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**10 YEARS OF REGIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC -  
AND STILL NO STABILIZATION IN SIGHT?**

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**Panel # 099: The role of regional economic communities for political and security issues**

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**Abstract:**

Since 2003, regional Central African troops have been deployed in the Central African Republic (CAR) - first with the multinational force FOMUC, and from 2008 with the peace consolidation mission MICOPAX - in response to subsequent political crises, rebellions and attempted and successful coups d'Etats. After 10 years of regional involvement that aimed at promoting peace and security in the CAR, the balance is however poor and disturbing. Whereas the mission's mandate was initially planned to end by the end of 2013 and the troops had already started to prepare their withdrawal, the recent coup d'État and violent regime change in March 2013 has severely challenged these projects. The situation in the CAR hence remains alarming, with very fragile and vulnerable political and security conditions, a high level of violence and criminality all over the territory, and severe humanitarian and socio-economic problems. Highly embarrassing the internal, regional and external stakeholders, the recent events and continuous instability in the country and the region are severely questioning the effectiveness of the so far implemented regional security initiatives and call for a substantial revision of current approach. Starting with a review of the recent developments in the CAR and their handling, the paper takes stock of the last 10 years of regional security cooperation and troop deployment in the CAR. It argues that a major failure of the current approach lies in its narrow focus on military activities, whereas social issues and civil involvement have been largely neglected. As broader human security needs and rapidly changing regional security constellations are likely to fuel conflicts, creating peace and security in a sustainable way (more than ever) requires a regional approach that addresses structural mainly non-military causes of instability.

## **10 years of regional security cooperation in the Central African Republic - and still no stabilization in sight?**

In March 2013, ten years exactly after the violent accession to power by President François Bozizé, the Central African Republic (CAR) has again been hit by a coup d'État. The coalition of rebel movements Séléka, that had already threatened to topple the regime three months before, seized power and forced the President to flee the country. This new incident is only the latest one in a long list of unconstitutional shifts of power since the country's independence in 1960. Ranging among the poorest and less developed states in the world, with a life expectancy at birth of only 49,1 years, two-thirds of the population living with less than 1,25 US \$ a day and a literacy rate of just 56%, the CAR is also one of the politically most unstable and volatile countries on the continent. Located in the middle of a conflict-torn region, with Sudan, South Sudan, Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) among its neighbours, weak state power, complete absence of the state in the border zones and border porosity have led to fragile and inner cohesion, the proliferation of armed groups and the emergence of rebel movements. With state authority being concentrated on the capital, some areas in the northern and north-eastern parts of the territory have fallen outside the state's control. Here either a state of anarchy or any form of alternative power structures are reigning (Meyer 2010).

As a response to this continuously high level of insecurity and political instability in one of their member states, the Central African regional economic communities – the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) - have been sending peace missions to the CAR since 2002. The multinational force FOMUC, deployed under the auspices of CEMAC from 2002 and 2008, and the following peace consolidation mission MICOPAX managed by ECCAS present the first cases of joint troop deployment under the framework of one of Central Africa's RECs in the region's history. MICOPAX, in particular, illustrates ECCAS' progressive broadening of an initially merely economic agenda and the increased attention paid to peace and security issues. The recent putsch in the CAR and the rise in insecurity in the country, including the capital of Bangui, however severely question the effectiveness of these regional peace and security efforts. Although MICOPAX has actively intervened to stop the rebel coalition's first advancement in December 2012, it has not prevented their seizure of the capital and the fall of President Bozizé in March 2013. Also the mission had in fact been considered to have completed its mandate and the troops' withdrawal, scheduled for the end of 2013, had already begun. The new surge in political instability in a state they have been supporting, for more than

10 years in consolidating its security, hence marks a significant backslide and calls the Central African states to thoroughly revise their approach to regional peace and security – at a time when they are about to build up a joint regional peace and security architecture.

The aim of this paper is to review regional peace and security cooperation in Central Africa, in the light of 10 years of regional troop deployment in the CAR and the yet recent violent power change. It intends to emphasize, illustrate and discuss major problems and weaknesses that can explain the current limits in the cooperation's performance and hinder it from contributing to the region's peace, security and stability in a sustainable way. Based on these considerations, the paper presents a series of conclusions and recommendations.

