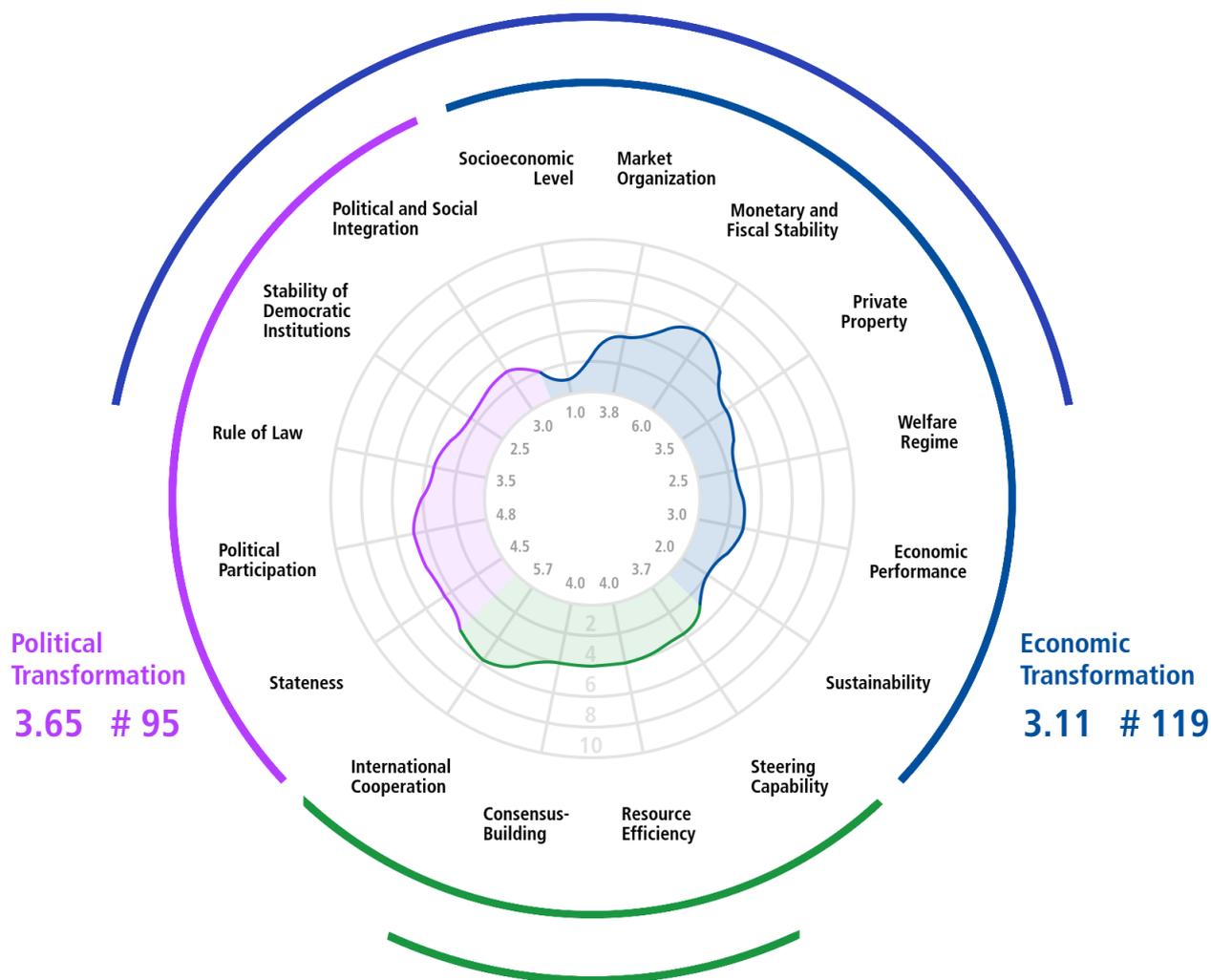


Central African Republic

Status Index

3.38 # 117

on 1-10 scale out of 137



Political Transformation
3.65 # 95

Economic Transformation
3.11 # 119

Governance Index

4.22 # 86

on 1-10 scale out of 137

This report is part of the **Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2026**. It covers the period from February 1, 2023 to January 31, 2025. The BTI assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance in 137 countries. More on the BTI at <https://www.bti-project.org>.

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Key Indicators

Population	M	5.3	HDI	0.414	GDP p.c., PPP \$	1264
Pop. growth ¹	% p.a.	3.4	HDI rank of 193	191	Gini Index	43.0
Life expectancy	years	57.4	UN Education Index	0.340	Poverty ³	% 85.8
Urban population	%	44.1	Gender inequality ²	-	Aid per capita \$	143.2

Sources (as of December 2025): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | UNDP, Human Development Report 2025. Footnotes: (1) Average annual growth rate. (2) Gender Inequality Index (GII). (3) Percentage of population living on less than \$3.65 a day at 2017 international prices.

Executive Summary

During the period under review, political developments in the Central African Republic (CAR) have been relatively calm and stable compared to previous years. President Faustin-Archange Touadéra has further strengthened control over most of the territory, much of which was previously occupied by armed groups. With support from ex-Wagner troops, the armed forces have been deployed in almost all provincial cities and in many rural areas, especially those near mines and other natural resources. However, the state remains weak, and intense, isolated violent attacks targeting civilians still occur. The so-called Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC), a rebel alliance led by former President François Bozizé, remains a significant threat. Some other rebel groups have also shown renewed vigor. The CAR continues to rely heavily on military cooperation with Russia, the Wagner Group and Rwanda.

In July 2023, a constitutional referendum was held to strengthen executive power. Its provisions included the abolishment of presidential term limits and a grant of greater authority to the president to appoint members of public institutions. While the opposition called for a large boycott, more than 95% of those voting approved the referendum, with a turnout of about 60%.

The period under review also saw France return as one of the CAR's main development partners. After a three-year interruption, Paris announced in 2024 that it would resume budgetary support and work with Bangui, the country's capital, toward a constructive partnership. In November 2024, France granted the government €10 million in budgetary aid to support economic and financial governance, reduce domestic arrears, and help organize local elections in 2025.

The improved overall political stability has not yet spurred the country's economic development, which remains hampered by structural constraints such as poor infrastructure and weak foreign direct investment (FDI).

From a humanitarian perspective, the situation in the Central African Republic remains tense. Over the last 10 years, the country has had one of the lowest Human Development Index scores in the world and is ranked 191st out of 193 countries in the 2023/2024 Human Development Report. In 2024, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2.8 million people, or half the population, were living under conditions of such extreme vulnerability that humanitarian assistance alone was not sufficient to restore their well-being. A wide range of human rights violations have been reported, and thousands of people have been forced to flee. The main drivers of displacement have been insecurity and the effects of climate change. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are currently more than 455,000 internally displaced persons, of whom about 83% live with host families and 17% in displacement sites. Together with the United Nations, the European Union and international financial institutions, as well as civil society and the private sector, Touadéra has set up a national development plan (PND 2024 – 2028) focused on security and good governance, development of human capital and access to basic services, development of infrastructure, economic development, and environmental sustainability. This plan is intended to help channel and synchronize international assistance and thus ensure more efficient use and implementation of such aid. However, the government is not likely to implement urgent reforms such as effective anti-corruption measures or the provision of broad public services.

History and Characteristics of Transformation

The Central African Republic's post-independence history has been marked by cycles of violence and political instability. The country has experienced five successful coups d'état and several attempted coups. Since 2016, it has been governed by Faustin-Archange Touadéra, who came to power through presidential elections in 2016 and was re-elected in 2020.

For the first 30 years after independence, France strongly interfered in the country's political developments. Until 1997, France maintained two permanent military bases with 1,400 troops. The French government supported Jean-Bédél Bokassa, who seized control from David Dacko in a coup d'état in 1965 and initially declared himself president for life, then emperor, while violently repressing dissent. When France grew tired of Bokassa's excesses, it "restored" David Dacko to the presidency in 1979. A second coup brought André Kolingba to power at the end of 1979. During Kolingba's presidency, the economy declined rapidly as structural adjustment policies destabilized an already fragile socioeconomic environment. At the end of the decade, international aid was made conditional on democratic progress, and Kolingba lost power to Ange-Félix Patassé in the 1993 elections. Patassé, the first northerner to become president, struggled to reform a monoethnic and defiant army, resulting in a series of mutinies. By the mid-1990s, civil conflict had escalated into organized rebellion. Armed groups proliferated, along with three attempted coups and, in 2001, a rebellion led by former chief of staff François Bozizé. Neighboring countries, mainly Chad, also interfered significantly in the country's domestic politics and conflict during this time. Chadian soldiers committed severe human rights violations in the CAR, as did rebels

from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, whom Patassé had called on to defend his presidency. These crimes, and the government's complicity in them, reinforced the population's latent mistrust of foreigners and the government.

In the 2005 presidential election, Bozizé won with 64.6% of the vote. Throughout Bozizé's decade in power, structural problems persisted and serious security issues developed. Three major rebellions emerged in the north of the country, quickly followed by peace efforts (e.g., inclusive dialogue processes, peace agreements and disarmament, and demobilization and reintegration programs).

When Bozizé won the 2011 election with an ostensible two-thirds majority in the first round, international partners remained quiet, despite allegations of fraud. A broad alliance of rebel groups called Séléka, dominated by Muslim forces including Chadian and Sudanese fighters, formed in late 2012 and conquered Bangui in March 2013. Séléka installed the country's first Muslim president, Michel Djotodia. In 2013, Séléka turned to rioting and looting and used violence against non-Muslims in Bangui and across the country. In response, brutal revenge killings by self-defense groups (Anti-Balaka) and former security forces began. The violence during this time was unprecedented and had a devastating impact on the country's fragile economy.

The country suffered a sharp decline in its HDI score, and the economy shrank by 37%. More than 800,000 people were displaced. In January 2014, Djotodia was forced to step down and an interim president, Catherine Samba-Panza, was appointed. The United Nations began operating the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in April 2014 to protect civilians, and a new constitution was approved in 2015.

In February 2016, presidential elections resulted in the victory of independent candidate Faustin-Archange Touadéra, a mathematician who had served as prime minister under Bozizé between 2008 and 2013. Touadéra was elected with 63% of the vote. However, violence and displacement continued and even affected previously stable areas. At the end of 2018, one in five Central Africans had been displaced.

Driven by criminal, economic or political interests, armed groups continued to assert control over the country throughout 2017 – 2020. François Bozizé returned to CAR in 2019 and announced he would run in the December 2020 presidential elections. The Constitutional Court disqualified his candidacy, arguing he was being prosecuted for war crimes and subject to U.N. sanctions. A couple of days before the presidential elections, an alliance of rebel movements, the CPC, took control of major cities. The elections were held as scheduled, although a number of polling stations were unable to open. Touadéra was declared the winner with more than 53% of the votes. On Jan. 13, 2021, the CPC launched an assault on Bangui but was pushed back by the Central African military forces (FACA), supported by international allies including MINUSCA, Rwandan troops and mercenaries from the Wagner Group. While the president's popularity rose significantly after the 2021 counterattacks, and Wagner soldiers were broadly welcomed by the population, especially in areas that had long been under rebel control, Touadéra's rapprochement with Russia has driven a wedge between Bangui and its other traditional partners, especially France. Following the declaration of a state of emergency between January and August 2021, the government agreed on

the Luanda Road map under the auspices of Rwanda and Angola as well as the heads of state of the intergovernmental International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) group. In line with this road map, Touadéra declared a unilateral cease-fire on October 15, 2021, and organized a Republican dialogue in March 2022, without, however, inviting representatives from the CPC coalition. During 2023, fighting between FACA, joined by Russian mercenaries and Rwandan forces, and the CPC alliance decreased, although some intense single events still occurred. In 2024 fighting saw a slight uptick again. Civilians, especially schools and hospitals, were frequent targets of attacks.

