THE ROLE OF UNITED NATIONS PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC 1998-2024

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ABSTRACT
United Nations (UN) is authorised to sustain global peace and security. The UN aims to maintain this objective via many ways like through peace supports operations by sending personnel and experts to manage crisis conditions. The world organization has imbibed a number of strategies and techniques to enforce its peace supports operations. However, there has been many activities aiming on peace supports operation with nodal successful operations, but the UN still encounter problems with negative consequences on efficiency, effectiveness and success of its peace supports operations in Central African Republic. The main thrust of this work is to interrogate the pivotal activities of UN peace supports operations, their effect, and the main problems that marred their works and confront the UN peace supports operations in Central African Republic. This research is a departure from others in that it views the UN peace support role in CAR through the prism of Liberalism and documentary evidence. The period of the paper is also unique. This work uses the theory of liberalism as a tool of analysis and data were obtained from secondary sources like books, journals, newspapers, magazines, and internet materials. Documentary evidence was used as a data gathering technique. The work discovered that the UN peace supports operations achieved limited success in controlling conflictual conditions and inculcating peace in Central African Republic. Nevertheless, the administrative, military and humanitarian problems of the initiatives marred the peace support operations in Central African Republic thereby hindering them from having a total success. Drawing from this, the work encourages policy and institutional changes in conjunction with determination of parties, institutions, and other actors to collectively join hands together so as to strengthen peacekeeping operations and install a lasting peace in Central African Republic.

Introduction

United Nations peace support operations is a special and vigorous technique meant to help nations shattered by crisis develop platforms for sustainable harmony (Ibrahim, 2015). From origin, the UN in consonance with the help of its sister institutions has been galvanizing strength to guard and support peace and protection in the global arena. As a global institution, the UN work as a structure for sustainable conflict amelioration gadget among the nations plus settling inter-national crisis and ensuring post crisis and post war harmony and protection.

The UN peace keeping force may only be engaged when the two conflict groups agree for them to come. The major sub-units authorised for UN peace keeping are the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Secretariat and the department of peacekeeping which are committed in arranging, overseeing and helping of UN-backed peace keeping mission (John,2015). The central responsibilities of the UN peace keeping are funded from the normal regular programme finance and the personal duties from a unique purse of the UN (Smith,2015). The UN has always made effort to stop conflicts from upscaling into war, they encourage conflicting groups to embrace diplomacy rather than coercion and to ensure peace instead of conflictual situation. Peace keeping is one of the vital techniques to maintain harmonious situation in post-crisis condition (Agrawal,2011).

The UN peace keeping operations perform many branches of peace keeping like ensuring conflict resolutions, provision of emergency relief, political reconstruction, institution of the rule of law, separating opposing fighting forces, and encouraging truce, armistice or treaties leading to ceasefires (AngrawaL, 2011).

The Central African Republic experienced processes of peace-building efforts from different groups plus nearly 20 years of United Nation Support and effective engagement. No matter the UN peace effort there was the overthrow of March 2015 by the Seleka rebels. Due to the unimaginable suffering that accompanied the Seleka insurgency the UN has raised their peace effort in CAR, although these efforts have not stopped the crisis. UN peace support operation main objective in CAR is to install a lasting and sustainable peace that will ensure the development of the area (Adams, 2014). The work is sectionalized into ten:- introduction, literature review, conceptual definitions, methodology, theoretical framework, UN peace support operations, historical background of CAR crisis, the role of UN in CAR, conclusion and recommendations.

Literature review

Bois Dagne (2000) in his work "The UN and its Budget in CAR" only looked at the UN expenses in its peace support operation in Central Africa. To him the UN is over spending in their operations in CAR. This paper is divergent to this work in that while our focus is on the role of the UN in CAR, its effects, challenges and solutions Boi's work focus on its expenses. Gerald Best (2023) in his work "UN and its workers in CAR" focused on how the UN treats' its workers in Central African Republic. To him, the UN does not treat their workers well and he claimed that is why some of them engage in shady deals. His paper does not look at the role of the UN in CAR and this was in contradiction with the focus of this work.