## **THE MARCH 2013 PUTSCH IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**

### **A brief glance at the crisis**

The toppling of President François Bozizé on 23/24 March 2013 has been a putsch in several steps. The regime's weakness and vulnerability have in fact become more and more evident and visible since summer 2012, with the deterioration of bilateral relations between the CAR and its neighbour and long-time ally Chad, a series of allegations of coup plotting and a partial cabinet reshuffle (Mehler 2013). In December 2012, the coalition of rebel movements, under the name Séléka, started a first major offensive. Their advancing towards the capital could eventually only be stopped, only 150 km out of Bangui, thanks to the support the national army FACA received from Chad, as well as the regional MICOPAX troops. The Libreville Peace Agreement signed between the government and the rebels on 11 January 2013 under the aegis of ECCAS brought an only temporary and relative calming of the tensions. The main elements of the accord are that Bozizé would remain the President of the CAR until the next elections in 2016 (art.1), at which he and all other cabinet members would be forbidden from running (art.6). A transition government, including members from the Séléka coalition and a Prime Minister from an opposition party would have to be formed, having as main mission to restore peace and security, to organise parliamentary elections, to reorganise the defence and security sector, the territorial administration and the judiciary system and to pursue the Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) and Security Sector Reform (SSR) processes, with international support (art.5). Together with the other ECCAS member states, the new government would moreover work towards the complete withdrawal of all non-Central African troops, present on the CAR territory, which in particular refers to Ugandan and South African forces (Art. 18). Finally, a Committee, including ECCAS, has been set up to monitor the

implementation of the agreement (Art. 11). Frustration over some of these provisions and Bozizé's reluctance to respect them, as well as the threatening split within the Séléka coalition between those included in the new transition government and a still not satisfied military basis led however to a new series of attacks by Séléka rebels in February 2013. This time, Chad and other Central African states did not actively intervene on Bozizé's side. The movement succeeded in seizing the capital and taking the power. On 25 March, Séléka leader Michel Djotodia proclaimed himself the new President of the CAR.

### **The crisis' context**

The circumstances and factors that led to and fostered the March 2013 events are multiple and complex. Following the fall of Muammar Gaddafi and violent regime change in Libya in 2011, the regional power balance is about to be significantly redefined, with still uncertain and unpredictable outcome. While revealing the weakness of many regimes in the Sahel and Central African region and facilitating the emergence of new actors, this new situation also brings along the underlying risk of old, partly frozen conflict lines reappearing (Meyer 2013). Besides this broader context, it is possible to identify a series of more specific developments that have in various ways influenced or even facilitated the accession to power by the Séléka coalition; in particular, the President's loss of former supporters that have made him considerably vulnerable to any form of rebellion and unveiled his weak power.

On the one hand, France refused to intervene, although Bozizé openly urged the country's former colonial power to assist him beat back the rebels. Paris had long continued to exert considerable influence on the CAR's domestic politics and security situation in the decades after the independence. France's declining willingness to directly interfere in the CAR and progressive reduction of local military presence since the 1990's is in line with France's revised Africa policy (Meyer 2011). This re-orientation, illustrated by the so called "ni-ni"<sup>1</sup> – or neither-neither – policy of then-French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin in 1997, is the basis of a significant redefinition of the French strategic priorities in Africa. Despite its geostrategic position, the CAR seems to have lost its role in this new *Françafrique*, both politically and economically, whereas other countries have seen a rebound in French interest and interference in recent years. Politically, the French interests are focused on other hotspots on the continent, currently in particular Mali. With AREVA freezing its mining activities in the sub-prefecture of Bakouma, due, on the one side, to a slowing uranium demand and declining market prices following the

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<sup>1</sup> Following Lionel Jospin's statement in Mali (1997) "Neither interference nor indifference." ("Ni ingérence ni indifférence")

Fukushima accident, and, on the other side, to rising instability in the area, the CAR has also economically lost some of its attraction. It is hence hardly surprising that François Bozizé's request for French protection, when the Séléka rebels were approaching Bangui in December 2012, went unheard. France only took care to protect the local French community, its Embassy and other important French institutions.