The BTI combines text analysis and numerical assessments. The score for each question is provided below its respective title. The scale ranges from 1 (worst) to 10 (best).

Transformation Status

I. Political Transformation

1 | Stateness

In the CAR, a state monopoly on the legitimate use of force has hardly ever existed. The state's authority and control have mainly concentrated in the capital, Bangui, and have been more or less absent from major parts of the country. Moreover, the national borders have been mostly uncontrolled and vulnerable to the entry of armed groups from neighboring countries. As a consequence, rebel movements and militias have set up their rule and established governance where the state is nonexistent.

The Central African Armed Forces (FACA) have traditionally been weak and have faced major difficulties in terms of resources, human capital and logistics. They rely heavily on external support for funding, resources and training. For decades, this support came primarily from France, the country's former colonial power. Given the weakness of state institutions with regard to ensuring security and stability, several multinational operations have been deployed to the Central African Republic (CAR) since 1997 under the control of regional communities such as the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), France, and the United Nations. In recent years, support and protection have been provided by the U.N. MINUSCA peacekeeping mission, established in 2014.

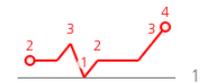
Since 2021, the CAR's government has increasingly called upon the military support of the Russian Wagner mercenary group, under an agreement signed between the Russian and CAR governments in 2018. This agreement provides for military support from the Wagner Group in exchange for mineral concessions. Additional support is provided by Rwanda. The activities of Wagner mercenaries and Rwandan troops became particularly evident after the escalation of violence following the 2020 elections. In order to reclaim territory lost to rebels, Wagner mercenaries were deployed and partially engaged in operations alongside FACA, MINUSCA and Rwandan troops.

Question
Score

Monopoly on the
use of force

4

'06 '26 10



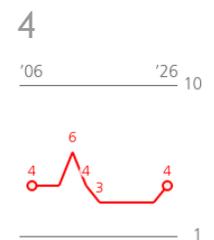
The recovery of major parts of the territory and restored control over roads have significantly increased Faustin-Archange Touadéra's popularity as a strong president. Although activities since 2021 have enabled a strong crackdown on rebel movements, it is difficult to determine whether the state has also reestablished its monopoly on the use of force. These military operations were significantly backed by foreign support. While these joint operations have limited the presence of rebels to fewer areas over the last four years, the intensity of violence from rebel groups rose again in 2024, and smaller towns have been retaken or become contested.

De jure, the existence of the nation-state is unquestioned. Neither the government nor the international community questions the concept of (re)building a nation-state in the CAR. Moreover, the rebel movements that have regularly challenged the government in place acknowledge the state itself. Rather, it is the ruling political elite they seek to topple in order to seize control over the country – or at least over the capital as the political center.

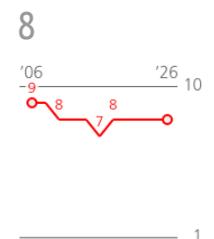
Traditionally, different population groups have competed for hegemony and denied civil rights to others. For decades, citizenship has been quietly manipulated based on ethnicity. Muslims, or even those with Muslim names, have often faced difficulties obtaining birth certificates and state identity cards. This antagonism is mainly rooted in decades of uncontrolled migration from Chad and Sudan due to weakly monitored borders. Tensions reached an extreme during the 2013 crisis, when mostly Christian Anti-Balaka self-defense militias openly opposed the predominantly Muslim combatants of the Séléka rebel groups. As a result, the citizenship of many Muslim Central Africans was questioned and, in some cases, withheld. For many internally displaced persons and refugees, citizenship remains uncertain.

In general, legislation in the Central African Republic is not substantially influenced by religious dogmas. The country largely adheres to the laicist tradition inherited from its former French colonial power. However, certain conflicts have religious overtones. Placing too much emphasis on the religious dimension of the years-long crisis in the Central African Republic, however, increases the risk of neglecting the fundamental causes of violence: the social, economic and political problems that have plagued the country since its independence. Yet, political actors have regularly used and exploited ethnoreligious differences and tensions for their own interests. Frictions along religious lines, notably between Christians and Muslims, have always existed. The long-standing interference of Chad in its neighbor's politics and security, including the years-long presence of Chadian soldiers in the country serving as personal guards to President Bozizé, has not only increased anti-Chadian resentment but has also disadvantaged Muslim people in several respects. Political elites in the Central African Republic have tried to gain legitimacy by instrumentalizing preexisting tensions between ethnic and religious groups. This, in turn, has further weakened an already fragile social cohesion and fueled local grievances.

State identity



No interference of religious dogmas



State administration is mainly concentrated in the capital and remains significantly weak or completely absent in the rest of the country. The farther one travels from Bangui, the more evident the absence of state administration becomes. This insufficiency stems from the state's long-standing inability to reach remote areas, which have been partly under the control of non-state actors such as rebel groups, as well as from the poor condition of existing infrastructure, including roads and means of transport. Even today, the state invests only a minimal fraction of its resources in public goods. This situation has been exacerbated by a lack of investment in basic infrastructure, such as the water supply and treatment network, and by repeated crises and armed conflicts.

As a consequence, the provision of basic services such as communication, education, health care, electricity and water is fragmented or largely absent in vast parts of the country. Recent figures from the World Bank show that the share of the population with access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities has been declining. In 2022, 36.3% of the population had access to drinking water, while only 13.8% and 15.7% had access to sanitation and electricity, respectively. The energy supply system has improved, and the percentage of the population with access to electricity has increased from 11% in 2013 to about 16%.

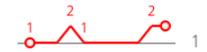
State-provided legal, financial and security functions are nearly nonexistent outside the capital. President Touadéra has tried to address this problem by reinventing the concept of “ministres résidents,” a practice previously introduced under former President Bozizé. The idea is to bind ministers more closely to the provinces they originally come from – but without any major results. NGOs, churches and international donors have partly stepped in to fill the gap and provide basic services.

During the period under review, a significant reform process aimed at changing the country's administrative structure was launched. By creating local authorities (collectivités territoriales), the goal is to further decentralize the state, enhance the responsibilities of local governance bodies, and thereby improve local administration and the provision of basic services. Local elections have not been held for 37 years. While they are announced every year – including for 2025 – they are repeatedly pushed back.

Basic
administration

2

'06 '26 10



2 | Political Participation

The constitution provides for democratic elections, universal suffrage and a secret ballot. However, in terms of political change, the CAR is characterized by a succession of democratic transitions and coups d'état. Until the 1990s, the country's political landscape was primarily marked by coups and power struggles among political elites. When the first democratic elections were held in 1992, this did not end the period of violent transitions of power – the elected president Patassé faced mutinies and coup attempts, and was ultimately overthrown in 2003 by François Bozizé.

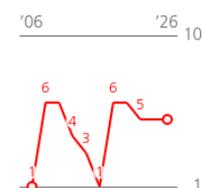
The current president, Faustin-Archange Touadéra, came to power in 2016 in the first elections after the 2013 crisis and a transition period under interim President Catherine Samba-Panza. He was re-elected in December 2020. These presidential elections attracted international attention when the Constitutional Court rejected the candidacy of former President François Bozizé, as he did not meet the “good morality” requirement for candidates due to an international warrant and U.N. sanctions against him for alleged assassinations, torture and other crimes. This rejection triggered an uprising that disrupted campaigning and nearly toppled the government. Fourteen percent of polling stations were closed; in 29 out of 71 sous-préfectures, no voting took place at all, and in six sous-préfectures, polling stations had to close early due to voter intimidation. Around half of the electorate could not register to vote and the opposition struggled to mobilize its voters under these circumstances. Nevertheless, the national election authority (ANE) reported a participation rate of 76.31%, counting only registered voters in polling stations where voting could occur: 910,000 out of a total of 1.8 million registered voters. The Constitutional Court declared Touadéra the winner with 53.92% of the vote in the first round.

In July 2023, the CAR population was called to vote in a referendum on extending the presidential term from five to seven years and abolishing the two-term limit, among other things. Although the referendum was highly controversial and boycotted by the opposition, 95% voted in favor of these changes, allowing Touadéra to remain in office longer than previously possible. However, neither election can be considered free and fair.

Following a significant reform of the CAR's administrative division and the creation of local authorities (collectivités territoriales), the first local elections since 1988 are planned for 2025. Local elections, last held more than 35 years ago, have been repeatedly scheduled since 2016, but have been postponed each time due to a joint lack of funding and political will. Now that the regime has clear control over the political landscape, it could use this opportunity to fill posts across the country with loyalists.

Free and fair elections

5



Elected leaders have limited power to govern, in part due to the presence of strong veto actors, including some that are partially external. Since the country's independence in 1960, the former colonial power France has continued to influence the Central African Republic's domestic politics and the country's political and regime changes. The most striking example of intervention was "Opération Barracuda," in 1979, when Emperor Bokassa was toppled by the French secret service and special forces, who then returned David Dacko to power as president. However, the violation of the Central African Republic's sovereignty rights was never discussed, even though France's role in the coup was openly known. Central African political elites accepted France's continued influence in their politics because it kept open the possibility of extraordinary financial and military support. In addition, they viewed it as an opportunity to bolster their own weak legitimacy. In line with a general reorientation of its Africa policy, mainly driven by budgetary cuts, France has gradually reduced its presence and troops in the Central African Republic since the mid-1990s. In 1997, the two French military bases in Bouar and Bangui were closed. France's gradual retreat consequently revealed the weakness of the Central African Republic's political system and the fragility and vulnerability of the country's social and political order. During the 2013 rebellion, France again deployed about 2,500 troops as part of Opération Sangaris to support U.N. peacekeepers in restoring peace and security.

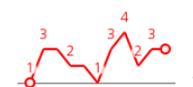
When Touadéra took power in 2016 and France confirmed the end of its military assistance, the new president faced the immediate challenge of maintaining security and stability without France's support. Seeking new security partners, he turned to Russia and Rwanda. Both countries became significant allies not only in countering the 2020 – 2021 rebellion but also in helping to regain control of most of the country. Although FACA troops are now deployed in almost all provincial cities and many rural areas, effective governing power remains largely limited to the capital, Bangui.

Some power may be shifted to the local level in 2025. The 2023 constitution establishes a new administrative division in local authorities (collectivités territoriales). According to articles 175 and 176 of the constitution, these local authorities are freely administered by elected bodies and have regulatory powers to exercise their jurisdiction. The first local elections are scheduled for April 2025. Since 1988, municipalities have been administered by special delegates nominated by the central government. This administrative reform and the election of local representatives could improve the effective restoration of state authority outside the capital as well. However, this will require a firm commitment on the part of the state and its partners toward a decentralized administration and the establishment of a relationship of trust between the state and the newly established local authorities. Such a relationship will be vital for strengthening the social contract between the state and its citizens.

