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Mhlanga, Vonani Aretha

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TRANSFORMING NATURAL RESOURCE DIMENSIONS OF THE ARMED CONFLICT IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Vonani Aretha Mhlanga

A dissertation submitted in 50% fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Masters of Management in Public Policy to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand School of Governance

Supervisor: Associate Professor Erin McCandless

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ABSTRACT

The transformation of contemporary conflicts poses challenges owing to the complexities of the natural resource dimensions of armed conflict. Yet, it presents opportunities for addressing the root causes of protracted conflicts. This study explores how the government of the Central African Republic (CAR) has sought to address natural resource dimensions of the armed conflict in the country and, based on lessons arising, determine the possibilities of conflict transformation. Drawing from the conflict transformation concept, an analytical framework highlighting the interaction of three key elements (actors, context and institutions) guides a qualitative analysis on the positions and interests of the various actors around natural resources. How natural resources are regulated and managed in the country is also examined. I find that it would be challenging to have a national consensus to transform the conflict due to the plurality of actors competing over control of natural resources while also forming opportunistic alliances.

Key terms: Natural resources, non-renewable resources, armed conflict, Central African Republic (CAR), conflict transformation, sustaining peace

DECLARATION

I, **Vonani Aretha Mhlanga**, hereby declare that this dissertation entitled '*Transforming Natural Resource Dimensions of the Armed Conflict in the Central African Republic'* is entirely my unaided work. The sources used have been accordingly acknowledged and referenced using the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) 6th edition style. This completed work has not previously been submitted for any academic examination towards any qualification at any other university.

_____

Vonani Aretha Mhlanga

13 November 2020

DEDICATION

To everyone working, tirelessly and against all the odds, for peace in Africa and the world.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AU	African Union
BECDOR	*Le Bureau d'Évaluation et de Contrôle de Diamants et d'Or*
CAR	Central African Republic CEMAC Central African Economic and Monetary Community
CNDS	*Commission Nationale de Defense et de Sécurité*
CLPC	*Coordination Nationale des Libérateurs du Peuple Centrafricain*
CPJP	*Convention des Patriots pour la Justice et la Paix*
CPSK	*Convention Patritique pour le Salut Wa Kodro*
CSO	Civil society organisation
DDRR	Disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and repatriation
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
FACA	*Forces Armées Centrafricaines*
FCCPD	*Front du People Congolais pour le Changement et la Démocratie*
FDPC	*Front Démocratique du Centraficains pour la Justice*
FPR	*Front Populaire pour le Redressment*
FPRC	*Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique*
IPIS	International Peace Information Service
KP	Kimberley Process
KPCS	Kimberley Process Certification Scheme
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in the CAR
MLCJ	*Mouvement des Libérateurs Centraficains pou la Justice*
MNLC	*Mouvement Nationale pour la Liberation de la Centrafique*
MPC	*Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique*
MPC Seriri	*Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique - Seriri*
NRM	natural resource management

PAPR	Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation
PoE	Panel of Experts
PRNC	*Parti du Rassemblement de la Nation Centrafricaine*
PSC	Peace and Security Council
3R	return, reclamation and rehabilitation RJ *Révolution Justice*
RoC	Republic of Congo
RPRC	*Rassemblement Patriotique pour la Renouveau de la Centrafique*
UFDR	*Union des Forces Democratiques pour le Rassemblement*
UPC	*Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique*
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In countries with protracted armed conflicts that seemingly defy efforts to mediate and reconcile the actors involved in the conflict, the conflict transformation concept offers a radical yet increasingly accepted strategy for how to address root causes of conflict to achieve and sustain peace. A conflict transformation approach necessitates delving into varying aspects of the conflict, from the immediate conflict episodes to existing patterns of relationships and structural factors within the context in which the conflict is embedded (Lederach & Maiese, 2009). A national vision and an inclusive process are essential to transform conflict, and all the actors must share responsibility geared towards the common goal of preventing conflict and addressing the root causes thereof (McCandless, 2020b). This study explores efforts undertaken by the government of the Central African Republic (CAR) to address the natural resource dimensions of the armed conflict in the country. Through analysis of the root causes of the prevailing conflict, this study also seeks to determine the possibilities of transforming the conflict and sustaining peace in the CAR.

The CAR is considerably rich in mineral resources, yet it remains underdeveloped and among the poorest countries in the world while seemingly plagued by conflict and instability. Particularly concerning is the persistent nature of the conflict since the 2012 Séléka uprising, which culminated in a coup ousting former President François Bozizé in the capital Bangui in March 2013 (Kah, 2013). The CAR conflict appears to defy efforts to find durable peace. Findings of past research, particularly the studies by Edelen, Coyle and Street (2014) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) mission report (Jensen, Halle & Lehtonen, 2009), showed a link between natural resources and the ongoing armed conflict in the CAR. These findings informed the assumption in this current study of an existing relationship and

accordingly the focus on *transforming the natural resource dimensions of the armed conflict in the CAR*.

In the following sections, I start by presenting the context of this study in section 1.2, followed by the problem statement in section 1.3. Section 1.4 articulates the purpose and objectives of this study. In section 1.5, I outline the research question and sub-questions to explore the research question fully. I then set out the study's delimitation under section 1.6, followed by the significance of conducting this research in section 1.7. This chapter closes with a preface of the chapters under section 1.8.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Since the CAR attained its independence in the 1960s, the country has been plagued by several crises emanating from multiple coups d'état and internal dissension (Giroux et al., 2009; Kah, 2013; Meyer, 2015; Welz, 2014). Over the years, unrest and banditry in the country's northern regions, especially the eastern parts bordering Chad, fuelled instability in the CAR. More specifically, these regions of the CAR experienced frequent incursions from armed groups and militia, kidnapping of children, attacks on villages and road banditry (Meyer, 2009). Glawion and De Vries (2018) observe that successive administrations since independence are yet to last for ten years in the country.

The proximity of the countries neighbouring the CAR to each other and alliances and regional influences give the conflict a regional dimension. The CAR is surrounded by countries that are themselves in conflict, namely the DRC, Sudan, South Sudan and Chad (Isaacs-Martin, 2016; Kisangani, 2015). Not only do these neighbouring countries have significant links among themselves, but they are also experiencing internal conflicts compounded by porous borders allowing unrestricted movement (Debos, 2008; Giroux et al., 2009). Since independence, the CAR has served as a transit route for guerrillas in the region (Heitman, 2013).

Exacerbating the conflict situation in the CAR are fluid loyalties on both sides: those of combatants/rebels and those of regional leaders (Ukeje et al., 2019). As a result, the CAR, Chad, DRC, and Sudan conflicts have become intertwined and spill into each other's territory, thereby taking a regional form (Giroux et al., 2009; Meyer, 2015). Moreover, the CAR's internal problems are inextricably linked to the neighbouring countries, which have varying influence on the CAR, further complicating the conflict (Kah, 2013, 2014). This entanglement with neighbouring countries makes it more challenging to solve the problems in the CAR (Kah, 2013).

Besides, the instability in the CAR has allowed the country to become a haven for belligerents, mercenaries and former soldiers from neighbouring countries, mainly from Chad and Sudan (Meyer, 2015, Knoope & Buchanan-Clarke, 2017). Various actors use alliances within the region, taking advantage of the porous borders to strategically obtain or hold onto power (Giroux et al., 2009). Debos (2008) attributes combatant nomadism to insecurity in the region. The fact is that the state in the CAR has only a limited territorial reach, with no control over its porous borders and remote areas. This limitation creates opportunities for the proliferation of armed groups and small arms and light weapons (Meyer, 2015). As long as there is instability in the CAR and its neighbouring countries, a greater risk of regional instability remains with adverse implications for the continent that is already confronted with myriad challenges.

Despite several interventions and conflict resolution efforts in the CAR, peace remains elusive. Instability has prevailed in the CAR dating back to the 1990s despite the various regional, continental and international interventions and diverse peace agreements signed. Several multinational peace operations aimed at restoring stability and security only resulted in what is called 'patchwork interventionism' (Meyer, 2015; Welz, 2014, 2016). The intervention and responses to the CAR crisis exposed the challenges of involving several organisations and the interests of the troop-contributing countries. Instead of complementing one another and solving the crisis, the different organisations

competed for visibility, relevance and control (Meyer, 2015; Welz, 2014), resulting in somewhat strained relations. Political differences linked to individual interests were central to the tensions involved in addition to the institutional overlap between the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), which made their relations ambiguous and competitive (Welz, 2014, 2016). Moreover, how the troop-contributing countries deployed their forces on their respective borders exposed these countries' interests and concern over a potential spill-over to their terrains (Welz, 2014). Their involvement was motivated by their respective interests and preventing a spill-over rather than resolving the crisis in the CAR. A change of method in the intervention in pursuit of sustaining peace is necessary.

Noteworthy is that the CAR has an impressive mineral endowment that includes diamonds, gold, iron ore, uranium, phosphates, cobalt, copper, columbite-tantalite (coltan), tin and tungsten, as well as possible oil deposits (Edelen et al., 2014; World Bank, 2018). However, while these should offer a promising economic base for the country's development, the ongoing conflict and resultant instability have discouraged investment in the country. Moreover, there remains an underexplored geological terrain. According to the World Bank (2018, p. 16), the CAR has "two main diamond fields with a combined surface area of more than 80 000 square kilometres (km) in the western and eastern regions". Diamonds are particularly crucial to the country's economy (Edelen et al., 2014).

The western diamond deposits located along the Lobaye and Mambéré river systems account for approximately 60 to 70 per cent of total diamond production (World Bank, 2018; ICG, 2010). The eastern deposits are scattered across the Bria and Nzako regions, further northeast at Ouandjo, towards the south between Bria and Yakinga, and in Kembé. Bria, a town 600 km to the east of Bangui, is a regular flashpoint for violence owing to the presence of rival factions of armed groups who control the town (Reuters, 2020). Furthermore, alluvial gold is found in many parts of the CAR, particularly in the

west and northeast regions near the border with Cameroon and in the central and south-eastern areas bordering the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (World Bank, 2018; ICG, 2010). Alluvial gold and diamonds have incredibly high value compared to their low weight. Besides the ease of extraction of these non-renewable and high-value resources, their low weights make it easy to hide and trade them with minimal chances of being caught. It is for these reasons that they are perfect for wartime looting (Lujala & Rustad, 2011).

The situation in the CAR is not unusual; countries endowed with natural resources appear to suffer conflicts far more compared to those without natural resources. Natural resource wealth has been linked with the weakening of economies, negatively impacting state–society relations, influencing the dynamics of armed conflicts, and shaping the means and motivations of combatants (Wennmann, 2011). Moreover, the countries affected by these natural resources-linked conflicts are, for the most part, underdeveloped with low incomes (Collier & Sambanis, 2002). As such, the eruption of conflict exacerbates the poor development prospects of a country and creates additional economic, social, political and even regional costs. This is what Bannon and Collier (2013, p. 1) refer to as 'development in reverse'.

As scholarship has well revealed, the natural resources association with armed conflict is complex and remains contested. Wennmann (2011) lists three ways in which natural resources relate to conflict, namely: (i) as a cause of conflict emanating from disputes over control leading to the onset of the conflict, (ii) as a means of the conflict in which these resources contribute to the financing of the belligerents, and (iii) as potential for economic gain to varied actors involved. To others, like Atta-Asamoah (2013), natural resources are secondary drivers built upon the existing ongoing conflict. Significantly, Lujala and Rustad (2011) contend that natural resources can also be associated with the collapse of several political processes. It is, however, essential to note that the availability of natural resources does not make conflict unavoidable and that they are mostly not the only cause of conflict (Bannon & Collier, 2013;

Frerks, Dietz & Van der Zaag, 2014; Ross, 2013). For a conflict to occur, there have to be incompatible goals among people, groups or nations (Byrne & Senehi, 2009).

Studying the possibilities of conflict transformation in natural resources-fuelled conflict settings, the CAR (in this case) is crucial to support policy efforts in pursuance of sustaining peace. Whether direct or indirect, chances are the interaction between natural resources and armed conflict could in due course intensify, resulting in the elongation of the conflict (Rustad & Binningsbø, 2012) to the detriment of the country's social fabric and developmental prospects. McCandless (2009) and Wennmann (2009) highlight the significance of exploring the inclusion of natural resource management (NRM) in peace agreements and improving governance of these resources. Inability to do so has far-reaching consequences for the CAR, the Central Africa region and the continent, as well as globally.

The focus of this study is contemporary, looking at the conflict in the CAR since 2012, and a qualitative research approach is followed. The CAR is yet to find peace since the 2012 Séléka uprising that culminated in the ousting of President François Bozizé in early 2013. The end of the transitional arrangements brought about by the election of Faustin-Archange Touadéra as the president in 2016 did not usher in peace as anticipated. This study comprises a qualitative case study of the CAR, broadly situated within the political economy of conflict and limited to the natural resource abundance–conflict nexus focusing particularly on non-renewable resources. By determining the efforts of the CAR government to address the natural resource dimensions of the conflict in the country, the study seeks to explore the possibilities of conflict transformation in this specific conflict context.

Against this background, the analysis of this study is framed using the concept of conflict transformation. A principle of this concept is that conflict is inevitable in societies when there are incompatible goals. Conflict transformation suggests priority criteria for evaluating the new policy consensus around

sustaining peace. A key element for sustaining peace, as espoused in the 2016 twin United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution S/RES/2282 and General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/262, is to address root causes (McCandless, 2020a, 2020b; Mahmood & Makoond, 2017). Conflict transformation and sustaining peace place a greater emphasis on building inclusive ownership around a national vision as a necessary element to move towards recovery, reconstruction and development (McCandless, 2020b).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In 2012, an alliance of Séléka militants (mainly from the restive northeast of the CAR) began their offensive that appeared to be targeting people associated with then incumbent President Bozizé and Christians (Welz, 2014). Emerging from the mineral resource-rich north-eastern CAR, the Séléka militancy culminated in a coup ousting Bozizé in the capital Bangui in March 2013 (Kah, 2013; Malpeli & Chirico, 2014). The violent takeover by the Séléka plunged the CAR into yet another crisis, and there has been unrest ever since. Noteworthy is that the rebel groups in the Séléka controlled parts of the local artisanal mining in the northeast of the country at times competing over illegal exploitation and trade of the natural resources found in that region (Glawion & De Vries, 2018). There is reason to suspect that the Séléka's coalition was motivated by having control over the redistribution of the natural resources, and they could only do so by capturing the state (Kah, 2013).

The Séléka militancy and the resultant coup have led to the proliferation of armed groups and persistence of armed conflict in the CAR. In 2013, another armed group – the anti-Balaka – emerged, comprising mostly young men motivated by revenge against the Séléka (Kah, 2013; Kisangani, 2015; Welz, 2014, 2016). This exacerbated the conflict. Several deaths occurred and a considerable number of people were displaced (Kisangani, 2015). Ever since, armed non-state actors have proliferated. The Séléka alliance has since 2014 splintered into many armed groupings that compete for dominance in the locales rich in natural resources (Glawion & De Vries, 2018). Similarly, the anti-

Balaka has fragmented into three distinctive armed groups (Dukhan, 2018). The various armed groups are deeply entrenched in various sections of Bangui, and they have control of large parts of the country (Glawion & De Vries, 2018; Ukeje, Boukas & Toga, 2019; Knoope & Buchanan-Clarke, 2017). As such, the armed conflict in the country persists despite regional and international intervention as well as several peace initiatives.

Scholarly research and analysis of the CAR are rare (Welz, 2014), and very few studies focus solely on the natural resource dimensions of the conflict. While different studies (Jensen et al., 2009; Kah, 2013; Heitman, 2013; Edelen et al., 2014; Kisangani, 2015) show some links between natural resources and the conflict in the country, there is no clear consensus position on what causes this particular dimension of the conflict in the CAR. The qualitative studies carried out by UNEP (Jensen et al., 2009) and Edelen et al. (2014) which suggested that natural resources have played an essential role as a causal and an exacerbating source of conflict inform the assumption in this study that a relationship between natural resources and the persistent armed conflict exists.

In their respective studies, Edelen et al. (2014) and Jensen et al. (2009) found that poor governance and weak oversight mechanisms over access to and exploitation of natural resources have been sources of tensions in some regions of the country. This creates opportunities for illicit exploitation of these resources, which in turn results in competition and grievances over mismanagement of natural resources.

Noteworthy is that Jensen et al. (2009) observe that before the 2012 conflict, peace agreements focused mainly on conflict parties and did not prioritise the underlying problems caused by poor management of access to the benefits of natural resources in the CAR. What is not known, however, is how the CAR government has sought to address the natural resources dimension of the conflict since 2012 and what approaches hold promise for conflict transformation. Although the studies by Jensen et al. (2009) and Edelen et al.

(2014) considered natural resources broadly, the focus of the current study was limited to the non-renewable extractive resources. This study, therefore, explores how the CAR government has sought to address the natural resource dimensions of the conflict in the country and further explores possibilities of conflict transformation in the CAR.