On the other hand, François Bozizé has also lost his other major ally and supporter: Chad's President Idriss Déby. Déby had played a fundamental role in Bozizé's accession to power in 2003, giving him refuge and supporting his putsch with men and equipment (ICG 2007). Over the last years, relations between the two neighbours have however worsened, with both accusing each other of backing rebels on their respective territory, growing frictions between the local population and Chadian soldiers – members of Bozizé's presidential guard or mercenaries from the 2003 putsch still requested their compensation – and Déby's increasing discontent over Bozizé's close relationship with other African states, mainly the RSA. The end of the Déby-Bozizé alliance became particularly manifest when the Chadian elements of presidential guard, which not only presented the strongest armed force in the country but also provided the main protection for François Bozizé, left the country in November 2012 after the mutual decision of both Presidents.

## **CHALLENGING REGIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY COOPERATION IN CENTRAL AFRICA**

### **ECCAS' evolution from economic to security cooperation**

The toppling of President Bozizé and Séléka's seizure of power by force poses a severe challenge to regional peace and security cooperation in Central Africa, and in particular to ECCAS.

The coup indeed happens when ECCAS is about to set up a Central African peace and security architecture. Initially created as economic community to promote economic exchange and cooperation between its member states, ECCAS has undergone an important broadening of its agenda since the end of the 1990's to also cover regional security concerns. A central impulse behind this development has been the region's significant conflict proneness in the 1990's. The outbreak of crises and conflicts in the Great Lakes region severely threatened the socio-economic development in Central Africa, strained the relations between some states and hampered regional cooperation and economic exchange. As a consequence, ECCAS' activities were paralysed between 1992 and 1997 and the community underwent a six years long hibernation. The revival of ECCAS came along with a reorientation of its agenda towards peace

and security issues. A vast reform process was launched in 1998 to give new impetus to regional cooperation. At the 1999 Conference of Central African Heads of State in Malabo “to develop capacities to maintain peace, security and stability - as essential prerequisites for economic and social development” has been identified as one of the community’s priority fields<sup>2</sup>.

The reform process includes the creation of several new regional security bodies that have progressively been set up, following the adoption of the Protocol of the Central African Peace and Security Council (COPAX) in February 2000 (ECCAS 2000). As central element within Central Africa’s regional peace and security architecture, the Peace and Security Council for Central Africa (COPAX) is responsible for “political and military concertation between the ECCAS member states, in the field of peace and security promotion, maintenance and consolidation” (ECCAS 2000: Art. 2). Its functions include conflict prevention and the reduction of sources of tension, conflict management and mediation, as well as conflict resolution and the coping with issues of illegal immigration, displaced persons, former combatants and refugees, as well as humanitarian assistance (ECCAS 2000: Art. 4).

Upon decision by ECCAS’ central policy-making organ, the Conference of Heads of State, COPAX can deploy civil and military observer and verification missions and take any civil or military action needed to prevent, manage and solve a conflict. Three technical organs are under COPAX’ authority: the Defense and Security Commission (CDS), the Early Warning Mechanism (MARAC) and the Multinational Force (FOMAC). Composed of the member states’ chiefs of staff and commanders-in-chief of police and gendarmerie forces, CDS is ECCAS’ technical planning and advisory body. MARAC presents the region’s conflict prevention instrument with as main task to collect and analyze data and detect possible risk factors. And FOMAC is the Central African non-permanent multinational force that can be deployed for peace support operations (PSO). According to its Standing Orders, adopted in June 2002, FOMAC is “a force composed of national interservice, police, gendarmerie contingents and of civilian modules from member states of the ECCAS, with a view of carrying out peace, security and humanitarian assistance missions” (ECCAS 2002: Art. 2).

Following the decision by the Conference of Heads of State and upon request by one of ECCAS’ member states, the United Nations (UN) or the African Union (AU), in line with the subsidiary principle that underpins ECCAS’ relationship with the AU, FOMAC is to conduct observation and monitoring missions, peace keeping and peace restoration operations, as well as peace building, disarmament and demobilization activities. (ECCAS 2002: Art. 26; AU 2007:

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2 The other three priorities being: the physical, economic and monetary integration; a Culture of human integration; and the development of an autonomous financing mechanism.

Art IV-iv). FOMAC can also be deployed in humanitarian disaster situations, as well as for the enforcement of sanctions, and preventive and policing activities.

In accordance with article 16 of the Protocol relating to the establishment of the AU Peace and Security Council, adopted in 2002 and defining regional mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution as part of the overall security architecture of the Union, as well as the 2007 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the AU and the seven RECs recognized by the AU, ECCAS' member states have agreed to contribute, on the regional level, to the full operationalization and effective functioning of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). In this perspective, the Central African bodies, notably MARAC and FOMAC, are presenting the regional building-blocks of APSA.