Effective power to govern

3

'06 _____ '26 10



For the past 20 years, association and assembly rights have been guaranteed by law.

The former constitution, in effect since 2015, upheld these rights under Article 12, which stipulates that all citizens have the right to freely create associations, groups, companies and public utilities, as long as these are in line with the law. There is also a law on political parties and associations. The recent constitutional change of 2023 has left this mostly intact in theory. Demonstrations since 2013 have often turned violent and either degenerated into intergroup violence or attacks on peacekeepers. The introduction of a state of emergency between January and August 2021 seriously undermined assembly rights. In April 2022, the Ministry of Public Security banned all public demonstrations of political nature, and in July 2022, demonstrations against the new constitution were only possible under protection by U.N. peacekeepers. Under the guise of the fight against the CPC rebel coalition, the government restricted the activities of political parties and civil groups. During the period under review, the right of assembly was subject to frequent interference or government restrictions, especially in the case of political meetings. This curtailment of rights is driven by the government's fear of a renewed flare-up of rebel activities that could further destabilize the country, as well as the increasingly autocratic demeanor of the sitting government.

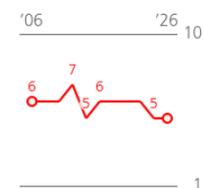
The CAR's constitution guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of the press. However, in practice, these freedoms remain limited, and the government has consistently sought to control much of the media and its content. Radio is the most important source of information. There are numerous public and private radio stations operating across the nation, but only two broadcast nationwide; the rest are localized. Radio Centrafrique, the main public radio station, has existed since 1958. Radio Ndeke Luka is an independent nationwide broadcaster known for strong democratic messaging and significant foreign support (Fondation Hironnelle). There are only two television networks – one public and one private. The print media sector consists of about 60 publications, which are primarily available in the capital, Bangui, and rarely sell more than a few hundred copies daily. The internet has become an increasingly important source of information in urban areas as well as for the diaspora.

In 2020, a new law on freedom of communication was adopted to protect journalists and guarantee media freedom. However, many journalists openly criticize the law's weak implementation and limited effect with regard to promoting independent, fact-based journalism. In 2024, the U.S. State Department reported that the government did not always respect freedoms of expression and the press. The report also criticized the law for allowing criminal prosecutions for defamation of public officials.

In 2024, Reporters Without Borders assigned the CAR 76th place out of 180 countries in its ranking of relative press freedoms, up from 98th out of 180 in 2023. Compared to a ranking of 101 in 2022 and 126 in 2021, this appears to be a steady improvement. However, before the 2013 crisis, the CAR had already reached 62 out of 179 in 2012.

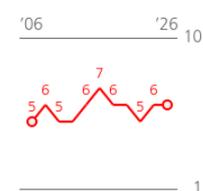
Association / assembly rights

5



Freedom of expression

6



3 | Rule of Law

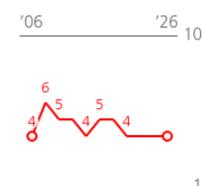
Since its independence in 1960 (with a brief interruption between 1976 and 1979 during the empire established by Jean-Bédél Bokassa), the Central African Republic has had a presidential system. The separation of powers is defined in the constitution, which has often been amended. While the 2015 constitution provided for the addition of an upper house in parliament to further strengthen the state's legislative functions, this Senate has never been established. The most recent amendment to the constitution, approved in the 2023 referendum, abolishes the Senate and instead provides for the creation of a Chamber of Traditional Chiefdoms, dedicated to the valorization of habits and customs.

In view of the president's power, and despite the persistent shortage of judges, prosecutors and lawyers, as well as limited resources, the Constitutional Court has repeatedly sought to play a more prominent role and to demonstrate its ability and autonomy in overseeing checks and balances – with varying degrees of success. In spring 2020, for example, the court blocked the president's plans to postpone the elections because of the pandemic. In September 2022, the Constitutional Court attempted to halt the president's constitutional reform project on the grounds that it would be unconstitutional. In addition, the court requested that the Senate be established. The government responded by ordering the retirement of the court's 70-year-old president, Danielle Darlan, by the end of 2022. The referendum for the constitutional reform was held as planned in July 2023, despite a significant boycott by the opposition. The amended constitution further increases presidential power. For example, the president now has the power to appoint a replacement vice president if that position becomes vacant, the number of Constitutional Court members appointed by the president has been increased from one to three, and the General Assembly's nomination rights have been significantly weakened. The General Assembly has been further marginalized by the previously mentioned abolition of the Senate.

The judiciary, historically understaffed and weak, has been negatively affected by repeated years of turmoil and domestic crises. Legal records have often been destroyed during or after rebellions or coups d'état, creating a feeling of impunity among the population. This perception is further reinforced by the poor functioning of prisons and their limited infrastructure and security, resulting in multiple prison breaks over the years. The Constitutional Court has in the past tried to check executive power, but its independence was compromised by the government in 2022. Another problem is the wide gap between the capital and the countryside, with only a few functioning courts outside Bangui. Given the population's limited trust in the state and national police, criminal activities have often not been reported or taken to court. As a result, many perpetrators have not been prosecuted and have instead continued living near their victims.

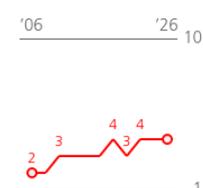
Separation of powers

4



Independent judiciary

4



In 2015, the Special Criminal Court (SCC/CPS) was established to investigate crimes against humanity and deliver justice to victims of criminal activities committed in the country. The court is part of the domestic judicial system, but its members include both international and Central African judges, prosecutors and administrators. The SCC/CPS is unique and unprecedented in the history of the CAR. Especially since 2017, the court has played an increasingly important role in prosecuting crimes committed during the 2013 rebellion as well as in recent years. Although it continues to face a number of challenges and still mainly depends on international funding, a series of steps have been taken to protect the court's credibility, independence and impartiality. Thus, the SCC/CPS serves as an example for other countries with pending investigations of international crimes in their national systems. On December 28, 2022, the SCC/CPS's mandate was renewed for five years by the CAR parliament. During the period under investigation, the court imposed guilty verdicts against several members of armed groups.

Corruption in the CAR is linked to a combination of factors. Though richly endowed with natural resources such as diamonds, gold and uranium, the country suffers from weak administration. Civil servants are poorly paid or receive their salaries irregularly, and the allocation of resources remains largely nontransparent. This is compounded by a weak judiciary when it comes to processing corruption cases.

Where the CAR's constitutional framework for fighting corruption has long been rather weak, several initiatives have been launched to improve action against mismanagement and abuse of office. The 2015 constitution provided for the creation of a High Authority for Good Governance (Haute Autorité chargée de la bonne gouvernance) to promote equity and transparency in resource allocation. President Touadéra established this body in 2016. It was intended to function as an institution independent of any political power, party, association or pressure group. However, in practice it is highly dependent on executive funding and approval and has never fulfilled its envisioned role as a public watchdog.

During the investigation period, in January 2023, President Touadéra emphasized his commitment to tackling corruption, mismanagement and abuses, particularly in light of the problem of dwindling public resources. In May, the country's parliament passed an anti-corruption law. Throughout 2024, the high authority has worked to make this law effective. At a meeting in Boali in May 2024, a draft implementing the decree was formulated with the goal of providing practical effect to the law's provisions and strengthening mechanisms to combat corruption. However, progress remains slow, and effective actions against corruption still face numerous obstacles. Many civil society actors also argue that efforts are not sufficiently targeting high-level corruption. As underlined by the high authority, the overall effectiveness of the new anti-corruption law would benefit from support by international partners, particularly regarding mutual legal assistance and extradition. Vigilance and transparency in applying the law remain crucial as key cornerstones in restoring public confidence in government institutions.

Prosecution of
office abuse

3

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The constitution adopted in 2015 and amended in 2023 addresses civil rights in articles 11 to 14. Article 11 states that all human beings are equal before the law and entitled to equal protection under the law, but political rights are granted only to Central Africans. While most countries reserve political rights for nationals, Article 12, which addresses equality before the law, still specifies that only nationals are entitled to equal protection under the law. Similarly, Article 13 prohibits any form of discrimination against nationals. Article 14 specifically prohibits discrimination against women.

De jure, civil rights are thus granted only to nationals. However, even for nationals, these rights are frequently violated. There are many complaints of discrimination, including on the grounds of gender or ethnicity.

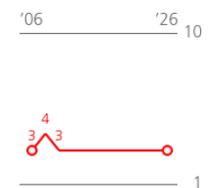
In a briefing from February 2024, the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported that NGOs raised issues concerning the situation of sexual and gender minorities, women's underrepresentation in political life, and discrimination against Muslim women in the CAR. The conditions experienced by sexual and gender minorities have remained slow to change. Assaults against gender minorities, such as transgender women and men, are frequently reported, but there is no law prohibiting such discrimination or violence. The government has not taken steps to address sexual and gender-based violence or to ensure that victims have access to justice. Complaints related to discrimination or violence based on sexual orientation rarely reach the courts. As a result, attacks against sexual and gender minorities remain unpunished. Assistance to women is usually provided by NGOs, with a lack of state legal, economic, psychosocial or health support. Regarding religious discrimination, Muslims are the most targeted group. Central African Muslims, especially women, are disproportionately affected by arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions.

4 | Stability of Democratic Institutions

The CAR's constitution establishes several democratic institutions, most of which are also in place. In addition, the state remains the largest employer in the country. For years, the public administration and related institutions have been exposed to privilege-seeking and corruption, which has resulted in weak accountability, transparency and public confidence. Touadéra has set ambitious goals to reform and strengthen the public sector's performance and effectiveness. Together with the country's international donors – mainly the European Union, the United Nations and the World Bank – the government has developed an ambitious development plan (PND 2024 – 2028). One objective of this plan is to reinforce good governance by strengthening the operational capacities of state institutions. However, it is unlikely that this plan will be implemented, as a prior plan with very similar goals (RCPCA 2016 – 2023) yielded few results.

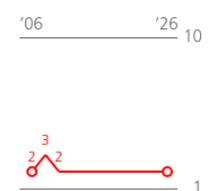
Civil rights

3



Performance of democratic institutions

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The judiciary is not fully functional, and the parliament does not serve to channel public interests or deliberate on them meaningfully. Instead, it reflects the self-interests of individuals who form ad hoc coalitions. Most members currently align with the presidential majority, providing no checks on executive power.

All relevant actors in the political system – government bodies, political parties and civic organizations – claim to be committed to the state’s democratic institutions and processes. Nevertheless, the political-military crises and ongoing instability that have continually affected the CAR have left a significant mark on the political system. Post-crisis efforts to revive and enhance national dialogue, aiming to build confidence in state institutions, have frequently faced challenges due to various factors, primarily the exclusion of certain actors from the process and the failure to implement its resolutions. Additionally, the lack of state presence in rural and especially remote areas, combined with decades of violence, has undermined trust and communication between the government and local communities.

In a context where the opposition often calls for boycotts and elections and referendums are frequently accompanied by local unrest, these difficult circumstances are likely to negatively affect voter participation. In the 2003 constitutional referendum, only 57.23% of the electorate cast their ballots, as the main opposition parties had called on voters not to participate.