Conflict transformation's emphasis on addressing root causes, changing structures giving rise to conflict and the veritable transformation of institutions present opportunities for natural resource-linked conflicts. Natural resources, which are a vital component of many war economies, could form part of a broader economic recovery strategy (McCandless, 2009). The systemic change espoused by conflict transformation paves the way for initiating a process of capacitating institutions to regulate and manage natural resources for the benefit of all and resolve conflicts non-violently.

Given these observations, this study focuses on the natural resource dimensions of the ongoing conflict in the CAR. There is no clear consensus on this aspect, and also a lack of attention to pathways to conflict transformation. To address this gap, this study seeks to determine whether there is a national vision to address the root causes and prevent escalation of the conflict. Addressing root causes and prevention of conflict are necessary conditions for conflict transformation and sustaining peace. In determining whether national vision exists to transform the natural dimensions of the conflict in the CAR, this study seeks to establish concrete efforts of the CAR government to address them. Equally important is examining conflict dynamics and social relationships concerning the management of natural resources. Moreover, there is a need to assess the infrastructure and mechanisms in place to regulate and manage these resources (from the extraction process to better usage of resource revenues). The study explores possible opportunities for conflict transformation in the CAR.

Within this context, a national vision would entail a plan or strategy by the government of the CAR accompanied by tangible efforts to initiate

transformation of the mining sector, capacitate its institutions and address conflict related to the country's natural resources. Transforming the natural resource dimensions of the conflict in the country requires natural resource management frameworks and mechanisms responsive to the citizenry and anchored on transparency, accessibility and inclusive participation. When the general population benefits from the revenues gained from natural resources, there is a likely chance to reduce contestations and hopefully in the long-term, curb illegal exploitation of these resources.

1.4 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this qualitative research was to explore how the CAR government has sought to address the natural resource dimensions of the conflict in the country and, based on lessons arising, determine the possibilities of conflict transformation in the country.

The following objectives guided the research:

- Identify and determine the positions and interests of the state and non-state actors around natural resources.
- Establish and assess the efforts of the CAR government to address the link between natural resources and conflict.
- Examine how natural resources are regulated and managed in the country.
- Explore the possibilities of conflict transformation and sustaining peace.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTIONS

1.5.1 Research question

The research explored the following question:

> How has the CAR government sought to address the natural resource dimensions of the conflict in the country and, based on lessons arising, what are the possibilities of conflict transformation?

1.5.2 Research Sub-questions

To explore this question, the research sub-questions are as follows:

- What are the positions and interests of the state and non-state actors around natural resources?
- What is the history of, and lessons arising, in trying to address these positions and interests around natural resources?
- How are the natural resources regulated and managed, from the extraction process to the access of resource revenues, in the CAR?
- What are the possibilities of conflict transformation and sustaining peace in the CAR?

The research questions above are informed by the need to gain a better understanding of the natural resource dimensions of the conflict in the CAR and explore a consensus position necessary for conflict transformation and sustaining peace. Central to conflict transformation and sustaining peace is a shared responsibility among diverse actors, building national ownership in activities geared towards preventing conflict and addressing root causes (McCandless, 2020b). Accordingly, the positions and interests of the various actors (inside and outside the state) around natural resources have to be determined. Establishing the history of addressing these aspects as well as how these natural resources are regulated and managed elucidate concrete efforts undertaken by the CAR government.

1.6 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The link between natural resources and conflict continues to stimulate debate and raise questions. These questions include how natural resource wealth could lead to conflict and even full-scale wars as well as which types of resources are deemed to be predictors of conflict. Perusing literature in this field shows different arguments about the onset, intensity and duration of conflict, intrastate or interstate armed conflict, etc. Furthermore, Koubi, Spilker, Böhmelt and Bernauer (2013) show that existing literature using varying methods, from quantitative studies to qualitative single or comparative case

studies, focuses on two causal mechanisms relating to abundance of resources and the opposite (which is scarcity). Others go further and distinguish between renewable and non-renewable resources.

This study is limited to the natural resource abundance–conflict nexus, with a particular focus on non-renewable extractive resources.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Armed conflict is a multifaceted phenomenon with adverse externalities for national development, and has consequences for the region and the continent at large. The CAR's geographical position in the centre of Africa makes it critical to the stability of the region and the continent. Also, the CAR is surrounded by countries that are themselves in conflict, namely the DRC, Sudan, South Sudan and Cameroon (Isaacs-Martin, 2016; Kisangani, 2015). Prevention and transformation of armed conflict is a priority for the AU, UN and international community. Resources committed to the mediation of conflicts and peacekeeping missions are costly, thus robbing the nation and the continent at large by diverting resources that could have been prioritised for developmental programmes.

While there have been studies on the armed conflict in the CAR, very few studies focus on the natural resource dimensions of the conflict and no attention is paid to pathways to conflict transformation. Jensen et al. (2009) observe that past peace agreements in the CAR did not prioritise the underlying problems caused by poor management of natural resources. Informed strategies of preventive diplomacy must rest on an analysis of the conflict dynamics as they relate to the natural resource dimensions of conflict broadly and the management of natural resources specifically. The findings of this study add to the scholarly research on the CAR. Importantly, the study contributes to informing preventive diplomacy strategies and directs researchers and policymakers on a possible course of action for the transformation of the conflict in the country.

1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

This dissertation comprises five chapters. The first chapter introduces the study. It provides the research problem and the research objectives and questions. It highlights the significance of conducting this study. It goes further by setting out the delimitations of the study.

Chapter two presents the theoretical foundation and situates this study broadly in the field of the political economy of conflict. In this section, the literature is reviewed and organised under three themes, namely: (i) natural resource abundance and conflict, (ii) NRM and conflict, and (iii) conflict transformation and natural resources. Three theories within the natural resource abundance–conflict nexus (greed versus grievances, the resource curse and the rentier state) are presented. It also reflects on the scholarly work regarding the importance of integrating NRM into the broader framework to achieve durable peace and avoid relapses into conflict. This section closes with the concept of conflict transformation, from which the analytical framework is derived, setting out the evaluative criteria for sustaining peace.

Chapter three covers the research strategy and methods used in conducting this study. It explains how the data were collected and prepared for analysis. It provides the steps followed to ensure that the research is credible and trustworthy. Moreover, it accounts for how ethical considerations were adhered to as well as the steps taken to address constraints during the research process.

Chapter four presents the research findings obtained by engaging experts and perusing primary and secondary sources of information. The detailed findings are organised using the three elements – actors, context and institutions – in the analytical framework and themes arising from the responses to research questions. It closes by applying the analytical framework.

Chapter five presents a discussion and analysis, reflecting on the possibilities of conflict transformation in the CAR and closes with conclusions drawn from the study. Further, it highlights the limitations of the research and possible areas for dedicated studies and concludes with recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO
THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a general theoretical framework and scholarship on the interrelationship between natural resources and armed conflict are presented. This serves not only to illuminate the multiple interactive factors, but also to lay the foundation for the analytical framework drawn from the concept of conflict transformation. The scholarship and different arguments point out varied possibilities on how natural resources and armed conflict interact. Natural resource wealth has been linked with the weakening of economies, influencing the armed conflict dynamics by shaping the means and motivations of belligerents as well as impacting negatively on state–society relations (Wennmann, 2011). Understanding how natural resources influence armed conflict is, therefore, crucial for conflict transformation efforts to at least have a chance at success in pursuit of peace.

Against this background, the literature review first presents three themes that shape the study, namely: (i) natural resource abundance and conflict, (ii) NRM and conflict, and (ii) conflict transformation and natural resources. This is followed by a presentation of the study's analytical framework. The first theme presents three theories broadly situated within the political economy of conflict and focusing primarily on the resource abundance–conflict nexus, namely: (i) greed versus grievance, (ii) the resource curse and (iii) the rentier state. Scholarship on NRM and conflict are then examined, highlighting the role of actors in the conflict. This is followed by a discussion on the natural resources and peace processes, with an emphasis on inclusion of natural resources in efforts to achieve durable solutions and avoid relapses into conflict. Presenting the scholarship on resource conflicts using the afore-mentioned themes provide a necessary foundation to explore conflict transformation in this context.

The literature review closes with the concept of conflict transformation and natural resources, which precedes and informs the analytical framework. To adequately explore the research question – *How has the CAR government sought to address the natural resource dimensions of the conflict in the country and, based on lessons arising, what are the possibilities of conflict transformation*? – the concept of conflict transformation is used to understand the natural resource conflict dynamics and assess the national consensus necessary to bring about systemic change within this conflict context.

Before presenting the three themes, the section starts with a brief literature review on past research on the conflict in the CAR and analysis of reviewed literature to show what necessitated this study.

2.1.1 Past Research on the Conflict in the CAR

Although scholarly research on and analysis of the CAR are rare (Bauters, 2012; Welz, 2014), available studies attribute different causes to the ongoing conflict in the CAR. The UNEP qualitative study points out that owing to national, local and regional considerations, the causes of conflict in the CAR are multifaceted (Jensen et al., 2009). Most of the research done on the country focused on social cleavages, ethnic identity and representation politics (Kisangani, 2015; Isaacs-Martin, 2016; Mehler, 2011). Other researchers such as Lombard and Batianga-Kinzi (2014) look at entrenched violence stemming from a culture of punishment and vengeance in the society as a contributing cause and driver of the current conflict. Very few studies focus solely on the natural resource dimensions of the conflict.

A study by Kah (2013) examines the rise of the Séléka militancy by tracing the origins of the instability in the CAR. While the study links the Séléka armed groups to the pillaging of natural resources, Kah (2013) points out that the historical exclusion of the members of the armed groups due to the ethnicisation of politics, breaking down of peace accords and unfulfilled

promises by the government led to the Séléka uprising that culminated in a coup in 2013.

Noteworthy is that the UNEP study, using expert inputs and desk research, found that natural resources played an essential role as a causal and an exacerbating source of conflict, even though they are not the sole reason for the conflict in the CAR (Jensen et al., 2009). In their policy brief, which also used experts' input, Edelen et al. (2014) conclude that grievances emanating from the management of natural resources as well as competition over these resources are often neglected root causes of the conflict in the CAR.

While the studies by Jensen et al. (2009) and Edelen et al. (2014) link natural resources to the conflict, Kisangani (2015) contends that natural resources are not directly related to the armed conflict in the CAR. What is certain is that after the onset of the conflict, the belligerents' first strategy was to occupy natural resource-rich sites, particularly the diamond sites (Kisangani, 2015). This, therefore, contributes to the elongation and sustenance of the conflict. Kisangani (2015), using a process-tracing qualitative method, found that the politics of exclusion best explains the instability in the CAR.

Among the scholars presented above, only Edelen et al. (2014) and Jensen et al. (2009) focused on the link between natural resources broadly, considering both renewable and non-renewable natural resources and the conflict in the CAR. In their respective studies, these researchers found that poor governance and weak oversight mechanisms over access to and exploitation of natural resources have been sources of tensions in some parts of the country. This creates opportunities for illicit exploitation of these resources, which in turn results in competition and grievances over the mismanagement of natural resources. There is, however, no clear consensus on the natural resource dimensions of the armed conflict in the CAR and, importantly, lack of attention to reflecting on pathways to conflict transformation.

2.1.2 Analysis of Literature Reviewed on the Conflict in the CAR

The CAR situation shows a complex and multifaceted interplay of factors in the persistence of conflict as well as its association with natural resources. These factors include grievances emanating from the disparity between the country's capital and the remote regions, the use of violence by non-state actors (armed groups) as a negotiating tool and extractive natural resource capture by various armed groups. Despite signing eight peace agreements since 2012 (Olayiwola, 2019), the conflict remains. The CAR conflict has defied several peace initiatives, begging the questions of what has sustained it and whether a shared vision exists for all the actors (inside and outside the state) to collectively address the root causes and prevent further conflict.

Below is a mind map (Figure 1) showing the evolution of the armed conflict since the 2013 coup sponsored by the former Séléka alliance of armed groups. This diagram further indicates that the armed groups multiplied after 2013 and their association with natural resource-rich regions. While the former Séleka armed groups dominate the north and eastern regions, anti-Balaka groups are mostly active in the west of the country. Both groups are somewhat involved in the illicit exploration of natural resources. Using themes derived from the data in the literature review on the CAR conflict supplemented by experts interviewed for this study, I present the analysis of the conflict under Figure 1 below.

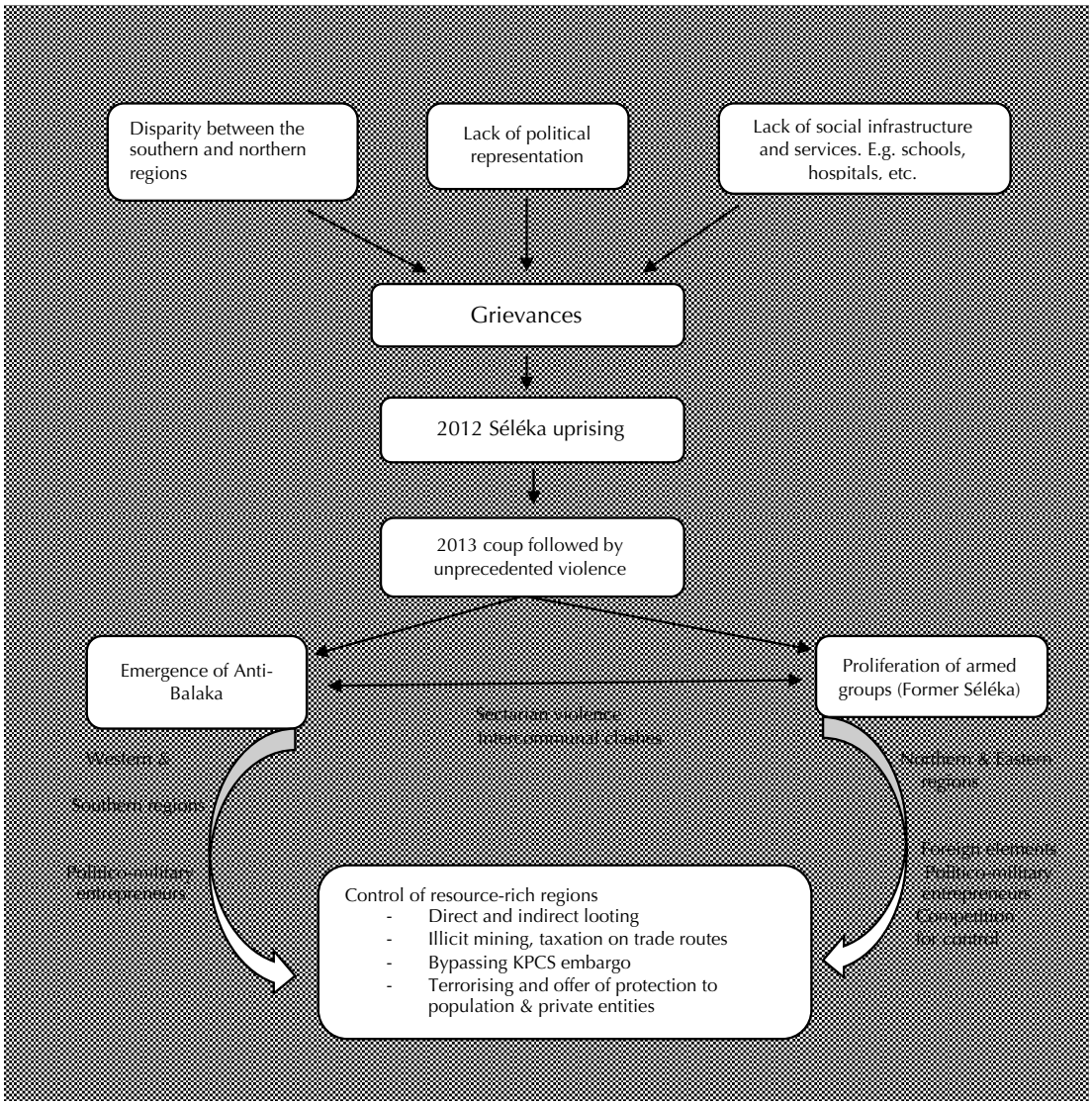


Figure 1. Mind map of the evolution of the armed conflict since 2012 (created by author)

2.1.2.1 Grievances or Greed?

The conflict in the CAR largely stemmed from a fragmented social landscape characterised by disparities in the capital and the peripheral provinces. Over the years, successive governments have neglected the remote regions in delivering social services, including education, health and access to water. The CAR has a distinctive north–south divide, with formal state institutions concentrated in the south (Mehler, 2011). This resulted in recurrent tensions and growing grievances over socio-economic conditions among the population in the north. Exacerbating the tensions was the apparent ethnicisation of politics that entrenched nepotism and cronyism (Dukhan, 2018; Isaacs-Martin, 2016; Kah, 2013). The common practice of the ruling elites was to surround

themselves with people from their ethnic groups to the exclusion of others owing to general mistrust and fear of violent takeovers. This became a trusted method of consolidating power. With over 80 ethnic groups in the CAR, mistrust between the populace and the government as well as among communities is rife (Knoope & Buchanan-Clarke, 2017). As such, the ethnic diversity has made it challenging to forge a cohesive national identity. This is also undermined by the history of crises accompanied by violence.

