

Polity IV Country Report 2010: Central African Republic

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2009</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2010</td> <td style="width: 15%;">Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Polity:</td> <td>-1</td> <td>-1</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Autoc:</td> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Durable:</td> <td></td> <td>7</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td></td> <td>No</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2009	2010	Change	Polity:	-1	-1	0	Democ:	1	1	0	Autoc:	2	2	0	Durable:		7		Tentative:		No		
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Durable:		7																							
Tentative:		No																							
SCODE	CEN	CCODE	482	Date of Report	1 June 2011																				
Polity IV Component Variables																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
2	0	0	3	3	3																				
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)																									
End Date	14 March 2003		Begin Date	15 March 2003																					
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution	1995																								
Executive(s)	President François Bozizé (no party); seized power in a coup on 15 March 2003; directly elected 13 March and 8 May 2005, 64.6%; reelected 23 January 2011, 64.4%																								
Legislature	Unicameral: National Assembly (105 seats; directly elected; most recent elections, 13 March and 23 January 2011 and 27 March 2011) National Convergence "Kwa Na Kwa" (KNK): 62 Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People (MLPC): 2 Other parties: 15 Independents: 26																								
Judiciary	Supreme Court																								

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Gradual Transition from Self-Selection (5)

The Central African Republic (C.A.R.) has a long history of political instability and authoritarian rule. In 1960 the land-locked country became independent from France and established self-rule under the leadership of David Dacko. Dacko attempted to consolidate his power through the establishment of one-party rule but was deposed in 1966 by his cousin, Jean-Bedel Bokossa. Bokossa declared himself "life President" in 1972 and "emperor" in 1977. After years of erratic and repressive rule, French troops overthrew Bokossa and placed Dacko in charge of the government. President Dacko was overthrown in 1981 by the army chief of staff, General Andre Kolingba. After establishing a one-party state in 1986,

¹ The research described in this report was sponsored by the Political Instability Task Force (PITF). The PITF is funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. The views expressed herein are the authors' alone and do not represent the views of the US Government.

Kolingba liberalized the political system in 1992. After failed elections and the imposition of an interim government, democratic elections were finally held in August 1993. In these elections President Kolingba was defeated by Ange-Felix Patasse. After serious political instability during 1996-97, presidential elections were once again held in September 1999 under the supervision of UN peacekeeping forces. This election, which was deemed to be largely “free and fair” by international observers, was won by President Patasse. Opposition candidates, led by former president Kolingba, claimed that Patasse had used fraud and intimidation to ensure his electoral victory. Ethnic tensions were prominent during the election process and resulted in sporadic post-election conflict. Despite efforts to institutionalize democracy in this country, deep-rooted political and ethnic cleavages continued to undermine this process and pushed the country towards civil war.

After a six-month armed rebellion, Francois Bozize, who previously attempted unsuccessful coups in 1983 and 2001, staged a successful coup against President Patasse on 15 March 2003. Bozize had originally stood for president in the country’s first democratic elections in 1993 but lost to Patasse. Following the 2003 coup, Bozize dissolved the government, the national assembly, the constitution and the constitutional court. However, in their place he established a transitional government comprising representatives of all the country’s political, professional, social and religious groups. A National Transitional Council was established on 30 May 2003. The National Transitional Council was provided with the mandate to write a new constitution, which was completed and ratified by ninety percent of the electorate on 20 December 2004, and organize new elections, which were held in March 2005.

The new constitution, virtually identical to the 1995 constitution that Bozize suspended after the 2003 coup, set the stage for the March 2005 elections. While Bozize had long insisted that he would not contest the presidency in future democratic elections, in December 2004 he reneged on this promise and announced that he would run for president as an independent candidate. The March 2005 elections were contested by Bozize, Kolingba and Martin Ziguele, leader of the opposition party Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People (MLPC). Patasse, who was under criminal investigation, was prohibited from participating in these elections. Bozize won forty-three percent of the vote in the first round, and defeated Martin Ziguele in second round balloting in May 2005 with sixty-five percent of the vote. In addition to his post as president, Bozize also serves as defense minister.

In early 2010, President Bozize twice delayed elections scheduled for April and May. In July 2010 he set the elections for January 2011 but made their conduct conditional on significant progress being made in the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Process outlined in the 2008 Comprehensive Peace Accord as well as on the establishment of political order throughout the country. While relative political stability can be found in the capital, Bangui, and the southwest region of the country, the northeastern parts of the country continue to be plagued by lawlessness, attacks by foreign armed groups and by continued factional rivalries. In December 2010 the UN recommended that their peacebuilding mandate in the CAR be extended for another year. The political opposition has argued that these delays in the electoral timetable were simply a ploy by the President to retain his hold on power and to undermine consensus decision-making within government. Elections were finally held on January 23, 2011; President Bozize gained reelection with 64% of the vote over the man he had deposed in the 2003 coup that brought him to power, former president Ange-Félix Pattassé.