5 | Political and Social Integration

Following years and decades of a one-party system after independence, a multiparty system was introduced under President Kolingba, who, in his speech on April 22, 1991, invited anyone interested to take part in a debate on the country’s political situation and agreed to release all prisoners of conscience. The law on political parties was passed in July 1991. Under this law, political parties are defined as associations contributing to the implementation of universal suffrage and the animation of political, economic, social and cultural life. A decree signed in 2005 further regulated, though rather insufficiently, the status of political parties in the country.

Consequently, the number of political parties was very high for a country with a population of only 5.4 million. According to the Ministry of Territorial Administration, in 2019 there were more than 90 political parties in the Central African Republic. Under President Touadéra, several initiatives have been undertaken to better regulate the party system in the country. As one of the requirements of the Khartoum Agreement of February 2019, the National Assembly passed a new law on political parties and the status of the opposition in February 2020.

To avoid the excessive formation of political parties as in the past, the law stipulates that parties need to obtain at least 5% of the votes in legislative or municipal elections to persist. In addition, parties are required to keep financial accounts. The opposition

Commitment to democratic institutions

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Party system

4

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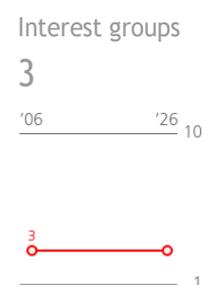


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welcomed the new law as a means to better define and regulate the rights and obligations of political parties. An additional decree was passed by the government in November 2020, setting out conditions for granting state subsidies to political parties. Among these conditions, political parties' accounts are subject to control by an authorized body. As an incentive to increase the involvement of women in politics, 15% of the subsidy is allocated to political parties whose female members are elected to parliament and 10% to parties that have women in municipal councils.

Since the last parliamentary elections in May 2021, and during the period under investigation, six main political parties have been represented in the Central African Republic parliament, the National Assembly (Assemblée Nationale). These include the Mouvement Cœurs unis (MCU), founded in November 2018 by President Touadéra and considered center-left (44 seats); Convergence nationale (Kwa Na Kwa), founded in 2009 by former President François Bozizé and described as social democratic and labor-influenced (10 seats); the Mouvement national des indépendants (Mouni), led by businessman and current Minister for the Environment Thierry Kamach (9 seats); the Union pour le renouveau centrafricain (URCA), a social-liberal party (8 seats); as well as two center-left to left-wing parties, the Mouvement pour la libération du peuple centrafricain (MLPC), founded clandestinely in 1979 (6 seats), and Rassemblement démocratique centrafricain (RDC) (5 seats). However, their positioning on a Western left-right political axis is questionable. The parties are instead organized regionally and around prominent leaders, including Bozizé (Kwa Na Kwa), Désiré Kolingba (RDC), Martin Ziguélé (MLPC) and Anicet-Georges Dologuélé (URCA). With shallow and largely ethnoregional roots, political parties are not systematically aligned by ideology, and polarization in this sense is low.

Most societal groups in the CAR lack clear representation in formal interest groups. As a result, important social interests, such as those of the rural population, along with youth and women, are underrepresented in public debate. However, youth, women and agricultural groups often have influence at the local level. In contrast, groups that are better organized in the capital, such as civil servants who have established a relatively strong trade union movement, are more vocal and influential. They played a significant role in the democratic transition in 1993 and were able to press for payment when salary arrears for civil servants occurred in 2015 and 2016. Churches, especially the Catholic Church, also constitute an influential group. Some cases indicate that the creation and activities of interest groups tend to follow money and power. Whenever international funding has focused on a particular area such as human rights, social cohesion or rural revival, the number of associations and NGOs active on the ground has also increased.



No public opinion survey data are available for the country.

Overall, approval of democratic norms and procedures may seem questionable for a population largely traumatized by years of constant unrest since the last successful coup in 2013. Many people have complained that democracy was never truly given a chance in the CAR. In the absence of concrete survey data, available information relates to the public’s participation in democratic processes.

At the local consultations held prior to the Bangui Forum in 2015, citizens expressed support for democratic ideals. Although election participation rates have often been affected by opposition calls for boycotts and frequent pre-election unrest, data such as voter registration figures nevertheless indicate broad interest in democratic processes. In the last presidential election in December 2020, a surprisingly high share of the population registered to vote. Effective voter turnout, however, was rather low. The main reasons include a sudden increase in violence following the CPC rebellion, the prevalence of voter intimidation and the closure of many polling stations. Nevertheless, the registration numbers clearly show that the population was willing to participate in voting. For the 2023 referendum, the participation rate was only about 57%, which can be explained by the opposition’s call to boycott the vote.

The Central African Republic and its population have been deeply affected by a long series of conflicts and crises. In particular, the rebellion and subsequent military-political crisis in 2013, which intensified divisions between Muslims and Christians, led to the fragmentation of the country and a deterioration of social ties among different communities. These repeated crises have also led to internal displacement, violence against the population and human rights abuses, and the decline of an already weak infrastructure. This has further undermined the resilience of the extremely poor population and pushed such communities into a state of acute fragility and vulnerability. Social cohesion and trust are especially low in rural areas, which face significant disparities in poverty and access to basic services, as well as among populations with limited opportunities.

Moreover, solidarity has been challenged by the persistent presence of armed groups. Rural communities are mainly composed of agropastoral farmers who base their peaceful coexistence and economy on specific sociocultural lifestyles, values and habits. The presence and activities of rebels have profoundly affected these systems, especially as conflicts have introduced religious and ethnic issues that had not previously played a significant role in social interactions. As a result, in many areas tensions between farmers and herders have developed quickly and turned into violent conflicts within communities. For example, predatory armed groups in agropastoral areas have significantly undermined the intercommunity cohesion that allowed for the amicable management of transhumance-related conflicts based on traditional governance models.

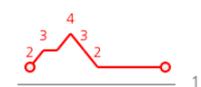
Approval of democracy

n/a



Social capital

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II. Economic Transformation

6 | Level of Socioeconomic Development

By international comparison, all relevant indicators of socioeconomic development available for the CAR are at very low levels. The country persistently ranks among the world's 10 lowest performers across a set of relevant indicators. According to the 2024 release of the Human Development Index (HDI 2022), the CAR was ranked 191st out of 193 countries, unchanged from HDI 2021 and similar to previous years. The 2024 report indicated an index score of 0.387 in 2022, unchanged from its 2021 value and representing a slight decline from its peak of 0.391 in 2019, before the pandemic impacted the country's economy and a security crisis in the first half of 2021 interrupted the CAR's main road for international trade.

The current HDI score is only slightly higher than the levels reached in 2012 (HDI 0.372), prior to the Séléka rebellion and the ensuing violence of 2013 (HDI 0.352). Because the latest available HDI figures predate the BTI review period, slight improvements in the index score can be expected during 2023 and 2024, given the relative stability that has been established in the country.

However, poverty remains pervasive, widespread and structural in the CAR. Despite some recovery from the 2013 crisis, GDP remains below the level reached in 2012 prior to the breakdown of political order that left the economy in ruins.

According to World Bank calculations, the number of people living below the international poverty line (\$2.15 per day in PPP, constant 2017 international dollars) increased from 2.76 million (61.9% of the population) in 2008 to 3.58 million (65.7% of the population) in 2021, with no signs of improvement in recent years (2022: 65.3%, 2023: 65.8% and 2024e: 66.1%). Survey data for the UNDP Multidimensional Poverty Index 2024 show that more than 55% of the population lives in severe multidimensional poverty, ranking the country among the most poverty-affected nations.

In general, urban residents, especially those in Bangui, have historically fared better than people in rural areas. Although there is limited recent empirical data on economic inequality in areas such as property ownership, it is evident from the latest 2021 World Bank estimate that inequality has significantly declined since the last review in 2008. While 2008 estimates set the CAR's Gini coefficient for income at a very high 56.24, placing it among the most unequal countries in the world, the latest 2021 World Bank estimate sets the CAR's Gini coefficient for income at a more moderate 43.05. However, data quality is limited, with no inequality-adjusted HDI assessed or published for CAR. The same lack of data applies to scores for the Gender Development Index and Gender Inequality Index, which are not available for CAR.

Question
Score

Socioeconomic
barriers

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Economic indicators		2021	2022	2023	2024
GDP	\$ M	2516.5	2382.6	2555.5	2751.5
GDP growth	%	1.0	0.5	0.7	1.5
Inflation (CPI)	%	4.3	5.6	3.0	1.5
Unemployment	%	6.4	6.0	5.9	5.9
Foreign direct investment	% of GDP	0.2	1.0	1.5	1.5
Export growth	%	-12.0	-6.5	18.4	24.7
Import growth	%	-9.1	7.0	-11.1	29.8
Current account balance	\$ M	-	-	-	-
Public debt	% of GDP	46.9	49.9	55.6	60.7
External debt	\$ M	1119.8	1015.0	1020.9	-
Total debt service	\$ M	17.7	20.1	38.1	-
Net lending/borrowing	% of GDP	-4.0	-	-	-
Tax revenue	% of GDP	8.2	-	-	-
Government consumption	% of GDP	9.1	8.3	8.3	9.7
Public education spending	% of GDP	1.9	2.1	1.8	-
Public health spending	% of GDP	1.3	1.6	-	-
R&D expenditure	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Military expenditure	% of GDP	2.2	1.7	2.3	-

Sources (as of December 2025): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Military Expenditure Database.

7 | Organization of the Market and Competition

Market competition in the Central African Republic operates under a very weak institutional framework. According to the Heritage Foundation, institutions remain fragile because of pervasive corruption and a deficient judicial system, both of which erode the effectiveness of government. In the foundation's Index of Economic Freedom, the country's economic freedom status is rated as "repressed" (2023).

The security environment remains fragile in the CAR but further stabilized during 2023 and 2024. The 2021 crisis temporarily disrupted the vital Douala-Bangui corridor that serves as a conduit for 80% of external trade, revealing the dependency of the country's economy on fragile infrastructure. The temporary closure of the RN3 highway in early 2021 resulted in inflation, followed by another price shock due to rising food and fuel prices on the world market in 2022.

Despite the state's further stabilization of control over its territory, which has removed the main obstacle to increased market participation beyond the capital region, poor infrastructure and slow improvements in the national road network continue to hinder the recovery of the country's fragile economy. Moreover, market access in rural areas is severely restrained by fuel shortages and seasonally impassable roads. Delays in projected investments in the country's waterways – a necessary transport corridor for fuel – have prolonged the need for government-subsidized fuel prices.

Except for urban centers and certain mining areas, the CAR's economy remains largely informal. According to recent estimates, 90% of economic activity takes place in the informal sector, meaning this accounts for 45% of total GDP. According to the FAO, the subsistence economy provided a livelihood for nearly 75% of the population in 2019. State-owned enterprises play a central role in the CAR's economy, providing essential goods and services such as electricity and water. However, the important mining sector is largely run by private enterprises.

Growing urban centers, especially Bangui, are seeing increased market-based competition, particularly in sectors serving the international community, such as real estate services, restaurants and other service industries.

Public procurements for infrastructure development projects, which are a key activity for private enterprises in CAR, are almost never allocated through a competitive process, but rather through personal connections.