While the state largely neglected the remote regions, non-state actors (various armed groups) emerged with varied vested interests. The emergence of the Séléka in 2012, an alliance of five rebel groups that were predominantly Muslim from the restive northeast of the CAR, at first harped on the systemic inequalities to gain support (Edelen et al., 2014; Glawion & De Vries, 2018; Kah, 2013). Historically, the remote northern regions were marginalised and without state presence (Kah, 2013). Growing poverty and grievances were initially factors behind the conflict in the CAR. The now-defunct Séléka also denounced the marginalisation of Muslims, the minority in the country (IPIS, 2018). The minority Muslims are discriminated against in the CAR and their political grievances are regarded as illegitimate (UN, 2017). The armed groups were galvanised through identity politics by emphasising religion and manipulating the facts to boost their position (D1). This fuelled distrust between Christians and Muslims, resulting in a leading narrative that the conflict was sectarian.

Although there were legitimate grievances in regions where these armed groups originated, their primary interests have become questionable considering that they have splintered into many groups. Power struggles and divergent interests could be the reasons for the split. However, Knoope and Buchanan-Clarke (2017) contend that the leaders of the various groups have a history of involvement in rebel activities. It appears that they have varied interests, including political power and financial incentives with regional influences. The former Séléka groups' objective of political power appears to be a means to garner wealth (Weyns et al., 2014). The participation of Chadian

and Sudanese rebels in the Séléka alliance and in the new groups that have been formed reinforces this perception (Glawion & De Vries, 2018). The rebel activities play on legitimate grievances of population groups in the remote regions, especially artisanal miners who need protection and have to earn a living. This begs the following questions: Can the conflict be sustained by the armed groups in the event of the issues central to the grievances of the wider populace in these regions being addressed? Suppose the armed groups were to be removed from the conflict scene, will the grievances of the populations emanating from structural inequalities remain and without addressing these, will there still be room for the eruption of conflict?

The situation in the CAR shows that given the complexity of the conflict in a country richly endowed with high-value extractable non-renewable natural resources, labelling the position and interests of armed groups as greed or grievances could be simplistic. Without the legitimate grievances of the groups in the north of the country, it would have proven difficult for the rebel groups to form and for the violent collective action that ensued and persists to date. Murshed and Tadjoeddin (2007) argue that it is possible to have grievances in the absence of greed, but it is rather challenging to uphold greedy motives without some grievances. This could explain why the Séléka groups were galvanised by and continue to use these grievances in political negotiations. While some armed groups' positions and interests appear to be rooted in self-defence and community representation, others are motivated by the capture of natural resources (World Bank, 2018). As most experts engaged in this study have attested that there are limited opportunities and the government cannot absorb most of the population into the economy, illicit exploration of natural resources becomes a trusted means to get an income.

In this specific context in the CAR, it cannot be either greed or grievances, one to the exclusion of the other. Focusing only on greed would be a reductionist approach that overlooks other compelling features (such as the political, socio-economic, historical and cultural) of the context within which this conflict is embedded (Arowobusoye, 2005; Cramer, 2002; Dunn, 2001; Keen, 2012). It

would mean disregarding the population doubly-affected by the conflict. While there is a financial gain aspect to resource capture, other contributing factors make this feasible. The inability of the state to cater to the needs of the population and secure its entire territory, institutional arrangements in place and regional dynamics, among others, contribute to the persistence of the conflict.

2.1.2.2 Plurality of Politico-Military Entrepreneurs

Although the Séléka groups were dissolved in 2013 by then interim president Djotodia, the groups have remained. They merely rebranded under new names and multiplied. The anti-Balaka, which was initially created as a reaction to the former Séléka groups, have also organised themselves and splintered into three distinctive groupings. The respective armed groups comprise rebels, mercenaries, former soldiers and recruited disenfranchised unemployed youth (Isaacs-Martin, 2016). To date, there are approximately 22 armed groups in the country that compete among themselves for control of mining sites and trading routes (see Appendix G). The former Séléka groups have foreign elements, mainly from Sudan and Chad, reinforcing the perception that their primary interests are removed from the grievances of the populations in the marginalised regions they purport to represent. Käihkö and Utas (2014) contend that diminishing prospects within the political economy of the CAR for the rebel leaders and soldiers in their rank were a significant contributing factor in the outbreak of the armed conflict in 2012 and 2013.

Some authors refer to the armed groups' leaders as 'politico-military entrepreneurs' because they use violence sponsored through illegal exploitation of the country's abundant resources to negotiate for political positions (Dukhan, 2018; Glawion & De Vries, 2018, Käikhö & Utas, 2014). The armed groups leverage dialogues and peace accords to ascend to prominent positions, which they then proceed to undermine from within (A1; A3; B1; B2; C1; D1). For example, Djotodia was made a deputy prime minister in early 2013 but staged the coup that ousted Bozizé a few months later (Kisangani, 2015). Judging by the demands made by the former Séléka armed

groups, including reform of the political regime, inclusion of Muslims in the government and financial compensation, power motives drive the strategies of these armed groups (Weyns et al., 2014; UN, 2019). Jostling for political positions is not only done by the former Séléka armed groups, but also the leadership of the anti-Balaka (IPIS, 2018). Everything in the CAR is extremely politicised, so that even civil society becomes vocal to ascend to political power or to be considered in some way that benefits them (A3; D1). The rebel groups that have multiplied through splintering are a cause for concern, as this increases insecurity along with illicit flows of weapons and natural resources in the country and the region. This overshadows the legitimate interests and grievances of the ethnic groups in the remote areas.

2.1.2.3 Violence as a Negotiating Tool

It appears that violence is used as a negotiating tool for ascendance to political power and control over the resources of the country, including natural resources. Expending violence has been normalised in the CAR as a means to control society (Lombard & Batianga-Kinzi, 2014). Successive governments have not lasted for 10 years in the CAR and change often came through violent coups with support from France and regional allies (Glawion & De Vries, 2018). France installed and removed the ruling elites at will when the respective presidents no longer served their interests and employed violence to do so (Dukhan, 2018; Olayiwola, 2019). Over time, violence became deeply entrenched in the fabric of society and an essential element to contest for political leadership and power (Isaacs-Martin, 2016; Lombard & Batianga-Kinzi, 2014; Weyns et al., 2014). Those seeking political power, mainly excluded groups, have relied on rebellion for inclusion even though they do not show any inclination to change the political system (Mehler, 2011; D1; Kisangani, 2015). The lines between civilian and rebellion politics have, thus, become blurred. Those who do not win power through elections, do so through fighting and violent takeover (Mehler, 2011; D1). The UN PoE observed that control over the north-eastern provinces, abundantly rich in mineral resources such as oil, uranium, diamonds and gold, guarantees the various actors a strong bargaining position during dialogues and peace negotiations (UN,

2019). It is for this reason that hardliners within the FPRC at times threaten secession. As the country prepares for the elections in December 2020, armed groups have already started maintaining and extending control of territories as a means to bargain for positions (A3).

2.1.2.4 Weak State Institutions

Consistent with the resource curse and rentier state theories, the CAR has weak state institutions that have not efficiently managed the resource wealth for the benefit of all citizenry. Due to the weak state institutions and deficient infrastructure, governance of the mining sector has fallen short (World Bank, 2018). It contributes to the grievances which several armed groups continue to exploit for support and to legitimise their treacherous activities. The CAR displays the adverse effects theorised under the resource curse and rentier state. These include rent-seeking, corruption and authoritarian rule, and institutional incapacities – which lead to conflict and unstable polities (Bayramov, 2018; Le Billon, 2001, Lujala & Rustad, 2011; Samset, 2009).

The institutional crisis in the CAR can be credited for the failure of the state and 'near collapse' of the country's economy (A3; B1; D1; Olayiwola, 2019). The state is mostly absent in the peripheral regions and, as such, do not exercise authority over all its territory, especially those areas with natural resource deposits. Moreover, successive political leaders used rents from natural resources to hold onto power and extend patronage (ICG, 2010). In this sense, the outbreak and sustenance of conflict in the country attest to the institutional weaknesses. It points to the inability of the state institutions to resolve grievances legitimately and peacefully. When there are effective institutions with widely held and accepted rules to govern the allocation of resources, it is unlikely for violent conflict to take hold (Murshed & Tadjoeddin, 2007; A3; D1).

While the 2016 government has not shown signs of preying on the peripheries, there remains limited capacity to implement sweeping reforms (Glawion & De Vries, 2018). It will take time for the current government to rebuild the country's

institutions that have been severely weakened and damaged by years of recurrent conflict. This vacuum creates conducive conditions for the conflict to persist. Nonetheless, the efforts of the government show determination to capacitate the institutions, reviewing policies aimed at increasing transparency and arresting to the part played by natural resources in the armed conflict. If the CAR government can get the buy-in of various stakeholders, they have a better chance of averting future conflict.

2.1.2.5 Interwoven Regional Conflict Dynamics

The CAR is landlocked and surrounded by countries experiencing internal conflicts. The countries neighbouring CAR (Chad, the DRC, Sudan and South Sudan) have for years experienced internal conflicts (Giroux et al., 2009; Meyer, 2015; Kah, 2014). The porosity of borders has enabled ease of movement for ex-soldiers, rebels and armed groups into and out of the CAR, particularly those from Chad and Sudan (Meyer, 2015; Knoope & Buchanan-Clarke, 2017). The various armed groups from the defunct Séléka harboured armed elements from neighbouring countries. The FPR, a Chadian militant group, was part of the Séléka that launched a coup in 2013 (Weyns et al., 2014). Another rebel group from Uganda, the LRA, also fought alongside the Séléka (Kah, 2014). The armed groups in the north-eastern CAR – FPRC, UPC, MPC and RPRC (all former Séléka groups) – collaborate with other groups in neighbouring Chad, Sudan and the DRC regarding arms supply, boosting their capabilities and at times in exchange for natural resources (Dukhan, 2018; UN, 2019). These neighbouring conflicts contribute to the flow of arms and create conducive conditions for the looting and illicit trading of the CAR's natural resources, especially diamonds.

Noteworthy is that the population groups in the north-eastern region have more in common with neighbouring Sudan, Chad and the DRC in terms of ethnicity, language, culture and religious affiliation. Most Muslims residing in the north-eastern region affiliate more with Sudan than with Bangui (Matthysen & Clarkson, 2013). Not only is the local language (Sango) hardly spoken in Vakaga province, but the local chiefs observe allegiances to Chad and Sudan

(Kisangani, 2015). Ethnic relations among groups in the CAR's eastern region with Chad and Sudan enables clandestine movements of the CAR's non-renewable resources (Malpeli & Chirico, 2014; ICG, 2019). It is, thus, more natural for the groups to collaborate across borders. The CAR's proximity to these countries and flows of people across the borders during past and present conflicts can also be credited for this situation (Knoope & Buchanan-Clarke, 2017). The vast territory and absence of the state make it more conducive for these groups to coordinate efforts and for anarchy to reign. The instability in the CAR and internal conflicts in neighbouring countries have, as a result, become somewhat interwoven.

2.1.2.6 Colonial Legacy

Without necessarily drawing on the theoretical arguments framing the colonial legacy thesis, several authors cited in this study (Knoope & Buchanan-Clarke, 2017; Lombard & Batianga-Kinzi, 2014; Heitman, 2013; Glawion & De Vries, 2014) point to the colonial legacy as a plausible major contributor to the persistence of violent conflict and the weak state institutions in the CAR. Lombard and Batianga-Kinzi (2014) argue that France used brutality to deter disobedience effectively. The French installed and removed ruling elites at will, and this was done through violent takeovers (Dukhan, 2018; Olayiwola, 2019). For example, Bozizé took power in 2003 through a coup supported by France (Dukhan, 2018; Kisangani, 2015), only to be ousted by the Séléka armed groups in 2013. The country remains within France’s sphere of influence (Käikhö & Utas, 2014).

The manner in which the French administered the CAR under colonisation should be noted. From 1903, the CAR was a French colony called Ubangui-Chari (Kisangani, 2015). The French were not committed to developing the colony and outsourced governance to private enterprises whose sole intention was to garner profits from the abundant natural resources (Knoope & Buchanan-Clarke, 2017; Kisangani, 2015). The French essentially created conducive conditions for ransacking natural resources from its colony working alongside private companies (ICG, 2010). Successive governments reinforced

the clientelist and authoritarian governance after independence (World Bank, 2019). Maintaining and sustaining the colonial practices resulted in weak state institutions and a less capable state to regulate the natural resources and use the revenues for socio-economic projects to the benefit of all the populace without discrimination. Although Bozizé attempted some reforms aimed at establishing government control, this later turned into a way of legitimising private gains (Glawion & De Vries, 2018).

2.2 NATURAL RESOURCE ABUNDANCE AND ARMED CONFLICT

The 1990s saw a growing prominence of scholarly debates linking natural resources to armed conflict (Maphosa, 2012). A distinction can be made between two schools of thought, one focusing on the abundance of resources and the other on the scarcity of resources (Mildner, Lauster & Wodni, 2011). Most research provided empirical evidence on the increased risk posed by the availability of natural resources in a country for certain kinds of armed conflict and political instability (Le Billon, 2001; Koubi et al., 2013). An abundance of natural resources, according to Koubi et al. (2013), tends to render the state a target of violence, increases grievances and makes rebellion attractive due to potential gains. Several scholars such as Collier and Hoeffler (2004); Collier and Sambanis (2002); Collier, Hoeffler and Rohner (2009); Humphreys (2005); Lujala and Rustad (2011) have studied and analysed the natural resource abundance–conflict nexus.

Given that this study is limited to non-renewable extractive natural resources and that the CAR is richly endowed with these resources such as diamonds, gold, iron ore, uranium, phosphates, cobalt, copper, coltan, tin and tungsten (Edelen et al., 2014; World Bank, 2018), three broad theoretical frameworks that link resources and conflict – greed versus grievance, resource curse and rentier state – are presented below.

2.2.1 Greed versus Grievance

Collier and Sambanis (2002) and Collier and Hoeffler (2004) aver the greed versus grievance thesis, and conclude that greed provides greater explanatory power for involvement in armed conflict. The greed thesis advances that financial gain and an opportunity for self-enrichment are central to belligerents' involvement in resource-linked conflicts. It sets out a rational choice paradigm which states that conflict is the result of choices or preferences (Murshed & Tadjoeddin, 2007; McCandless, 2009). These scholars used quantitative methods, relying on statistical correlations emphasising the finance opportunity. Using econometric models, Collier and Sambanis (2002) and Collier and Hoeffler (2004) found that the model focusing on the opportunity for involvement in armed conflict performed well and identified four factors influencing the chance of rebellion. These factors are (i) the availability of finance, (ii) the cost of the war, (iii) the military advantage and (iv) the observation that the risk of armed conflict is proportional to a country's population. Using 'opportunity' to explain the potential risk of conflict aligned with the economic interpretation of armed conflict as greed motivated.

However, grievances reflect group interests emanating from deeper social issues, including political, economic and social inequalities, exclusion, and ethnic and religious polarisation among others (Hoeffler, 2011; Lujala & Rustad, 2011; McCandless, 2009). Collective action, according to Hoeffler (2011), provides useful insights into belligerents' motives for joining an armed conflict. Any form of concerted group effort translates into collective action. Murshed and Tadjoeddin (2007) contend that when there are historical grievances, group formation is likely to lead to violent collective action. Hence, collective action is often applied to explain common grievances. Notably, rebellions that started as addressing grievances might turn into loot seeking during the conflict. In this respect, private gain supersedes common interests. Also, belligerents' grievances might be largely separated from social concerns such as ethnic or religious identity, political rights and inequalities (Collier et al., 2004).

Noteworthy is that the 2009 paper “Beyond greed and grievance: Feasibility and civil war” by Collier et al. moves away from “greed” to highlight “feasibility” of conflict. But Murshed and Tadjoeddin (2007) argue that the content of the greed thesis is almost identical to the one rephrased as “feasibility”, adding that both are about opportunity.

The greed thesis is highly contested. Humphreys (2005) points out that correlates between commodities and conflict cannot be relied on to conclude that greed motivates actors. In an attempt to explain the different possibilities in the relationship between natural resources and armed conflict, Humphreys (2005, p. 511) proposes six mechanisms: (i) the greedy rebel mechanism, (ii) the greedy outsiders mechanism, (iii) the grievance mechanism, (iv) the feasibility mechanism, (v) the weak states mechanism and (vi) the sparse networks mechanism. Rustad and Binningsbø (2012, p. 532) argue that there are three other mechanisms, namely: (i) disagreements over natural resource (revenue) distribution may motivate rebellion, (ii) revenues from natural resources may create funding opportunities for rebels, and (iii) natural resources may aggravate ongoing conflict, acting either as motivation or opportunity for rebels ‘but through other roles than distributional claims or as funding sources’.

