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OUIS and MINUSCA in the CAR: The Effectiveness of Realist and Liberal Peacekeeping Paradigms

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Abstract. The conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR) has attracted international attention since the early 2000s. The African Union, the United Nations (UN) and the French Republic have all been involved in trying to help resolve the conflict. Since 2018, Russia has been actively involved in resolving the conflict in the Central African Republic. The government and people of the CAR have repeatedly expressed their dissatisfaction with the functioning of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) contingent and, conversely, expressed their appreciation for the Russian military specialists stationed in the CAR. The author attempts to compare the effectiveness of the UN peacekeeping contingent (MINUSCA) and Russian military specialists operating under the auspices of the Officers Union for International Security (OUIS), based on the essential unity of purpose of these forces. Based on an analysis of data on state control in the CAR and violent incidents from 2014 to 2022, the author concludes that the Russian contingent is more effective in providing security and strengthening the state in the CAR (tasks also outlined in the MINUSCA mandate). The author also analyzes the problems in the functioning of the UN peacekeeping contingents, highlighting their systemic and structural shortcomings. The main shortcoming, however, in his view, is the UN's commitment to a liberal approach that challenges the sovereignty of the host state. The Russian realist approach, by contrast, focuses on sovereignty and its power component. Thus, the actions of the Russians in the CAR can be studied within the paradigm of "illiberal" peacekeeping.

Key words: peacekeeping, peacebuilding, liberalism, illiberalism, realism, international relations, Russia, Africa, Central African Republic, CAR, MINUSCA, OUIS, France, human rights

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СОМБ и МИНУСКА в ЦАР: эффективность реалистской и либеральной парадигм миротворчества

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Аннотация. Конфликт в Центральноафриканской Республике (ЦАР) привлекает внимание мирового сообщества с начала 2000-х гг. В попытках оказать содействие его разрешению принимали участие Африканский союз, ООН, Французская Республика. После 2018 г. активное участие в разрешении конфликта в ЦАР принимает Россия. Правительство ЦАР неоднократно выражало недовольство функционированием контингента Многопрофильной комплексной миссии Организации Объединенных Наций по стабилизации в Центральноафриканской Республике (МИНУСКА) и, напротив, заявляло о признательности российским военным специалистам, находящимся в ЦАР. Автор сравнивает эффективность миротворческого контингента ООН — МИНУСКА — и российских военных специалистов, действующих под эгидой «Содружества офицеров за международную безопасность» (СОМБ) на основании сущностного единства стоящих перед этими силами задач. На основании анализа данных по государственному контролю в ЦАР и насильственным инцидентам с 2014 по 2022 гг. сделан вывод о большей эффективности российского контингента с точки зрения обеспечения безопасности и укрепления государства в ЦАР (задачи, обозначенные и в мандате МИНУСКА). Автор также анализирует проблемы функционирования миротворческих контингентов ООН, отмечая их системные и структурные недостатки. Главным недостатком, однако, признается приверженность ООН либеральному подходу, который ставит под сомнение суверенитет принимающего государства. Российский реалистский подход, напротив, центрируется вокруг суверенитета и его силовой составляющей. Тем самым действия россиян в ЦАР вполне возможно изучать в рамках парадигмы «илиберального» миротворчества.

Ключевые слова: миротворчество, миростроительство, либерализм, илиберализм, реализм, международные отношения, Россия, Африка, Центральноафриканская Республика, ЦАР, МИНУСКА, СОМБ, Франция, права человека

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Introduction

Since the early 2000s, the Central African Republic (CAR) has been involved in a series of civil conflicts (2001—2003, 2004—2007, 2012 — present). French peacekeepers were stationed in the country from 2013 to 2021 to stabilize the situation.¹ Since 2014, the UN peacekeepers (*the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization*

Mission in the Central African Republic, MINUSCA) have also been deployed in the CAR, replacing the African Union peacekeeping mission, which also operates under a UN Security Council mandate. There are currently more than 16,000 UN peacekeepers in the CAR.² Their primary task, according to the mandate given, is to “protect civilians.”³ In addition, the UN mission is to “support the implementation of the transition

¹ France Suspends Military, Budgetary Support to Central African Republic // Africanews. June 7, 2021. URL: <https://www.africanews.com/2021/06/07/france-suspends-military-budgetary-support-to-central-african-republic> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

² MINUSCA — Fact Sheet // UN Peacekeeping Operations. (In Russian). URL: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/ru/mission/minusca> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

³ Ibid.

process; facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance; promote and protect human rights; support justice and the rule of law; and advance disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation processes.”⁴

However, by the end of 2017—2018, despite the presence of more than 11,000 peacekeepers, the situation in the CAR remained tense. As Western observers noted, MINUSCA’s forces appeared “increasingly over-stretched and powerless vis-à-vis the growing contestation.”⁵ MINUSCA faced “significant challenges in fulfilling its mandate to protect civilians and dismantle armed groups, primarily due to a lack of infrastructure and a reluctance to use military force.”⁶

In 2018, the CAR authorities turned to Russia for help and Russian military experts appeared in the country (the first group consisted of 170 civilian and 5 military instructors⁷). Its official task is to train the CAR military. With Russian support (Kostelyanets, 2020) the CAR authorities and the opposition concluded the Khartoum Agreement or Political Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR on 6 February 2019.⁸

⁴ MINUSCA — Fact Sheet // UN Peacekeeping Operations. (In Russian). URL: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/ru/mission/minusca> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

⁵ Zanoletti G. Increasing Political Violence in the Central African Republic // ACLED. June 8, 2018. URL: <https://acleddata.com/2018/06/08/increasing-political-violence-in-the-central-african-republic/> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

⁶ Conflict in the Central African Republic // CFR Global Conflict Tracker. May 11, 2022. URL: <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict-violence-central-african-republic> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

⁷ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Reported on the Dispatch of Russian Military to Central Africa // RBC. March 22, 2018. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/society/22/03/2018/5ab3b98c9a79472ad58eccac> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

⁸ Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, February 2019 (S/2019/145) // Reliefweb. February 15, 2019. URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/political-agreement-peace-and-reconciliation-central-african> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

The number of Russian military specialists began to increase after the united armed opposition, led by former president François Bozizé attempted to take the capital Bangui and disrupt the presidential elections in late 2020. In doing so, the opposition violated previous agreements.

According to the Russian ambassador to the CAR, there were 1,890 Russian instructors in the country on 3 February 2023.⁹ On the Russian side, they are supervised by the Officers Union for International Security (OUIS), headed by A.A. Ivanov.¹⁰ According to the CAR ambassador to Russia, Leon Dodonou-Pounagaza, “What they (the French and Americans. — *Editor’s note.*) could not do in decades, Russia has done in a year. It is the same in Mali. Russia promised, and in less than two years, order has been restored.”¹¹

Comparison Possibility

It is theoretically possible to compare the effectiveness of the UN peacekeepers and Russian specialists in the CAR. There is also a practical need: if, according to the CAR’s ambassador to Russia, the situation has changed for the better since the Russians arrived, (something the UN peacekeepers were unable to achieve for many years), then this experience should be studied for scaling up in other regions of Africa and the world.