### **MICOPAX' comeback – before its withdrawal**

Whereas the implementation of the Central African Peace and Security Architecture has been proceeding much slower than initially planned and compared to most other regions in Africa, such as notably Southern or Western Africa (Bachmann 2011), ECCAS has been operating, since 2008, the regional peace consolidation mission MICOPAX in the CAR. MICOPAX is the successor of FOMUC which has been sent to the country in 2002 by the other Central African regional community CEMAC as response to the alarming rise of insecurity. Although CEMAC has maintained its initial focus on economic cooperation, the decision to deploy the troops under its aegis was mainly due to the fact that in 2002 ECCAS was still in a stage of post-revival transition and reforming.

When ECCAS took over in July 2008, the mandate of the renamed mission was revised and adapted. Becoming much larger and multidimensional, it nevertheless remained quite vague. With as main task to secure the CAR territory, protect the population from violence and crime, and allow for a resumption of economic activities and trade inside the country, the mandate was built around four pillars: to assist the government in restructuring its institutions and developing the political process to consolidate a climate of peace and stability; to accompany the country in promoting democratic principles, and fostering the national reconciliation and dialogue process; to promote and monitor the respect of Human Rights; and to coordinate humanitarian aid and the fight against pandemic and endemic diseases (ECCAS 2008).

With a strength of some 700 troops in the year 2012, primarily provided by Chad, Gabon, Cameroon and the Republic of Congo, MICOPAX' budget has mainly been financed through the European Commission's Africa Peace Facility (APF). Under the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> European

Development Fund (EDF), a total amount of Euro 101.7 million has been spent by the EU to regional peace consolidation missions in the CAR (European Commission 2012).

After several renewals of the mandate, the mission was supposed to leave the CAR by the end of 2013. A partial withdrawal of troops had already begun in the course of 2012. The main reasons behind this decision can be seen in the contributing states' frustration over limited results and changing strategic interests, as well as the end of support by major international partners, first and foremost the EU. The recent violent regime change and rise in instability and instability thwart these plans. While making evident the fragile inner stability, posing a threat to the entire region, they illustrate the need for a prolongation of foreign assistance in consolidating peace and security in the country. At the same, the incapacity of MICOPAX to prevent this new crisis - similar to FOMUC's paralysis when Bozizé violently seized power 10 years ago – calls for a substantial revision, not only of the mission's mandate and composition, but of the whole Central African security cooperation approach.

### **ECCAS' reaction – a controversy**

With regard to its evolution from a merely economic organization to a community increasingly concerned with peace and security questions and its involvement in the CAR crises management since 2008, the recent tensions are indeed posing a significant challenge to ECCAS. Without doubt, ECCAS has played a central role in the crisis resolution process. In January 2013, they substantially guided the negotiation of the Libreville agreement, and, after Djotodia's seizure of power, immediately convened two extraordinary summits with the participation of representatives from Séléka and major international partners and stakeholders to encourage the continued application of the amended agreement over a transition period of 18 months. Moreover, the ECCAS' states have decided to continue their active support in form of a prolongation of the regional peace mission, to be strengthened to up to 2000 troops.

Nevertheless, the community's reaction can be seen as quite controversial. First of all, the community's weak commitment in monitoring the Libreville accord's implementation after its agreement in January is seen by some observers, such as the International Crisis Group (ICG) as critical factor for the renewed rise of tensions and eventual putsch in March (ICG 2013). Another controversy has emerged around the official recognition by ECCAS of the self-proclaimed President. Being contradictory to the AU's reaction and suspension of the CAR's membership, this step also shows a certain inconsistency within ECCAS position.

Whereas most ECCAS states had still been supporting the former President against the advancement of the rebel troops in December, their positioning in March was clearly on the



side of the rebel chief Michel Djotodia, whom they acknowledged as new political leader of the CAR and supported in launching a transition process. The reasons for this change of mind can principally be seen in frustration over Bozizé's weak commitment to implement the Libreville Agreement and especially his turning to the RSA for ensuring his protection. This step in particular additionally worsened the relations between the CAR President and some of his regional counterparts; relations that had already severely deteriorated over the last years, as will be discussed more in detail below.