Executive Constraints: Slight to Moderate Limitations (3)

The constitution was abrogated and the national assembly and constitutional courts were dissolved after the March 2003 coup. A broad-based National Transitional Council was established on 30 May 2003 to write a new constitution; the new constitution is virtually identical to that which was abrogated in 1995. The president is both head of state and head of government, although the president shares limited executive powers with a prime minister. The unicameral multi-party National Assembly consists of 109 members, elected for five-year terms in a two-round balloting system. In the first elections since the ratification of the new constitution, held on 13 March and 8 May 2005, 909 candidates contested the 109 seats. The Kwa Na Kwa (KNK) party, a coalition of parties supporting President Bozize, won forty-two seats, while the largest opposition party, MLPC, won only eleven seats. The President appoints his own ministers.

Instead of constraining Bozize, the relatively weak National Assembly has generally given him a free hand. From January through March of 2006, the National Assembly authorized President Bozize to rule by decree, which he did, reorganizing the civil service. Prefectural and municipal leaders are appointed by the president. The Judicial Branch consists of several national and military courts, all of which are appointed and strongly influenced by the president. The country’s criminal court meets only once or twice

per year, for one or two months per session, and the country's other high courts are plagued by lack of funding and trained personnel.

Political Participation: Factional/Restricted Competition (6)

Ethnic cleavages and tribal identities continue to define politics in the C.A.R. The vast majority of political parties are organized along ethnic lines and ethnic violence is never far from the surface. Nine broad ethnic groups are found in the C.A.R. along with over ninety tribal subdivisions. For the last two decades two ethnic groups, the Yakoma and the Kaba, have dominated the political arena. Former President Kolingba (ruler from 1981-93) is from the Yakoma tribe, a subdivision of the Ngbandi ethnic group found on the banks of the Obangui River in the southern half of the country. The Yakoma gained significant economic, political and social privileges under French rule and continue to dominate the higher echelons of the military apparatus. Yakoma dominance of the armed forces was a constant source of instability for President Patasse (ruler of the C.A.R. from 1993 to 2003). Ex-President Patasse is from the Kaba subdivision of the Sara ethnic group which is found in the north of the country. The personal political rivalry between Kolingba and Patasse until the 2003 coup exacerbated ethnic tensions and rivalries between these two groups.

These tensions erupted into violence in 1996-97, when the impending 1997 closing of all French military bases in the C.A.R. created a power vacuum. During this period three violent military uprisings ravaged the capital city of Bangui (which is split into Kaba and Yakoma ethnic enclaves) and left hundreds dead. These conflicts pitted disgruntled members of the army (dominated by southern ethnic groups loyal to Kolingba) against the Special Forces for the Defense of Democratic Institutions (the presidential guard that was comprised of northern Saras who were loyal to Patasse). While French and African forces brought an end to this turmoil, resulting in the 1998 Pact on National Reconciliation, the potential for disorder in this country remained high as self-seeking politicians continued to use ethnicity as a political tool.

The tenuous peace established by UN forces in 1999-2000 was shattered in May 2001 when, once again, forces loyal to ex-President Kolingba led a failed coup attempt. Ethnopolitical violence broke out in the wake of the failed coup as forces loyal to President Patasse sought to capture Kolingba and dismantle his political apparatus. At least fifty-nine people were killed and over 88,000 people displaced in the weeks following the coup attempt. UN forces were called in to restore order. Further violence erupted in October 2001 when President Patasse sought to remove the country's top military official, then-General Francois Bozize, for his part in the May coup attempt. General Bozize, along with 300 of his followers, fled to southern Chad as loyalists within the country continued to battle with government troops. Bozize successfully seized power in March 2003 in a bloodless coup. Under the guidance of the C.A.R.'s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, throughout 2003 all major political actors – Kolingba, Patasse, Dacko and Bozize – publicly apologized to the nation for the violence and instability their fighting caused over the previous three decades.

Under Bozize's rule the constitution was abrogated and a transitional government took power, which in turn re-wrote the constitution, although the two remained virtually identical. The first elections under the new constitution took place in March and May of 2005, and were generally peaceful and fair. Despite this progress, the political landscape in C.A.R. continues to be divided by personalistic and ethnic factions. The predominant faction consisted of the supporters of Bozize, who dominate the National Assembly under the Kwa Na Kwa moniker and as independents. This faction is opposed by mutually hostile groups who all oppose Bozize: the MLPC consists of supporters of former President Patasse, with a political base in the Sara and Baya ethnic groups dominant in the northern provinces; the Central African Democratic Rally consists of supporters of former President Kolingba, with a political base in the southeast of the country, particularly among the Yakoma people. The central government continues to have difficulty maintaining order in outlying rural areas, especially in regions dominated by these opposing factions. Since the consolidation of Bozize's regime, supporters of ousted President Patasse in the north have faced retribution from the regime, which draws its support from southerners. Open rebellion broke out in the northwest in June 2005 and, then, in October 2006 in the northeast, which borders on the troubled region of Darfur in neighboring Sudan.

On 21 June 2008 a peace agreement between the Central African Republic Government and two major rebels groups in the Central African Republic (CAR) was signed. The impoverished and strife-torn country faced a military coup in 2003, that led to the fighting between the government and rebel groups in the country ever since. The fighting has forced some 300,000 Central Africans to be internally displaced or to seek refuge in nearby Chad and Cameroon. The peace agreement was signed in Libreville, Gabon

between the Central African Republic authorities, the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR) and the Popular Army for the Restoration of Democracy (ARPD).