According to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), some positive developments occurred in the mining sector in August 2024. A new mining code was submitted to the National Assembly, requiring holders of mining titles to comply with the principles and requirements of the EITI Standard, the Kimberley Process and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (Article 20). The new mining code also requires the Ministry of Mines to identify beneficial owners.

Market
organization

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The CAR is a member of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) and has adopted the community's regional competition regime. However, there is no formal national authority or regulation for merger control in the CAR. Enforcing competition regulations in the country is challenging, and the regulation of monopolies and oligopolies is sporadic. This is particularly evident in certain sectors of the service industry, such as telecommunications and banking. The government still lacks the will and resources to prioritize addressing monopolistic distortions in the market, as there is limited investor interest and some essential goods are not provided sufficiently.

The implementation of planned infrastructure projects – especially an all-season road network within the country and improved roads and waterways connecting the CAR internationally – was delayed and hindered by insufficient resources.

It should be noted that the CAR is not a member of the International Competition Network.

The Central African Republic, a landlocked country with limited internal transportation infrastructure, has consistently faced challenges stemming from its isolated geographic position and heavy reliance on a single international transport corridor and an inadequate road network. These infrastructure bottlenecks contribute to relatively high foreign trade costs. According to the World Trade Organization, the average applied most favored nation level was 18.1% in 2023.

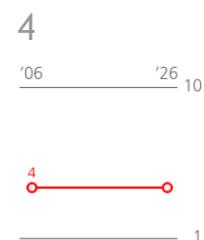
Exports have recovered from the pandemic slump and the interruptions of 2021. Export volumes grew by 2.6% in 2022 and 9% in 2023. In 2024, export growth continued, albeit at a slower pace. However, exports remain almost entirely confined to the timber and precious stones sectors. Overall, the value of exports has not yet reached the approximately \$200 million recorded in 2017. The significant rise in global food and energy prices in 2021 and 2022 resulted in a severe deterioration in the CAR's terms of trade and foreign trade balance, a situation only partially reversed during the reporting period of 2023 and 2024.

The CAR's membership in CEMAC includes a set of common trade rules, which could raise trade standards if implemented more effectively.

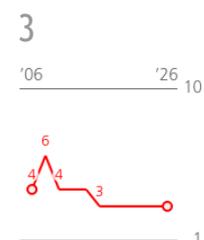
Alongside its selective integration into the global market, the CAR has also been deeply connected to the illicit global trade in small arms, poached animals and animal products such as ivory, scales and horns, despite various embargoes. Porous borders provide opportunities for illegal trade and stolen goods, particularly diamonds.

Further improvements in territorial control by the government have reduced the illegal trafficking of gemstones by armed groups and herders, many of whom come from Chad or Sudan. However, the government's increased control of the national territory since 2021, along with the expansion of zones compliant with the Kimberley Process, has significantly reduced the share of illegally traded diamonds from the

Competition policy



Liberalization of foreign trade



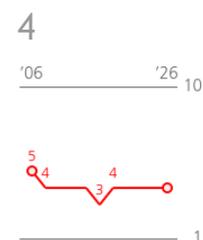
CAR. This culminated in the decision on November 15, 2024, to end all Kimberley Process-related restrictions that were still in place, especially in the eastern part of the CAR.

Reliable, up-to-date information on the banking sector in the CAR is scarce in the public domain. According to World Bank data, the banking sector's capital-to-assets ratio remained relatively stable at around 14% in 2022, similar to 2020 and 2021. The percentage of non-performing loans has shown a positive trend, declining from more than 30% in 2015 to 16.1% in 2019 and stabilizing at 13.9% in 2021 and 14.5% in 2022.

The CAR's membership in CEMAC and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) anchors the country to international banking standards despite its small economy. However, the CAR has the smallest financial sector in the entire CEMAC region and the weakest ratio of population to bank counters in Central Africa. Banks are mainly concentrated in Bangui, with some presence in Berbérati and Bouar. Currently, there are four commercial banks (Ecobank, CBCA, BSIC and BPMC) and at least two active microfinance institutes. The Banque des Etats de l'Afrique Centrale (BEAC) serves as the central bank for the six countries in the CEMAC community. The common currency and monetary policy of the BEAC remain linked to the euro and the Banque de France, but there are growing reservations across the region – including in the CAR – about this. The banking sector is theoretically well regulated under the supervision of the Commission Bancaire de l'Afrique Centrale (COBAC), which is associated with the BEAC. However, the market is poorly differentiated and offers limited opportunities for domestic investors.

In early 2022, the Touadéra government introduced a bill that was unanimously adopted in parliament, making Bitcoin legal tender in the CAR. This move was surprising, given the country's relatively low internet access rate – just above 11% – and ongoing questions about the provision's compatibility with CEMAC requirements. President Touadéra has since developed ambitious plans to establish a national blockchain-based currency called Sango, although public listing of the coin has been postponed several times. Nonetheless, the government continues to pursue its goal of creating favorable conditions for blockchain-related financial services such as the tokenization of natural resources.

Banking system



8 | Monetary and fiscal stability

The regional central bank, Banque des États de l’Afrique Centrale (BEAC), which focuses on controlling inflation and maintaining the peg of the CFA franc to the euro (XAF 655 = €1, approximately), manages monetary policy in the Central African Republic. The BEAC’s monetary policy largely follows the stance of the European Central Bank and is influenced by the availability of foreign exchange reserves. In line with the unprecedented stimulus packages of major central banks, the BEAC lowered its main policy interest rate to 3.25%. However, due to resulting inflationary pressures in 2021 and 2022, the BEAC increased the main policy rate to 5% in early 2023, a level not seen in the past decade. This interest rate has since remained unchanged, although inflation eased significantly during 2023 and 2024.

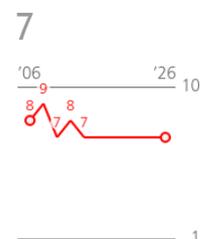
The real effective exchange rate declined to 117.4 in 2022 after years of a continued upward trend, reaching a peak of 130.5 in 2021. The latest real effective exchange rate index was 128.6 in 2023. The disparity with other CEMAC countries remains significant. In 2021, inflationary pressure (4.3% CPI inflation rate) was aggravated by security-related interruptions in CAR’s vital transport corridor with Cameroon, followed by imported inflation due to rising food and fuel prices in the global market in 2022 (inflation rate of 5.6%). In 2023, the CPI inflation rate came down to 3% in line with the convergence rate of 3% set by CEMAC. For 2024 estimates suggest further deceleration of CPI price pressures in the range of 1.5% according to the latest World Bank data.

In recent years, criticism of monetary stabilization policies within the CFA franc zone has increased regarding the country’s economic development needs and prospects. Several deviations from the status quo have emerged, including the introduction of Bitcoin as an alternative legal tender in the Central African Republic in 2021.

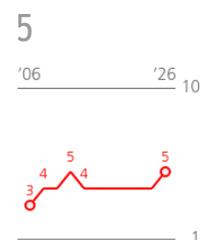
The budgetary situation in 2023 improved after the IMF resumed disbursements via an Extended Credit Facility (ECF) by the end of 2022. Moreover, prudent government spending and delayed infrastructure investments helped stabilize the budgetary situation. Government consumption was reduced to 8.3% of GDP in 2023, compared to an already moderate 9.1% of GDP in 2021. The government continued efforts to expand the notoriously weak tax base and move away from fuel subsidies, which were considered necessary given almost prohibitively high transport costs and external price shocks.

The progress made thus far has yet to unlock financing from other donors and multilateral partners. In recent years, international donor grants have accounted for about 8% of GDP or nearly 50% of total government revenue. The public debt burden is projected to remain stable, with the external share decreasing and accounting for about 55% of the total, mainly held by multilateral and bilateral creditors. The resumption of planned budget support disbursements and the stabilization of import

Monetary stability



Fiscal stability



prices in 2023 and 2024 have reduced a still-significant current account deficit, estimated at 8.9% in 2023. Significant improvements will occur only when infrastructure upgrades – particularly in waterways – finally allow for more exports and lower import prices.

Investment in public goods, such as health, education, agricultural assistance and infrastructure, depends almost entirely on external donors, while the government allocates most of its own resources to security.

The government has taken steps to repay arrears to small- and medium-sized enterprises and reduce domestic arrears to pension funds. However, without donor contributions, the fiscal deficit of the state budget remains at unsustainable levels. The deficit, which reached 6.0% of GDP in 2021 and 5.7% in 2022, was reduced to 3.5% in 2023 and an estimated 2.8% in 2024 due to forced consolidation – especially targeting domestically financed capital spending – as well as fiscal reforms and increased grant financing.

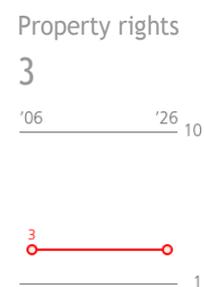
The overall public debt reached 58.3% of GDP in 2024, and is projected to stabilize around this level. Domestically held debt accounted for 25.9% of GDP that year, or 45% of all public debt.

9 | Private Property

As in previous review periods, property rights are not currently implemented or enforced consistently.

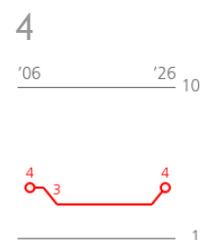
Private property is legally guaranteed, but because of weak state institutions and rule of law, property rights are not reliably protected. In rural areas, the government owns all land, although customary usage rights are common. The events in 2013/14 severely undermined fundamental property rights, as the government was unable to protect its citizens or their assets during and after the conflict. This resulted in the displacement of millions of people. Many returning individuals have found their properties occupied by others and have faced challenges in reclaiming their land. This has particularly been a problem for Muslim owners. International non-governmental organizations such as the Norwegian Refugee Council have implemented programs to assist returnees in advocating for their property rights.

During the period under review, the CAR government took further steps toward the tokenization of the economy, including the tokenization of property rights and land ownership based on a national digital blockchain project, the Sango coin.



Private enterprise activities have accelerated slightly during the period under review. However, the country’s economy remains structured around microbusinesses that operate between the formal and informal sectors. This is true not only in agriculture, but also in artisanal industries and the mining sector. Diamond extraction resumed in 2016 after the partial lifting of the 2013 export ban. In 2023, however, diamond exports reached just \$12.3 million, or about 105,000 carats, which is still 67% below the level prior to the crisis. With the decision on November 15, 2024, to lift all remaining Kimberley Process-related restrictions, the outlook for diamond mining has significantly improved.

Private enterprise



Despite government efforts to improve infrastructure and enhance physical security in rural areas, private investment and business opportunities have yet to materialize.

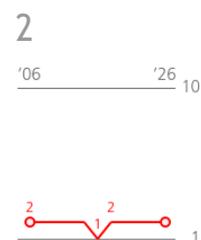
Agricultural production, including timber, bamboo, cotton and coffee – which are the Central African Republic’s main agricultural exports – accounts for more than 40% of GDP. Recent government investments in the agricultural sector helped mitigate the adverse weather conditions of 2024. Improved security has also contributed to stabilizing a fragile economy under turbulent macro conditions and multiple crises.

While international donors were particularly hesitant to provide funding in 2021 and 2022 due to growing geopolitical spillovers – with Western donor countries redirecting resources to support Ukraine in its conflict with Russia and demanding that the CAR government cease its collaboration with Russia – the IMF has resumed its assistance. Chinese companies have been the main investors, primarily offering construction services, while Russia has consolidated its security-related agreements with the CAR government, drawing mainly Western criticism due to alleged links and dealings in the mining sector.

