GENERAL ELECTIONS 2015 / 2016 AS THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

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Abstract

After its' independence, Central African Republic had been facing political instability and also insurgencies. Most of the leaders gained power undemocratically and were overthrown in coups. In 2013, Séléka and Anti-Balaka emerged launching attacks against each other to gain power. Dealing with the problem, general elections were tried to be conducted several times but it only faced irregularities and security threats from the conflicting parties. The question emerged when there were international assistances in conducting general elections at the end of 2015. Thus, the conflict resolution measures were taken before conducting general elections are questioned.

The objective of this research is to analyze how conflict resolution measures were taken before conducting general elections 2015 / 2016 in Central African Republic. Furthermore, the method that was used by the writer was qualitative method by using secondary data such as article, journals, e-news, e-book and other literary sources.

As the findings, this research proves that there were national efforts done by faith-based actors and regional organization in creating cohesiveness through social and cultural norms. Also, humanitarian aid, diplomatic supports and international

assistances that consist of security, political and electoral assistance played the important role in conducting the general elections as well.

Introduction

In the end of 2012, Séléka as the first actor of recent conflicting party emerged. It is a Muslim minority group who lived in the north region of Central African Republic which was also the part of previous rebels group that already split into one (Herbert, Dukhan, & Debos, 2013). Séléka is the overview of Muslim minority disappointment toward unfair treatments done by the government like the exclusivity had by Christians and also persecution faced by them (Arieff & F. Husted, The Central African Republic: Background and U.S. Policy, 2015).

Séléka was formed to oppose the government of Francois Bozize in 2012 who gained the power to be the president of Central African Republic undemocratically by attempting a coup to topple down the previous president (Central African Republic Profile – Timeline , 2016). Under his ten years administration, many rebels emerged as the demand of new government establishment. To handle the rebels, Bozize made an agreement with them but at the end, he violated the agreement and finally became toppled down (Herbert, Dukhan, & Debos, 2013).

After Bozize toppled down, Séléka as the new powerful group at that time chose unilaterally their leader, Michel Djotodia to become the new president. He was the first Muslim ruler in the country. Under his administration, Séléka used power abuse to occupy all of C.A.R cities by conducting the individual attack to the citizens. However, since Djotodia was not chosen by the entire C.A.R's citizen, he was not recognized by African leaders and Western powers as the legitimate president. (Regional Leaders recognize C.African Republic rebel chief (2013) Retrieved November 13th, 2016 Regional Leaders recognize C.African Republic rebel chief , 2013)

Under his administration in 2013, anti-Balaka re-emerged as the disagreement response of the chosen Muslim leader. They were formed from Christian farmers and also consist of the former officers of Bozize's army. (ACLED, COUNTRY REPORT: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, 2015) They gained power and became a Christian militant group targeting Séléka as their threat which also making Muslims as their target to be killed. It was the starting point of ethnic cleansing in C.A.R towards Muslims. Due to this condition, hundreds of deaths were reported. A religious dimension had emerged in the conflict, with Anti-Balaka targeting Muslim civilians. This action led to reprisals done by Séléka to target back Christian civilians.

The condition where Muslim and Christians attacked each other brought Michel Djotodia to step down from his position and again, made C.A.R facing a political vacuum and made the number of violence increased. Since Djotodia stepped down from the position of president, the number of violence from both conflicting parties to the innocent civilians increased.

In managing the conflict, there were many alternative peace ways that had already taken by both transitional government of C.A.R and even international actor involvement. One of the actions taken was ceasefire agreement conducted in Congo between Séléka and Anti-Balaka in 2014. However, it was not effective enough to end the conflict that had already caused many victims died. (ACLED, COUNTRY REPORT: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, 2015) Not only that, regional actor like The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) also played a role in solving the problem by mediating peace accords and also deploying troops. (Arieff & Husted, Crisis in the Central African Republic, 2015)

In the end of 2015 and the beginning of 2016, general elections succeed to be conducted by the involvement of other others. This paper will describe conflict resolution measures taken before conducting general elections 2015/2016 in Central African Republic.

Theory of Democratic Peace

Democratic peace theory was first enunciated in a keynote article by Michael Doyle in the journal *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. He observed that almost no liberal states had fought against other liberal state while it seemed that no liberal state had fought wars against liberal states (Williams, 2008). This theory is considered by the basic idea about democracies by nature do not go to war with another. This concept is rooted theoretically in the writings of Immanuel Kant, and in particular his work "Perpetual Peace" (Pugh, 2005).

In explaining the idea of democracy, there are three versions of democratic peace theory that had been argued by democratic peace theorists by examining real conflicts:

1. Monadic version analyzed in 1960's and 70's: democracies, in general, are more peaceful and are less likely to go to war (Democratic Peace Theory).

