

CHAPTER III

THE EMERGENCE OF CONFLICT IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

In this chapter, the writer will provide the information about conflicting parties in Central African Republic which consist of Séléka as Muslim minority in northern area of the country and also Christian Anti-Balaka. The information of both conflicting parties emergence will be followed by the historical setting of conflict in the countries since 2012 until the end of 2015 and alternative resolutions that had been taken to deal with the conflict.

A. The Emergence of Conflicting Parties

1. The Séléka

Séléka was one of the first current conflicting parties who consist of Muslim minority in northern area of Central African Republic. It was emerged in the end of 2012 as the disappointment of Muslim minority toward the government of C.A.R. This group was led by Michel Djotodia by making alliances with previous rebels groups like Democratic Front for the People of the Central African Republic (FDPC), and the Union of Re-publican Forces (UFR).

In its formation process, Séléka was also supported by other eight armed groups in the country while from the outset supports, Séléka relied on mercenaries who came from Sudan and Chad. (Weyns, Hoex, Hilgert, &

Spittaels, 2014). After Séléka gained C.A.R territory, to increase their power, they became alliances with several other armed groups present in the country.

Séléka itself was formed to oppose the government of Francois Bozize in 2012 who gained power to be the president of Central African Republic undemocratically by attempting coup to topple down the previous president (Central African Republic Profile – Timeline , 2016). As the response of Séléka emergence, Bozize tried to find alternative way in maintaining his position as the president of C.A.R.

One of the efforts taken to deal with Séléka was Libreville peace agreement signed by Séléka and Bozize in Libreville, Gabon, on 11th January 2013. The agreement itself was mediated by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).The agreement consist of demands asked by Séléka toward Bozize to decrease the tension of their rebellion. However it was not effective enough to stop Séléka's eagerness to gain power since Boziz could not fulfill all of the demands asked by Séléka. The leader of Séléka, Djotodia also impeached Francois Bozize as the previous president doing such kind of discrimination toward certain ethnic and political groups, particularly Muslims by applying 'exclusionist' policies (Herbert, Dukhan, & Debos, State Fragility in the Central African Republic : What prompted the 2013 coup?, 2013).

In March 2013, Séléka succeed to control the capital city of C.A.R, Bangui by toppling down President François Bozize, who had himself come

to power in an armed rebellion 10 years earlier. (Arieff & Husted, Crisis in the Central African Republic, 2015). After Bozize was toppled down, Michel Djotodia was chosen to be the next president. He was the first Muslim leader in the country.

To avoid the international blame pointed to Séléka, Djotodia officially disbanded Séléka coalition on September 12th 2013 and blamed “fake Séléka” and members of former of Bozize’s members as the one who abused human right (Central African Republic : Legacy of Misrule , 2014). Although “fake Séléka” was disbanded, but offensive attack toward the citizens was still continued. As the armed force of the country, he declared the FACA (Forces armées centrafricaines) to be the only legitimate force by still recruiting the ex-Séléka militants as the member of FACA. Also, he promoted some commanders of ex-Séléka to be senior ranks and appointing them as zone commanders throughout the country (Weyns, Hoex, Hilgert, & Spittaels, 2014). However, there was no difference between ex-Séléka who were officially integrated into the army, and Séléka as rebels group of the country.

Under Djotodia’s administration, the dysfunctional government of C.A.R under the control of Séléka as the powerful group had resulted citizens suffered from irregularities of laws done by Séléka to benefited themselves. Although Séléka launched attacks toward the other groups and civilians but the power of Djotodia as the president made them to have the

impunity. It was also one of the reason they ignored their action to avoid international blame by disbanding the group in September 2013. The government also seemed to be without a plan to integrate or disarm Séléka. (ACLED, COUNTRY REPORT: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, 2015).