10 | Welfare Regime

Given the state’s limited tax base (less than 9% of GDP), there are minimal financial resources available to build and develop any social safety nets. Improvements in territorial control and progress in containing armed groups since 2021 have improved conditions for NGOs’ work and revitalized community self-help as a traditional form of social support in rural areas. However, formal and informal self-help mechanisms were destroyed during the 2013 crisis and remain weak in the CAR due to the lack of social capital within and between social groups. Churches and religious organizations currently serve as the strongest social safety net in rural regions, providing care for the elderly, education and health care, and even promoting entrepreneurial activities.

Social safety nets



Estimates suggest that in 2024, 44% of the country’s population, about 2.5 million people, are living under conditions of acute food insecurity and 1.2 million need nutrition assistance. The CAR government and OCHA officially launched a \$461.3 million Humanitarian Response Plan for 2022. Rising global food and energy prices exacerbate the hardships of vulnerable groups and displaced persons.

Average life expectancy at birth has steadily increased over the past two decades, reaching 54.5 years in 2022, up from 53.35 years in 2021 (and from 50.7 years in 2015 and 44.6 years in 2003). The Touadéra government has made efforts to reduce the country's high maternal mortality rate as well as neonatal and child mortality rates. While international donors supported CAR's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in which health expenditure was increased to 1.2% and 1.3% of GDP in 2020 and 2021, donor interest quickly faded thereafter. The death toll from malaria quadrupled between 2014 and 2017, and malaria continues to account for 40% of reported illnesses and 10% of all registered deaths. The surge in international funding for CAR after the 2013 crisis led to a proliferation of NGOs on the ground, but there has been no sustained improvement in social safety nets.

The constitution of the CAR affirms a commitment to preventing all forms of discrimination against women, indigenous peoples and tribal groups. It guarantees equality based on factors such as race, ethnic origin, region, sex, religion, political affiliation and social position. However, as with many legal provisions in the CAR, implementation remains constrained by weak state institutions and resources.

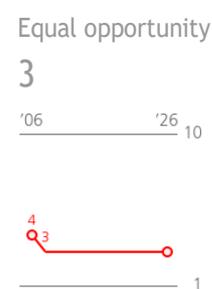
In 2023, women made up 45.4% of the labor force. Data on the gender pay gap are not available. However, because women's literacy rates are lower than men's among the working-age population, women face significant disadvantages in the labor market and the overall economy.

The UNDP Gender Inequality Index stopped publishing a score for the CAR. The most recent available index data ranked CAR 166th out of 170 indexed countries, with a score of 0.672 in 2021. This marked a slight improvement from 0.701 in 2016, which coincided with the first elections after the 2013 crisis that brought the Touadéra government into office.

While women accounted for 20% of the Conseil National de Transition (CNT), and a woman served as interim president from 2014 to 2016, the representation of women in the National Assembly elected in 2016 – installed in May 2016 – dropped to a share of just 8.5%. The 2021 elections slightly increased the share of women in the National Assembly to 13%.

Although women have held key government positions since 2016, including the posts of minister of defense and minister of foreign affairs, only seven out of 39 government ministers were women prior to the 2021 elections. As of 2024, the government cabinet comprised 34 ministers, six of them women.

Discrimination against Muslims remains prevalent, although it may be subtle and not immediately apparent. While there are no legal barriers to Muslims' advancement, their access to various public service positions has been hindered by limited access to basic education, particularly in the northeastern regions. The economic success of Muslim traders has contributed to increased discrimination, which also extends to nonlocal Muslims such as Chadians, who are often suspected of exploiting the country's resources.



11 | Economic Performance

The civil war in 2013 had a devastating impact on the CAR's economy. GDP contracted by an unprecedented 37% in 2013, to \$1.6 billion. The country's recovery has been hampered by recurrent security crises, the COVID-19 pandemic, external price shocks in the food and energy markets in 2022, and persistent energy shortages and adverse weather effects thereafter. By 2023, GDP (in current \$) had increased to \$2.56 billion, compared to \$2.38 billion in 2022. Real GDP at market prices grew by 0.7% in 2023 and an estimated 0.9% in 2024, a rate well below that seen in other low-income countries in the region. According to the World Bank's Global Economic Prospects report January 2025, the CAR remains among a group of low-income countries with persistently negative per capita growth, when measured in current dollars. This was -2.0% in 2023, and was persistently negative for the three years previously, according to the World Bank.

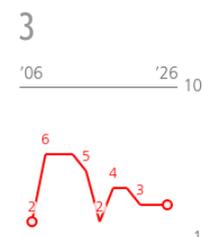
While higher growth rates seem possible, performance was dampened by a 13% drop in gold production in 2023 and persistent fuel shortages linked to delays and uncertainty around the planned investment in the country's waterways (river campaign). Energy shortages continued to hamper growth in 2024, a year that also saw severe flooding that affected agricultural output. The forecast for 2025 and 2026 promises only minor improvements, with predicted real growth rates of 1.1% and 2.0% respectively.

The inflation rate was 3% in 2023, and is estimated to decline to 1.5% in 2024.

Due to its landlocked geography and delays in infrastructure improvements, high energy prices and severe energy shortages have become the single most important bottleneck to expanding economic activity. Like other low-income countries, the CAR's economy faces risks from low levels of economic diversification and a heavy reliance on foreign aid, which accounts for over 40% of the national budget. The country's geographical location, with only one access road, makes it highly vulnerable to external shocks, as demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Although there have been some improvements, these risks still outweigh the incentives that might attract more significant foreign direct investment. FDI slightly increased to 1.5% of GDP in 2023 (compared to 1.2% in 2021 and 0.2% in 2015). The overall public debt reached 57.6% of GDP in 2023 and is projected to stabilize at 58.3% in 2024, well above pre-pandemic levels.

Although the country possesses significant natural resources, CAR's export statistics indicate the structural and infrastructural challenges in utilizing them to meet development needs. The three most important exports – gold, timber and raw diamonds – cannot offset the cost of imports, mainly fuel and vehicles, electronics, and manufactured goods. The current account deficit, which reached 12.2% in 2022, remains high at 8.5% of GDP in 2023.

Output strength



Unemployment statistics show steady rates of 6.3% in 2023, down from 6.7% in 2021. These figures must be interpreted with caution, given the minor role of the formal labor market in an economy that remains largely informal and still relies on subsistence activities.

12 | Sustainability

The primary challenges to environmental sustainability in the CAR stem from poverty-related forms of human activity and resource usage. In particular, the widespread use of firewood and charcoal for cooking and small-scale manufacturing processes takes place in spite of environmental and health regulations, and there is no effective enforcement. Especially in Bangui and other larger settlements, the resulting air pollution can reach harmful levels even outdoors.

Mining activities and agricultural production, as well as poor land and wastewater management, are the primary sources of pollution for the country's water bodies.

In this regard, the humanitarian crisis resulting from the 2013 civil war remains an issue since refugees and internally displaced people, in particular, cannot afford to consider environmental sustainability and protection.

The 1990 forestry law is progressive in its environmental and social protections – for example, setting quantitative limits on logging with the aim of promoting natural regeneration, and involving indigenous populations in forest-management efforts. But enforcement remains extremely weak. Companies often self-regulate, and reports about corruption persist. In 2023, more than 85% of the value of the country's exported goods came from extractive industries and timber logging, activities that are notoriously prone to circumventing environmental restrictions.

In 2022, the CAR adopted a revised version of the Nationally Determined Contribution as part of its national U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) climate action plan.

In 2023, the country's total greenhouse gas emissions (mtCO_{2e}) of 56.2 ranked the CAR among the globe's lowest emitters on a per capita basis. Nevertheless, the country faces significant vulnerabilities to climate change, with few resources available to invest in adaptation and mitigation strategies. This is especially true in the eastern regions bordering Sudan and South Sudan, where food insecurity is already at crisis levels, according to recent FAO assessments.

Environmental
policy

3

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According to the latest UNESCO report based on 2022 data, the adult literacy rate was 37.5%. Although there has been a slight improvement, CAR performs poorly on the U.N. Education Index, with a score of 0.336 in 2022, unchanged from previous years.

Despite significant support for education from donor partners over the last 20 years (World Bank, IMF, European Commission, African Development Bank and China), average education levels remain low. The country’s education system is not competitive, and its quality eroded during the 2013 crisis and has not fully recovered since. In 2022, the CAR spent only 2.17% of its GDP on education (2020: 1.8%). No other quantitative data on research and development in the CAR is published, but qualitative evidence suggests that only Bangui University has minimal capacity for social and scientific research. Even there, quality varies significantly depending on the level of funding and the availability of the few national experts now heavily solicited by the humanitarian community and the United Nations.

Education policy / R&D

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Governance

I. Level of Difficulty

There is a wide variety of structural constraints in the CAR that severely limit governance capacity. The landlocked country is surrounded by unstable neighbors that have experienced crises and conflicts themselves. These include Chad, Sudan's Darfur province, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Cameroon has struggled for years with the presence and expansion of Boko Haram in its northern provinces. Chad, itself once torn by conflict, has intervened in various ways in the CAR. Chad and Sudan are highly problematic neighbors with their own interests. Under former President Idriss Déby, Chad exerted significant influence on CAR's domestic politics, and fueled its neighbor's instability by providing small arms, weapons and soldiers. Relations remain tense with the current president, Mahamat Idriss Déby, who feels threatened by the presence and activities of Wagner Group troops in the northwest of the CAR near the border.

The CAR has also experienced problems with Chad and Sudan related to their cattle and livestock-based economies. While the cattle and livestock trades are particularly important for Chad and Sudan's economies, they lack sufficient grazing capacity and depend on the grasslands of the CAR to sustain their herds. This dependence regularly results in conflicts with local farmers and communities.

Structural constraints also include extensive surface water networks, which make communication and mobility very difficult in many rural areas. Neither the telecommunications nor the transport infrastructures have successfully provided access to the countryside. Only 1,300 kilometers of roads are paved, although the CAR is roughly the size of France. Twenty thousand kilometers of unpaved roads are subject to annual closure during the rainy seasons, which usually last between four and six months each year.

The National Development Plan (PND 2024–2028), developed in collaboration with key international partners and donors including the European Union, various U.N. organizations and programs and the World Bank, as well as civil society, was launched in September 2024. The plan addresses the country's infrastructural deficiencies and aims to bring about improvements, particularly in transportation, urban development, energy and communication technologies.

Structural
constraints

10



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The role and function of civil society in the Central African Republic has undergone considerable evolution since the country's independence. Civil society groups emerged in the 1960s with an initial focus on women's rights, family issues and religion. This changed in the 1990s, when attempted coups d'état and the 2003 rebellion considerably weakened the state. Against this backdrop, civil society groups increasingly addressed topics such as human rights violations, poverty and unemployment.

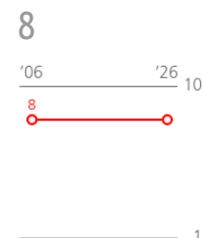
Civil society is mainly composed of community groups, labor unions, charitable organizations, and groups affiliated with churches and religious communities, as well as other organizations. These groups have often intervened in areas where the state's provision of basic services is insufficient, attempting to partially or even fully replace state institutions.