2. Dyadic: the most commonly accepted version among democratic peace theorists. Democracies may be even robust in the use of force than non-democracies due partially to the ideological nature of democratic wars and partially to the fact that liberal democratic states are strong with large wealth base (Williams, 2008).

3. Systemic: as democratic states grow, then the international system as a whole becomes more peaceful (Democratic Peace Theory).

From those three versions of democratic peace theory, it is clearly explained the positive side of democracy in dealing with conflict and could be related to the case of Central African Republic conflict where many parties are trying to adopt democracy as the way to solve the

problem. The involvement from other actors like regional organization, international organization and also other countries are also explained by all of three versions of democratic peace theory.

In the explanation of democratic peace theory, there are several arguments proofing how democracy could result peace. One of the arguments that could be related to the case of Central Africa Republic is Normative Arguments.

According to normative arguments, democracies believe that other democracies are reasonable, predictable, and trustworthy (Maoz & M. Russett, 1993). Democratic states are bound by cultural and social norms that call for non-violent conflict resolution and negotiation. Because democratic leaders are bound by these norms they try to adopt them in the international arena which means that a democracy will respect its fellow democracy abiding by these norms and ; thus, treat the fellow with great esteem and diplomatic affection.

This logic argues that autocratic political systems are considered unjust and immoral. From the perspective of democracy, war may be necessary to free people from dictatorship. Democracies may also want to introduce the idea of human right (Democratic Peace Theory).
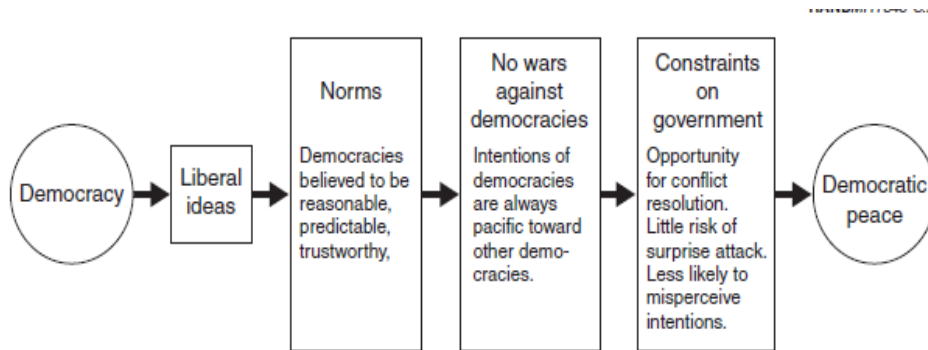
Figure 1 – Norms and Democratic Peace

Source:

rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1346/MR1346.appc.pdf

In relating the theory with conflict in Central African Republic, based on the figure 1, it explains that democracy is bound by norms. The norms that should be created in the process of conducting general elections in Central African Republic are cultural and social norms. It aimed to create cohesiveness between Muslim and Christians since the conflict in the country somehow was influenced by political interests that used religious matter as the mean to achieve their interest. In this process, the actor who played a role was faith-based actors.

Also in the figure 1 explains that fellow democracy will treat the fellow with great esteem and diplomatic affection. In the context of conducting general elections as liberal democratic idea in Central African Republic, there were humanitarian aids and diplomatic supports given by the international actors as other adherents of democracy.

While also as explained in the normative figure of democratic peace theory, due to democratic leaders are bound by norms they try to adopt them in international arena which means that a democracy will respect its fellow democracy abiding by these norms and treat the fellow with great esteem and diplomatic affection. International assistance is showing diplomatic affection regarding non-violent resolution and negotiation done by other international actors to Central African Republic as the process in conducting general elections.

Despite some arguments about democratic peace theory, this theory has been influential in public policy. The association between war, democracy, and rights prevalent in the immediate aftermath of Second World War, has also been revived (Williams, 2008).

From the explanation above, this theory could be implemented in analyzing how conflict resolution measures taken before conducting general elections 2015/2016 C.A.R. Normative argument of democratic peace theory figure could be used to analyze steps taken in conducting the elections.

ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESS IN CONDUCTION GENERAL ELECTIONS 2015 / 2016 IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Based on the explanation about democratic peace theory above, in explaining the conflict resolution measures taken before conducting general elections 2015/2016 in Central African Republic as liberal democracy idea, the writer analyzes that there are several steps taken by both internal and external actors to support the success of the elections.

Creating Cohesiveness between Muslims and Christians through Cultural and Social Norms Creation

1. **Faith-Based Actors Role**

In dealing with the problem, not only state that has its role, some faith-based actors (priests, imams, missionaries), either as religious leaders or as directors of schools and health center could be influential in dealing with the problem. Based on the figure 1 about normative argument of democratic peace theory, democracy is bound by norms. The norms that should be created in the process of conducting general elections in Central African Republic are cultural and social norms.