The comparison is facilitated by the following factors.

⁹ Interview of Russian Ambassador to the CAR A.M. Bikantov to the Rossiya Segodnya News Agency, February 3, 2023 // Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. February 3, 2023. (In Russian). URL: <https://mid.ru/ru/maps/cf/1852373/> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

¹⁰ About Alexander Ivanov // Officers’ Union for International Security. (In Russian). URL: <https://officersunion.org/ru/ivanov-ru/> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

¹¹ Leon Dodonou: Russia Brought Order in CAR in a Year, While the West Could Not for Many Years // RIA Novosti. February 7, 2022. (In Russian). URL: <https://ria.ru/20220207/dodonu-1771085398.html> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

1) The time of the UN peacekeepers' stay before the first Russian military advisors arrived and the time of the Russian contingent's stay in the CAR are approximately the same (four years).

2) The peacekeepers and Russian instructors had, and still have, essentially the same mission. Regardless of theoretical disputes about the definition of "peacekeeping" and the distinction between "peacekeeping," "peacebuilding," and "peace enforcement" (Nikitin, 2016, p. 21), in this particular case the MINUSCA mandate clearly speaks about the protection of civilians as the first priority task and the strengthening of statehood as the second most important task for the UN forces in the CAR.¹²

According to the Russian Ambassador to the CAR A.M. Bikantov, Russian military specialists provide support to the armed forces of the CAR "in order to improve their competence in maintaining security and law and order throughout the territory of the state, which should contribute to the normalization of the situation and a lasting settlement of the protracted armed conflict."¹³ The OUIS officially positions itself as an "association of people working for peace and stability."¹⁴

Thus, both the UN peacekeepers and the Russians are formally in the CAR formally for the same purpose: to stabilize the situation in the country and to protect civilians. It is therefore fair to ask how their effectiveness can be compared and what the fundamental difference is between the MINUSCA and OUIS approaches.

¹² Resolution 2149 (2014) Adopted by the Security Council at its 7153rd Meeting, on 10 April 2014 // United Nations Digital Library. April 10, 2014. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/768393?ln=ru> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

¹³ The Foreign Ministry Stated that Russian Instructors Continue Their Work in the Central African Republic Legally // TASS. April 8, 2021. (In Russian). URL: <https://tass.ru/politika/11096083> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

¹⁴ About Us // Officers' Union for International Security. (In Russian). URL: <https://officersunion.org/ru/> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

MINUSCA and OUIS: Attitudes of the CAR Authorities and Population

Over the past four years, the CAR authorities and the population of the country have had the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of both the MINUSCA peacekeepers and the Russians. Over the past eight years, there have been repeated demonstrations in the country against the presence of the blue helmets in the CAR.¹⁵ There have been no such demonstrations against Russian trainers in the CAR.

According to a sociological study by the Russian Foundation for the Defense of National Values, which was conducted in the CAR in June 2021, almost 70% of respondents had a negative opinion of MINUSCA. The actions of the Russians were viewed positively by 94% of

¹⁵ See: Fisayo-Bambi J. Protesters in Bangui Call for Expulsion of MINUSCA Staff // Africanews. February 18, 2020. URL: <https://www.africanews.com/amp/2020/02/18/protesters-in-bangui-call-for-expulsion-of-minusca-staff-morning-call/> (accessed: 15.02.2023); CAR Protesters Clash with UN Peacekeepers Turns Deadly // Al Jazeera. April 10, 2015. URL: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/4/10/car-protesters-clash-with-un-peacekeepers-turns-deadly> (accessed: 15.02.2023); Four Killed in CAR Protest against UN Peacekeepers // France 24. October 24, 2016. URL: <https://www.france24.com/en/20161024-central-africa-republic-un-peacekeepers-minusca-bangui> (accessed: 15.02.2023); Violent Demonstrations against MINUSCA in Kaga-Bandoro // Reliefweb. April 10, 2015. URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/violent-demonstrations-against-minusca-kaga-bandoro> (accessed: 15.02.2023); CAR Residents Barricaded the UN Peacekeepers' Road to the Airport // Federal News Agency. November 20, 2021. (In Russian). URL: https://web.archive.org/web/20220810235317/https://riafan.ru/23056779-zhiteli_tsar_zabarrikadirovali_mirotvortsam_oon_dorogu_k_aeroportu (accessed: 15.02.2023); CAR Residents Rallied against UN Peacekeepers in Bosangoa // Federal News Agency. August 23, 2021. (In Russian). URL: https://web.archive.org/web/20220701175244/https://riafan.ru/23241137-zhiteli_tsar_vishli_na_miting_protiv_mirotvortsev_oon_v_bosangoa (accessed: 15.02.2023); CAR Citizens Accused UN Peacekeepers and France of Preparing a Coup // Realist. November 29, 2021. (In Russian). URL: <https://realtribune.ru/grazhdane-car-obvinili-mirotvorcev-oon-i-franciju-v-podgotovke-perevorota> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

respondents.¹⁶ The 2020 sociological survey, initiated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI), in collaboration with MINUSCA and supported by the United States, the UN Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the Peacebuilding Fund, with all possible customer-related bias, confirms the low credibility of MINUSCA. “In general, respondents have less confidence in MINUSCA than in other security actors to ensure security in the CAR,” — the social scientists point out.¹⁷ The CAR residents feel less safe when they encounter MINUSCA troops and are least likely to perceive them as a meaningful security provider.¹⁸

The Russians have not been criticized by the official CAR authorities during their stay in the Republic. At the same time, conflicts between the country’s authorities and MINUSCA were repeatedly reported, with MINUSCA officers arrested and accused of supporting militants.¹⁹

Criteria for the Effectiveness of MINUSCA and OUIS Peacekeepers

A subjective assessment can always be challenged as biased or influenced by propaganda. However, the so-called objective tools for assessing the effectiveness of the peacekeeping process are not always unbiased.

Attempts to quantify “electoral assistance, economic reconstruction and state-building”²⁰ in

peacekeeping assessments and, in general, the adoption of liberal Western values and liberal institutions by conflict-affected states as part of assessing the “quality of peace” (Wallensteen, 2015) are highly debatable. The above-mentioned efforts do not necessarily lead to peace, and often create a “virtual peace” rather than a real one, if we compare the tasks outlined in the mandates of peacekeepers and the results of their activities (Richmond, 2005, p. 175). These efforts are based on an ideologized “liberal peace theory” and the idea of Western liberal democracy as the only political system that supposedly guarantees peaceful and conflict-free development. Such a view, however, can rightly be considered a form of neocolonialism (Jabri, 2010; Taylor, 2017).

Other seemingly objective indicators, such as an increase in the total number of casualties in a conflict over a certain period of time can indicate both the success and failure of peacekeeping, depending on the context (e.g. casualties may be caused by intensive killing of militants during “peace enforcement” operations). In civil conflicts involving multiple armed gangs, the line between civilians and combatants is blurred. Moreover, depending on the geopolitical context, non-combatants can be presented as combatants and vice versa. As a result, the data on the number of civilian deaths is also an unreliable figure (especially given all the difficulties in objectively recording such phenomena in the CAR). However, in general, the overall dynamics of recorded violent incidents and the number of deaths may indicate the relative level of escalation or de-escalation of the conflict.