Séléka was let in doing its violence toward the citizens. Djotodia and two heads of the transition government, Nguendet and Samba-Panza, had not been very active in running the government. Among his signatory on more than 500 decrees, there was not a single one of those decrees that is related to socio-economic issue of the country. Majority of those decrees are relating to nominations of political and military positions. (Weyns, Hoex, Hilgert, & Spittaels, 2014). Meanwhile, Djotodia as the president of C.A.R and former leader of Séléka did power abuse in accessing public funding to increase his own enrichment. Not only the former leader of the group, the whole Séléka also benefited from the taxes gotten by them since they had power. Beside that, they also did illegal actions toward C.A.R natural resources such as trading and smuggling diamonds and also pre-financing mining activities (Weyns, Hoex, Hilgert, & Spittaels, 2014).

After becoming powerful, Séléka started to kill civilians who were trying to flee attacks. In some villages, every single structure was at least partially burned. The destruction was often accompanied by pillaging, leaving civilian populations utterly destitute. It resulted many villagers forced to abandon

their homes, are living in extremely difficult conditions in the bush. Lacking humanitarian support, numerous people have died of illness, injuries, or exposure to the elements. International humanitarian agencies have been able to provide limited support to only a few affected areas. Governmental and nongovernmental health services were systematically targeted, and destroyed or closed (World Report 2014 : Central African Republic | Human Right Watch, 2014).

However, in February 2014, the violence done by Séléka to the civilians started to decrease. It may be influenced by the resignation of Djotodia as president in January 2014 under the demand and pressure of international actors since he was not considered as legal leader. Beside that, the militants of Séléka had to deal with Security Council Resolution 2134 which sent African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA) and Sangaris French Mission to conduct disarmament in Bangui (ACLED, COUNTRY REPORT: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, 2015).

Despite on the violence done by Séléka toward the citizens of C.A.R, they also launched attack against other groups including state forces and international forces sent by UN and France. Also, as the peak of the recent conflict in C.A.R, Séléka had to deal with Anti-Balaka, the Christian militants reformed as the response of power abuse done by Séléka (ACLED, COUNTRY REPORT: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, 2015).

2. The Anti-Balaka

Anti-Balaka is a modern coalition of local groups who formed in self-defense to protect communities from power abuses done by certain groups like rebels, bandits, cattle-raiders and poachers that was emerged in August-September 2013 also as the response of power abuse done by Séléka under its former leader Michel Djotodia as the president of the country (ACLED, COUNTRY REPORT: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, 2015).

Anti-Balaka militants mainly consist of former soldiers in Francois Bozize administration, defected members of the Séléka, Christian vigilante farmers, members of the Association of Central African Farmers (ACP), and the Front for the Return to the Constitutional Order in Central Africa (FROCCA). Most of them were the supporter of the former president Francois Bozize (Pastor). Together, this diverse range of predominantly Christian actors formed local units, which sought to defend communities against the actions of the Séléka, while also retaliating against Muslim communities.

Although the Anti-Balaka group firstly were created only aiming to protect their own group in their own region, under the administration of Djotodia as the first Muslim leader of the country, Anti-Balaka started to gain more power by gathering trusted people from lower position of Bozizé's administration such as FACA, Presidential Guard, and Gendarmerie in order to fight against Séléka. Beside that, Anti-Balaka also

started to recruit their own new militants and organize the groups as the response toward power abuse done by Séléka (Weyns, Hoex, Hilgert, & Spittaels, 2014).

In the end of 2013, Anti-Balaka started to launch counter-attack toward Séléka actions under Djotodia's government. Christian Anti-Balaka attack Bangui as the capital city and successfully conquered it. The attack done by Christian Anti-Balaka triggered a cycle of revenge killings between Séléka and Anti-Balaka, which also made the spolitical and security situation became worse. The Anti-Balaka militants, reinforced by elements of the disorganized and scattered FACA, organized themselves and C.A.R carried out mass killings, looting and destruction of property under the pretext of retaliating for the violations against the non-Muslim and Christian communities by the Séléka forces (UNSC, The Final report of the International Commission of Inquiry on the Central African Republic, 2014). As the result, Michel Djotodia had to leave his position as the president of the country. By being mediated by the Chad, Michel Djotodia finally resigned from his position as the president of Central African Republic on January 10th 2014 (Weyns, Hoex, Hilgert, & Spittaels, 2014).