Creating cultural and social norms in Central African Republic aimed to create cohesiveness between Muslim and Christians since the conflict in the country somehow was

influenced by political interests that used religious matter as the mean to achieve their interest. In this process, the actor who plays a role is faith-based actors.

In December 2012, religious leaders from different communities came together to form the Inter-Religious Platform (IRP) and discuss about plan actions and messages aimed to reduce the tension of the conflict, also to mediate the conflicting parties. It was supported by international faith-based NGOs, including CAFOD, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Muslim Charities Forum. In this platform, religious leaders were influential in advocating for peace. Also, the advocacy done by those faith-based actors had called international action and the deployment of a peacekeeping mission like robust response from UN Member States, the Security Council. International NGOs such as Médecins Sans Frontières, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. (Barbelet, 2015)

2. Regional Organization Role

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide through citizen participation, openness and accountability in government (Central African Republic). NDI had already helped the society to conduct discussion aimed to share democratic values and maintain the peace relation among citizens in Central African Republic who got the impact of the conflict.

Actions taken by NDI were also influential in creating cohesiveness between Muslims and Christians through social and cultural norms creation. Beside that, actions taken by NDI also aimed to "re-unite" Muslims and Christians that was somehow pitted against each other and seen as conflicting parties due to the image made by certain parties that had interests in gaining power. This process was analyzed as the first process taken before conducting general

elections in Central African Republic. Based on the democratic peace theory, norms were created before the achievement of peace.

Humanitarian and Diplomatic Assistance

As a democratic peace theory explained above, fellow democracy will treat the fellow with great esteem and diplomatic affection, managing humanitarian problems in Central African Republic was one of the processes taken before conducting general elections.

Based on the democratic peace theory also, democracy will face constraint on government by using opportunity for conflict resolution. As one of the effort to restoration of Central African Republic government and public condition, there were humanitarian aids and diplomatic supports given by international actors. It also aimed to create conducive situation before conducting general elections.

1. **Humanitarian aid and diplomatic support to the transitional government by US**

Under Obama's administration, United States of America put a high concern toward the crisis happened in Central African Republic. By giving humanitarian aid, U.S. wanted to show its effort to elevate the prevention of "mass atrocities" as the concern of its' foreign policy. Despite of humanitarian aid given, U.S. also scaled up the diplomatic efforts to C.A.R by resuming diplomatic operations in Bangui on September 2014 (Arieff & Husted, 2015).

2. **Humanitarian Aid by International Organizations**

Beside United States of America, several international organizations also put high concern toward humanitarian crisis like International Rescue Committee (IRC) and European Union (EU). As the impact of the conflict, many public infrastructures of the country were dismissed. It made the people of Central African Republic faced difficulties in accessing basic

needs like health and education service. In dealing with the crisis, IRC took the actions by providing health care, restoring water sources and also building school for the survivors of the conflict. Not only that, IRC also tried to create economic opportunity for the victims of the conflict. In increasing the safety, IRC tried to conduct dialogues and workshops on gender-based violence (Central African Republic | International Rescue Committee).

International Assistance

As explained in the normative figure of democratic peace theory, democratic states are bound by cultural and social norms that call for non-violent conflict resolution and negotiation. Because democratic leaders are bound by these norms they try to adopt them in international arena which means that a democracy will respect its fellow democracy abiding by these norms and; thus, treat the fellow with great esteem and diplomatic affection. International assistance is showing diplomatic affection regarding non-violent resolution and negotiation done by other international actors to Central African Republic as the process in conducting general elections.

1. Security Assistance

1.1. Sangaris Troops and MISCA role

Since general elections in C.A.R had already suffered from irregularities and security threats from the conflicting parties, international assistance that was firstly needed was security assistance to create conducive situation in the country before conducting general elections.

As the response of conflict escalation between anti-Balaka and Séléka which was emerged after the coup of Francoiz Bozize in the March 2013, United Nations Security

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Council (UNSC) deployed the African-led International Support Mission in Central Africa (MISCA) in December 2013 (UNSC, 2013). MISCA was tasked to protect the civilians and establish the conducive environment. There are ten African countries that contributed in the forming of MISCA including comprises soldiers from Gabon, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville and Cameroon.

At the same time, France also contributed in security assistance to help MISCA by establishing Operation Sangaris, which was began on December 2013 by sending French troops country. The Sangaris operation aimed to disarm the militias and also secure the capital city of the country, Bangui. (Arieff & Husted, Crisis in the Central African Republic, 2015)

1.2.   MINUSCA Role

United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) was established on April 10th 2014 under Security Council Resolution as the transition mission after MISCA. In the period preceding the transfer of authority between both missions, MINUSCA implemented the mandated tasks through its civilian component, while MISCA continued to implement its tasks as mandated by Security Council (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Central African Republic).