To analyze the situation in the CAR, one can use data from the American non-governmental organization (NGO) ACLED (*The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project*), abstracting from its anti-Russian interpretations of these data, analyzing “pure numbers” and taking into account primarily the

¹⁶ CAR: Residents of the Country Do Not Trust France and the UN // Foundation for the Defence of National Values. June 21, 2021. (In Russian). URL: <https://fznc.ru/afrikanskij-klub/czar-zhiteli-strany-ne-doverayut-franczii-i-oon/> (accessed: 15.12.2022).

¹⁷ Peace Justice & Security Polls. Central African Republic. Report 5 // Peacebuilding Data. November 2020. URL: http://www.peacebuildingdata.org/sites/m/pdf/CAR_Poll5_ENG.pdf (accessed: 15.02.2023).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Guterres Strongly Condemns Arrest of UN Personnel in Central African Republic // UN News. February 23, 2022. URL: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/02/1112532> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

²⁰ Salvatore D. J., Ruggeri A. Effectiveness of Peacekeeping Operations // Oxford Research Encyclopedia

of Politics. 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.586>

general data on “incidents of political violence” and the number of deaths in them. The data of the same structure on the number of “civilian” deaths are not taken into account in this article. Such a decision was made, firstly, because of the problematic distinction of “civilians” from “combatants,” and secondly, because this data does not provide anything new, it is part of the same incidents of political violence and deaths in them.²¹

A relatively objective indicator of the success of peacekeeping in the case of internal civil conflict can be considered territorial: the territory in which the institutions of statehood function, which is included in the functioning of the state system and in which the state can exercise legitimate violence and thus protect citizens. Of course, there may be cases where the state is more repressive than the armed groups that previously controlled the territory, or is itself an instrument of radical groups, that pose a threat to its citizens and to other countries. Under such circumstances, one might question whether this expansion of state control is a good thing. However, from a theoretical point of view, if the government is legal and legitimate — i.e., both legitimate in terms of domestic and international law and enjoying public support (Weber, 2008) and the trust of the population (Klishas, 2018) — then the merits of expanding its control cannot be questioned.

In the case of the CAR, it is precisely the actions of such a popularly elected and internationally recognized authority, as demonstrated in the free elections, especially the presidential elections of 2016 and 2020. Furthermore, MINUSCA’s mandate, reinforced by the UN Security Council Resolution 2149 (2014), explicitly states as its second most important task, after 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.”²² Thus, from the point of view of international law, the extension of territorial control by the CAR authorities should be considered a good thing. And accordingly — a direct criterion for the effectiveness of the military contingents in the CAR.

Dynamics of the Number of the UN Peacekeepers and Russian Military Instructors in the CAR

The MINUSCA contingent was deployed in the CAR in 2014 (Table 1). The UN and the international community have tried to disarm the armed groups in control of the country and have expressed the need to facilitate the extension of state authority.²³ First through the authority of the transitional government, after the 2015 elections — the legally elected president of the country, Fostren-Arkange Touadera. Attempts to reach a comprehensive peace agreement were consistently thwarted until a Russian-backed agreement was concluded in Khartoum in 2019.²⁴ This was preceded by Russia’s active involvement in both the training of CAR soldiers and the negotiation process in 2018.²⁵

²² Resolution 2149 (2014) Adopted by the Security Council at its 7153rd Meeting, on 10 April 2014 // United Nations Digital Library. April 10, 2014. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/768393?ln=ru> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

²³ Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in the Central African Republic // United Nations Digital Library. November 28, 2014. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/784128?ln=en> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

²⁴ Central African Republic Militias Sign Agreement Brokered by Russia and Sudan // Defense Post. August 29, 2019. URL: <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2018/08/29/central-african-republic-armed-groups-agreement-russia-sudan/> (accessed: 23.02.2023).

²⁵ The Russian Effort to Bring Armed Groups and the Government in the CAR to the Negotiating Table Is Overtaking the AU’s African Initiative // Institute for Security Studies. September 17, 2018. URL: <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/the-aus-african-initiative-vs-russiansudanese-mediation-in-the-car> (accessed: 23.02.2023).

²¹ Methodology // ACLED Data. URL: https://www.acledata.com/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2017/10/Methodology.pdf (accessed: 27.02.2023).

Table 1. Dynamics of the MINUSCA Contingent, Russian Military Specialists, State Control and the Level of Violence in the CAR, 2014—2022

Year	MINUSCA contingent*	Russian contingent	State control, % of country territory	Number of incidents of political violence (according to ACLED data)	Number of deaths in violent incidents (according to ACLED data)
2014	11 800	–	–	867	3 605
2015	12 830	–	–	251	515
2016	12 830	–	–	227	734
2017	13 730	–	40	357	1 824
2018	13 730	175	20	469	1 169
2019	13 730	235	–	192	596
2020	13 730	535	30	370	446
2021	17 420	1 135	From 30% at the beginning of the year to 70% in June	666	1 708
2022	17 420	1 135	95	263	839

Note. * — Data are based on UN Security Council resolutions. Includes military and police personnel (excluding corrections officers): UN Digital Library. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Reported about the Dispatch of Russian Military to Central Africa // RBC. March 22, 2018. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/society/22/03/2018/5ab3b98c9a79472ad58eccac> (accessed: 15.02.2023); Boot Z. Russian Foreign Ministry: Russian Specialists Are Training Military and Police Officers in the CAR // Parlamentskaya Gazeta. February 14, 2020. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.pnp.ru/in-world/mid-rf-rossiyskie-specialisty-gotovyat-voennykh-i-policeyskikh-v-car.html> (accessed: 15.02.2023); The Number of Russian Instructors in the CAR Is Revealed // Lenta.ru. January 20, 2022. (In Russian). URL: <https://lenta.ru/news/2022/01/20/instructors/> (accessed: 15.02.2023); Interview of A.M. Bikantov, Deputy Director of the Department of Information and Press of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, to the Media Holding Deutsche Welle, April 8, 2021 // Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. April 8, 2021. (In Russian). URL: https://archive.mid.ru/web/guest/foreign_policy/international_safety/conflicts/-/asset_publisher/xIEMTQ3OvzcA/content/id/4670482 (accessed: 15.02.2023); Foreign Ministry: Botoroeva E. Russia Sent 300 Additional Military Instructors to the Central African Republic // Parlamentskaya Gazeta. December 22, 2020. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.pnp.ru/politics/mid-rossiya-dopolnitelno-napravila-v-car-300-voennykh-instruktorov.html> (accessed: 15.02.2023); Russia Insists CAfrica 'Instructors' Are Unarmed // France 24. May 28, 2021. URL: <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210528-russia-insists-cafrica-instructors-are-unarmed> (accessed: 15.02.2023); Central African Republic: Civilians Pay the Price of Renewed, Brutal Fighting // Reliefweb. April 13, 2017. URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/central-african-republic-civilians-pay-price-renewed-brutal-fighting> (accessed: 15.02.2023); Central African Republic: A Forgotten Humanitarian Crisis on the Verge of Elections // Italian Institute for International Political Studies. October 22, 2020. URL: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/central-african-republic-forgotten-humanitarian-crisis-verge-elections-27948> (accessed: 24.02.2023); Central African Republic Country Report 2022 // Bertelsmann Transformation Index. 2022. P. 7. URL: https://bti-project.org/fileadmin/api/content/en/downloads/reports/country_report_2022_CAF.pdf (accessed: 23.02.2023); Rebels Launch Attacks on Central African Republic's Capital // Al Jazeera. January 13, 2021. URL: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/13/rebels-launch-attacks-on-central-african-republics-capital> (accessed: 23.02.2023); Diamonds, Gold and Blood. Why Russia Is Accused of Atrocities of PMC Mercenaries in Central Africa? // Lenta.ru. July 3, 2021. (In Russian). URL: https://lenta.ru/articles/2021/07/03/central_african_rus/ (accessed: 15.02.2023); Leon Dodonu: Russia Brought Order in CAR in a Year, While the West Could Not for Many Years // RIA Novosti. February 7, 2022. (In Russian). URL: <https://ria.ru/20220207/dodonu-1771085398.html> (accessed: 15.02.2023); Central African Republic — Conflict Events // Humanitarian Data Exchange. URL: <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/central-african-republic-acled-conflict-data> (accessed: 21.02.2023); (Filippov, 2019, p. 130).