Civil society organizations and actors also play a role in national reconciliation. When the Bangui Agreements were prepared in 2015 by the government to find a settlement with major rebel groups, civil society was directly invited to participate as mediators. In drafting the National Development Plan (PND 2024 – 2028), the government included civil society organizations alongside international donors.

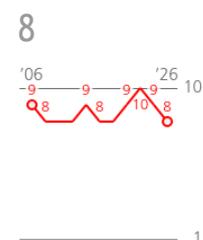
The government sees the primary role of civil society as lying in its ability to inform and engage individuals and communities, and to bridge the gap between the central government and the population. A major challenge facing civil society is financing. Many organizations rely on international funding, which in turn makes them vulnerable to foreign interests. To survive, many groups must adapt their priorities and put their original goals and objectives on the back burner, focusing instead on areas receiving funding from the international community.

Since gaining independence in 1960, the Central African Republic has experienced a series of crises and conflicts, with considerable violence and instability. Attempted and successful coups d'état have occurred repeatedly, and the presence of rebels has become a widespread phenomenon in many parts of the country. Since his re-election in December 2020 and during the review period, President Touadéra has managed to recapture territories previously under rebel control, mainly with help from Wagner Group mercenaries. The level of violence has remained very high, and both rebel movements and the national forces, backed by international allies, have been accused by several institutions, including the United Nations, of committing serious human rights abuses against the population. After some initial battlefield successes, followed by an overall decrease in fighting intensity – a conclusion supported by data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) – the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) reports the situation to be consistently “turbulent” as of December 2024, turbulent being the third-most-severe category. However, conflict again slightly increased in intensity in 2024. It is hard to predict whether these trends are the first signs of a resurgence of civil war.

Civil society traditions



Conflict intensity



II. Governance Performance

14 | Steering Capability

With regard to the volatile security situation and high level of political instability, CAR policymakers in the past have prioritized short-term personal gains over long-term reforms and strategic priorities. However, under President Touadéra, and especially in recent years, a number of changes can be observed. Touadéra set several priorities when first elected in 2016 and reaffirmed them in 2022 at the beginning of his second mandate. The National Recovery and Peace Plan (PNRCP), initially established for five years (2017 – 2021) and jointly financed by the European Union, the United Nations and the World Bank, was the first plan to define major strategic goals at the economic, societal and security levels. However, there was little to show after its completion. This plan was replaced in September 2024 by the National Development Plan (PND 2024 – 2028), without considering how better results might be achieved this time. The PND was developed in cooperation with international partners and donors such as the European Union, various U.N. organizations and programs, the World Bank and civil society. The plan sets out the government's main aims and priorities until 2028, organized around four main pillars: security and good governance, the development of human capital and access to basic services, the development of infrastructures, economic development, and environmental sustainability. The potential of this development plan lies in its role as an instrument to channel and synchronize international aid and assistance, thereby ensuring its more efficient use in realizing strategic goals and priorities.

The Touadéra administration fails to implement many of its policies. Reasons listed by the Heritage Foundation include pervasive corruption and a deficient judicial system, both of which have undermined the effectiveness of the government, including its implementation of the National Recovery and Peace Plan and its cooperation with the IMF. While IMF officials commended some progress with reforms in their latest Article IV consultations in January 2025, they also encouraged further reform, especially with regard to managing the financial sector and increasing tax documentation and revenue.

The CAR's state revenue depends heavily on foreign budgetary aid provided mainly by the EU and France, the World Bank and the IMF. As a result, the government's ability to implement and achieve its strategic priorities relies significantly on the availability of these funds. In response to the CAR's closer ties to Russia and a rise in anti-French sentiment, France and other traditional Western partners and donors partly froze and delayed their budget support in 2021 and 2022. France and the EU accused Bangui of paying Wagner troops with their money and froze their contributions in 2021. The World Bank interrupted its budget support, calling for more transparency in government finances.

Question
Score

Prioritization

4

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Implementation

4

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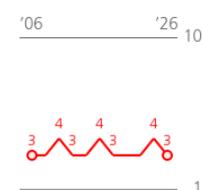
The year 2024 brought some relief for the CAR, as most international partners resumed their support. Against the backdrop of the diplomatic crisis with the Sahel region, France reestablished contacts with Bangui to remain engaged on the continent. In March 2024, Paris and Bangui signed a road map to set up a framework for a constructive partnership that respects state sovereignty. In November 2024, a €10 million aid agreement was signed by France and the CAR to support governance, education and the organization of local elections in 2025.

The CAR's history and recurring crises, rebellions and conflicts indicate a long-standing lack of policy learning, innovation and flexibility among previous governments. Since independence, the country has moved from one conflict to another. Government operations have frequently been disrupted by attempted or successful coups or violent conflicts, which have also destroyed administrative infrastructure. Nearly every conflict-resolution process has led to a government reshuffle and administrative changes, hampering the development of bureaucratic continuity and consistency. Although the specifics of each crisis period differ, the overarching patterns remain the same, including the weakness, inability or unwillingness of governments to uphold democratic processes and engage with the opposition; inadequately implemented reforms, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs and reconciliation measures; and an absence of focus in the area of economic development. Monitoring and evaluation of past experiences are extremely difficult in CAR, as the statistics needed to inform policy decisions are either unavailable or unreliable.

Since President Touadéra took office, his reluctance to actively engage in dialogue with rebel movements – such as with CPC representatives – has echoed past experiences. On the other hand, a substantial departure from previous patterns is the president's determination to diversify the country's allies. When relations with France became strained, China, Russia and Rwanda have emerged as new partners, with increased bilateral political, military, trade and economic cooperation from these sources. Some developments, such as the increase in presidential power and the removal of term limits after the referendum, may indicate parallels with Rwanda and the similar referendum that took place there in 2015. While Rwanda's influence in CAR is growing through the deployment of troops, it is also conceivable that Rwanda – and especially its rapid economic growth – is today serving as an example for Bangui, and is influencing the government's policy learning.

Policy learning

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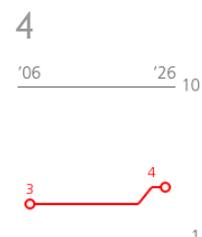
15 | Resource Efficiency

The CAR has struggled since independence to use available resources efficiently. This is due not only to the state’s fragmented territorial control, but also to the ineffectiveness of the public administration and taxation system. Employment in public services is highly lucrative, because international partners such as France, the European Union, the World Bank and the IMF have repeatedly provided direct budget support for public sector wages despite poor management performance. This has resulted in several issues, including clientelism, delayed retirement and duplication and overlap among available jobs. Consequently, the administration is characterized by inefficient use of human resources, as organizations are repeatedly reshuffled and decentralized across the country. The quality of human resources has steadily declined as a long-term effect of the violence in the country. In terms of taxation, the country remains among those in sub-Saharan Africa with the lowest domestic tax revenues. As a result, the CAR has been heavily dependent on external financing to fund its basic state administrative functions. However, aid inflows are volatile and leave the country vulnerable to the international community’s goodwill. This became particularly evident in 2021 and 2022 when France and the World Bank interrupted their support due to the close ties the country had established to Russia, and requested more transparency regarding expenditures.

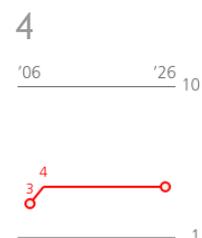
Overall, President Touadéra appears determined to improve the national administration’s efficiency – more so than any previous government. In 2022, he reached an agreement with the IMF on a program to enhance domestic revenue mobilization, including through fuel market reforms; improve public financial management; overhaul public debt management; and adopt governance reforms. This also involves reducing customs and VAT exemptions, collecting tax arrears, and centralizing revenue in the Treasury Single Account. One of Touadéra’s main priorities in this regard is the digitalization of services. One goal in this regard is to establish a foundation for digital governance, which should, for example, facilitate the payment of salaries to public employees in remote areas of the country. In addition, reforms have been introduced to digitalize the tax administration to make it more transparent and efficient.

Given the high dependency on foreign budgetary support, CAR governments have always had to balance their own policy aims with the goals of their donors, adding substantial coordination problems within the government. The country’s main donors are France, the EU, and international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. President Touadéra’s shift toward Russia to gain military support in the fight against rebel movements in the country was considered by Western donors to be a clear deviation from their aims and intentions. As a result, in 2021 and 2022, France and the World Bank froze their budgetary aid. In 2023, relations were reestablished. In March 2024, Paris and Bangui signed a road map to set up a

Efficient use of assets



Policy coordination



framework for constructive partnership that respects state sovereignty. Together with its international donors, the CAR has set up a National Development Plan (PND 2024 – 2028), which was launched in September 2024. This plan provides an instrument to channel and synchronize international aid and assistance, and thus may better coordinate the different goals and priorities.

Previous governments in the CAR have been only partially willing and able to contain corruption. Limited political will, a lack of resources and continued insecurity hinder the government from effectively combating administrative corruption as well as economic corruption, including the illicit trafficking of diamonds, gold and ivory. The few integrity mechanisms that do exist focus on preventing misuse of external funding. Audits, media access to information, office-holder accountability and transparent procurement mechanisms are directly encouraged by grants or indirectly by government departments that benefit from anti-corruption policy grants. The same anti-corruption mechanisms are inconsistently applied to domestic revenues, which allows for a lack of transparency in domestic policy goals and preserves the political space for concessionary politics. As a consequence, according to data collected by UNDP, more than 50% of the CAR population had no trust in their legal system in 2024.

Anti-corruption institutions have come and gone from the institutional framework over time, but have primarily served as an alibi for illicit government activity. Similarly, anti-corruption policies and programs have existed only on paper.

President Touadéra has established the High Authority for Good Governance, which is in part responsible for promoting equity and transparency in resource allocation.

The president's focus on tackling corruption, mismanagement and abuses, particularly regarding the issue of diminishing public resources, was reflected in the adoption of an anti-corruption law by parliament in May 2023. In 2024, the high authority was working to implement this legislation, mainly by drafting an implementing decree.

To be effective overall, the new anti-corruption law will also need support from international partners, particularly regarding mutual legal assistance and extradition. Nevertheless, greater vigilance and transparency will be crucial not only to maintain good relations with international donors but also to restore public confidence in government institutions.

Anti-corruption
policy

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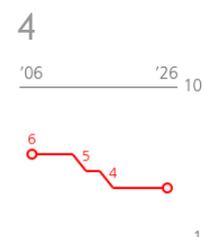
16 | Consensus-Building

For a long time, CAR's democratic institutions served personal interests rather than primarily fostering democracy. In the past, elections were marked by irregularities and often delayed or postponed. Although all major actors agree on the value of democracy, there appears to be disagreement on how to achieve it. The 2023 referendum significantly strengthens presidential powers while extending the presidential term from five to seven years and eliminating term limits. Although opposition parties called for a boycott, the referendum was held and approved by 95.3% of voters, with a reported turnout rate of 57.23%. The referendum also abolished the Senate, which was created by the 2015 constitution as an upper house in parliament but was never officially established. It has now been decided to create a Chamber of Traditional Chiefdoms instead, dedicated to the preservation of habits and customs. Although many see the abolition of the Senate as a weakening of legislative power, this strengthening of local chiefs, along with the planned first local elections in more than 30 years, could be viewed as a step toward giving more power to democratically elected political actors at the local level.