## **PROBLEMS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **ECCAS between intergovernmental cooperation and regional integration**

The recent putsch in the CAR and how it was handled on the regional level demonstrate the main weaknesses of regional security cooperation in Central Africa. Despite more than a decade of joint efforts to emphasise the regional dimension of security, to set up institutions and implement common policies, the effective sustainable contribution to regional peace and security in a long term perspective remains limited. A central problem can be seen in the adopted approach. ECCAS, similar to its counterpart CEMAC, as well as to most other African regional communities, follows a clearly intergovernmental approach that is moreover highly personalised by the respective Heads of State. Decision making, as well as the definition of the organisation's policy direction are within the authority of ECCAS' supreme body, the Conference of Heads of State. The predominant position of the member states' political leaders in all community affairs, including peace and security issues, contradicts any sharing of power and responsibility. It limits the role of institutions, especially those at the community level, to mere executors of the Conference's decisions, with negligible powers, responsibilities and control functions. In a similar way, also the involvement of other actors, besides the states, such as representatives of the civil society, is insignificant. In this perspective, being so centred on the states makes ECCAS considerably vulnerable, not only to deadlocks in decision-taking and implementation processes but also to particular interests or the clash of conflicting positions. A major challenge in Central Africa is that, compared to other regions in Africa, there is no clear regional leader. Indeed, it is not evident which state could act as regional driver, comparable to the RSA in Southern Africa or Nigeria in Western Africa. Several observers have emphasized the importance of such a hegemon for the region's security, presenting "an important element of successful conflict management and peace-keeping" and serving "as the 'fulcrum' of regional security co-operation" (MacAulay and Karbo 2008:157). Whereas

Gabonese then-President Omar Bongo and his Cameroonian counterpart Paul Biya have long claimed the position of Central Africa's hegemon for their respective countries, other states such as the Angola or Equatorial Guinea have from time to time shown similar ambitions that have however all more or less failed, mainly due to internal reasons or the problem of mutual mistrust within the community<sup>3</sup> (ICG 2011; Guicherd 2012). Constituting a suitable candidate with regard to its size, population, geostrategic position and economic potential, the DRC is afflicted by chronic instability and insecurity in the Eastern provinces.

By involving himself so directly in the CAR crisis, Chad's President Déby has once again clearly demonstrated his ambitions to fill this gap and take the leading role in the region's political arena. The way the crisis in the CAR was handled on the regional level clearly has his fingerprints. Certainly, Chad currently holds the chairmanship of ECCAS, which might also explain why, for instance, the two extraordinary Conferences of Heads of State had been held in N'Djaména. However the engagement of ECCAS, under Déby, has very much been guided by the Chadian vision and interests. As has already briefly been discussed above, Chad is very much concerned about the developments in his neighbor country, and hence has deeply been involved in the country's politics. Stability and security, and a situation in compliance with his specific interests are indeed essential for Déby to mainly realize his economic and political ambitions. With the start of oil extraction in 2003 in the southern area of Chad, Déby's attention has been mainly focused on the border with the CAR and the Republic's frontier provinces, which however present the most instable ones. Bozizé's incapacity to have control over these peripheral areas and especially to contain those centrifugal movements that are hostile to Déby's regime played a fundamental role in Chad dropping his former ally (ICG 2013). A second faux-pas of Bozizé that has both challenged and triggered Déby's regional engagement was the intensification of his relations to the RSA. Although Pretoria's reasons for assisting the CAR regime in his fight against the Séléka rebels have never clearly been laid down, it can be assumed that they were both of economic (mining concessions) and political (expanding power to Central Africa) nature. Especially, the presence of 400 South African

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<sup>3</sup> Traditionally, Gabon's former long-term President Omar Bongo has taken a very central role in Central Africa's regional cooperation processes. Besides serving as mediator in lot of crises and conflicts, he has been a major promoter of ECCAS' revival and reform and the setup of FOMUC in 2002 as regional response to the CAR crisis. Cameroon's President Paul Biya has long tried to counter these ambitions and strengthen his own regional position. Animosities between the two neighbors have not only contributed to slowing the process and deadlocking decisions, as until 2008 the two Presidents refused to come to the same regional summits and meetings. The tense relationship also hindered the emergence of any clear regional lead nation. Under Bongo's son and current President, Ali Bongo, Gabon's priorities have significantly changed, with more attention given to internal affairs. Angola's regional ambitions in Central Africa are rather temporary. They appear as an answer to the RSA's leadership in Southern Africa, following the "big fish in a small pond"- principle (UNDP 2008:11). Finally, Equatorial Guinea's recent efforts to assert itself on the regional level are mainly economically oriented and hence turned more towards CEMAC than ECCAS.

troops on the CAR territory must apparently have been considered by Déby as a severe provocation and clear affront against him. It certainly significantly influenced ECCAS' changing attitude from first assisting the Bozizé regime in December to remain in power to acknowledging his opponents as new political leader in March.