Mongolo Ibu (2024) in her work "UN peace support and bureaucracy in CAR". Here he was engaged with the bureaucratic bottle necks that slowed and complicated things for the UN peace keepers in CAR. According to him it takes long for decision to be taken and many opportunities were lost because of this lackadaisical and ineptitude attitude. His work was good but he fails to examine the role of this global institution in CAR as this research aims to do. Ibrahim Abbas (2023) in his research "The UN peace support and infrastructure in CAR" focused on buildings, roads, housing, vehicles, stores and other logistical instruments in aiding or hampering the UN work in Central Africa Republic. His main view was only on the hinderances that confronted the UN peace support in the country unlike this work that is looking at the roles (positive and negative), effects and solutions out of the quagmire in CAR.

Finally, Boise Henry (2024) in his work "The UN and the vandalization of its equipment's in CAR" focused on how the UN equipment's were stolen and vandalized and its effect on the poor performance of the UN peace support in CAR. This may have restricted the UN work in CAR but certainly not the only factor. This is why a wholistic work has to be done as regards to their role, effect, challenges and solutions if the UN deeds in CAR will be duly appreciated and this is the pivot of this work.

Conceptual Definitions

Anti-Balaka: Christian-led Militia from Northwestern CAR.

BONUCA: United Nations peace-building support office in the Central African Republic.

MISAB: Central African peace support force made up of Gabon, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali.

MINURCA: United Nations Mission in Central African Republic.

PSO: Peace Support Operations (controlled by the UN)

Seleka: Muslim-led Militia groups from the Northeast of CAR.

Methodology

This is a qualitative, descriptive, and interpretative work. The research used secondary data obtained from journals, magazines, books, Newspapers and reports from UN peace keeping operation department. Documentary evidence was used as data gathering technique while the theory of liberal internationalism was used as the analytical tool.

Theoretical Framework

The theory this work used is the liberal theory. This theory maintains that liberal states should intervene in other independent countries so as to secure liberal objectives of which one of them is peace. One of the main proponents of this theory is John Locke of the Enlightenment fame. The liberalists believe that social bond linking human beings should be seen as a window for cooperation. They opined that inter-dependency, interaction, and cooperation among countries are emblem of peace and security. Liberals main goal is to see how global peace and cooperation can be ensured (Dume, 2014). This is the idea behind the UN peace support operations.

They acknowledge that might or bellicosity alone cannot be the only deciding factor in international arena and added that international institutions like the UN are veritable tools for ensuring and enforcing peaceful relations among nations. To them international organizations act as higher authority in ensuring peace amongst nations (Morgan, 1999). Liberals are in tandem that democratic states with free market economy are more conducive to peace than undemocratic countries. There are two types of liberal theory scholars: cosmopolitan interventionists and liberal interventionists. Cosmopolitan interventionists believe that intervention is a mandatory duty in case of a deliberate human rights abuses by a wicked government. Liberal internationalists envisage external intervention as a last check to end long lasting civil wars and widespread casualties. The UN combines both aspects of liberalism theory. They asserted that peace keeping operations must be globally agreed to and authorised by the UNSC to be authentic (Doyle,2011).

The United Nations peacekeeping operations was formed base on the ethics of liberalism which focused on installing peace in place of conflict globally. This is why this work adopted this theoretical construct in order to analyze and explain the role of United Nations Peace Support Operations in Central African Republic.

UN Peace Support Operation

United Nation peace support Operation is based on the first priority of the UN which focus on building peace and security. The first PSO was sent by the UN to form a buffer zone between the Israeli and the Egyptian soldiers in the Sinai Peninsula in 1948 (Richard,1970). Since then, many peace support operations have been initiated by the UN in many parts of the world. Importantly, peace support mission or operations are shaped to carry out a plethora of civil and armed forces duties, plus the sustenance of public peace. The peace support instrument works on the foundation of flexibility, giving room for the mission to adapt its strategy between peace keeping and peace enforcement based on the agreement of the conflictual groups (Richard, 1970).

UN peacekeeping is regulated by three fundamental objectives: agreement of the conflictual groups, impartiality, non-use of force except in self defence or in protection of the objectives (Sampson,2016). This implies that the UN peace support operations must be sent focused on the agreement of the fighting groups. Secondly, the UN peacekeeping forces must not take sides and thirdly, they must not use force unless on self defence or to implement the mandate they were given in case they were not allow to do so peacefully.