In December 2020, after the armed opposition refused to fulfill the Khartoum Agreement and launched an offensive on Bangui, it was decided to increase the number of Russian military advisors by 300 people.²⁶

²⁶ Botoroeva E. Russia Sent 300 Additional Military Instructors to the Central African Republic //

Another 600 Russian military specialists arrived in the CAR in May 2021.²⁷ Thus, the official

Parlamentskaya Gazeta. December 22, 2020. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.pnp.ru/politics/mid-rossiya-dopolnitelno-napravila-v-car-300-voennykh-instruktorov.html> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

²⁷ Russia Insists CAfrica 'Instructors' Are Unarmed // France 24. May 28, 2021. URL: <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210528-russia-insists-cafrica-instructors-are-unarmed>

number of Russian military specialists doubled in December 2021 and then doubled again in 2022 (see Figure 1). That is, from December 2020 to May 2021, the official number of Russian military instructors in the CAR increased 4.8 times (see Table 1).

The number of MINUSCA contingents also increased by 27% from 13 730 to 17 420²⁸ (military and police) in 2021 (see Table 1 and Figure 2).

Changes in Territorial Control

For the period 2014—2015, there are only relative, estimated data on the territorial control of the government. In particular, the US publication *Foreign Policy* noted that in the CAR in these years “the government ends in Bangui.”²⁹ There was no meaningful presence of state authority outside the capital (Karlsrud, 2015).

International organizations working in the country have noted that since the outbreak of the conflict between the Seleka and Anti-Balaka groups in 2014—2015, at least half of the country has not been under the control of the central government.³⁰ Experts are also talking about the actual disintegration of the country in 2016—2017.³¹ Despite the obvious problems, it

[com/en/live-news/20210528-russia-insists-cafrica-instructors-are-unarmed](https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict-violence-central-african-republic) (accessed: 15.02.2023).

²⁸ See: Resolution 2566 (2021) Adopted by the Security Council on 12 March 2021 // United Nations Digital Library. March 12, 2021. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3905146?ln=en> (accessed: 23.02.2023); Resolution 2605 (2021) Adopted by the Security Council at its 8902nd meeting, on 12 November 2021 // United Nations Digital Library. November 12, 2021. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3948208?ln=en> (accessed: 23.02.2023).

²⁹ McCormick T. One Day, We Will Start a Big War // *Foreign Policy*. February 5, 2017. URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20170205203123/http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/28/one-day-we-will-start-a-big-war-central-african-republic-un-violence/> (accessed: 23.02.2023).

³⁰ Central African Republic: Civilians Pay the Price of Renewed, Brutal Fighting // *Reliefweb*. April 13, 2017. URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/central-african-republic-civilians-pay-price-renewed-brutal-fighting> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

³¹ Conflict in the Central African Republic // CFR Global Conflict Tracker. May 11, 2022.

was in 2016 that France withdrew most of its contingent (1,000 troops) from CAR,³² and the European Union (EU) military mission (EUFOR CAR) was replaced by the EU military training mission (EUTM RCA).³³ At the same time, there has been a steady increase in the UN contingent, which has not lead to any improvement in the state control over the territory.

In 2017, the area under the control of the central government of the CAR was no more than 40% of the country’s total territory.³⁴ In 2018, the government’s control was estimated at 20% of the country’s territory (Filippov, 2019, p. 130), and 30% in 2020.³⁵ In early 2021, at the peak of the Coalition of Patriots for Change (*Coalition des patriotes pour le changement*, CPC) offensive, militant groups controlled between 67% (2/3)³⁶ and 80%³⁷ of the CAR, according to various reports (Figure 3).

URL: <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict-violence-central-african-republic> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

³² Central African Republic Control Map & Timeline — July 2021 // *Political Geography Now*. July 20, 2021. URL: <https://www.polgeonow.com/2021/07/who-controls-the-central-african-republic-2021.html?m=1> (accessed: 24.02.2023).

³³ About the Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA) // European Union Training Mission in Central African Republic. September 15, 2021. URL: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eutm-rca/about-military-training-mission-central-african-republic-eutm-rca_en?s=334#10110 (accessed: 24.02.2022).

³⁴ Knoope P., Buchanan-Clarke S. Central African Republic: A Conflict Misunderstood // *The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation*. April 13, 2017. P. 4. URL: https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/CAR_Report.pdf (accessed: 23.02.2023).

³⁵ Central African Republic: A Forgotten Humanitarian Crisis on the Verge of Elections // *Italian Institute for International Political Studies*. October 22, 2020. URL: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/central-african-republic-forgotten-humanitarian-crisis-verge-elections-27948> (accessed: 24.02.2023).

³⁶ Rebels Launch Attacks on Central African Republic’s Capital // *Al Jazeera*. January 13, 2021. URL: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/13/rebels-launch-attacks-on-central-african-republics-capital> (accessed: 23.02.2023).

³⁷ Central African Republic Country Report 2022 // Bertelsmann Transformation Index. 2022. P. 7. URL: https://bti-project.org/fileadmin/api/content/en/downloads/reports/country_report_2022_CAF.pdf (accessed: 23.02.2023).