Some scholars (Arowobusoye, 2005; Cramer, 2002; Dunn, 2001; Keen, 2012; Khan, 2016; Wennmann, 2007) argue that the greed thesis is reductionist given the complexity of conflicts. Dunn (2001) opines that it overlooks other features – social, cultural and historical – that may cause the eruption of conflict. Cramer (2002) questions the trade-off implied by the economic models (which is a choice between greed or grievance, loot or justice, and danger or financial gain) as well as the materialist approach to the explanation of the conflict. Arowobusoye (2005) posits that the political economy perspective, and its reliance on econometric indicators, ignores the realities of those involved in conflicts. Furthermore, Keen (2012) contends that Collier’s greed thesis is an oversimplification of a complicated situation and analysis by exclusion in ignoring and rendering all other essential issues irrelevant. Other

methods that are separate from natural resources could finance conflicts, for example kidnapping and unlawful levying of taxes from civilians and companies (Bayramov, 2018; Wennmann, 2007). Khan (2016) opines that the theory restricts analysis of other factors which may promote conflict.

2.2.2 Resource Curse

Richard Auty is credited as the first to use the notion of the 'resource curse' in 1993, building on earlier work by Alan Gelb in the book *Oil windfalls: blessing or curse* in 1988 which looked at economic effects of oil rents (Badeep, Lean & Clark, 2016). It describes how countries endowed with natural resources seemed to have poor economic growth compared to those without natural resources (Rosser, 2006). As such, these countries appeared to be unable to use the wealth generated from natural resources to boost their economies. The resource curse is used to explain the adverse effects of resource wealth – slow economic growth, rent-seeking, corruption and authoritarian rule, and institutional incapacities among others – at a country level that leads to conflict and unstable polities (Bayramov, 2018; Le Billon, 2001, Lujala & Rustad, 2011; Samset, 2009). In this regard, the countries endowed with mineral resources experience a conflict trap that increases their vulnerability to future wars (Wennmann, 2011). Collier and Sambanis (2002) argue that it is mainly underdeveloped countries dependent on high-value commodities which experience conflict. Paradoxically, these countries do not benefit from resource wealth. The states get locked into cycles of armed conflict, and the result is a weakened economy that also creates grievances due to unmet societal expectations.

The evidence that the abundance of natural resources leads to adverse development outcomes is by no means irrefutable. Rosser (2006) argues that explanations provided in literature are reductionist because they do not account for the role of other factors in society (social, political and economic) that could considerably influence the development trajectory. Also, the focus on the size and nature of the countries' resource endowment is limiting.

Meanwhile, there is ongoing debate about which natural resources are most detrimental and more likely to lead to armed conflict. Smaller developing economies such as Botswana are managing their resource wealth (Varisco, 2010), meaning that it is not a foregone conclusion that having an abundance of natural resources will lead to armed conflict. McCandless (2009) rightly states that strengthening state institutions, as well as context-specific policies, is required to manage commodity fluctuations and shocks. This can aid countries in developing and mitigating the adverse effects associated with resource wealth.

2.2.3 Rentier State

Another theoretical perspective that explains the effect of the abundant natural resources–conflict nexus is that of the rentier state. This idea was influenced by Adam Smith's work that distinguished between 'rent', 'income' and 'wages' (Beblawi, 1987). The concept of the rentier state gained prominence after the advent of oil discoveries in the Middle East in the 1980s. When a state derives income markedly from rents accruing from resource extraction, it is considered a rentier state (Koubi et al., 2013; Samset, 2009). Rents become synonymous with political power, and the state dependence on natural resource wealth thus becomes attractive for rebels (Koubi et al., 2013). In this respect, Le Billon (2001) observes that power politics are shaped by institutional arrangements and clientelist networks (Le Billon, 2001). Mainly, rents from resources provide political leaders with means to hold onto power. Instead of using the revenues to upgrade infrastructure and ensure sustainable economic development, those with power or elites generally take a large share for personal benefit and those in their immediate circles (Badeep et al., 2016). This widens inequalities in a given state.

The rentier state perspective is closely intertwined with the resource curse because of similar adverse effects such as dysfunctional institutions, corruption and weakening of economies. The control of natural resources is a distinguishing factor. In cases where the state has ownership and absolute

control, there is a risk that involvement of politicians and bureaucrats in rent-seeking might give rise to authoritarian regimes accompanied by weak institutions unresponsive to the needs of the citizenry (Samset, 2009). The consequence of this is fomenting conflict.

The counter-argument to this is that some states might use the income from natural resources to buy peace either through patronage or repression, making these states appear more stable and less prone to conflict. It is, however, unsustainable in the long term because those excluded from patronage will have grievances that can lead to conflict in the future. Violence becomes an attractive option for the aggrieved to access wealth and power in the absence of widespread political consensus (Le Billon, 2001). Hence, McCandless (2009) recommends the transformation of rentier states through strengthening revenue mobilisation capacity in addition to strategies for NRM and development of rigorous oversight mechanisms to prevent corruption and rent-seeking.

2.3 NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND CONFLICT

NRM refers to frameworks and mechanisms put in place to regulate and manage natural resource wealth. It speaks to the legitimate authority over natural resource wealth and interventions instituted for the regulation of these resources, from the extraction stage to the distribution of the wealth generated (McCandless, 2009). The UN Economic Commission for Africa (2018, p. 37) recommends that NRM should ideally include objectives to address, among others 'ownership, allocation of rights, the sharing and management of revenues, and growth of local business capabilities; to maximise local content; and to catalyse links and diversification'. This would require mechanisms responsive to the citizenry and anchored on transparency, accessibility and inclusive participation. Capable institutions are, therefore, crucial to ensuring the effectiveness of NRM.

Conflict around natural resources arises when there are contestations around access and control, disagreements over the exploitation of high-value natural resources, and generally the management of these natural resources as well as the distribution of wealth generated from them. As scholarship has shown, the competition to gain access to or control over natural resources has been attributed to the outbreak of violent conflict. In the absence of institutions with capacity to manage existing disputes legally, conflicts could escalate and societies likely be drawn into intractable cycles of conflict. Capable state institutions are better equipped to address the root causes of conflict, prevent the outbreak of violent conflict and provide the right kind of incentives through a legal system (McCandless, 2009). Overall, the NRM system would be beneficial in any society when it is designed to contribute towards economic development, foster sustainable use of natural resources and address resource-based conflicts peacefully (UN Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action, 2012).

The section below presents scholarship on the actors and conflict with an emphasis on their roles in resources-linked conflict, followed by the natural resources and peace processes with particular focus on considerations to integrate NRM into a broader framework to achieve durable solutions and avoid relapses into conflict. The transformation of natural dimensions of conflict requires an explicit commitment by all the actors, both state actors and non-state actors, to address root causes and prevent conflict.

2.3.1 Actors and Natural Resource Conflict

2.3.1.1 The state and conflict

Considering that not all countries with mineral resources end up with conflict, some literature focuses on the role of the state as an enabler (or not) of resource-linked conflict. States are arguably supposed to exercise authority over all their territory, including those areas where there are natural resource deposits. As custodians of the natural resources, states bear the primary responsibility for NRM and overall governance (McCandless, 2009). The

absence of authority and weak institutions create conducive conditions for conflict, for example the competition to access and control natural resources. Weak states – primarily those dependent on natural resources – have been characterised by poor leadership, corruption, and rent-seeking by political and economic actors (Atta-Asamoah, 2013; Humphreys, 2005; Ross, 2013, Samset, 2009). Besides, rent-seeking by political and economic actors as well as bureaucrats tends to create authoritarian regimes and weak institutions (Atta-Assamoah, 2013; Le Billon, 2001; Samset, 2009). This in turn leads to grievances and conflict.

Another source of conflict is the inability of states and institutions to be accountable, transparent and responsive to their citizens' needs and interests. Conflict is likely to be averted in cases where various stakeholders in society buy into the NRM in place. In this respect, civil society groups have increasingly become formidable actors demanding better accountability from states, participating in instilling better practices in post-conflict contexts and addressing inequitable access to natural resources (UN Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action, 2012). As a policymaker, the state's role in directing policy and strengthening institutions for the management of resources and arresting the part of the natural resources in conflict is crucial. This role can be the differentiating determinant of why some states with abundant resources have conflict while others do not.

2.3.1.2 Non-state actors and conflict

In resource-based conflicts, the actors involved have varying motivations and influences. The scholarship has well shown that rebel groups may be motivated by the extortion of economic rents and, as such, use this revenue as a means to support their rebellion. The presence of mineral resources, particularly the non-renewable resources widely dispersed and easily lootable, provides an additional incentive for greedy and opportunistic rebels to engage in armed conflict for personal enrichment and to generate income to finance armed conflicts (Rustad & Binningsbø, 2012). This perpetuates the fragility of the state and, at times, increases claims for secession (Wennmann, 2007).

The economic dimension of armed conflict needs to be recognised and managed because inability to do so can spoil peacebuilding efforts, especially in cases where current and former combatants obtain revenue from natural resources. Where economic factors are ends rather than means, they can perpetuate and sustain the armed conflict. Hence, Wennmann (2009) and McCandless (2009) recommend that NRM should be central to peacebuilding efforts.

Other actors outside the state worthy of mention are the private extractive industries. The extractive resources industry has been implicated for its involvement in the self-sustaining nature of corruption, especially in conflict settings, despite the unmistakable adverse effects on economic development (McCandless, 2009; O'Higgins, 2006). The private extractive sector could, in a corrupt manner, exploit poorly developed countries dependent on resource abundance revenues and in desperate need of foreign direct investment. Noteworthy is that corruption by the private sector is often done with the complicity of the host government officials. O'Higgins (2006) opines that rent-seeking regimes enable this corrupt behaviour of the private sector, which in turn allows those at the highest level of decision making to accumulate substantial unscrutinised wealth. This observation ties in with the resource curse and rentier state perspectives, where valuable resources make the control of the state more enticing but could also create grievances leading to conflict (O'Higgins, 2006). The aggrieved may use violence as a means to access power and, thereby, wealth (Le Billon, 2001).

Another area where the extractive industry is implicated is where easily lootable resources are strongly connected to the financing of conflict (McCandless, 2009). Collusion between the extractive industries and the armed elements has the potential to elongate and sustain the violent conflict. This is dependent on the regulatory environment, which might be non-existent in some conflict situations. McCandless (2009) underscores the imperative of the participation of the private sector in post-conflict natural resource governance and management.

2.3.2 Natural Resources and the Peace Process

In the last decade, scholarly interest and research have raised questions on the implications of conflict fuelled by natural resources on peace processes. Peace processes need to consider the diverse and multifaceted nature of the link between natural resources and armed conflict. These interrelations involve political, societal and economic aspects of a country, in addition to geographical and inherent characteristics of the natural resources involved. Failure to do so could seriously undermine the fragile peace process as well as intended efforts towards conflict transformation, further risking a relapse into violent conflict (Lujala & Rustad, 2011; Maphosa, 2012; Varisco, 2010). Several scholars (Edelen et al., 2014; Lujala & Rustad, 2011; Jensen et al., 2009; Maphosa, 2012; Rustad & Binningsbø, 2012; Varisco, 2010; Wennmann, 2011) recommend that post-conflict settlements consider natural resources in either financing reconstruction efforts and other vital peace-related needs or distributing and redistributing wealth generated from these resources towards sustainable growth and development. This is necessary to prevent causing new grievances or even fostering greed that could lead to conflict starting afresh. Undoubtedly, armed conflict implies a loss for all and integrating NRM into a broader framework in peace efforts can assist in regulating access to finances (Wennmann, 2011).

2.4 CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Conflict transformation can best be explained as a multi-level and complex process aimed at bringing about constructive systemic change in a given conflict context. It entails addressing root causes; instituting personal, relational, cultural and structural change; and building a shared vision for living together (Lederach & Maiese, 2009; McCandless, 2020b). A central principle of this concept is that conflict is inevitable in societies when there are incompatible goals, and it should therefore be viewed as a necessary vector to bring about essential constructive change. Lederach and Maiese (2009, p. 9) outline three components of setting in motion the change processes, namely

“the presenting situation, the horizon of the future and the development of change processes”. Conflict analysis is thus crucial as a first enquiry into the presenting conflict episode to determine what the conflict is about, the history of said conflict, actors involved and patterns of cooperation before envisioning the future and formulating the possible change required. Understanding attitudes and behaviours of the conflicting actors, as well as how they relate to the sources of conflict and with each other, is crucial in conflict transformation.

Although conflict transformation rests on similar foundations as conflict resolution, it is much more comprehensive and a future-oriented process. These two concepts are at times used interchangeably in texts dealing with the mediation of conflict. While conflict resolution attempts to frame the conflict as a shared problem and attempts to mediate for acceptable solutions between warring stakeholders, conflict transformation aims to “truly overcome revealed forms of direct, cultural and structural violence” (Reimann, 2005, p.10). It goes beyond the ‘win-win’ compromise settlement found in peace agreements and top-down approaches inherent to conflict resolution (Mitchell, 2002). Unlike in conflict resolution, where third parties primarily lead intervention through negotiations and diplomacy with passive participation of the grassroots levels and no broader involvement of the population, conflict transformation puts at its centre stage their participation (Reimann, 2005).

Essentially, conflict transformation is about building long-term infrastructure for peace, supporting internal actors to own and carry the process of change, and building ties and mutual trust among actors; and it is sensitive to local culture (Kriesberg, 2011; Reimann, 2005). Its importance lies in recognising the value of existing cultural practices in resolving conflict and concerted efforts to build on this rather than to transfer techniques merely across cultures (Reimann, 2005). It places much more emphasis on addressing root causes and facilitating an inclusive process that requires the buy-in of various stakeholders, including at grassroots levels, to build a shared vision for the future. In this way, interests of and relationships between multiple stakeholders (including those in support of the continuation of armed conflict) become a

focus for potential transformation (Miall, 2004). Importantly, this approach provides a platform to collectively identify the reasons for the armed conflict and concerted efforts on redressing these causes and create new structures and ways of interacting in the future (Lederach & Maiese, 2009).

While different scholars stress different aspects of what needs to be transformed and how to effect this transformation, there is broad consensus on what conflict transformation entails (Mitchell, 2002). McCandless (2020) identifies root causes and institutions as two areas that are crucial for conflict transformation outcomes. This entails attention to and radical change of issues, attitudes and behaviours of the various actors, rules and the very structures which give rise to conflict. Kriesberg (2011) cites South Africa as a notable example of political and social transformation after the decades of apartheid, even though general living conditions of people are yet to be transformed. In essence, conflict transformation is a continuous process that requires time, and any transformation should be pursued in an integrated manner to avoid generating new conflicts.

In addressing the root causes of conflict, the unique circumstances of a particular conflict inform the kind of transformation to be pursued. Miall (2004, p10) provides five areas or types of transformations, namely:

(i) Context transformations - this refers to concerted efforts undertaken to bring about changes within the context in which the conflict is embedded, such as governance arrangements, culture, institutions, which will ultimately result in changes of perceptions amongst the parties involved. For instance, efforts have to factor in whether people have the same access to government services or, in this case, do people benefit from the natural revenues services?

(ii) Structural transformations - in this case, attention is paid to transform the underlying structures which give rise to conflict. This would include a particular focus on various actors, state and economy, incompatible goals and relationships. In asymmetric conflicts, transformation efforts have to look at the roots of unbalanced and contested relationships.

(iii) Actor transformations include working with various actors to change their goals or alter their general approach to conflict.

(iv) Issue transformations entail working with various actors to reformulate their positions central to the conflict to reach compromises or solutions.

(v) Personal or elite transformations – individual changes of heart with decision making power at critical moments may be crucial.

While some of these transformations could happen in a shorter time frame, others would take time. In deep-rooted conflicts which have occurred over a long time, transformation cannot be immediate. Context and structural transformation are likely to happen gradually and over a longer time frame. Acting inclusively is key in initiating and sustaining any transformation (Kriesberg, 2011).

Conflict transformation's emphasis on addressing root causes, changing structures giving rise to conflict and veritable transformation of institutions present opportunities for natural resource-linked conflicts. Natural resources, which are a vital component of many war economies, could form part of a broader economic recovery strategy (McCandless, 2009). Facilitating the transformation of informal economies, such as artisanal mining, into legalised forms of economic activity is one such example with the potential to starve belligerents benefiting from it and generate income for the state (Lwanda, 2016). It presents opportunities for rebuilding the economy and reviving livelihoods in addition to other socio-political imperatives necessary for post-conflict reconstruction. If left unresolved, the interplay between natural resources and armed conflict can complicate efforts towards finding peace. Examples that are usually cited are the DRC, Liberia and Sierra Leone, where resource dimensions of the conflict with debilitating impact continued unabated years after active combat ended (Ballentine & Nitzschke, 2005; McCandless, 2009).

2.5 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Drawing on the literature discussed above, this research assumes a link between natural resources and the persistence of armed conflict in the CAR, and it is inspired by the question: *How has the CAR government sought to address the natural resource dimensions of the conflict in the country and, based on lessons arising, what are the possibilities of conflict transformation?* An analytical framework was developed, presented here, which provides a lens to examine the root causes of the presenting conflict in the CAR. Not only does the conflict transformation approach look at immediate problems, but also extends to the overall context where the conflict is expressed (Lederach & Maiese, 2009). I use this framework to look at the positions and interests of actors around natural resources and how these resources are regulated.