Historical Background of Central African Republic Crisis

The Central African Republic (CAR) is an inland state located in central Africa. It is bounded by Chad in the north, Sudan in the north-east, South Sudan in the south-east, and the Democratic Republic of Congo in the west. The CAR covers a land area of about 620,000 square kilometers (240, ooo sqml) with an estimated population of 4.7 million as of December, 2020. The CAR has been characterised by civil disturbances since 2021 (Abdul, 2022).

The control of finance and infidelities was the bane for the unprogressive and fragile economy, which was responsible for inadequacy in making available the fundamental provisions to the populace. Regional crisis within central Africa, added with domestic feeble governmental administrations and a lineage of armed forces grip have instigated a cycle of violence in the CAR. Since its freedom from France in 1960, CAR's story is characterised by repetitive coups and autocratic rule. Democratic elections held in 1993 abrogated a period of almost 30 years of turbulence (Obi, 2000). The elections favoured Ange Felix Patasse, a civilian political figure aided by Chad. Within Patasse's presidency 1993-2003, the CAR experienced economic crisis losing what was left of its administrative capacity to make available social services for its populace and heightened its reliance on foreign aid. Moreover, Patasse instituted the Presidential Guard (GP), further tribalizing the nation's armed forces and adding to increase in administrative and tribal tensions all through the 1990s (International Crisis Group 2014).

With the first reconciliation attempt by Gabon, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali the inter-African force in the Central African Republic (MISAB) was sent in February 1997 before being replaced in 1998 by the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) and by the United Nations Peace-Building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) after 2000 (UN 2001). On March 15, 2003, General Francois Bozize dethroned Patasse in a foreign aided coup, removing the parliament and putting up a transitional government. The capital, Bangui, initially fell into crisis as the new Chadian and Sudanese armed forces extracted payments through widespread ravaging of civilians' properties. Within this period, the rebels carry out widespread acts of brutality in the north-west, causing the dislocation of over 100,000 people (Douglas,2017). The government did little to punish these behaviours, planting a behaviour of lawlessness while the legal use of force melted away.

With the 2005 elections, which re-elected Bozize, internal crisis increased and unleash throughout the CAR, plus the regional crisis that was already in central Africa, this stimulated the global community to intervene more seriously. By 2010, numerous peace treaties were concluded between the government and three of the major militias groups, setting the importance for inclusive political discussions and withdrawing of arms, dissolving the militias, and reconciliation (DDR). The CAR equally launched its first state seminar on protection sector reform (SSR). While these developments built a new sense of hope towards protection and institutional reconfiguration, there were no serious efforts as to implementation. By 2012, many Muslim-led militia groups, mainly from the marginalized North-east, established a union Known as the Seleka, embarking on a military raid and successfully dethroning Bozize on March 23, 2013. Michael Djotodia, former militia leader of L'Union des Forces Democratiques pour le Rassemblement (UFDR), pronounced himself President (Olalawe, 2014). This caused most of the Forces Arme es Centrafricaines (FACA) to flee and this triggered complete institutional destruction of the security wing, aiding comprehensive raids, plus human abuses, lootings, killings of civilians and vandalization of entire villages.

No matter the removal of the Seleka union, Djotodia cannot control the fighters. Calamitous attacks were often for instance in the Christian North-West area, which was seen as Bozize's stronghold. In turn, a majority Christian-led North-Western rebels called the anti-balakas came up and attacked Muslim communities, adding religious and inter-communal phase to the conflict and further increasing the violence. Seriously condemned for not being able to pacify the country, Djotodia left the leadership in January 2014 and was succeeded by Catherine Samba Panza (International Crisis Group, 2014).

To solve the problem, the UN joined Peace building Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) with the implementation of the handover process, the help to conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance; the stabilization of the protection condition and in the security of human rights, among others (UN Security Council agreement 2121) and this was

later put together in April 2014 into the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) (UN Security Council resolution 2149).