After Michel Djotodia ousted in January 2014, Séléka was started to split due to the emergence of distrust among the members. Some of the commanders of Séléka considered the representatives in the capital only negotiate for their own interests to maintain their positions in the

government or the administration. Moreover, Djotodia was additionally subject to U.S. sanctions (Arieff & Husted, Crisis in the Central African Republic, 2015). He was declared as persona non grata by the international community when placed under international sanctions (Weyns, Hoex, Hilgert, & Spittaels, 2014).

Since then, both conflicting parties started to attack civilians in the name of religion and resulted ethnic cleansing toward Muslims as the minority in the country. Although both conflicting parties attack in the name of religious, however, it could not be considered correct since political interests also play a role as the reason behind the attacks between both conflicting parties (Käihkö & Utas, 2014). It could be seen from the emergence of several political actors in the political arena of the country. When international actors only focused on the conflict between Séléka and the Anti-Balaka due to the information shared by media, the other information about groups such as the LRA and Fulani/Peul ethnic militias contributing to the complex setting of C.A.R was not delivered. Even the information about the re-grouping of Séléka and the emergence of other factions in political arena such as the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC) under Ali Daras, the Popular Front for the Renaissance of Central Africa (FPRC) under Adam Nourredine and the Patriotic Assembly for the Renaissance of Central Africa (RPRC) under Damane Zacharia and Joseph Zoundeko were not delivered to the international actors which made people

in the world think that conflict in the country only caused by religious reason (ACLEDA, COUNTRY REPORT: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, 2015).

Other evidence shown telling that the conflicting parties who attack each other in the name of religious is wrong was the forming of the Central African Party for Unity and Development (PCUD) by Anti-Balaka as a political party seeking to legitimize their role in C.A.R and use institutional forces to continue their struggle. Even as the result of this formation, the Anti-Balaka has won the international PR campaign and their activities, in particular those oppose civilians, including forced migrations and campaigns of ethnic (ACLEDA, COUNTRY REPORT: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, 2015). Due to the ineffectiveness of government role, both conflicting parties have been integrated into the government, with some holding ministerial positions, impunity continues in the context of a crippled judicial system (ACLEDA, COUNTRY REPORT: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, 2015).

B. Figure of Conflict between Séléka and Anti Balaka

1. Causes of The Conflict

1.1.Structural Causes

According to United Nations Development Programs (UNDP)'s analysis, the structural causes of conflict in Central African Republic are due to extreme poverty, considerable inequalities, poor governance, weaknesses and failures of the political class in the country (Dieye, 2014).

1.2.Accelerator Causes

Accelerator of the conflict could be seen from changes or deterioration in the structural factors that drive a conflict (Conflict Prevention). Seeing the conflict in Central African Republic that could not face its end, the accelerator is political interests and eagerness of certain parties to gain power by establishing several rebels groups which were used to achieve their own interests to attack each other.

1.3.Trigger Causes

Trigger of conflict in Central African Republic could be seen from the toppling down of every people who were positioned as the president of the country. Also the attack on behalf of religion could be one of the trigger of conflict in Central African Republic that resulted into the provocation on behalf of religion.

2. The historical setting of the conflict

Since 2013, Central African Republic had faced the worst political crisis in their history (UN: Muslims ethnically cleansed in CAR, 2015). Most of the presidents of C.A.R were overthrown in coups, sometimes with external involvement (Central African Republic : Legacy of Misrule , 2014). During its political crisis, 2014 was the year that recorded most of political violent emerged in the country. The emergence of Muslim Séléka as one of the rebels group in December 2012 resulted widespread violence toward the citizens and led to a coup in March 2013 to topple down Francois Bozize as the president (Weyns, Hoex, Hilgert, & Spittaels, 2014). As the change, the leader of Séléka, Michel Djotodia was chosen unilaterally as the new president by Séléka which made them continued in doing its violence for beneficiating them.

Like the analysis of Johan Galtung in his conflict escalation and de-escalation model, there are many complexity of conflict in Central African Republic. The conflict is dynamic and can take long periods of time to gestate unnoticed before it suddenly erupt into overt violence. The process of its escalation is also complex and unpredictable where new issues and even new parties could emerge to complicate the situation (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Mial, 2015).