In the conflict transformation theory, conflict is viewed as a necessary disruption to bring about structural change, and it requires unpacking how the different factors feed into conflict. The first enquiry in conflict transformation looks at the presenting situation and entails unpacking the source of the conflict, the patterns and the history (Lederach & Maiese, 2009). I limit my application of the concept to the first enquiry to identify the root causes in an attempt to locate the much-needed consensus among varied actors to undertake conflict transformation. In doing so, I analyse the actors involved, their actions and patterns, the background of the conflict, context in which the conflict finds expression and the related linkages.

For this study, I use three key elements (actors, context and institutions) to analyse the natural resource dimensions of armed conflict in the CAR (see Figure 1 below). I use these three elements and how they interact to examine the root causes of the conflict in the CAR relating to the research questions. I argue that the context and the institutions enable the persistence of the conflict in the CAR.

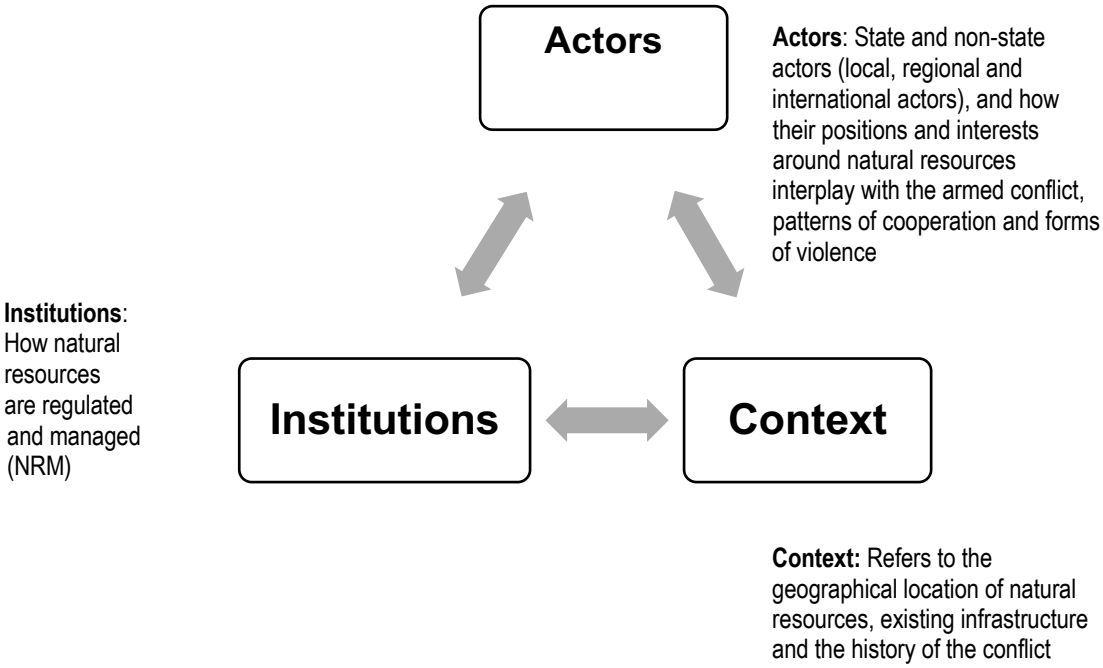


Figure 2. Schematic representation of the analytical framework depicting the interaction of the three elements I use to examine the natural resource dimensions of armed conflict in the CAR (Created by author)

With this framework, in Chapter four I analyse the positions and interests of the state and non-state actors around natural resources, as well as the history of and lessons arising from trying to address them. I also examine how these positions and interests interplay with the conflict, the patterns of conflict and cooperation among the actors, and different forms of violence and strategies employed by the actors. Equally necessary is to analyse how the context shapes and influences the positions and interests of the actors. Doing so allows better understanding of the conflict in the CAR, its history and how it has been sustained.

In scrutinising how the context and institutions feed into the armed conflict in the CAR, the attributes of natural resources and those deemed conflict resources, as well as geographic factors, are specified as recommended by Rustad, Lujala and Le Billon (2001) and Varisco (2010). I then examine the NRM in place and concrete efforts undertaken by the government to address these natural resource dimensions of the conflict. The conflict transformation approach goes beyond episodic violence. It is about building long-term

infrastructure for peace, supporting internal actors to own and carry the process of change, and building ties and mutual trust among actors (Kriesberg, 2011; Reimann, 2005). It requires, therefore, an understanding and better insight into the root causes. I use this understanding to identify areas for transformation and locate a shared consensus position necessary to set in motion system change espoused in conflict transformation and sustaining peace in Chapter five.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research strategy and methods used in conducting the study. The research, which is exploratory, was inspired by the question *How has the government of the CAR sought to address the natural resource dimensions of the armed conflict in the country and, based on lessons arising, what are the possibilities of conflict transformation?* Following a qualitative case study format, experts' views were solicited and triangulated with both primary and secondary sources of information. This chapter details and justifies the methods used in undertaking this study, from the research approach, sampling and collection of data to how the data were prepared for analysis. It further casts light on the steps followed to ensure that the research is credible and trustworthy. Moreover, it gives an account of how ethical considerations were adhered to, as well as the steps taken to address constraints during the research process. It ends with a positionality statement in conformity with ethics standards.

3.2 RESEARCH STRATEGY

The research comprised a qualitative case study of the CAR, focusing on the conflict since 2012. Past studies (Edelen et al., 2014; Jensen et al., 2009; Kisangani, 2015) linking natural resources and the armed conflict in the CAR used qualitative methods and relied on expert input. Similarly, this study depends on the accounts of identified experts and their interpretations in recognition that there is more than one reality (Creswell, 2007; Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012; Nieuwenhuis & Smit, 2012; Patton, 2002). The study embraces an interpretive approach within this bounded system. Granted, the experts' views cannot represent the views of the general populace. However, their knowledge base, access to various stakeholders and frame of reference are of value considering that conflict transformation and sustaining peace

entail an inclusive process accommodative of all sectors of society. The aim is to move beyond the correlations provided by most quantitative studies done on this subject globally, within the political economy of conflict.

The findings of this study on the CAR may not be transferable to other social settings where armed conflict exists. Also, this study may not pronounce on what is true or more accurate due to multiple realities which could be subjective (Guba & Lincoln, in Patton, 2002), unlike a positivist approach where the emphasis is on establishing truth and objective reality. Nonetheless, the study attempts to provide an in-depth explanation of the emergent patterns of meaning (Creswell, 2007; Nieuwenhuis & Smit, 2012).

3.3 DATA COLLECTION: PRIMARY AND SECONDARY, AND SAMPLING

Primary and secondary sources of information were combined to address the research problem adequately. The primary data was collected through interviews, using a semi-structured interview questionnaire through email and WhatsApp. The secondary data collection entailed conducting a documentary analysis of various publications such as scholarly articles, government publications and proclamations, electronic articles, think tank research reports and policy briefs about the subject under exploration (Neuman, 2014). I perused primary sources including the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (PAPR, 2019) signed in February 2019, some reports compiled by the UN Panel of Experts (PoE) from 2016 until 2019 and the translated version of the 2009 Mining Code. Some of the secondary sources I used in the study were drawn from grey literature. These include mapping of conflict studies and artisanal mining sites conducted by the International Peace Information Service (IPIS), the World Bank reports and analysis of the CAR conflict by International Crisis Group (ICG). Documents in French were translated using DeepL.

Through the documentary analysis of the documents as mentioned above, I was able to cross-validate the answers provided by interviewed experts. I gained better insights on the positions and interests of actors around natural resources, how these resources are regulated and managed as well as efforts undertaken by the government of the CAR to address the natural resource dimensions of the conflict. The reports by the PoE provide an assessment of political and security developments and identify actors who violate the sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council. As a policy document, the 2009 Mining Code provides the regulatory framework used for managing natural resources in CAR. Furthermore, the mapping studies conducted by the IPIS show different mining sites, their geographic context and link some actors to involvement in illicit activities around natural resources.

Using this strategy of combining primary and secondary sources in addition to targeted experts' interviews resulted in a detailed and in-depth description of the phenomenon under study. I used semi-structured interviews to ensure comparability of the collected data from experts (Creswell, 2007; Kumar, 2005; Patton, 2002). I had a list of questions which I used as a start but followed up on answers provided for clarity. As I perused documents, I was able to add some pointed questions to obtain expert views and to triangulate responses. Due to internet challenges, I collected the data by email and through virtual interviews. The experts obliged by sending their answers by email and WhatsApp. The answered questionnaires were immediately marked upon receipt to identify the respondents by their ascribed alphabetical number easily. Where I conducted interviews, I typed the written notes without delay. This ensured that the integrity of the collection process was not compromised and provides an audit trail, as recommended by Kawulich and Holland (2012).

Non-probability sampling was used for this study. Ten experts were identified through purposive sampling and targeted for interviews (Creswell, 2007; Laher & Botha, 2012; Patton, 2002). These experts were selected from the diplomatic corps comprising embassies and multilateral institutions (the AU and the UN), as well as government officials, CSOs and think tanks, to obtain diverse views

and as much insight as possible suitable for the scope of this research. However, some identified potential interviewees were not available and others withdrew from participation after I had sent introduction letters and semi-structured questions. Snowball sampling was thus activated. Referrals were sought from the already engaged experts, and the referred experts were solicited to ensure that adequate information on the subject matter was obtained (Creswell, 2007; Laher & Botha, 2012; Patton, 2002). While the number of experts engaged did not reach the targeted number of 10, the use of primary and secondary sources made up for this limitation.

For ease of reference, I clustered the chosen experts according to the sector they represented as mentioned above (see Appendix D) and they were ascribed a numbered alphabet. This ensured that the identities of the experts were protected and accorded them anonymity. The experts engaged provided guidance on this aspect, but the decision was taken solely by me. Overall, I engaged six experts. Table 1 below shows the schedule and format of the engagements:

No	Expert	Date of interview request	Response format (interview/email/WhatsApp)	Date of response
1	A1	7 July 2020	Email/WhatsApp	25 July 2020
2	B2	7 July 2020	Email/WhatsApp	27 July 2020
3	C1	18 July 2020	Email	25 July 2020
4	D1	17 July 2020	Interview	11 August 2020
5	A3	30 July 2020	Interview	18 August 2020
6	B1	27 July 2020	Interview/WhatsApp	26 August 2020

** The table excludes experts who were solicited but did/could not respond.

Table 1. Engagement schedule

3.4 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

To organise, understand, interpret and form generalisations of the data collected from both the experts, primary and secondary sources, thematic and

content analysis was used for this research. Thematic analysis is recommended by Neuman (2014) and Kawulich and Holland (2012) as a useful approach to analyse data derived from interviews. While my research questions guided how I initially organised the collected data, I endeavoured to identify elements of meaning from the text and labelled these as an initial analysis process (Table 2 below provides an example of the procedure followed in interpreting the data). Labelling collected data to assign meaning is referred to as coding (Neuman, 2014). Coding helps to summarise and condense collected data. I further used the three elements in the analytical framework (actors, context and institutions) to group the data into manageable segments while grouping those conveying similar ideas. From these segments, I extracted themes to establish meaning. Some themes were drawn from terms used by the interviewed experts and the reviewed literature. Neuman (2014, p.481) suggests that 'themes could come from the research questions, concepts in the literature, terms used by members in the social setting or new thoughts stimulated by immersion in the data'. I examined the meaning of the text through content analysis. The overall aim was to ensure that the collected data answered the research objectives and questions.

Research question/statement	Meaning Unit	Condensed Meaning Unit	Code	Unit of Analysis	Theme
Positions of actors around natural resources (NR)	• The CAR has many high-quality minerals, especially gold and diamonds, widely dispersed in remote regions.	• Natural resource wealth	NR wealth	Context	Widely dispersed high-quality NR
	• Many main armed groups covet these resources, which are mined informally, and smuggled	• Occupation of resource-endowed territories/illegal trade across borders	Coveting of NR/informal mining	Actors/ Institutions	Informal mining of NR Smuggling of resources

	through the borders. • Armed groups' involvement in the armed conflict is a combination of resource capture, survival and means to ascend to political office. • It is easy because of porous borders and the army has no means to secure the territory.	• Strategic involvement linked to political and economic aspirations • Incapacity to secure the territory/borders	• Resource capture • Insecurity	Actors Context/Institutions	Strategic occupation of resource-rich regions Insecurity and porous borders / weak army enables resource capture

Table 2. Analysis schedule: Example of how data were organised for interpretation

Analytic reflection entailed going through the data repeatedly to abstract and sound out ideas conveyed by the experts and reviewed literature concerning the questions raised in this study. I highlighted emerging and recurring terms, phrases and themes from the text to derive meaning. It is recommended to consistently organise data according to frequent terms and themes while looking for patterns and trends, and recording similarities, differences and complementarities (Creswell, 2007; Kawulich & Holland, 2012; Kumar, 2005; Patton, 2002). I grouped the information that spoke to a 'theme' to provide a detailed account of the subject under study. The research questions were a constant reference to ensure that I do not lose focus.

The presentation of the analysis is divided into two. I present the first analysis in Chapter five, where I apply the analytical framework drawn from the concept of conflict transformation. I use three key elements (actors, context and institutions) to organise and analyse the collected raw data on the natural

resource dimensions of armed conflict in the CAR. The second analysis is in Chapter six, where I outline emerging concepts from the literature review on the background to the conflict and answers from the experts. In this chapter, I also use the different arguments posited by the theories (greed versus grievances, the resource curse and the rentier state) and the literature reviewed to enrich the analysis. I close the section by reflecting on the possibilities of conflict transformation in the CAR.

3.5 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

While quantitative research is concerned with the validity and reliability of data collection (Kumar, 2005; Mentz & Botha, 2012), qualitative research is more concerned with credibility and trustworthiness (Niewenhuis & Smit, 2012). This was achieved by gathering information from multiple sources to allow for triangulation of the data (Niewenhuis & Smit, 2012; Patton, 2002). The ultimate goal was to make certain that the data would be 'credible', 'transferable', 'dependable' and could be 'confirmed', as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (cited in Niewenhuis & Smit, 2012, p. 137). I kept a notebook to record thoughts related to the research, writing down recurring terms from the data and first impression interpretation. Care was taken to maintain the marked answered questionnaires and written notes as close to their original form as practicable to preserve their integrity. Also, all the sources of information used have been referenced.

3.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Several constraints were encountered during this study, including limited access to experts to engage on the topic, inability to travel to the CAR for the intended face-to-face interviews and internet blackouts. For ethical considerations, it would not have been feasible to engage with some actors (particularly conflicting parties who reside in remote areas in the western and eastern regions of the CAR) to obtain their first-hand accounts. Conducting research during the COVID-19 pandemic posed several challenges, including

inability to travel to conduct face-to-face interviews and unavailability of some identified experts. I had to be mindful of the sensitivities around approaching people during this time, most of whom were working remotely from their usual workplaces and missions. Besides, the research coincided with preparations for electoral campaigning as the CAR prepares for its legislative and presidential elections scheduled for December 2020. Due to this busy schedule, time differences and other constraints imposed by COVID-19, and the sensitivity of the topic, some experts across the sectors could no longer participate. Moreover, the data collection strategy had to be modified to include email and WhatsApp exchanges in addition to virtual interviews due to internet challenges in Ethiopia which lasted for most of July 2020.

Despite the mentioned limitations, an effort was made to engage varied experts. These experts had proven experience of working in the CAR and could offer well-informed diverse views. They provided an in-depth description of the subject under study. They offered insight into the current challenges for the CAR and impediments to transforming the natural resource dimensions of the armed conflict. The findings of this research will undoubtedly enrich the debate, contribute to the scholarly work on the conflict in the CAR, and inform policy considerations towards conflict transformation and sustaining peace efforts.

3.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethical guidelines of the University of the Witwatersrand (Knight, 2018) were adhered to in conducting this study. The research proposal was defended virtually on 17 March 2020 before the defence panel comprising four senior lecturers at Wits School of Governance and my supervisor. It was passed with minor revisions. The revised proposal was approved on 22 May 2020 and ethics clearance was granted on 25 June 2020. The introductory letters, consent forms and semi-structured questionnaire were subsequently sent to the targeted experts to request their voluntary participation (see Appendices A, B and C). Anonymity and confidentiality were afforded to the experts, as

recommended by Kumar (2005), Ogletree and Kawulich (2012), and Patton (2002). It was impressed upon the experts that responses to the questions sent by email implied voluntary consent. It was also emphasised that the experts could withdraw their participation at any point. No incentives were provided for participating and all the experts gave freely of their time.

3.8. POSITIONALITY

Ethical considerations require that the positionality of the researcher be declared. I am a civil servant and a diplomat seconded to the AU Peace and Security Department as a political officer in the Peace and Security Council (PSC) Secretariat. The secretariat provides a supportive function to the PSC, an organ of the AU mandated with advancing peace and security in Africa. Working within the peace and conflict space stimulated my research interests. These interests are borne from the realisation that the African political and security landscape is confronted with armed conflicts that seemingly defy efforts to mediate and reconcile the actors involved in the conflict. In addition to CAR, some of the countries in protracted conflicts are the DRC, South Sudan, Somalia, Libya and Mali. What these countries have in common is their rich endowment in natural resources.