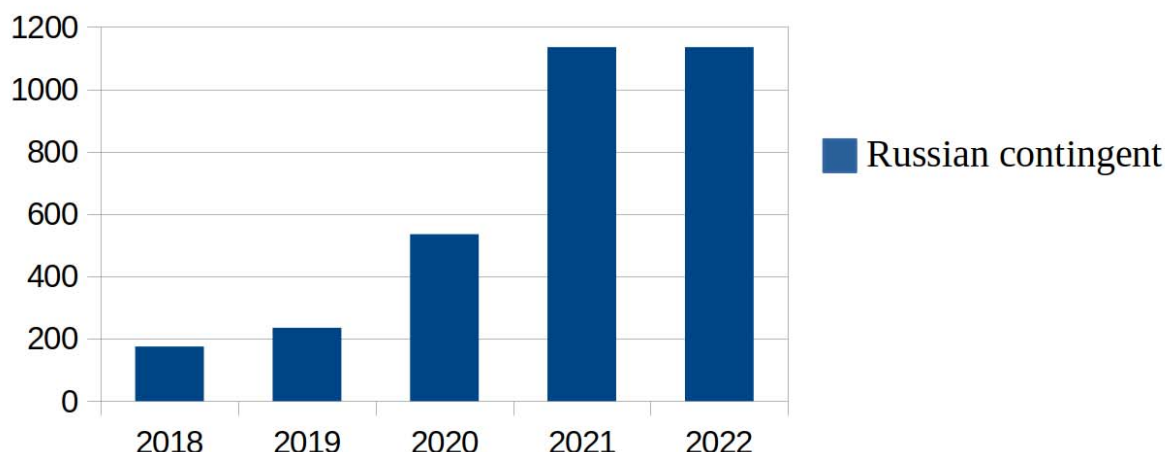


Figure 1. Changes in the Number of the Russian Contingent in the CAR, 2018—2022

Source: compiled by the author.

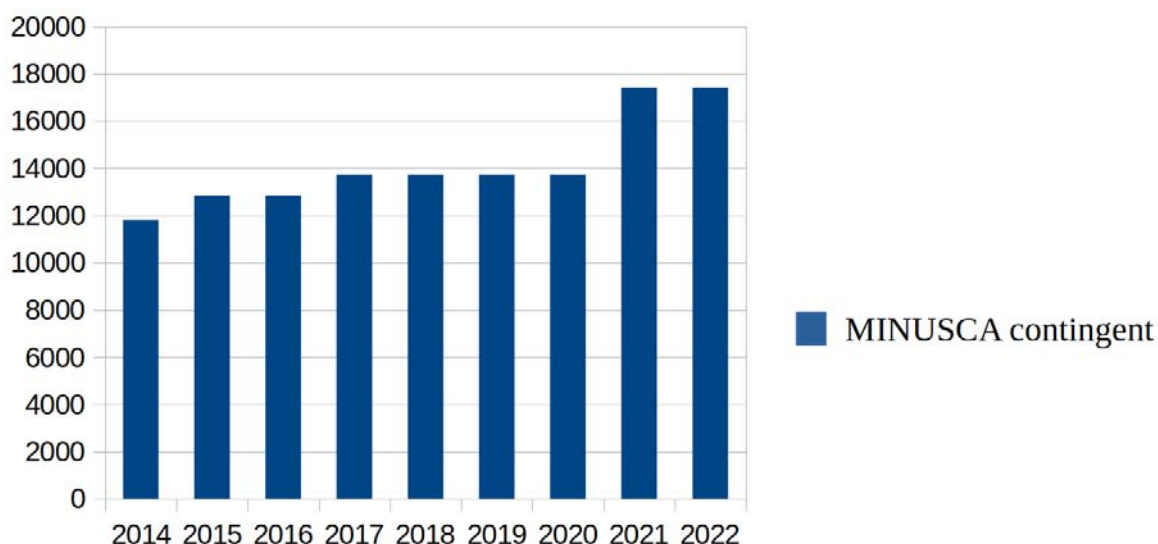


Figure 2. Changes in the Size of the MINUSCA Contingent, 2014—2022

Source: compiled by the author.

According to media reports, in 2020—2021, Russian specialists, whose numbers have significantly increased, have become actively involved in countering militants. As a result, by July 2021, experts estimate that at least 70% of the country has been liberated.³⁸

In this context, the MINUSCA contingent was also reinforced, but it did not actively

participate in the counteroffensive and the related training of the CAR forces (*Forces Armées Centrafricaines*, FACA). On March 12, 2021, the UN Security Council decided to reinforce the MINUSCA contingent.³⁹

³⁸ Diamonds, Gold and Blood. Why Russia Is Accused of Atrocities of PMC Mercenaries in Central Africa? // Lenta.ru. July 3, 2021. (In Russian). URL: https://lenta.ru/articles/2021/07/03/central_african_rus/ (accessed: 15.02.2023).

³⁹ Security Council Increases Size of Central African Republic Stabilization Mission, Adopting Resolution 2566 (2021) by 14 Votes in Favour, with 1 Abstention // Reliefweb. March 12, 2021. URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/security-council-increases-size-central-african-republic> (accessed: 24.02.2023).

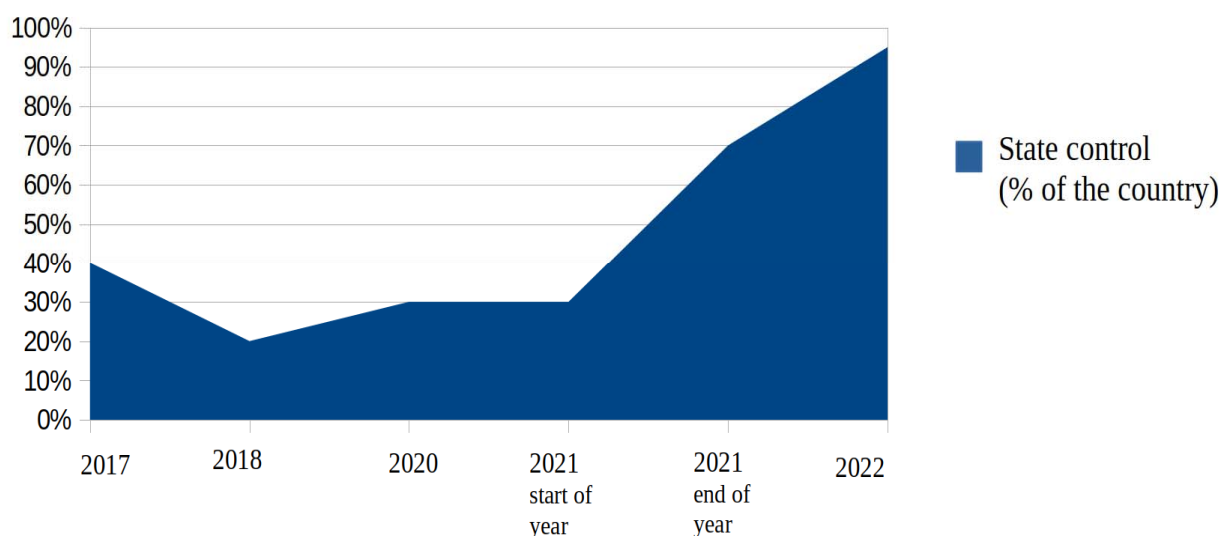


Figure 3. Government-controlled Territories in the CAR, 2017—2022

Source: compiled by the author.