As the response toward the power abuse by Séléka under Djotodia administration, a majority-Christian coalition of the Anti-Balaka re-emerged

in August 2013 to launch a counter attack and resulted a revenge cycle attack between both parties. Since then, Djotodia got pressure to leave his presidency position.

After the fall of Djotodia administration, the troops of Séléka in Bangui were withdrawn. Most of them started moving to the northeast of the country. Although transitional president was chosen to run the government, however, the conflict between Séléka and Anti-Balaka could not be avoided. The conflicts reached the escalation in December 2013, when it was recorded the highest number of violence and attacks launched by both of conflicting parties. It could be seen from the report of hundreds of people died as the victims of the conflict. It was also reported that there were 60 cases of violence involving Muslim and Christian militias have increased, frequent targeting of people based on religion. Being targeted in the worst violence conducted by conflicting parties, there had been thousands of Muslims exodus left the country. Furthermore, Christian and Muslim militias continue to attack civilians of the other faith (ACLED, COUNTRY REPORT: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, 2015).

In the beginning of 2014, Séléka continued to conduct violence toward Christian civilians including their properties. The Séléka considered their attacks toward the Christian population were their responsibility for Anti-Balaka attacks toward the Muslims that was conducted before (AMNESTY, 2014). The conflict continued on the middle of 2014, when the conflict

between Anti-balaka and Séléka continued in several cities of the country like Kémo, Ouaka, Nana-Grébizi and Bangui. Not only attacking each other, Anti-Balaka and Séléka also launched attack against the civilians (ACLED, COUNTRY REPORT: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, 2015).

3. Impact of The Conflict

As the result of conflict between Séléka and Anti-Balaka, by the end of 2015, thousands had been killed on both sides and hundreds of villages burned. An estimated 456,000 people, the majority Muslim, remained refugees. A further 447,000 remained displaced internally (Human Rights Watch World Report 2016 : Central African Republic, 2015).

Beside attacking Anti-Balaka, Séléka also burned or destroyed villages and engaged in widespread looting. For example, in late 2014 and early 2015, Séléka fighters from the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (*l'Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique*), a former Séléka group, killed at least 120 people and burned hundreds of homes on the road between Kouango and Bianga, in Ouaka province (World Report 2014 : Central African Republic | Human Right Watch, 2014).

While the Anti-balaka who also fought against Séléka, targeted Muslim civilians as well as, increasingly, others who were seen as being too close to Muslims or were not supporting the Anti-Balaka. In central regions, the

Anti-Balaka killed scores of civilians and burned homes. For example, in late March, Anti-Balaka fighters killed at least 14 ethnic Peuhl herders outside Kaga Bandoro as they were moving their cattle. Ten of the victims were children, aged between one and nine years old, and three were women. The Peuhl scattered into the bush and several others went missing and are presumed dead. Some Anti-Balaka fighters also held ethnic Peuhl hostage for ransom, raped Peuhl women and girls and, in some cases, held them as sex slaves (Human Rights Watch World Report 2016 : Central African Republic, 2015).

Widespread of Anti-Balaka attacks have forced tens of thousands of Muslims to flee their homes. Muslim-owned properties and businesses have been looted and seized, and mosques have been destroyed. In some locations, Muslims are confined to precarious enclaves where their survival depends on the protection of international troops (Central African Republic: Muslims Trapped in Enclaves | Human Rights Watch , 2016). The U.N. Secretary General reported in April 2015 that the security and humanitarian situations remained critical in and around Muslim community enclaves and Amnesty International has reported on the forcible suppression of Muslim religious practice, including through forced conversions (Arieff & Husted, Crisis in the Central African Republic, 2015).

C. Alternative Resolutions taken in Dealing with the Conflict

During the conflict between Séléka and Anti-Balaka in Central African Republic, there had been many actors involved trying to find alternative solutions in dealing with the problem.

1. Repressive / Military means

1.1. State's and Army's role

The attack between Séléka and Anti-Balaka in Central African Republic supposed to be state's responsibility. The state had enforced justice and rule of law to deal with the conflict. However, state's role is not enough to solve the problem since state had focused in Bangui while it had limited presence outside the capital, which led to a proliferation of self-defense militias, armed groups and bandits, particularly in the north-east. The police and army were also inadequate and completely disintegrated following the 2013 coup (Barbelet, 2015).