While my professional position did not have any bearing on the research, it facilitated access to a variety of stakeholders, particularly in diplomatic circles, who referred me to other experts. In this research, I used publicly accessible material in addition to scholarly articles. No classified information was used in this study, in accordance with the employment code that binds employees from using prohibited and classified information.

CHAPTER FOUR
PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings of this study, obtained from primary and secondary sources, are presented in this chapter. These entail answers and views from the experts, as well as various primary and secondary sources of information perused. The findings in this chapter correlate with the sub-questions introduced in Chapter one (Section 1.5), viz:

(i) What are the positions and interests of the state and non-state actors around natural resources?
(ii) What is the history of, and lessons arising, in trying to address these positions and interests around natural resources?
(iii) How are the natural resources regulated and managed, from the extraction process to the access of resource revenues, in the CAR?

I use the three elements proposed in the analytical framework to arrange and present the findings in this chapter. I further use themes arising from the collected data to provide detailed responses to the research questions mentioned above as derived from experts, primary and secondary sources. The possibilities of conflict transformation are explored in the next chapter.

The rest of the chapter is structured as follows:

- Section 4.2 is on 'context' looking at extractive natural resources found in the CAR, how mining operations have been conducted over the years and shows the geographical context in which these resources are deposited and closes with identifying conflict resources.
- Section 4.3 looks at 'actors' detailing the activities of the different state and non-state actors, and their patterns of conflict and cooperation.

- Section 4.4 is on ‘institutions’, detailing how natural resources are regulated and managed in the country, efforts by the government of the CAR in addressing the conflict and followed by lessons arising from addressing these dimensions.
- Section 4.5 presents overarching analysis on actors, institutions and context through the lens of the analytical framework.

The findings are organised in this way to provide a picture of how natural resources interplay with conflict in the CAR. Through using the three key elements presented in the analytical framework, I elucidate the root causes of the conflict. Conflict analysis is an essential and first step in conflict transformation efforts. In doing so, I can assess the possibilities of conflict transformation in this conflict setting.

4.2 CONTEXT

4.2.1 Extractive Natural Resource Base

The CAR has an impressive wealth of extractive non-renewable natural resources. Approximately 34 natural resources have been identified in the country (B1). The CAR has diamonds, gold, iron ore, uranium, phosphates, cobalt, copper, coltan, tin and tungsten, as well as possible oil deposits among others (Edelen et al., 2014; World Bank, 2018). There are 16 provinces in the CAR, 10 of these produce gold and diamond deposits are found in nine of them (IPIS, 2018). Two main diamond fields are in the remote western and eastern regions with a ‘combined surface area of more than 80 000 square kilometres’ (World Bank, 2018, p. 16). The diamonds in the CAR are exclusively alluvial, with exceptional high quality and value (Malpeli & Chirico, 2014). Alluvial gold and gold deposits found in hard rocks were mined as a marginal activity until recently, and its mining has picked up since 2014 (IPIS, 2018). Oil is being explored in the north and north-western areas of the CAR bordering Chad (B1; B2). While official data on the oil reserves in the country are not available, the basins from which explorative activities are ongoing in northern CAR overlap

with those in neighbouring Chad where exploration is in an advanced stage (Weyns et al., 2014). Moreover, there remains an underexplored geological terrain (B1; World Bank, 2018).

Mining in the CAR is mainly artisanal or small scale. Even in the years preceding the political and security instability that has ensued since 2012, there was minimal industrial mineral production (Jaillon & De Brier, 2019). Mining, particularly for diamonds and gold, is done by unskilled workers with the use of rudimentary utensils and techniques (Malpeli & Chirico, 2014; Matthysen & Clarkson, 2013). Before gaining independence from France in 1960, the French colonial authorities gave mining concessions to private enterprises to exploit the CAR's abundant resources (ICG, 2010; Knoope & Buchanan-Clarke, 2017; Matthysen & Clarkson, 2013). The sole intention was to exploit these natural resources for maximum profit, with scant attention paid to the development of the country (ICG, 2010; World Bank, 2019).

After the country's independence from France in the 1960s, successive government administrations continued with this system of granting mineral concessions to international actors, who in turn have to provide some essential services and infrastructure (Knoope & Buchanan-Clarke, 2017). Also, prospective rights were afforded those considered allies of the governing elites with the expectation that they would sponsor and protect the government of the time (Dukhan, 2018). This practice has been detrimental to the development of the mining sector and the country.

4.2.2 Geographical Context of Natural Resources

The natural resources in the CAR are widely dispersed in remote regions, mainly in the north-eastern and south-eastern, as well as the western parts of the CAR (see Figures 3 and 4 below). In the west region, alluvial diamonds are found around the towns of Berberati, Carnot and Nola, in an area underlain by the Carnot Sandstone (DeWitt, Chirico, Bergstresser & Clark, 2018; IPIS, 2018). Gold deposits are found around Amada Gaza, Bossangoa, Mbrés,

Sibut, Sosso-Nakombo and Yaloké, among others (DeWitt et al., 2018; IPIS, 2018). Alluvial diamonds underlain by the Moukka-Ouadda Sandstone and gold deposits are found in areas around Bria, Sam Ouandja, Kembé and Grand Nzako, among others, in the eastern CAR (DeWitt et al., 2018). Oil and gas are purportedly being explored in several basins in the northeast of the CAR, around Birao and the north of N'délé, along the border with Chad, with activities extending towards the Bossangoa zone in Ouham (Weyns et al., 2014; UN, 2016). Iron and related minerals (ores) are found in the Dekoa-Bougoyo area in south-eastern CAR, and manganese is in the Boali in Ombella-M'Poko province in the north-eastern region. Uranium is in the Bakouma sub-province in Mbomou province, southeast of the CAR (Glawion & De Vries, 2018; Matthysen & Clarkson, 2013). While there is not much information on the other natural resources found in the CAR (oil, gas, iron and uranium), interest has been mostly in diamonds and lately in gold.

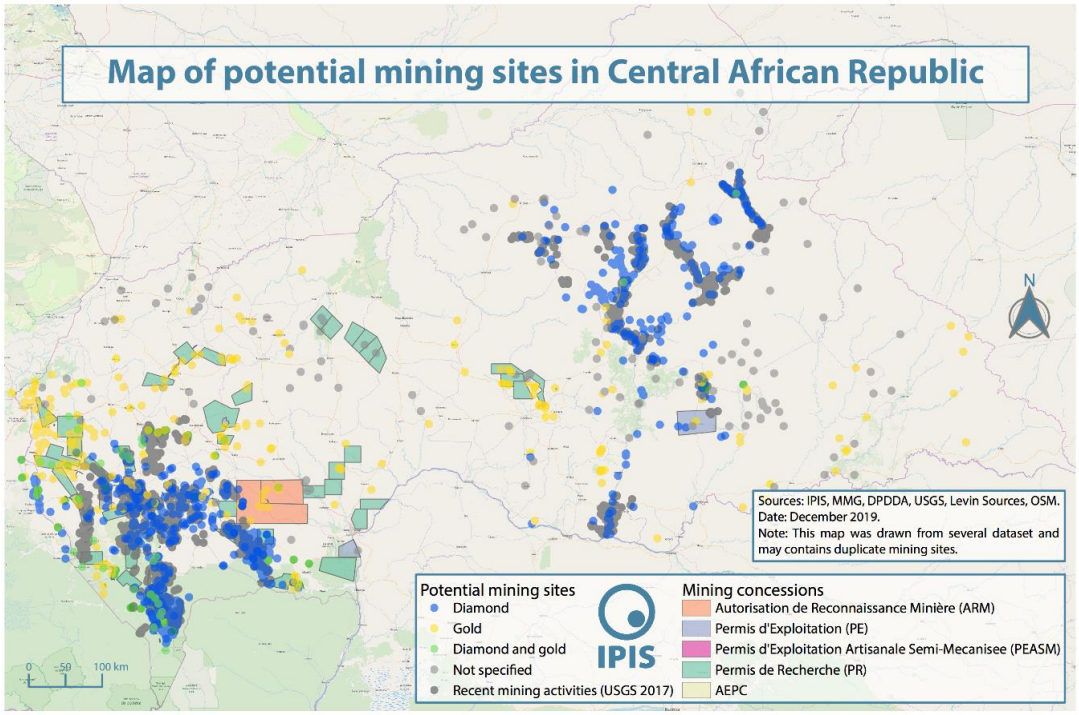


Figure 3. Map showing potential mining sites in the CAR (Source: Jaillon & De Brier, 2019, p. 6)

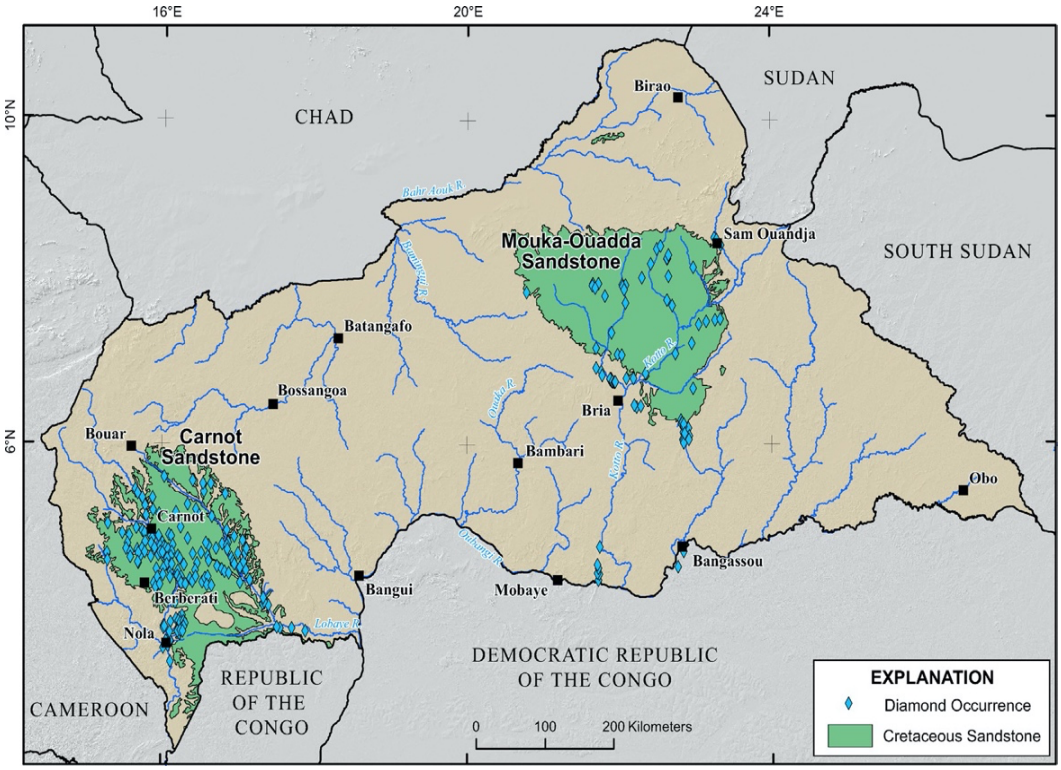


Figure 4. Map showing diamond deposits in the east and west of the CAR: The Carnot and Mouka-Ouadda Sandstone formations (Source: Malpeli & Chirico, 2014, p. 250)

Poor terrain and the lack of institutional infrastructure characterise the resource-rich territories, especially those in the north of the CAR (IPIS, 2018). The infrastructure in the CAR is underdeveloped, with poor roads that are mostly impassable during rainy seasons, especially in the northern regions, making access of the state to these regions difficult (Matthysen & Clarkson, 2013; Malpeli & Chirico, 2014; World Bank, 2019). Low and gently rolling hills dominate the topography of the CAR and slightly higher elevations are found in the northern parts of the country (DeWitt et al., 2018).

What sets the regions apart is their proximity to the capital Bangui, the presence of state administrators, ethnic make-up as well as the proximity to regional armed conflicts (Malpeli & Chirico, 2014, p. 250). Malpeli and Chirico (2014) found that the northern regions were almost twice the distance of the western regions from Bangui. The western regions, rich in natural resources, have not attracted armed groups in the same way as the eastern regions

because the government has limited control in the west (B1; B2; A3). Experts note that the northeast, bordering Chad and Sudan, is the most insecure of the regions rich in extractable non-renewable natural resources.

4.2.3 Conflict Resources

Diamonds and gold, alluvial in nature, are deemed ‘conflict resources’ in the CAR (Malpeli & Chirico, 2014; IPIS, 2018). The use of the term ‘conflict resources’ became prominent in scholarly work since the 1990s, following debates on the linkages between natural resources and armed conflict. It refers to the resources central to the conflict or those used in financing conflict, contributing to the sustenance and elongation of some armed conflicts (Samset, 2009). For decades, the production of diamonds in the CAR has been associated with the intractable armed conflict and political instability (DeWitt et al., 2018). The natural resources coveted include, but are not limited to, gold and diamond (C1; A3). Figure 4 above (p.56) shows the diamond deposits in the CAR. Since 2013, both former Séléka and anti-Balaka armed groups (see Figure 5 below) are linked with the occupation of mining sites and predation of the high-value resources found in both the western and north-eastern regions (IPIS, 2018; Dukhan, 2018).

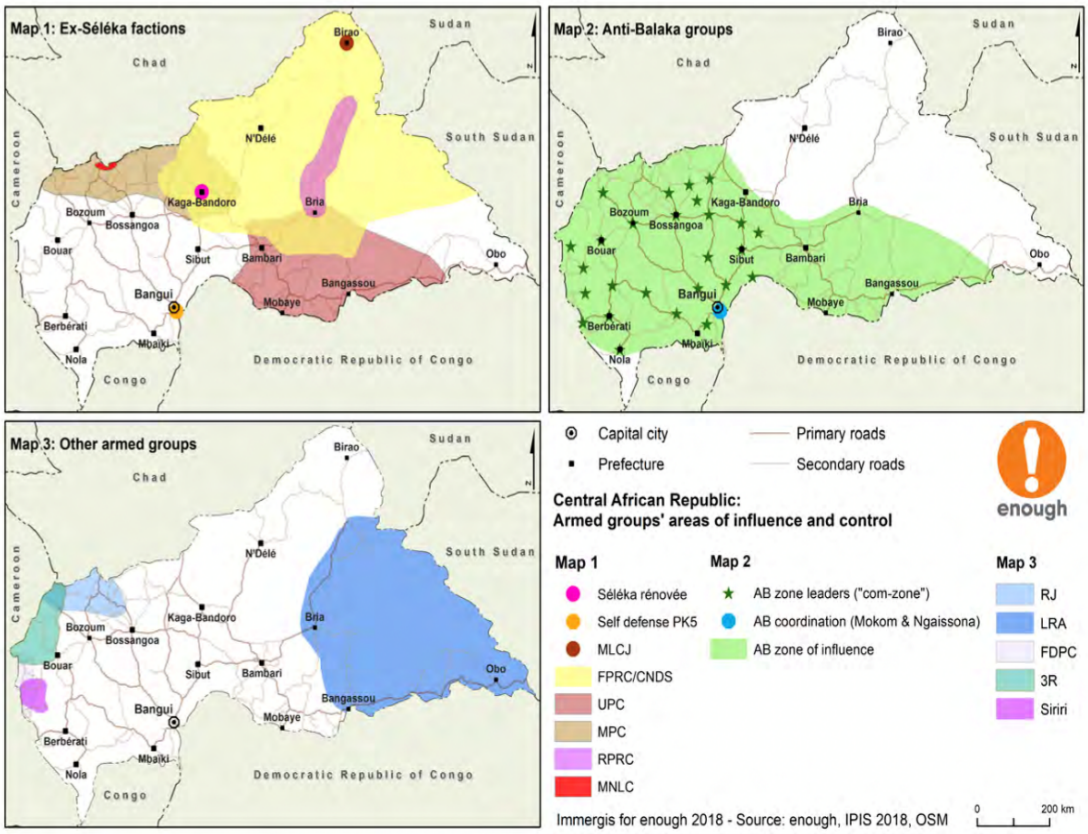


Figure 5. Maps showing areas controlled by the different armed groups in the CAR (Dukhan, 2018, p. 4)

4.3 ACTORS

Various actors, both state and non-state, have varying positions and interests around natural resources in the CAR. While many of the actors are local, there is a regional dimension and the involvement of international actors. It is, however, difficult to identify all the actors involved in the armed conflict in the CAR, but locally these include politicians and armed groups (C1). The armed groups involved include the former Séléka armed groups that have multiplied since 2013 and the anti-Balaka that initially formed as 'self-defence' militias (Dukhan, 2018). The armed groups engaged in illegal artisanal mining of gold and diamonds, and continue to benefit financially from these activities in the absence of state presence in some parts of the country, especially in the north (A3). These actors clash over control of natural resource-rich territories, but cooperate where it is mutually beneficial. They position themselves for acquiring political positions (IPIS, 2018; A3; B1; D1). Since their origin, the

Séléka groups comprised foreign belligerents from the neighbouring countries (B1). International actors doing business in the country form allegiances with armed groups (Dukhan, 2018; B2; A3).