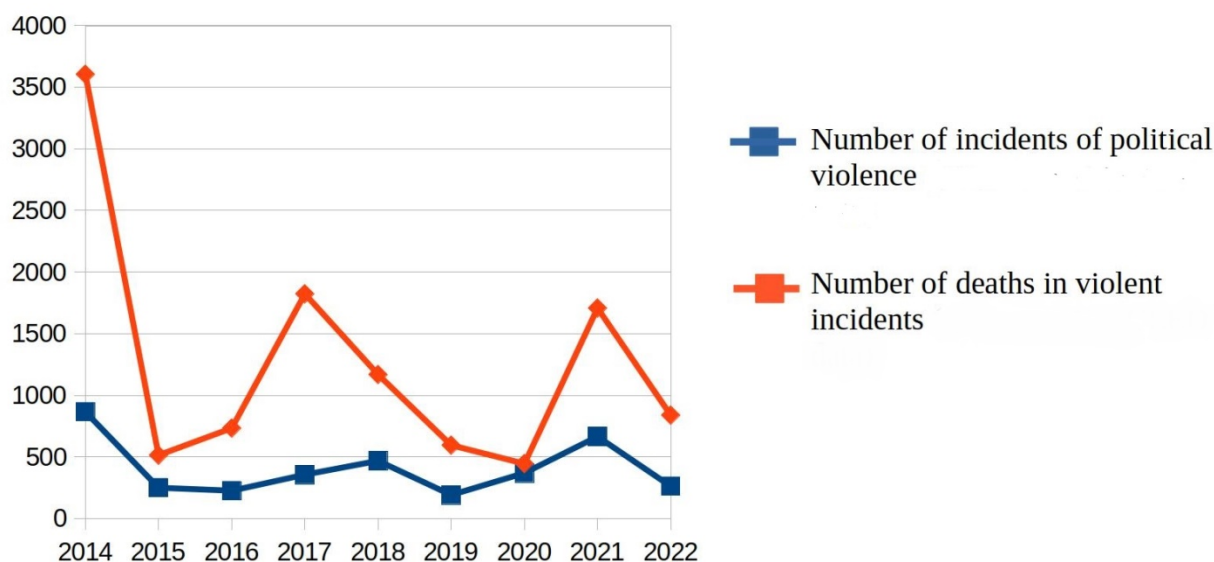


Figure 4. Number of Violent Incidents and Fatalities in the CAR in 2014—2022 According to ACLED Data

Source: compiled by the author.

Meanwhile, in January, February and March 2021, the FACA — trained and supported by Russian military specialists and a military contingent from Rwanda — successfully fought against the militants, liberating rebel territories.⁴⁰ Successful combat

operations against the rebels led to a split within the anti-government forces. In April 2021, the Union for Peace in Central Africa (*Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique*, UPC) announced its withdrawal from the CPC.⁴¹ There were also reports of internal splits in other rebel groups

⁴⁰ Central African Republic Control Map & Timeline — July 2021 // Political Geography Now. July 20, 2021. URL: <https://www.polgeonow.com/2021/07/who-controls-the-central-african-republic-2021.html?m=1> (accessed: 24.02.2023).

⁴¹ Powerful Armed Group in Central African Republic Vows to Leave Rebel Coalition // France 24. April 6, 2021. URL: <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20210405-powerful-armed-group-in-central-african-republic-vows-to-leave-rebel-coalition> (accessed: 24.02.2023).

due to a reluctance to associate with the CPC.⁴² By early 2022, according to the CAR's ambassador to Russia, 95% of the country's territory was under the control of the central government.⁴³ Independent experts note that "the country's recognized government now controls more territory than at any time since the war began in 2012"⁴⁴.

Number of Violent Incidents

As the ACLED data show, 2017 is the peak year for violence in the CAR during the entire period of peacekeepers' deployment (see Table 1 and Figure 4). After a sharp decline in 2015, 2016 and 2017, the number of violent incidents and fatalities increases sharply. In 2018 and especially in 2019, there is a dramatic decline in the same indicators, which coincides with Russia's active involvement in peacekeeping.

In 2021, after pro-French former president François Bozizé led a rebellion against the legitimate authorities in the CAR, the number of violent incidents and deaths in the CAR increases again, reaching 2017 levels. This trend is a continuation of the late 2020 trend, with a sharp spike in violence in December when the CPC began its march on Bangui.

By 2022, however, the number of deaths and violent incidents had dropped by half (2018—2019 levels). The decrease in violence was accompanied by an unprecedented expansion of state control in the CAR. As Table

1 and the graphs generated from its data show, there is a direct correlation between the increase in the number of Russian military specialists, Russia's more active participation in providing assistance to the CAR, the liberation of more and more territories, and the subsequent decrease in violence. There is no such correlation with respect to the UN forces.

The following conclusions can be drawn:

1. there was a relative decrease in violence in 2015—2016 following the deployment of the MINUSCA contingent, with almost no state control in the CAR;

2. in 2017—2018 there is a sharp increase in violence, state control is highly questionable. The UN contingent of many thousands of troops in the CAR is accused of inefficiency and inaction;

3. with Russia's involvement in the peace process and training of the CAR troops, the conflict begins to de-escalate in 2018—2020. However, the government's territorial control remains tenuous;

4. escalation of the conflict in late 2020—2021 leads to a fourfold increase in the contingent of Russian military specialists. 2021 is a new peak of violence, but accompanied by an expansion of the zone of government control;

5. in 2022, there is a decrease in violence and an increase in state control. Actions to eliminate gangs in 2021 prove effective. By 2022, the CAR authorities have achieved not only increased territorial control, but also de-escalation by defeating the rebels who withdrew from the Khartoum Agreement;

6. according to the results, the presence of Russian military specialists led to a positive effect that neither UN peacekeepers, nor European military and trainers, nor the French military could achieve before and without them.

As a result, the experts of the International Crisis Group, who are absolutely not sympathetic to Russia, had to admit already at the end of 2021 that Russia's active involvement in the resolution of the crisis "was

⁴² Central African Republic: Report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/571) // Reliefweb. June 21, 2021. URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/central-african-republic-report-secretary-general-s2021571> (accessed: 24.02.2023).

⁴³ Leon Dodonou: Russia Brought Order in CAR in a Year, While the West Could Not for Many Years // RIA Novosti. February 7, 2022. (In Russian). URL: <https://ria.ru/20220207/dodonu-1771085398.html> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

⁴⁴ Central African Republic Control Map & Timeline — July 2021 // Political Geography Now. July 20, 2021. URL: <https://www.polgeonow.com/2021/07/who-controls-the-central-african-republic-2021.html?m=1> (accessed: 24.02.2023).

a momentous achievement that boosted Touadéra's popular support. Many Central Africans hailed the Russian mercenaries as liberators."⁴⁵

This is also confirmed by the above analysis of the data on the expansion of state control and the level of violence in the CAR. Negative assessments of the OUIS's actions in the CAR in Western analyses as being aimed solely at violating human rights,⁴⁶ allegations of such violations by the UN "experts" citing anonymous sources,⁴⁷ designed to create the impression of Russian instructors and military specialists as a threat to the CAR⁴⁸ — are likely to be untrue and biased, discrediting the UN structures themselves. The highest levels of violence and lack of state control were observed when external support for security in the country was the sole responsibility of the UN peacekeepers.