Besides the Chadian interests underlying the regional crisis resolution approach, it can be assumed that the fall of Bozizé and the way the situation was handled were also complying with particular concerns of other states in the region. A first issue are the aforementioned close ties that Bozizé had made with South Africa's President Jacob Zuma. South Africa certainly presents an important economic partner for almost all ECCAS states. However, the partnership between Bangui and Pretoria were highly disapproved given the fear of raising South African influence throughout the region. In addition, several bilateral animosities have emerged between Bozizé and some of his counterparts in the region: Gabon took it badly that the CAR regime supported Nkosazana Ndlamini-Zuma from RSA against the Gabonese candidate Jean Ping in the race for the AU Commission chair. In a quite similar way, tensions arose between Cameroun and the CAR over the re-election of the CEMAC Commission President, a Cameroonian, against the rotation principle which would have been in favour of Bangui (ICG 2013).

Being so influenced and driven by particular interests and vulnerable to frictions over them, Central Africa's regional cooperation is considerably weak and fragile. Any progress towards some kind of supranationalism and integration driven by its institutions is challenged by the complex interplay of particular motives and ambitions. Regional decision making, especially as regards peace and security questions, as well as the implementation of policies and agreements are mainly subject to specific primarily short-term concerns and commitments, and often more based on the predominant position of one state or a superficial compromise than on any shared consolidated vision. In this perspective, what the process is lacking is some form of self-dynamic that could make it less dependent on the political will of the member states and give it more independence and continuity. As long as Central Africa's regional institutional framework, and especially the Peace and Security Architecture reflect the currently applied intergovernmental logic, their potential to contribute to any long-term sustainable form of regional stability however remains more than questionable.

### **A narrow understanding of security**

Closely related, another concern can be raised regarding the conceptualisation of security. The actions taken and the composition of the main institutions set up in the frame of regional security cooperation in Africa reflect a definition of security that is based on a predominantly

military and Heads of State-centric perspective. A more comprehensive approach that would acknowledge the importance of non-military, social, economic and ecological aspects is still not sufficiently developed. These aspects however are inherent to the majority of conflicts and crises in Africa (Meyer 2010). The problem with such a narrow understanding is that solutions tend to be merely ad-hoc, addressing rather the direct manifestations of insecurity than its root-causes that are likely to be linked to socio-economic conditions. In the CAR, the year-long crisis is rooted in severe socio-economic problems, payment arrears of more than 30 months for civil servants and the military, growing unemployment and poverty, insufficiencies in terms of development and provision of basic needs in large parts of the periphery, as well as high levels of corruption, criminality and violence all over the country. Generating constant discontent and mistrust among the population, these problems are not only nourishing civil unrest and riots and massive strikes. They are also favoring the emergence of armed groups and rebel movements. It goes without doubt that the recent escalation in the CAR has called, in the short term, for a rapid end of the fighting and restoration of order. However, by limiting the solution to a military strategy and diplomatic negotiations and not addressing the structural causes behind the crisis, it will be difficult to achieve, in the long term, any sustainable consolidation of security in the CAR.

### **An integrated approach towards regional integration**

The predominance of Heads of State and focus on military security approaches are mirrored in the limited role played by non-state actors in Central Africa's regional cooperation process. Whereas mechanisms to involve these actors, such as notably representatives from the civil society, in regional decision making processes are still largely underdeveloped compared to other regions, where specific exchange forums or networks have been established (e.g. SADC, ECOWAS), also the role of civil actors within the regional peace and security architecture is still rather marginal. Over the last years, the importance of further developing their engagement has more and more been acknowledged. In January 2009, ECCAS then-secretary-general, Louis Sylvain-Goma noted that "[t]oday, national security cannot be reserved for experts. It concerns all of us, as it is not only about ensuring state security but also the human security of populations. It is therefore natural that all are associated with the discussion about priorities and means."<sup>4</sup> However, ECCAS is taking long to put into practice these good

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<sup>4</sup> Translation by the author of: "Aujourd'hui, la sécurité nationale ne peut être réservée aux experts. Elle est l'affaire de tous, puisqu'il s'agit non seulement d'assurer la sécurité de l'Etat, mais aussi la sécurité humaine des populations. Il est donc naturel que tous soient associés à la discussion de ses priorités et de ses moyens." In :

intentions and commitments. Initially foreseen to be operational by January 2009, the effective deployment of MICOPAX' civil and police components has taken much longer than planned. This has raised the question both, concerning its peace consolidation nature – that was considered a key element of the mission as even indicates its full name – and to what degree its approach effectively differs from that of its predecessor FOMUC (Guicherd 2012).