4.3.1 State Actors

As the custodian of natural resources, the state bears the responsibility of regulating and managing the extraction of natural resources. The state issues permits for mining operations (C1; A1). However, some officials are implicated in corrupt practices, especially in areas controlled by the government (A1; B2). The corruption pertains to the issuance of permits and licences for mining activities (A1). Corruption contributes to the conflict in the country (A3). Some state officials enable anti-Balaka's predation of natural resources in the western regions (IPIS, 2018).

4.3.2 Non-State Actors

(1) Armed groups control natural resource-rich sites

The armed groups control vast territories rich in various natural resources (A1; B1; B2). According to B2, these natural resources include diamonds, gold and uranium. C1 opined that although it is common knowledge that armed groups exploit minerals in the CAR for economic or financial transactions more than the state does, it is difficult to link specific actors to a particular area with mineral resources. There is little evidence or proof of how the non-state armed actors use the illicit extraction of and trade in natural resources to sustain themselves in the CAR, despite the many claims of armed groups linked to the pillaging of natural resources (D1). Table 2 below provides a list of 12 armed groups and their respective areas of dominance as well as minerals found in these strongholds. A comprehensive list of active armed groups in the country is attached as Appendix G. Almost all the armed groups emerging from the now-defunct Séléka alliance are somewhat involved in the predation of natural resources. Noteworthy is that armed groups not involved in the illicit exploration of non-renewable resources are implicated in the pillaging of other

resources not covered in the scope of this research, such as timber and cattle (B1; D1; A3).

At the time of the 2012 uprising, five armed groups formed the Séléka alliance originating from the northeast of the CAR with a known history of controlling the artisanal mining in these regions (Kah, 2013; Glawion & De Vries, 2018). Séléka comprised *Union des Forces Democratiques pour le Rassemblement* (UFDR), *Convention des Patriots pour la Justice et la Paix* (CPJP), *Convention Patritique pour le Salut Wa Kodro* (CPSK), *Front Démocratique du Peuple Centraficaine* (FDPC), and the Chadian group called the *Front Populaire pour le Redressment* (FPR). These groups from Vakaga province, which lies close to the Sudan and Chad borders, have over time competed with one another – at times through violent confrontation – over the exploitation and trade of the natural resources abundant in this region (B2; IPIS, 2018). Mercenaries from Sudan and Chad were part of the Séléka from the outset (Weyns et al., 2014). The Séléka alliance has since 2014 splintered into many armed groups that compete for dominance and control of the locales in the northeast, especially those areas rich in natural resources (Glawion & De Vries, 2018). The groups that emerged from the Séléka include the following:

- *Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique* (FPRC);
- *Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique* (UPC);
- *Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique* (MPC);
- *Rassemblement Patriotique pour la Renouveau de la Centrafique* (RPRC);
- *Mouvement Nationale pour la Liberation de la Centrafique* (MNLC);
- *Front du people Congolais pour le Changement et la Démocratie* (FCCPD);
- *Front Démocratique du Peuple Centrafricain* (FDPC);
- *Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique – Seriri* (MPC Seriri);
- *Reformed Séléka (*formerly CPSK)*;*
- *Commission Nationale de Defense et de Sécurité* (CNDS);
- *Mouvement des Libérateurs Centraficains pou la Justice* (MLCJ); and

- *Parti du Rassemblement de la Nation Centrafricaine* (PRNC).

(Dukhan, 2018; IPIS, 2018; UN, 2019)

Although the interests, strengths and strategies of the various armed groups differ, in the main their modus operandi is to take over a territory and to establish their administration parallel to that of the government to issue mining permits, trade and smuggle mineral resources (Weyns et al., 2014; UN, 2017). Not only do the armed groups attack the local populace, but the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in the CAR (MINUSCA) and FACA are also targeted to deter them from securing resource-rich territories (B1; B2). Some even use landmines in their quest for domination of these areas (B2). Armed groups are known for terrorising the populace, followed by imposing taxation for protection they offer inhabitants (D1). These armed groups mostly covet natural resources production hubs and transit routes (UN, 2019). In addition to revenues generated from exploiting the artisanal mining in their areas of control, the armed groups target miners from whom they extort taxation and offer security services to companies involved in oil exploration activities (B1; B2; IPIS, 2018; UN, 2017). The FPRC, the former Séléka armed group, has the most sophisticated strategy of predation with various means of revenue generation encompassing control of mining hubs, provision of security services to Chinese companies involved in oil exploration and for Sudanese traders (IPIS, 2018; UN, 2017). Sizeable diamond sites and a significant portion of gold sites are under the control of the FPRC and RPRC, both former Séléka armed groups (IPIS, 2018).

Complicating matters is that some of the members of these armed groups are not CAR citizens. It is suspected that some are from neighbouring Chad and Sudan, while others are from West Africa (A1; B1; B2; C1; A3). The former Séléka groups facilitate the entry of foreigners, many of them from Chad, to work as diggers in the mining sites (UN, 2019). The various groups use fighters from the neighbouring countries to boost their capabilities as and when necessary. The PRNC (a much recent splinter from the RPRC) has links with fighters from Darfur in Sudan (UN, 2019). The FPRC went on a recruitment

drive for additional belligerents from Sudan and South Sudan to regain the ground it lost after a confrontation with the PRNC and MLCJ around July 2019 (UN, 2019). Moreover, raw diamonds and gold continue to be smuggled through Chad and Cameroon, where mineral collectors eventually trade them on a legal market (A1; B1; B2; Weyns et al., 2014; UN, 2019). Most Muslim mineral collectors from Bangui settled in Cameroon, where they established natural resource buying houses after the conflict in 2013 (World Bank, 2018).

The anti-Balaka group is most active in the western regions where there are gold deposits, particularly around Amada Gaza, Bossangoa, Mbrés, Yaloké, Sibut and Sosso-Nakombo (IPIS, 2018). Particularly concerning is that the anti-Balaka has a somewhat relative influence over some local authorities and, as such, anti-Balaka's illegal profiteering is often done with the complicity of local authorities (IPIS, 2018). Only those involved in looting and acquiring weapons generated from the illicit mining and trade of natural resources generally gain.

While natural resources in these regions have been used to acquire arms, other groups benefit from imposing tax levies. The UN PoE reported that the UPC and anti-Balaka acquire weapons in the neighbouring DRC in exchange for natural resources (UN, 2019). Armed groups benefit more from taxation collected along the migratory routes, especially those involving cattle herders, than they do from extractive mining activities (B1; D1). The former Séléka groups have roadblocks that far exceeds those by the government (149 versus 115), which they use for the extortion of taxes (IPIS, 2018). For example, the UPC was found to derive more financial gain from levying taxes in regions they controlled in a simulation exercise conducted by the UN PoE (D1). Extractive activities involve a long and complex chain compared to direct levying of taxes that offers immediate benefits (D1).

No	Name	Acronym	Leader(s)/ Ethnic	Date established	Stronghold	Natural resources found	Origins/ Association	PAPR Signatory /Non-signatory
1	*Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique* /Union for Peace in the CAR	UPC	Ali Darassa (Nigerian Fulani Oudda)	Sept/Oct 2014	Alindao, Bokolobo Ouaka, Basse Kotto and Mboumou. (eastern CAR) Béma (near the DRC border)	Diamonds, gold, uranium	Ex-Séléka Association with a neighbouring country	Signatory
2	*Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique* /Popular Front for the Rennaissance of the CAR	FPRC	Michel Djotodia (Runga) Nourredine Adam (Runga)	Aug 2014	Vakaga and Hauto-Kotto provinces Birao, Ndélé, Bria, Kaga-Bandoro (northern and eastern CAR)	Diamonds, gold, oil (provide security to Chinese company exploring oil)	Ex-Séléka	Signatory
3	*Rassemblement Patriotique pour la Renouveau de la Centrafique*/ Union for Central African Renewal	RPRC	Zakara Damane (Gula), Djono Ahaba	Nov 2014	Bria, Tiringou (central-eastern CAR)	Diamonds, gold	Ex-Séléka	Signatory
4	*Mouvement des Libérateurs Centraficains pou la Justice*/Movement of Central African Liberators for Justice	MLCJ	Tamou Deya Gilbert (Kara)	Late 2008, left FPRC late 2014	Birao, Bria (north-eastern and central CAR)	Diamonds, gold, oil	Ex-Séléka	Signatory
5	Anti-Balaka-pro Bozizé		Maxime Mokom	May 2015	Bossangoa Gobongo (north of Bangu)	Gold		Signatory
6	Anti-Balaka		François Bozizé, Francis Bozizé		Bossangoa Gobongo, Boy-Rabe, Combattant (Bangui)	Gold		Non-signatory
7	*Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique* / Central	MPC	Mahamat al-Khatim (Chadian Arab - Salamat)	July 2015	Kaga-Bandoro (central CAR)	Diamonds, gold, potential oil	Ex-Séléka	Signatory

No	Name	Acronym	Leader(s)/ Ethnic	Date established	Stronghold	Natural resources found	Origins/ Association	PAPR Signatory /Non-signatory
	African Patriotic Movement				Moyenne-Sido (north-central CAR)			
8	Lord's Resistance Army	LRA	Joseph Kony		Obo, Sam-Ouandja, Yalinga area (eastern CAR)	Diamonds, gold	Ugandan origins/links	Non-signatory
9	*Commission Nationale de Defense et de Sécurité*/ National Defence and Security Committee	CNDS	Abdoulaye Hissène (Runga)	Oct 2016	Ndélé, Bria, Kaga-Bandoro	Diamonds, gold, oil	Ex-Séléka Military wing of FPRC	Non-signatory
10	*Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique – Siriri*	MPC Seriri	Mahamat Abdel Karim (Chadian Arab [Salamat])	July 2017	Noufou, Gamboula, Mambéré-Kadei (close to Cameroon border)	Diamonds, gold	Ex-Séléka, Association with a neighbouring country	Non-signatory
11	*Rassemblement des Républicains* /Rally of Republicans	RDR	Gaetan Boadé	Aug 2017	Ndassima	Gold	Former anti-Balaka	Non-signatory
12	*Parti du Rassemblement de la Nation Centrafricaine*	PRNC (splinter of RPRC)	Nourd Gregaza (Goula)	May 2019	Birao (northeast CAR)	Oil	Ex-Séléka	Non-signatory

Table 3. Armed groups active in extractive natural resource-rich regions. (Sources: Dukhan, 2018; IPIS, 2018; UN, 2016, 2017, 2019; Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic (PAPR), 2019)

(2) Regional actors in collusion with armed groups

The countries neighbouring the CAR (Chad, the DRC, Cameroon, the RoC, Sudan and South Sudan) play a critical role in the persisting conflict in the CAR. While some act as mediators or as part of ECCAS, which is the guarantor for peace agreements, individuals from these countries are implicated in the illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources in the CAR (A1; B1; C1; B2). Chad is implicated in supporting the Séléka armed groups to reinforce its position as a regional authority (Weyns et al., 2014). The IPIS study, however, established no precise links to Chad concerning the illicit exploitation of natural

resources in the CAR (Weyns et al., 2014). The armed groups have exploited the proximity of the CAR to these countries, and mainly Chad, Sudan and Cameroon are used as a transit for trading natural resources (A1; C1; B2). Out of the three countries, Cameroon, is the leading destination and transit (Knoope & Buchanan-Clarke, 2017; Weyns et al., 2014; Obale, 2016). A1 stated that the armed groups cooperate with individuals (not named) in these countries to trade minerals or transit to global markets. Moreover, some of the leaders and members of the armed groups are foreigners from these very countries (B1; B2). This has complicated peace processes, as some of the leaders benefit from the persisting instability (B2; A3). Some leaders of the armed groups are purportedly close to prominent politicians in the neighbouring countries (UN, 2016). The UN PoE contend that some leaders were able to bypass international sanctions and travel using diplomatic passports issued by neighbouring countries (UN, 2019).

(3) International actors cooperate with armed groups

Other actors involved in the CAR, outside the state, worthy of mention are the international private extractive enterprises. The joint venture between the Qatari company IAS International and the Chinese government-owned Poly Technologies Inc or PTI-IAS Petroleum Holding (commonly referred to as the Chinese company) is undertaking an exploration expedition for oil at Gaskai, north of N'délé (Weyns et al., 2014; UN, 2016). Other Chinese entities are involved in semi-artisanal mining and can be found at both gold and diamond sites (IPIS, 2018). Passendro Gold Project of AXMIN, a Canadian company involved in gold industrial mining in Bambari (Ouka province) has been in the country since 1996 (Matthysen & Clarkson, 2013). AREVA, a French state-owned nuclear company, has a 25-year permit to explore and exploit uranium in the east of the country near Bakouma (Matthysen & Clarkson, 2013). A1 indicated that AREVA currently has no physical presence in the country despite the permit. Other French companies can be found in major cities where there are diamonds (B2). The Russian company Lobaye Invest and the Wagner group's Evgeny Prigozhin's have permits to mine gold and diamonds

in north-eastern rebel-controlled regions and south-western regions (Marten, 2019; Dukhan, 2018; B2).

While some enterprises mentioned above are present purely for business, others have colluded with armed groups in some form relating to natural resources. Chinese, French and Russian companies have forged agreements with armed groups so that they do not clash with them in areas where they are active (B2). It appears that some Chinese entities involved in semi-artisanal mining bypassed formal channels of declaring mined products and this is often done with the complicity of some state officials (IPIS, 2018; Jaillon & De Brier, 2019). The Chinese company exploring oil employs armed groups as its security (B2; UN, 2017). Noteworthy is that the Wagner group's Evgeny Prigozhin facilitated talks with armed groups in neighbouring Sudan at the same time when the AU was leading negotiations and dialogue between these groups and the government (Dukhan, 2018). While it is unclear whether officials or Wagner employees led the Russian talks, they were conducted mainly in Khartoum in Sudan (ICG, 2019). Although these talks broke down when leaders of some groups withdrew, the Russian negotiations had proposed revenue sharing amongst all stakeholders (the government, private investors, armed groups and local communities) in addition to the cessation of violence (Dukhan, 2018).

4.3.3 Opportunistic Alliances among Armed Groups

Although the many armed groups fight for control of resource-rich territories, particularly in the north-eastern regions, they also cooperate and form alliances where it is beneficial for each of them. The FPRC and RPRC work together in their stronghold areas (UN, 2016). Amid attempts to unify the Séléka factions, championed by the FPRC, aimed at solidifying their political and economic interests, the MPC initially maintained its independence (UN, 2016). The hardliners within the FPRC threatens secession while developing shadow administrations parallel to that of the government (Dukhan, 2018). When the UPC's expansion threatened both the FPRC and the MPC into

Nana-Grebizi and Ouham, the FPRC and MPC formed an alliance (IPIS, 2018). Armed groups cooperate with others in countries used as transit (namely Chad, Sudan and Cameroon) for the global markets (A1). Moreover, the FPRC, UPC, MPC and RPRC (all former Séléka groups) coordinate in matters of arms supply from Chad, the DRC and Sudan (Dukhan, 2018). The armed groups form alliances and share pertinent political and military information to consolidate their control over natural resource-rich areas (Dukhan, 2018). For example, the FPRC and UPC share information on possible MINUSCA and FACA operations in their respective areas of control (B2). This present the groups with a stronger position to bargain for power in various peace initiatives (Dukhan, 2018; UN, 2019).

The armed groups are prone to expending violence in their areas of control as a show of force. They are vehemently opposed to government efforts to restore security in the regions, as this threatens their interests, especially in mining (B2; ICG, 2019). When the government planned to deploy the armed forces (FACA) in the north-eastern regions, the FPRC fired into the air, thus dissuading the deployment (UN, 2019). The situation has improved slightly, according to A3, as some armed elements of the armed groups are slowly being integrated into mixed patrols with MINUSCA and the FACA. The FPRC is mainly in charge of Vakaga province, through which trucks from the Sudan and Chad pass (UN, 2019). This arrangement holds, despite an agreement between the FPRC, RPRC and MLCJ on the regulation of taxation in this region and the trafficking system (UN, 2019). In September 2019, the MLCJ aligned with the PRNC against the FPRC during a confrontation in Birao. It should be noted that the creation of the PRNC was a ploy by the political and military leaders of the RPRC to deflect attention away from their involvement and avoid sanctions as signatories of the 2019 PAPR (UN, 2019).

An unlikely alliance is that between the former Séléka groups and the anti-Balaka. The MPC in the past allied with a rival group, a faction of the anti-Balaka, to fight the UPC (Knoope & Buchanan-Clarke, 2017). Another alliance between former Séléka groups and the anti-Balaka emanated from the talks in

Nairobi in 2015 that were facilitated by the RoC and Kenya (Dukhan, 2018). Dubbed the Nairobi Alliance, these warring groups on opposite ends agreed to bury the hatchet and position themselves as significant interlocutors for resolving the crisis in the country (Dukhan, 2018). Their alliance is activated as and when the need arises, while their military wings led by Hissène and Mokom respectively exchange information and supply arms and ammunition as well as collaborate in planning violent confrontations between communities (Dukhan, 2018). Their convergence lies in their dissatisfaction with the current president and his government.

