats most of the violence between 2013-2020 as not over separatism and/or as not state-based. In line with general coding rules, we however code HVIOLSD if a conflict is included in SSW and separatism was one of the rebels' motives.

Historical context

- The Central African Republic was conquered by France in the 1880s and colonially ruled from 1894. An independence movement emerged in the 1940s. In 1960, CAR became independent and was henceforth ruled by a succession of dictators. A key conflict line was between the country's northern and southern parts (MRGI).
- In 2012, religion became the country's key cleavage with the formation of the largely Muslim rebel alliance Séléka. Séléka entered into negotiation swith the government in late 2012. A power-sharing deal was struck in January 2013, but Séléka quickly became disenchanted. Hostilities resumed in March. Séléka captured Bangui, the capital, that same month and the Séléka leader, Djotodia, declare himself president. Séléka was formally dissolved by the president and former Séléka leader in September 2013, with some of the rebels being integrated into the new CAR army. Yet, the Séléka government was unable to maintain control and lacked sovereignty over most of the country. CAR had effectively collapsed and become a failed state.
- Widespread human rights abuses, mostly targeted at Christian civilians, had been committed during the Séléka campaign and continued after their leader, Michel Djotodia, took power as the country's new president. In response, a group of armed animist and Christian militias, known as 'anti-balaka' ('anti-machete'), were formed and by the end of the 2013 had staged a series of reprisal attacks against Muslim civilians in Bangui. The inter-ethnic violence led to mor ehtan 800,000 people being displaced (Encyclopedia Britannica). In December 2013, the UN Security Council mandated a French military intervention to support African Union troops in France (MRGI).
- The Séléka alliance splintered in 2014 into a number of different armed groups including FPRC, MPC, UPC, 3R, and more. Djotodia resigned amidst the emergence of Christian anti-balaka militias, who fought back against the rebels and CAR's Muslim population. An interim government was anointed, but it exerted little effective control over territory. In April 2014, the UN Security Council approved a UN-led peacekeeping mission, which in September took over operations from the African and French forces already in the country (Encyclopedia Britannica; MRGI; Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl 2019).

Concessions and restrictions

NA

Regional autonomy

- Due to de facto independence. [2015-2020: regional autonomy]

De facto independence

- The interim government that came to power in 2014 wielded little power beyond Bangui and 80% of the country was controlled by armed groups. This includes the FPRC, which erected a de facto independent state called the Republic of Logone in the country's north-east. The rebels operated a parallel state with their own police and they collected taxes. The government had little control (Encyclopedia Britannica; International Crisis Group 2017; IPIS & DIIS 2018). Other Muslim rebel groups similarly held territories (IPIS & DIIS 2018). [2015-2020: de facto independence]

Major territorial changes

- [2014: establishment of de facto independent state]

EPR2SDM

Movement	Muslims
Scenario	1:n
EPR group(s)	Fulani; Northern Muslim groups (Goula, Runga, Kara)
Gwgroupid(s)	48205080; 48205095

- Note: according to EPR, these groups in combination make up 0.8% of the country's population. Muslism make up 9-15% according to most sources, and Fulani are the largest Muslim group, with Wikipedia suggesting they make up 5% of CAR's population (EPR reports 0.6%, by contrast). This suggests that EPR's group size estimates have likely been wrongly entered. Note: EPR does not seem to include all Muslim groups; e.g., there are also Arabs.

Power access

- According to EPR, the Fulani became discriminated against after the ouster of Séléka in early 2014 while other, smaller Muslim groups had some representation and therefore are coded as junior partner (Goula, Runga, and Kara). From 2017, all Muslim groups are coded as powerless. We apply a powerless code throughout. [2014-2020: powerless]

Group size

- We draw on the U.S. government estimate, which is that 15% of the country's population are Muslim (U.S. Department of State 2018). MRGI reports the same estimate. Other sources report lower estimates of around 10%. Note: the violence led to significant numbers of displaced, disproportionately Muslims. Therefore, these numbers may no longer be accurate. We could not find better information, however. [0.15]

Regional concentration

- EPR codes the Fulani, the largest group associated with this movement, as "dispersed". We could not find better information. [not concentrated]

Kin

- There are grounds to code transborder kin. For example, there are several million ethnic Fulani also in neighboring Cameroon or several hundred thousand in Chad. [kin in adjacent country]

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