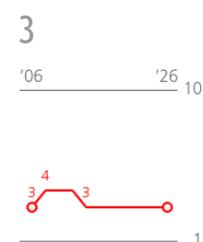
Similarly, on paper, there is consensus on a market economy as a strategic, long-term goal. Political actors in the CAR agree that economic decisions and the pricing of goods and services should be guided solely by the aggregate interactions of the country's individual citizens and businesses, with little government intervention or central planning. This goal also reflects requirements set down by international donors. However, in practice, the implementation of a market economy faces several challenges. On one hand, the formal economy suffers from serious distortions, including a high level of corruption and trafficking. On the other hand, the informal sector is an essential part of the economy, particularly outside the capital.

The political history of the Central African Republic has shown that drawing a clear line between democratic and anti-democratic actors is often challenging. Some presidents were former rebels who came to power through coups d'état. Once in office, however, they adhered to democratic values and practices, followed the constitution and held elections – even if these polls often failed to meet many basic democratic standards. In turn, political actors who did not secure lucrative government positions often sought revenge by siding with armed groups in opposition to the government, manipulating segments of the population to take stances against the government or certain international actors. The former president of the Central African Republic, François Bozizé, serves as an example. After he seized power in a 2003 coup, Bozizé was deposed in the 2013 rebellion. During Touadéra's term in office, Bozizé has repeatedly tried to destabilize the regime. He was the main driver behind the rebellion launched by the CPC coalition after being barred from running for office because of his prosecution for war crimes and United Nations sanctions.

Consensus on goals



Anti-democratic actors



In the CAR, the prolonged series of crises and ongoing violence in recent years can be seen as the result of the political leadership's inability to moderate the capacity for violence in rural areas or to defuse intense, long-standing frustrations. Violence is deeply rooted in the country's history. The geographical and historical context of the CAR has placed the country at the intersection of two distinct regions and two cultural groups: the north is characterized by pastoralist communities and a significant Muslim presence, while the south is more populated by Christian communities. Traditionally, Muslims have expressed their frustration over perceived injustices (e.g., discrimination in accessing education, employment and other basic services in the northeastern part of the country). But these frustrations have never been sufficiently addressed by government policymakers. The 2013 crisis temporarily marked a fundamental reversal of CAR's traditional political landscape. Even though President Touadéra has been able to reestablish order in the country, cleavages persist, and Muslims continue to express their discontent over perceived injustices.

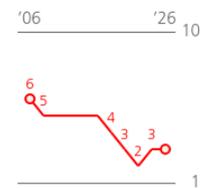
Strong civil society actors or organizations have never truly existed in the CAR. Although governments have often invited civil society to participate in policy deliberation, formulation and decision-making, this involvement has mainly been symbolic, and has not extended beyond mere tokenism. The most recent example of civil society engagement is the development of the National Development Plan (PND) in 2024. It can be assumed that the involvement of civil society groups is often driven by demands from international observers or donor requirements, and that only organizations aligned with the government's interests and priorities are selected and consulted. In turn, the creation of civil society organizations has also become another means of rent-seeking, even though many civil society groups certainly pursue honest goals. In the absence of a clearly defined mechanism for cooperation between the state and civil society, relationships between most civil society organizations and the government are either nonexistent or difficult. Recently, many civil society groups have been formed to support the government's agenda and counter nonaligned movements such as unions critical of state policies.

In an effort to reach an agreement with the numerous armed movements that had been active in the Central African Republic, particularly following the 2013 rebellion and in the subsequent years, the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in CAR (APPR-RCA) was signed in February 2019 between the government and 14 armed groups after intensive negotiations in Khartoum, under the auspices of the African Union and the United Nations. In September 2021, the CAR government adopted the Luanda Roadmap to guide the implementation of the APPR-RCA, including the organization of a dialogue process that took place in March 2022.

By late 2023, nine of the 14 armed groups that signed the APPR-RCA had dissolved themselves. The exclusion of CPC, the main rebel alliance, and the lack of commitment from both sides to find common ground in this regard remains a major challenge.

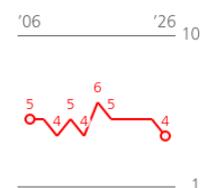
Cleavage /
conflict
management

3



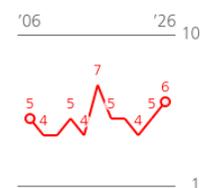
Public
consultation

4



Reconciliation

6



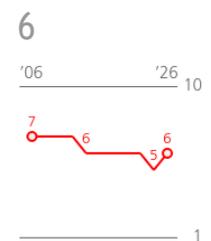
Regarding justice and the prosecution of perpetrators of past injustices, the Special Criminal Court (SCC/CPS) has been in place since 2015 to investigate crimes against humanity and deliver justice to victims of criminal activities. The SCC/CPS is part of the national legal system but is composed of national and international members, and receives substantial support from the United Nations as well as other forms of international assistance.

In 2023 and 2024, the SCC/CPS convicted several members of armed groups that took part in the 2013 rebellion, as well as individuals who committed war crimes or crimes against humanity in 2019, 2020 and 2021. At the same time, the CAR government is working with the International Criminal Court (ICC). The government has already transferred several alleged rebel group leaders to the ICC to face charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The trials are ongoing.

17 | International Cooperation

The CAR government has always depended on international aid. Foreign support has been essential to make any progress on the national goals set jointly by the political leadership and international donors. These goals include reducing insecurity and instability, increasing growth and enhancing government revenues (not least from natural resources), building administrative capacity in various sectors, and improving national infrastructure. The five-year National Recovery and Peace Plan (PNRCP) launched in 2016 by President Touadéra was explicit regarding steps toward reaching its goals and clearly outlined the resources required to achieve them. However, the government has shown little initiative of its own, and the effective contribution of external aid to the country's development has been questionable. So far, international aid has only partially and temporarily addressed fundamental obstacles to development, such as security, lack of basic services, and transport and communication infrastructure. This is partly due to government failures, but also to international partners' short-term interests and a lack of efficient oversight mechanisms. In addition, there has been a shift in international partnerships, with the increased role of new partners such as Russia and Rwanda, along with the consequent break with France in 2021 and 2022, which introduced temporary uncertainty into previous development goals. During the review period, cooperation with France resumed, and a new National Development Plan (PND 2024 – 2028) was launched in September 2024 jointly with CAR's main development partners: the European Union, various U.N. organizations and programs, and the World Bank. The main pillars are security and good governance, the development of human capital and access to basic services, infrastructure development, economic development, and environmental sustainability. The potential of this new development plan, which replaces the PNRCP, lies in its role as an instrument to channel and synchronize international aid and assistance, and thus ensure more efficient use and implementation.

Effective use of support



Following the cooperation with Russia by the Touadéra government and its call for support from the Wagner Group, relations with traditional partners – above all France – significantly deteriorated. In 2021, France cut its budgetary aid, accusing Russia of feeding anti-French propaganda and the CAR government of promoting it. Diplomatic tensions further escalated in November 2022 when Bangui denied the French ambassador the privileged position French diplomats had previously enjoyed as deans of the diplomatic corps, under the so-called principle of *décanat*. The close ties with Russia have also overshadowed relations between Bangui and the IMF and World Bank, as well as with the European Commission.

During the review period, these relations have been resumed. France in particular reestablished its ties to the CAR. In March 2024, Paris and Bangui signed a road map to establish a framework for constructive partnership that respects state sovereignty. In November 2024, a €10 million aid agreement was signed by France and the CAR to support governance, education and the organization of the local elections in 2025.

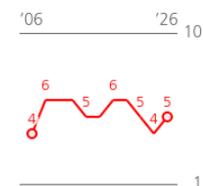
On paper, the CAR has ratified or concluded 186 different international conventions, charters and treaties, including the various Geneva conventions, the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, core ILO labor standards, various arms control treaties and transparency initiatives in the natural resource sector. However, as with its own laws, enforcement is extremely challenging. One example is child labor. Although the CAR has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor, according to UNICEF, about 30% of children between the ages of five and 17 today work instead of going to school. The true figures are likely even higher, as many children are at least temporarily engaged in agriculture. International donors try to help by rebuilding schools, training teachers and assisting with the registration of births. However, the contribution of the state remains insufficient, especially regarding the lack of funds for conducting regular labor inspections. Ratification of international conventions often serves more as a way of leveraging international funds for compliance than as proof of a fundamental belief in a convention's goals. Given the cyclical nature of conflicts in the CAR, each new administration initially presents itself as credible as a means of achieving power.

During the period under review, some developmental achievements were made in the CAR, but the country still faces a wide variety of challenges.

More than 10 years after the Séléka coup that plunged the Central African Republic into one of its deepest crises since independence, President Touadéra has managed to further stabilize the country and expand the state's territorial control beyond the capital. He has the support of the U.N. MINUSCA peacekeeping mission and relies on bilateral military allies, mainly Russia and Rwanda, to maintain stability. However, despite the launch of a reconciliation process, the situation has the potential to rapidly re-escalate, as occurred before the presidential elections in late 2020 and early 2021. This remains a particular concern because a stable agreement has not yet been reached with the main coalition of armed groups, the CPC, under the command of former President Bozizé.

Credibility

5



Regional cooperation

6



Although the Central African Armed Forces (FACA), with Russian support, are now deployed in almost all provincial cities and in many rural areas that were previously under rebel control, effective state power remains weak outside the capital, especially in the rural east. Military control has not been followed by the long-desired provision of public goods. Greater engagement toward achieving long-term reconciliation with all armed groups is now needed. However, FACA troops are still unable to ensure security without the support of foreign forces. Additional training and resources are essential. Finally, increased investment in infrastructure in the countryside, especially in remote areas, is necessary to ensure the provision of basic services.

Whereas relations with traditional donors, mainly France, experienced a severe crisis in 2021 and 2022, cooperation resumed in 2024. Based on a road map agreed to by Paris and Bangui in April 2024 with the goal of building a constructive partnership, France restarted its budgetary support in November 2024. This development in some ways reflects a general trend in francophone Africa, particularly an increasing desire among countries to diversify their relationships and select their own partners for cooperation. This diversification has become possible due to the presence of countries beyond the former colonial powers, especially China, Russia, Türkiye or, in the case of CAR, Rwanda. France's decision to reengage with CAR must be seen against the background of growing anti-French sentiment across the African continent.

The year 2025 will be an important election year for the CAR, with repeatedly delayed local elections being slated for December 2025 as of August 2025. If finally conducted, these elections would play a significant role in the development of local governance and the effective restoration of state authority outside the capital, which is crucial for restoring and strengthening the social contract. However, such a situation could also be manipulated to further strengthen the regime's power. Years of protracted conflicts and crises have led to deep-rooted grievances and limited confidence among the population. The challenge lies in addressing these grievances and tackling the root causes of violence and rebel movements: poverty, unequal economic opportunities and a lack of basic services. This would imply greater investment in infrastructure, especially in remote areas.

Furthermore, presidential elections are scheduled for December 2025. With the constitutional referendum held in August 2023, Faustin-Archange Touadéra has set the course to run for a third term in office. In light of the controversy over this referendum, there is a risk that the elections will lead to yet another round of unrest in the CAR.

Strategic Outlook

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