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS – TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE AND SELF-SUSTAINED PEACE AND SECURITY IN CENTRAL AFRICA**

If regional cooperation is to contribute to sustainable and self-sustaining peace and security in Central Africa, some issues appear particularly relevant.

First, to quickly respond to a crisis and rising insecurity, such as in the case of the CAR, it is, with no doubt fundamental to take measures aimed at rapidly calming the situation and specific manifestations. In the long-term, a suitable approach however needs to consider the main causes and sources behind the crises, and to pay in particular attention to socio-economic problems. In the CAR, major security challenges are the high level of poverty and unemployment, weak and uneven development and the isolation of peripheral areas. Crisis resolution has therefore to offer vital solutions to these issues, in view of reducing their potential to generate and fuel conflicts. Measures to integrate former combatants economically may, for instance, be a more promising approach than a purely military based solution. Trying to integrate former Séléka adherents into the – already quite fragile and inefficient – national army bears the risk to fail given the current bad condition of the CAR troops, important payment arrears as well as the fact that rebels would probably not be accepted and their “military rank” not acknowledged by their FACA colleagues. Considering economic integration as a central part of the DDR process, by offering combatants specific trainings and supporting them in finding jobs and integrating the local economy appears, in contrast, as a more viable and sustainable option.

Second, civil crises solutions also require a stronger engagement of non-state actors and in particular of the civil society. Although civil society organisations are economically still very weak in Central Africa, many demonstrate a high level of motivation and commitment. This is mainly due to the fact that the emergence of civil society in Central Africa, as well as on the whole continent, is still a rather recent phenomenon, compared for instance to Europe.

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Discours d'ouverture du Secrétaire Général au séminaire sous régional sur la réforme des secteurs de la sécurité, January 14, 2009. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.ceeac-eccas.org/index.php?rubrique=documentation&cat=6&id=230> (accessed July 26, 2009).

Moreover, their relationship to local communities whose concerns and interests they represent is principally very close, which gives them a lot of legitimacy. Several examples, for instance following the Rwanda genocides, have shown the important role CSOs are able to play in the field of conflict resolution or mediation. In the CAR, distrust between the population and, on the one side, state institutions, and on the other side, military forces – may these be rebel movements, FACA, MICOPAX or Chadian soldiers – is critical. Engaging the civil society as intermediary might be an approach to follow.

Finally, the involvement of non-state actors is also essential as regards the regional cooperation process as such. Given the predominance of Heads of State in regional decision and policy making, the identification of the Central African people with ECCAS, as well as with CEMAC is considerable limited. Enabling civil society actors to actively participate on the regional level would not only counterbalance the state-centric and interest-driven approach characteristic of intergovernmental cooperation and give regional decision making more transparency. It would also allow to promote a more integrative approach to regionalization, that is indeed essential to give more attention to development and human security needs and thereby develop and strengthen the potential of regional cooperation to promote self-sustaining peace and security in Central Africa.

With regard to the prevailing difficulties in terms of economic capabilities, financial resources and human capital, substantial capacity building would be required in order to realize this potential of the civil society – a need that is especially to be more considered and addressed by the international community than it is currently the case.<sup>5</sup> To be effective, civil society involvement can however not only be based on external support. It also requires the endorsement of the region's member states, and hence their political leaders' commitment towards a second substantial turning within Central Africa's regionalisation: from an intergovernmental approach towards a multi-actor, multi-level one.

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<sup>5</sup> Noteworthy attempts in this direction have so far been done by the European Commission, in the context of the "ECCAS Support Programme for Peace and Security/ Programme d'appui en matière de paix et sécurité de la CEEAC (PAPS-CEEAC). In September 2007, a comprehensive programme to improve cooperation with civil society groups in Central Africa has been launched.

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