



With Russian Help, A Fragile Peace Agreement in the Central African Republic

OE Watch Commentary: Since 2012, seven peace treaties have been signed by the warring parties in the Central African Republic and all seven failed to deliver peace between the country’s Christians and Muslims. Now, as the accompanying excerpted article from the South African website *CAJ News* reports, an eighth treaty is attempting to succeed where the others have not. The negotiations leading to this agreement were held in Sudan with mediation from both the African Union and UN. Interestingly, while this article gave credit to Russia for brokering a meeting last year between the mainly Christian anti-Balaka alliance (led by Maxime Mokom) and Seleka, an alliance of Muslim rebel groups (led by Nouredine Adam), many other news sites did not mention Russia’s role in the peace process.



Members of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) on patrol. Violence between Christians and Muslims has necessitated a military presence to try and keep the peace.

Source: UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe, <https://goo.gl/YttqQJ>, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Although this agreement between the government and 14 rebel groups is being praised, like its predecessors, it faces formidable obstacles. There is, however, some cautious optimism for success, as described in the accompanying excerpted article from *Deutsche Welle*, based on the long negotiations that culminated in the agreement, including many that attempted to tackle the numerous grievances of the various groups as well as to understand the socioeconomic pressures behind them. Still, there are concerns the treaty could unravel in this thinly populated country that is often at or near the bottom of human development indices.

One of the largest concerns is whether or not the Seleka rebels, who control large parts of the country, including some that are mineral rich, will give up power. Along these same lines, one attempt to provide the rebels with some power in the government is to have the prime minister appointed from within their ranks. However, the rebels are not fully unified, and there is a rivalry among several of the groups, so it could be difficult choosing one person who is acceptable to all factions. Additionally, it is unclear how much power the Muslim prime minister will actually wield in this country that has a Christian majority.

Although the government rejected the idea of a blanket amnesty, the treaty does call for the establishment of a Truth, Reconciliation and Compensation Commission. It also establishes a goal of integrating the rebels into the armed forces. It is hoped that these and other key components of the treaty will be enough to end a war that has resulted in thousands dead and over one million fleeing their homes. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“A prime minister from the ranks of the rebels and no general amnesty — these are the cornerstones of the peace treaty that has been signed by the government of the Central African Republic and several rebel groups.”

Source: Raji Bashir, “Russia plays momentous truce to usher peace in CAR,” *CAJ*, 4 February 2019. <http://cajnewsafrica.com/2019/02/04/russia-plays-momentous-truce-to-usher-peace-in-car/>

However, Russia played a prominent role in laying the foundation for the peace talks between Touadera’s administration and the 14 armed groups that control most of the country. CAR has been in crisis since 2013 when Muslim rebels seized power.

Source: Silja Fröhlich, “New Hope for the Central African Republic,” *Deutsche Welle*, 5 February 2019. <https://www.dw.com/en/new-hope-for-the-central-african-republic/a-47373650>

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The agreement covers various aspects, including the implementation of a government of national unity bringing together all political and social forces of the country.

“These groups don’t respect international humanitarian law. They don’t delineate between civilians and combatants. So to treat these groups as equal partners at the table to give them some autonomy, if that does emerge, is very worrying.”