The mandates brought by MINUSCA focused on the protection of civilians, support for the implementation of the transition process, including efforts in favor of the extension of State authority and preservation of territorial integrity, facilitate the immediate, full, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance, protection of

the United Nations, promotion and protection of human rights, support for national and international justice and the rule of law, Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration (DDR) and Repatriation (DDRR) (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Central African).

1.3. Bangui National Forum

As one of the efforts taken in the process conducting general elections, Bangui national forum was influential in creating conducive situation in the country. It was conducted on May 11th 2015 as one of the way to foster national cohesion. The forum was attended by approximately 700 leaders from different groups including Séléka and Anti-Balaka as the conflicting armed parties (Mission Report and Post Bangui Forum Action, 2015). The forum talked about the agreements on disarmament, governance reforms, and reconciliation that could, if implemented, provide a way forward to greater peace (Arieff & Husted, 2015).

2. Political and Electoral Assistance

According to democratic peace theory, autocratic political systems are considered unjust and immoral. From the perspective of democracy, war may be necessary to free people from dictatorship. Democracies may also want to introduce the idea of human right (Democratic Peace Theory).

In applying the theory to analyze the process in conducting general elections in Central African Republic, the writer analyzed that there were political and electoral assistance from other actors since the structural position in the government or even public services of C.A.R could not conduct its maximal functions. They were only positioned by transitional government and some of the actors who were positioned in public services were involving in

the conflict. That is why the role of other regional and international actors like Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) and United Nations were needed.

2.1. EISA Role

Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) is a non-profit organization established in 1996 based in Johannesburg (South Africa). The vision of EISA is to establish democratic governance, human rights and citizen participation are upheld in a peaceful environment in the African continent (About EISA). EISA has opened an office in Bangui since October 1st 2014.

EISA was deployed as the needs assessment mission to Bangui, Central African Republic (C.A.R) from August, 26th- 29th 2014. The objective of the mission was to understand the general environment regarding political transition, preparation of elections. EISA also aimed to analyze the needs and opportunities to support the process of transition and exit from the crisis in the country (About EISA).

1.1. United Nations Role

In preparing for the elections in Central African Republic, UNDP and MINUSCA were the international actors who played a big role. By coordinating with national transitional government of C.A.R, and also were supported by Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support, MINUSCA and UNDP developed a multi-disciplinary operational plan and concept of operations to support the Transitional Authorities on the electoral process (UNSC, Report of the Secretary-General on the situatuion in the Central African Republic, 2015).

The plan consisted of efforts needed to be taken in accordance to create the conducive environment for the elections, public awareness and sensitization, technical

assistance, monitoring, and capacity-building. It also outlined the detail of logistics planning for the voter registration process, voting, and post-electoral support to the National Electoral Authority and the national internal security forces. In accordance to objectify the plans, MINUSCA established an ad hoc committee to increase awareness among national actors on women's candidacies and effective participation in the elections.

After getting the political and electoral assistance from other national and international actors, United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reported that Central African Republic achieved significant betterment in its political transition, most notably the peaceful and successful holding of a constitutional referendum on December 13th and legislative and presidential elections in December, February and March (UNSC, 2016).

The National Electoral Authority reported that the elections would be participated by 30 presidential candidates (including one woman) and 1,643 legislative candidates (including 175 women. Not only the people in C.A.R who participated in the elections, but United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also helped to enable refugees in neighboring states to participate in the electoral process.

After being postponed, the first round of presidential and legislative elections was held on December 30th. Unfortunately, there were 415 appeals reported during the first round of elections which made the Court annulled the results and announced that a new first round would need to be held. Despite on the appeals reported, there were also complaints regarding the technical errors.

The second round of presidential elections was held on February 14th 2016. In this round, there was improvement in the overall organization. Although there were 3 appeals reported in this round, The Transitional Constitutional Court rejected them and proclaimed

the final results of the presidential elections on 1 March, resulting candidate Faustin Archange Touadera as President with 62.69 per cent of the vote, and with Anicet George Dologuélé garnering 37.31 per cent. (UNSC, Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic S/2016/305, 2016). While the second-place presidential candidate positioned by Mr. Dologuele. Fortunately he conceded victory following the announcement of the provisional results had a generally positive effect on the post-electoral environment, including among his supporters.

Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the analysis using democratic peace theory, the conflict resolution measures taken before conducting general elections 2015 / 2016 in Central African Republic is by re-creating social and cultural norms between Muslims and Christians, giving humanitarian and diplomatic assistances given by United States of America and international organizations, also by involving international assistances in term of security assistance, political and electoral assistances.

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