Conceptual Differences in the Activities of OUIS and MINUSCA

The reasons for the different effectiveness of the OUIS and MINUSCA contingents lie in their fundamentally different approaches to their tasks. MINUSCA operates under a peacekeeping doctrine that equates the

country's legitimate authorities with the insurgents. This is explained by the principle of *impartiality*.⁴⁹ This approach has already met with Russian criticism during the UN debate. As Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation A.M. Evstigneeva noted in November 2022, Moscow considers the CAR's request "to designate assistance in maintaining state presence as MINUSCA's priority task" to be justified.⁵⁰ She said that Russia could not accept that the UN "put the parties to the conflict and armed groups on an equal footing."⁵¹

Data from the surveys of the local residents, commissioned by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in 2019, show that the people of the CAR demand a stronger sovereign state. They want to see a strong state (the ideal is the rule of J.B. Bokassa from 1966—1979), capable of controlling borders and fighting insurgency. The CAR armed forces are seen as the main force capable of providing security (Van der Lijn, Glawion & de Zwaan, 2019, pp. 4—5). This is exactly what Russia has been and is doing in the CAR: supporting the state and strengthening its armed forces.

The systemic problem of the UN peacekeeping is linked to structural problems. Not only is the mandate of the UN peacekeepers extremely limited, making it impossible to fulfill their tasks, but even if peacekeepers were

⁴⁵ Bax P. Russia's Influence in the Central African Republic // International Crisis Group. December 3, 2021. URL: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/central-african-republic/russias-influence-central-african-republic> (accessed: 24.02.2023).

⁴⁶ Munday D. Russian Mercenaries in the Central African Republic Create Problems for Democratic Actors // London School of Economics. May 5, 2021. URL: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2021/05/05/russian-mercenaries-military-entral-african-republic-problems-democratic-actors/> (accessed: 26.02.2023).

⁴⁷ Central African Republic: Rights Experts Concerned Over 'Russian Advisers' and Close Contacts with UN Peacekeepers // UN News. March 31, 2021. URL: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1088802> (accessed: 26.02.2023).

⁴⁸ Russia's Use of Private Military Contractors // Africa Center for Strategic Studies. September 15, 2022. URL: <https://africacenter.org/experts/russia-private-military-contractors/> (accessed: 26.02.2023).

⁴⁹ Principles of Peacekeeping // United Nations Peacekeeping. URL: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/principles-of-peacekeeping> (accessed: 24.02.2022).

⁵⁰ Explanation of Vote by Deputy Permanent Representative Anna Evstigneeva after the UNSC Vote on a Draft Resolution on Renewal of the Mandate of MINUSCA // Permanent Mission of the Russia Federation to the United Nations. November 14, 2022. URL: https://russia.un.org/en/news/141122_c (accessed: 24.02.2022).

⁵¹ Explanation of Vote by Deputy Permanent Representative Anna Evstigneeva after the UNSC Vote on a Draft Resolution on Renewal of the Mandate of MINUSCA // Permanent Mission of the Russia Federation to the United Nations. November 14, 2022. URL: https://russia.un.org/en/news/141122_c (accessed: 24.02.2022).

less restricted in their actions, their effectiveness would still remain low. This is not the first time that the UN peacekeepers have been confronted with the same problems that have manifested themselves in CAR:

1. reluctance to use military force⁵² and intervene on key security issues (Van der Lijn, Glawion & de Zwaan, 2019, p. 5);

2. poor discipline, violence against the local population, constant accusations of sexual violence;⁵³

3. poor training (Tuvdendarjaa, 2022). The latter is usually due to the fact that peacekeeping operations tend to involve soldiers and officers mainly from developing countries.⁵⁴ The same factor is the reason for weak motivation, refusal to risk their lives and protect the local population.⁵⁵ There are no structures in place to encourage them to behave differently;

4. the UN multinational forces also tend to suffer from problems of subordination and coordination. Often, mission leadership and participating countries lack understanding of the situation in the country in which they are operating (Tuvdendarjaa, 2022).

The UN peacekeepers in the CAR often observe violence against civilians without intervening.⁵⁶ At the same time, Russian instructors are capable not only of training their Central African colleagues, but also of protecting civilians when such a choice is made,

as the Western media, which are critical of the Russians, have also noted.⁵⁷ Foreign experts have to point out that the Russians have no problems with coordination, are well prepared and highly manoeuvrable.⁵⁸ As General Pierre Schill, Chief of Staff of the French Land Forces, emphasized, they are ready to pay for their successes with their blood and are “a formidable adversary.”⁵⁹

It can be assumed that the fact that Russia is operating a structure defined as a “private military company” (PMC) only strengthens the advantages of the Russians (due to the high corporate ethics, focus on results, the experience of fighters in various conflicts). Another PMC — South African Executive Outcomes in 1990 achieved significant results in the fight against rebels in Angola and Sierra Leone (Mills & Stremlau, 1999, pp. 53—54) largely due to the result-oriented military culture (Fitzsimmons, 2012, pp. 167—230). Even critics of the PMC have noted its military effectiveness (Adamo, 2020). However, the rejection of the services of this structure resulted in a new outbreak of civil war, which in 1999 led to the introduction, first of UN peacekeepers (*the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone*, UNAMSIL), and then — against the background of the latter’s inability to cope with the situation (Reno, 2001) — of the British military contingent. Under the same conditions, the British, who did not hesitate to use force against the rebels and

⁵² Conflict in the Central African Republic // CFR Global Conflict Tracker. May 11, 2022. URL: <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violence-central-african-republic> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

⁵³ UN Pulls out 450 Gabon Peacekeepers from CAR Over Sex Abuse Claims // TRT World. September 15, 2021. URL: <https://www.trtworld.com/africa/un-pulls-out-450-gabon-peacekeepers-from-car-over-sex-abuse-claims-49970> (accessed: 24.02.2023).

⁵⁴ Autesserre S. The Crisis of Peacekeeping: Why the UN Can’t End Wars // Foreign Affairs. 2019. Vol. 98, no. 1. P. 108. <https://doi.org/10.7916/d8-gcre-q775>

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ MINUSCA: Challenges Mount // The Nation. June 16, 2021. URL: <https://thenationonlineng.net/minusca-challenges-mount/> (accessed: 25.02.2023).

⁵⁷ Cohen R. Putin Wants Fealty, and He’s Found It in Africa // The Japan Times. December 25, 2022. URL: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/12/25/world/putin-africa-loyalty/> (accessed: 25.02.2023).

⁵⁸ Arduino A. The Wagner Group in Africa Is Where the Rubber Meets the Road // The National Interest. February 10, 2023. URL: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/wagner-group-africa-where-rubber-meets-road-206202> (accessed: 26.02.2023).

⁵⁹ Le Groupe Wagner, “un Adversaire Redoutable”, Selon le Chef d’État-Major de l’Armée de Terre Française // Le Figaro. 13.02.2023. URL: <https://www.lefigaro.fr/international/le-groupe-wagner-un-adversaire-redoutable-selon-le-chef-d-etat-major-de-l-armee-de-terre-francaise-20230213> (accessed: 26.02.2023).

who tried to establish links between the state and local leaders in the former colony, achieved better results than the UN peacekeepers, who were not ready to force the rebels to peace (Reno, 2001). Experts are forced to recognize that all recent relatively successful UN peacekeeping missions owe their success to the parallel presence of other armed forces in crisis regions.⁶⁰

In general, this experience, as well as the experience of Russian military specialists' actions in the CAR, confirms that “militarily effective, robust peacekeeping is most important for improving civilian protection and ensuring mission credibility in theaters where there is no peace to keep” (Williams, 2023, p. 32).