The Role of UN in Central African Republic

Worried by the protection, social, human rights, political conflict in Central African Republic and its regional consequences, the Security Council mandated on 10 April 2014 the sending of a comprehensive United Nations peacekeeping operation-MINUSCA with the protection of civilians as its utmost objective. Its other initial duties comprise support for the handover process, helping humanitarian needs, uplifting and security of human rights, support for legality and constitutionality, and removal of illegal arms, cancelling militias, encouraging togetherness and returning processes. On 15 September, 2014, the African-initiated International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) handover its power over to MINUSCA, in agreement with resolution 2149 (UN 2014). UN role in Central African Republic is divided into two-the positive and the negative role.

(i) UN Positive Roles

- MUNISCA unequivocally protected civilians and also help in consolidating state authority in CAR
- MINUSCA worked together with the then newly-formed Central African soldiers (FACA) outside of Bangui for the first time since 2013.
- The UN also brought up nearly 4,000 national police and 4,000 civil servants, built and trained prisons warders and reprimanded centers; helped the launch of CAR's new mixed Special Criminal Court (Douglas, 2017).
- The UN helped to reconstruct schools, community buildings, prefecture centers, and hospitals.
- MINUSCA support to establish 29 local peace and reconciliation committees in towns throughout the country, likewise a variety of local peace concord. For instance, in 2017, in the southeastern town of Pombolo, a MINUSCA political affairs worker helped an ex-Seleka herder leader write a missive to the local anti-Balaka chief town council, asking for forgiveness due to prior violence. The mayor received the missive, and the political affairs officer aided to write a consequent exchange of letters between the two sides. The community heads thereafter formalized their ways of dispute reconciliation, and since then, the town has seen few civilian deaths (George, 2015).
- MINUSCA brought the idea of gender balance by employing equal female and male employees. MINUSCA deployed a female Zambian engagement team who helped the town in many of ways. The female battalion helped MINUSCA to open 13 town halls in the town (George, 2015).
- MINUSCA and the CAR government have made available many supports for militia leaders to take part in non-violent politics. For instance, MINUSCA helped them to participate in then February 2019 peace accord. This act reduced the violence among the warring groups (Ebenezer, 2020).

(ii) UN Negative Roles

- The arrival of MINUSCA raised prices and increase prostitution as the local girls' scramble for the cash of the richer peacekeeping forces (Bashiru,2021).
- Due to the increased prostitution introduced by the MINUSCA there were widespread of HIV/AIDS and other STD'S among the local communities.
- Some members of MINUSCA indulge in human trafficking which involve mainly females. Human trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, keeping or receipt of persons by way of threat or use of force or other form of coercion, abduction, fraud, deceiving, and use of vulnerability or giving money or benefits for control of another person. This human trafficking business introduced local organised criminal networks within the community (Adaku, 2023).

- There was no formalized accountability or penalties for peacekeepers disobeying their code of conduct and

- No implementation of anti-trafficking policies in the peacekeeping operation (Santos, 2017).

- A strong gap in the system is that UN personnel are higher than the local laws, personnel seen trafficking or carrying out any other offence are simply sent to their country to face the law which are hardly implemented (Sandler, 2017). The UN peacekeeping should reduce bureaucratic bottle neck in order to have an efficient relief distribution system.

Conclusion

The UN played an important role in CAR no matter the obstacles they encountered. The Unted Nations peace supports operations in Central African Republic achieved some laudable progress like in protecting civilians, supporting local peace initiatives, and stabilizing violence where it still persists. But despite these enviable marks, MINUSCA failed in areas like introduction of prostitution, high prices of goods, human trafficking, spreading of HIV/AIDs and other STDs, and acting above the law in some instances.

Recommendations

1. All sections of the UN peacekeeping operations should obey international and domestic laws of indigenous people wherein they are serving so as to implement the UN peacekeeping mandate cordially.

2. The UN peacekeeping forces should be changed after 4 or 6 months to reduce promiscuity amongst them.

3. The UN peacekeeping should be restructured to adequately meet up with present realities

4. The UN peacekeeping should reduce their bureaucratic bottle necks in order to have flawless and reliable relief distribution system.

5. The UN peacekeeping should work closely with local community-based peace initiators in order to achieve a more reliable and sustainable peace.

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