Even judges and lawyers who had the capability to deal with criminals had already left the country since they also had been targeted by Séléka as part of its efforts to undermine the official authorities during and after the coup. The country has no secure prisons. Widespread impunity was impossible to be tackled when the legal chain had been broken (Barbelet, 2015).

National army of the country (FACA) and redeploying the police only could rely on deploying peace-keepers. However, there were allegations that both the army and the police had participated in Anti-Balaka attacks on Muslims in Bangui. Some observers have claimed that the well-organized military operation attack Bangui in December 2013 was the work of professional soldiers, not a loose coalition of self-defense groups (Barbelet, 2015).

1.2. Peacekeeping actors (MISCA and Sangaris)

Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA) was established on December 5th, 2013. It was established by the African Union's Peace and Security Council and through UN Security Council 2127. Ten African countries contributed troops except Chad that had repeated accusations that its troops were supporting the Séléka and firing on civilians (Barbelet, 2015).

MISCA focused on the protection of civilians, the restoration of security and public order and stabilization, the restoration of state authority, the creation of conditions conducive to the provision of humanitarian assistance, the continuation of United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA)'s disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and security sector reform.

While the French force called Sangaris was tasked under Security Council Resolution 2127 ‘to take all necessary measures to support MISCA in the discharge of its mandate’. It was particularly active in disarming the Séléka in late December and early January, and deployed to safeguard areas of C.A.R with the objective of protecting civilians.

However, MISCA and Sangaris missed the rise of the Anti-Balaka and the increasing threat to civilians. They also failed to recognize the impact on Muslim minorities of the Séléka’s retreat in January 2014.

2. Negotiation and Mediation Means

1.3. Libreville Peace Agreement

After Séléka took over several cities in Central African Republic, they asked for formal demands to Francois Bozize as the president at that time. In discussing their demands, a negotiation conducted between Séléka and the government to create peace agreement in order to decrease the conflict. The negotiation that was mediated by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in Gabon resulted Libreville Peace Agreement that was signed in January. United Nations Integrated Peace-building Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) in 2013 reported that the presidents of ECCAS (Chad, Republic of Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea) were also highly involved in the process (Tumutegyereize & Tillon, 2013).

The agreement discussed about the ceasefire of Séléka, the limitation of Bozizé's administration as the president of C.A.R until the end of 2016 without a possibility to be re-elected, the formation of a government of national union within twelve months (to include the majority party, opposition parties, non-active rebel movements, the Séléka coalition, and civil society), elections, reformation of defense, security, territorial administration, and the judicial system, a continued DDR and SSR process with the support of the international community, and various economic and social reforms (Herbert, Dukhan, & Debos, State Fragility in the Central African Republic : What prompted the 2013 coup?, 2013).

Although the Libreville agreement had been signed by Séléka and Bozize, however, it was violated by Bozize. He hadn't fulfilled the demands asked by Séléka except the demand for the appointment of the Prime Minister. The demands asked by Séléka consist of the release of certain prisoners, and the withdrawal of South African troops from the country who were deployed from South African army. All of the demands were not fulfilled and violated by Bozize which made Séléka continued the attacks.

As the continuation of Libreville agreement, in March 2013, Séléka asked more demands to the administration of Francois Bozize by providing the list of eleven demands for the government. They also launched the threat to conduct military action if the government did not fulfill the demands

within 72 hours. The demands asked by Séléka included the content of 2013 peace agreement before since it had not been fulfilled yet by Bozize such as the withdrawal of the South African troops. In addition, Séléka also asked for the review of the ministerial posts for Séléka, disarmament of the government's militias, and the integration of more than 2000 rebels into the FACA force. However, again, the demands were not fulfilled by Bozize and in March 2013, Séléka entered Bangui to topple down the administration of Bozize and chose Michel Djotodia, the leader of Séléka to be the new president of the country (Herbert, Dukhan, & Debos, State Fragility in the Central African Republic : What prompted the 2013 coup?, 2013)