Theoretical Basis of the MINUSCA and OUIS Peacekeeping Approaches

The key principle of Russian peacekeeping and security exports, as seen in the CAR, is a state-centered, realist approach. The principal feature of this approach is the refusal to impose any ideological paradigms on its partners. The main thing is to strengthen state structures. The second characteristic since the 1990s has been an active position on peace restoration (Trenin, 1996, p. 70).

In turn, all the UN peacekeeping activities are theoretically based on the theory of “liberal peace” (Jabri, 2010; Cavalcante, 2014; Philipsen, 2014; Taylor, 2017; Maiangwa & Suleiman, 2017). Within such a paradigm, building institutions modeled on Western liberal democracies is seen as the only possible and effective way of peacekeeping, resolving internal and external conflicts. It is no coincidence that the tasks of the UN peacekeepers usually include: holding elections, protecting human rights and gender

equality,⁶¹ i.e. tasks formulated in terms of liberal ideology.

At the heart of liberal peace theory is the idea that “certain types of (liberally constituted) societies will tend to be more peaceful than illiberal states, both in their domestic affairs and in their international relations. The international variant of this theory is the ‘democratic peace’ ” (Newman, Paris & Richmond, 2009, p. 11). However, in practice in Africa and especially in the CAR, this approach has not proven to be effective (Cavalcante, 2014; Maiangwa & Suleiman, 2017). Moreover, the very internationalist paradigm of liberal state building leads to a contradiction — in theory, such a state should be accountable to its people. De facto, the practice of liberal peacebuilding leads to the opposite — the dependence of power on international structures (Philipsen, 2014), i.e. to de-sovereignization.

The principle of the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P), adopted in 2005 by the General Assembly Resolution 60/1 and representing a “revised version of humanitarian intervention” (Khudaykulova, 2019, p. 115), tested in 2011 within the framework of the Libyan campaign “Unified Protector,” corresponds to the same phenomenon. The result was the growth of terrorism and extremism and the actual destruction of the unified Libyan state.

The consequences of the general disregard for state sovereignty on the part of the UN structures are not only cases of approval of direct military intervention and violation of state sovereignty under the pretext of protecting the population from the state. The UN’s refusal to force militants to make peace where it is necessary, in particular in the Central African Republic, its refusal to consider the strengthening of state sovereignty as an important component of the peacekeeping process are the practical results of following the same theoretical principle, where state

⁶⁰ Howard L. Assessing the Effectiveness of the UN Mission in the Central African Republic // Reliefweb. November 21, 2019. URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/assessing-effectiveness-un-mission-central-african-republic> (accessed: 28.02.2023).

⁶¹ Autesserre S. The Crisis of Peacekeeping: Why the UN Can’t End Wars // *Foreign Affairs*. 2019. Vol. 98, no. 1. P. 108. <https://doi.org/10.7916/d8-gcre-q775>

sovereignty is neglected in favor of other priorities.

However, in a war in which gangs are fighting the legitimate government, “impartiality” de facto means tacit support for those gangs. The key thesis of “liberal peacekeeping” that interference in internal affairs and the construction of non-Western societies on the Western model can promote peace rather than increase dysfunction in society is also highly questionable. On the contrary, the adversarial and partisan nature of Western liberal systems in ethnically and religiously divided Africa opens the door to corruption, nepotism, and the usurpation of power by some groups to the detriment of others, leading not to peace but to conflict (Maiangwa & Suleiman, 2017, p. 4; Finkenbusch, 2021).

Russia, on the contrary, does not impose either liberal democracy or any other form of socio-political system on its partners. Moscow is willing to co-operate with illiberal regimes (Mali, Sudan, Burkina Faso) if this illiberalism ensures stability (so called ‘illiberal peacekeeping’ (Russell, 2014; Owen et. al., 2018)). Moreover, it is the illiberal regime of J.B. Bokassa in the very same CAR that is seen as a kind of “golden age” in terms of security (Van der Lijn, Glawion & de Zwaan, 2019). Ideologically, Russia’s realist orientation towards strengthening its partner’s sovereignty is juxtaposed with anti-colonial rhetoric. This in turn is understood by the African fighters against neocolonialism, who are characterized by sympathy for strong authoritarian sovereign regimes with an anti-colonial, anti-Western ideology.⁶²

Russian efforts to strengthen peace and security in the CAR are based on an approach in which the key is to strengthen local statehood and sovereignty and ensure the proper functioning of security forces (Bratersky, 2018,

⁶² Kemi Seba: Russia Is at War with Globalism // *Katehon*. March 23, 2022. (In Russian). URL: <https://katehon.com/ru/article/kemi-seba-rossiya-vedet-voynu-s-globalizmom> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

p. 158). This approach is based on the understanding of the state as the only force capable of stopping the “war of all against all.” This approach, which is realist in its basis, prioritizes the strengthening of the state’s autonomy, including from the restrictions imposed on it by international institutions. Russia’s initiatives to legalize diamond exports⁶³ and lift the arms embargo on the CAR therefore seem perfectly logical within this paradigm.⁶⁴ The goal is to enable the state to ensure its own stability with the resources available to it.

In turn, the approach of Western countries, reflected in the functioning of the UN peacekeeping component, is not focused on strengthening statehood, but on empowering the “world community” through intervention or dangerous non-interference in conflicts, often to the detriment of the interests of the host state. This is reinforced by an idealistic view of the relationship between peace and the imposition of the Western liberal institutions and the development of civil society institutions.

Conclusion

The dynamics of the conflict in the CAR show the effectiveness of the Russian approach and the great efficiency of the Russian OUIS structure operating in the CAR. From a practical point of view, Russian peacekeeping is more effective than the efforts of the UN contingent. The latter should not be understood as a call for the withdrawal of the MINUSCA contingent. However, attempts to prevent MINUSCA from working with Russian specialists who have proven their effectiveness under the pretext of

⁶³ Moscow to Help Bangui with Diamond Exports, Ambassador Says // *RIA Novosti*. February 3, 2023. (In Russian). URL: <https://ria.ru/20230203/almazny-1849418960.html> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

⁶⁴ The CAR Thanked Russia for Supporting the Cancellation of the Arms Embargo // *RIA Novosti*. October 23, 2022. (In Russian). URL: <https://ria.ru/20221023/embargo-1826027893.html> (accessed: 15.02.2023).

protecting human rights⁶⁵ should be recognized as harmful and inadequate to the task facing its peacekeepers.

⁶⁵ Central African Republic: Rights Experts Concerned Over ‘Russian Advisers’ and Close Contacts with UN Peacekeepers // UN News. March 31, 2021. URL: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1088802> (accessed: 26.02.2023).

Conceptualizing the Russian experience in the CAR as forceful ‘realist’ peacekeeping is also necessary from a theoretical perspective due to the growing interest in ‘illiberal peacekeeping’ as a response to the crisis of Western liberal peacekeeping and the erosion of the foundations of the liberal world order as a whole.

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