4.4 INSTITUTIONS

4.4.1 Ineffective Natural Resource Management in the CAR

Inability to effectively regulate and manage natural resources contributes to the conflict in the country. NRM falls under the Ministry of Energy and Mines and the Directorate-General for Mining and Geology (World Bank, 2018). For years, since before the conflict, the 2009 Mining Code (promulgated into law by Decree 09.005 of 29 April 2009) was used to regulate the natural resources in the country (Matthysen & Clarkson, 2013). The 2009 Mining Code regulates all aspects of mining, ranging from the issuance of prospecting and exploration permits to exploitation of natural resources as well as their trade and transportation. While the CAR's mining code is in line with international standards, the main challenge has been the ability to implement the regulatory framework due to weak state institutions and human resource capacity, and insecurity (A1; B2; C1). The regulatory framework is opaque at best, with decrees and ordinances used alongside the mining code to legislate mining (World Bank, 2018). The production and trade of diamonds and gold are overseen by the *Bureau d'Évaluation et de Contrôle de Diamant et d'Or* (BECDOR), which has been in existence since 1982 (DeWitt et al., 2018). Yet, the sector is managed informally with limited state presence and oversight in mining sites, and this has been detrimental to its growth (Jaillon & De Brier,

2019). 50 per cent of the diamonds and gold production are estimated to have exited the CAR undeclared even before the 2013 crisis (World Bank, 2018).

Insecurity and lack of human resource capacity and state authority in the country are some of the challenges the government has in dispatching its duties and responsibilities around NRM (C1; A1; B2). The government has no control of mining and extraction of the mineral resources in the north-eastern part of the country, which is under the control of armed groups, compared to western regions where the government can issue concessions (C1; A1; B1). Only some mines in the western regions are certified to export diamonds in compliance with the KPCS (C1; A1; DeWitt et al., 2018). The government cannot enforce the law owing to the ill-equipped FACA and national police, leaving room for the armed groups to exploit these incapacities (B2). The Séléka groups display a clear military superiority over the FACA (Weyns et al., 2014). Government officials' involvement in the corrupt issuance of permits and licences in the areas where the government has some control presents challenges for the incumbent administration (A1). Some officials go to the extent of collaborating with armed groups (B2).

4.4.2 Unsuccessful efforts to Address Conflict around Natural Resources

Even before the start of the conflict in 2012, some initiatives were undertaken by the ousted Bozizé's government to transform the mining sector. These initiatives included an undertaking to revise the 2009 Mining Code, the establishment of an entity to conduct geological research called the *Direction de la Géologie, des Recherches Minières et du Cadastre Minier* and a union for the cooperatives leading artisanal mining (Matthysen & Clarkson, 2013; ICG, 2010; Weyns et al., 2014). Importantly, the CAR joined the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2008 (EITI, 2020). The EITI promotes transparency and accountability in the management of extractive natural resources (Edelen et al., 2014). The CAR has been a member of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) since the scheme's inception

in 2003 (Matthysen & Clarkson, 2013). Yet, despite these sound initiatives, the control of mining activities remained centralised under the supervision of Bozizé and elites of his clan, the Gbaya (ICG, 2010). As such, the management of the sector and the revenues was not done transparently.

Several interventions have since been undertaken by the CAR government to address the natural dimensions of armed conflict in the country, including a stipulation in a new constitution, reaching out to the various armed groups, and collaborating with the World Bank to institute much-needed reforms in the mining sector. The transitional government under former president Catherine Samba-Panza convened the Bangui Forum and National Reconciliation (hereafter referred to as Bangui Forum) in February 2015 which was attended widely by representatives from all the provinces of the country, including armed groups and the diaspora (A1, B2; C1; UN, 2015). One of the outcomes of the Bangui Forum was to amend the constitution (Glawion & De Vries, 2018). Article 60 of the 2015 Constitution of the CAR affords the national assembly an oversight function to review prospecting rights contracts before the government can sign and stipulates that these contracts should be publicised after signatures (World Bank, 2018). This is aimed at breaking away from past practices and conducting business transparently with accountability.

Among the tools used to address the illegal exploitation of non-renewable resources in the CAR, the KPCS focuses on diamonds (C1; A1). Following the 2012 conflict that erupted in the country, the CAR was placed under an embargo by the KPCS in June 2013 aimed at preventing the entry of illegally exploited diamonds into the global markets (Obale, 2016; Jaillon & De Brier, 2019). While the embargo restrains trade of illicitly exploited natural resources, it also means that the CAR loses much-needed revenues (B1; A3). The government, however, has no control over the territory in its entirety (A1; B1; B2; C1; A3). The armed groups control large swathes of territory, especially in the northern regions, and importantly have no respect for government authority (A1; B1; B2; C1). Nonetheless, the government has been trying to rebuild its capacity aimed at reclaiming control of the natural resources, but it is limited

by its lack of state authority and capable human resources (A1; B1; A3). Other non-renewable resources are not covered under the KPCS, leaving them vulnerable for exploitation and trade by the armed groups (A1).

The incumbent President Touadéra has reached out to the different armed groups. Despite his misgivings, he included some leaders of the armed groups in his cabinet in an attempt to reduce instability (UN, 2016). Touadéra is regarded as a peace-seeking reformer (Marten, 2019), and he has shown a positive disposition towards finding peace (Ukeje et al., 2019). Despite several efforts to accommodate armed groups through various peace agreements, including the latest 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic (PAPR) and inclusion in the cabinet, the armed groups remain the biggest obstacles to finding and sustaining peace (B2). The armed groups tend to renege on undertakings of peace agreements (B2), and their fragmentation along fluid ethnic lines complicate matters further (Ukeje et al., 2019). For example, the armed groups are reluctant to submit to the full disarmament programme (ICG, 2019). However, A3 opined that progress has been made towards the disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) programme even though challenges remain. The CAR government has been lobbying the UNSC for the lifting of an arms embargo to train the FACA (UN, 2016). The arms embargo also has a negative impact on the state's capacity to restore security and assert control over all its territory (A1; B1). Russia has provided this function of training the FACA since December 2017, even though the embargo is still in effect (Dukhan, 2018).

The government is working with the World Bank to institute reforms in the mining sector. It recognised the need to formalise this industry, since much revenue is lost through illegal exploitation and minerals that are not declared. Revision of the mining code with a particular focus on institutional governance of the mining sector is among the projects facilitated by the World Bank (World Bank, 2018).

In the most recent PAPR negotiated in Khartoum and signed in Bangui in February 2019 by the government and 14 armed groups, including former Séléka and anti-Balaka, both parties agreed to cease hostilities (UN, 2019). The government undertook, as per Article 4(l) of the PAPR (2019), to ensure that the population of the CAR benefit equitably from revenues generated from the exploitation of the country's natural resources. Similarly, in Article 5(h), the signatory armed groups undertook to give up the illegal exploitation of natural resources and illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition (PAPR, 2019).

Bringing security to the resource-rich regions is among the priorities of the government. However, the heavily armed and well-trained armed groups resist the deployment of the recently trained and ill-resourced FACA in these regions (UN, 2019; B1; B2). With the armed embargo still in place, the government cannot acquire heavy weaponry and the FACA cannot withstand an offensive from the heavily resourced armed groups (B1; B2). The national police force and army have been deployed in most areas previously occupied by rebels (A3). However, as the December 2020 elections approach, some armed groups are maintaining and extending their control of the territory (A3). This is aimed at increasing their bargaining power for political positions (A3).

4.4.3 Lessons Arising from Efforts to Address the Armed Conflict

Despite several initiatives in pursuit of peace, including the Brazzaville Agreement, Bangui Forum, Libreville Agreement, Nairobi Initiative, Rome Agreement and the so-called Khartoum Agreement signed on 6 February 2019, peace has remained elusive (A1; C1; B2). Peace agreements have mainly focused on political solutions to the persisting armed conflict, and they omitted NRM (A1; C1). NRM is solely the mandate of the government (C1). B2 stated that armed groups opposed the inclusion of NRM in past peace endeavours. B2 added that armed groups tend to agree on paper and act differently on the ground. Without the commitment of all the stakeholders (including the CAR's politicians; armed groups; and regional, continental and multilateral actors), it is difficult to change the situation in the CAR (C1; A1; A3;

B1). Moreover, interference by external actors in the CAR is another challenge impacting peace efforts negatively (C1; A1; A3). Foreign powers use armed groups to ensure the continued dependence of the CAR, which in turn is used by these powers to manipulate processes to their benefit (B2). Some regional and international actors prefer instability in the CAR, as they benefit from it (A3).

Agreements premised on the political appointment of armed groups as ministers and heads of government institutions have been problematic in the CAR (A1; B2; D1). While the main bargaining points of the peace agreements or peace initiatives have been peace, silencing the guns, extension of state authority and inclusive government, the armed groups target political appointments in the cabinet (A1; B2; UN, 2019). There is an entrenched political culture in the CAR to ascend to political power through armed conflict or coup (D1). Armed groups mainly request the ministerial portfolios for mines and defence to safeguard their illegal exploitation of natural resources (A1; B2). The former Séléka groups seek 30 per cent representation of their members within the FACA (UN 2016).

The lessons arising are that capable institutions are crucial in addressing conflict and enforcing widely held rules governing actors' behaviour. It appears that agreements have failed because the government is unable to implement some of the agreed-upon stipulations owing to lack of capacity and the ever-present peace spoilers who benefit from the illegal mining of natural resources (A1; A3; B1; B2). Furthermore, those who have not won power form coalitions aimed at forcing incumbents to resign or be out of office (D1). With some leaders of the armed groups being of foreign origin (from Chad, Sudan and Niger among others), interviewees suggest that 'they have no interest in peace' (B1; B2). Furthermore, the instability in the CAR provides some of these foreign leaders of armed groups with a haven in addition to regular income, as they fear prosecution and even execution should they return to their home countries (B2).

4.5 DISPARITIES INFLUENCE PERSISTENCE OF CONFLICT

A common narrative about the causes of conflict highlights ethnicity and religious aspects, which offers an oversimplification of the conflict dynamics (Lombard & Batianga-Kinzi, 2014; Edelen et al., 2014). However, the armed conflict in the CAR mainly stemmed from frustrations over the uneven distribution of resources between Bangui and its immediate outskirts, and the remote regions in terms of government investment (B2; DeWitt et al., 2018). D1 disputed the disparity claims because Bangui is also very poor in terms of infrastructure albeit better than other regions. Chronic poverty, weak and dysfunctional institutions and lack of state authority are the key drivers of the conflict in the CAR (A1; B2; C1; D1). Politicians contribute to the conflict in the country because not much has been done since independence to develop the country (A3).

Long-lasting structural fragility developed a cyclical aspect, wherein unresolved issues concerning disparities between regions and the marginalisation of Muslims laid the foundation for the next crisis since independence (World Bank, 2019; D1). Successive governments mainly neglected the remote regions and did not adjust investments to factor in the growing population in the remote regions (D1). To date, the state is largely absent in the regions that are far from the capital and the armed groups were started because of their grievances about lack of social services (IPIS, 2018; Matthysen & Clarkson, 2013). Despite signing several accords with Bozizé between 2007 and 2008, there was no change (Glawion & De Vries, 2018). The former Séléka armed groups grew in prominence by playing on these grievances and denouncing the Muslims' marginalisation by the central government (IPIS, 2018).

The government's inability to absorb people into the economy and inequitable distribution of resources have contributed to the creation of armed groups. Those who are excluded and disadvantage are inclined to take up arms for equality (B2). The armed conflict in the CAR is the result of fragile institutions

being unable to mediate various interests within a framework of widely held rules (B1; D1). The Séléka uprising in 2012 was not motivated by natural resource wealth, even though the very same rebel groups appear to be allured by the country's natural resources (Matthysen & Clarkson, 2013). The tendency is to pursue illicit exploitation of mineral resources, which are traded on black markets due to poverty and few economic opportunities (C1; A1; B2).

Involvement in armed conflict is a combination of resource capture, survival and means to ascend to political power for the many armed groups (D1). Recruitment to join the armed groups is made easy by lack of livelihood opportunities and marginalisation (Weyns et al., 2014). The various armed groups control mining zones and are flourishing from mineral resources extraction in the country (A1; B1; B2; A3). Once trading networks are established on the black markets, they resist change and assist in the fight against the government, contributing to the elongation and sustenance of violence (B2). Armed groups benefit more from levying taxation than the complicated long chain of illicit extraction and trade of natural resources in the CAR (D1). Also, the government has no means to provide alternate livelihoods for belligerents who join the DDRR programmes and disarm (B1; B2).

Compounding matters are the porous borders in a region where most countries face internal conflicts, which in turn allows easy movement of armed groups, flow of illicit arms and other forms of trafficking (B2; A3; Meyer, 2015). The continued instability in the CAR (especially in the northern regions) essentially turned the country into a haven for various belligerents, mercenaries and former soldiers from neighbouring countries, particularly from Chad and Sudan (Meyer, 2015; Knoope & Buchanan-Clarke, 2017). There is fear that armed groups could form coalitions with various armed groups in the region which would make instability reign not only in the CAR but also in the wider region (B1; A3). Although the armed groups in the CAR had legitimate grievances, their primary interest appears to have been financial because of their continued alliance with belligerents from neighbouring countries (Glawion & De Vries, 2018). The armed groups have no political will to relinquish power (B2). They

continue to use the popular grievances over lack of essential services in the northern and eastern regions, as well as marginalisation of the Muslim population from political and national institutions, to bargain with the government (UN, 2016; D1).

4.6 APPLICATION OF THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The following analysis is presented through the lens of the analytical framework shared in Chapter 2 on actors, context and institutions – as a way to identify what needs to be addressed and an attempt to locate consensus which is necessary to undertake conflict transformation. The analysis reveals how the interaction of these elements influence the trajectory of the natural resource dimensions of armed conflict in the CAR. I use the interactions between the identified elements from the collected data and present the analysis under three themes, namely:

(i) **Actors**: Proliferation of actors competing over access to natural resources and use of this access by the actors for political power;
(ii) **Context**: Widely dispersed natural resources in remote regions render them vulnerable to illegal exploitation, and the proximity of the CAR to regional conflicts adds to this vulnerability; and
(iii) **Institutions**: Ineffective institutions with limited oversight fail to enforce widely held rules, regulate and manage natural resources, and resolve the conflict non-violently.

Actors: Proliferation of actors competing over access to natural resources and use of this access by the actors for political power

The various actors have proliferated since the start of the armed conflict in 2012 and compete over access in regions rich in natural resources. The non-state actors (mainly the armed groups) have split and multiplied into many groups, from the initial five that staged the coup in 2013 to over 20 distinct groupings. The competition among these actors for access and domination over resource-rich territories manifests in different forms, including the use of violence to dissuade others from occupying these sites. Using violence is more

apparent in the eastern regions of the country than the western regions. A common strategy employed is to set up a parallel administration to issue mining permits and to oversee illicit exploration of and trade in natural resources, which are then smuggled out of the country, as well as levying taxes on trade and migratory routes. Curiously, the various armed groups cooperate where and when it is mutually beneficial.

Noteworthy is that the proliferation of the armed groups is mostly along ethnic and religious lines, as well as affiliation with other fighters from the neighbouring countries. Armed groups instrumentalise ethnicity to legitimise the armed conflict. It is also done to deflect from their activities of pillaging natural resources. As they fragment into different groups, insecurity increases as they intermittently clash for control. Foreign belligerents (mainly from Sudan, Chad and South Sudan) are recruited to bolster the groups' capabilities. Also, revenues from natural resources are used to buy weapons.

While there is an evident economic aspect of gaining revenues from the illegal exploitation and trading of natural resources, the non-state actors have used occupation of the resource-rich regions for political power. By occupying these regions, the armed groups are included as essential stakeholders in peace initiatives and political settlements. This provides them with political power and a guarantee of the potential of inclusion in the government. As such, there is an entrenched culture of ascending to political office through violent means. These actors have positioned themselves as permanent interlocutors. Even private enterprises collude with them for access to natural resources in the CAR. The armed groups can manoeuvre due to the weaknesses of the state institutions, lack of oversight and the persisting insecurity.

Context: Widely dispersed natural resources in remote regions render them vulnerable to illegal exploitation, and the proximity of the CAR to regional conflicts adds to this vulnerability

The natural resources in the CAR are widely dispersed in remote regions, with poor infrastructure making them inaccessible at times and rendering them

vulnerable to illicit capture, exploitation and trade. Furthermore, the conflict resources (gold and diamonds) are alluvial and of high quality. This makes it easy to exploit using rudimentary equipment, and to hide and smuggle across the borders. The absence of the state to provide oversight and secure its territory and borders makes this feasible.

The remote resource-rich regions are close to borders of countries facing internal conflicts, thus creating conducive conditions for the armed groups to trade natural resources across the borders. Armed elements from the CAR and neighbouring countries move with ease with limited state oversight. Also, once the underground trading markets have been established across the borders, it is difficult to monitor the movement of the captured resources.

Institutions: Ineffective institutions with limited oversight fail to enforce widely held rules, regulate and manage natural resources, and resolve the conflict non-violently

Institutions in the CAR lack capacity to enforce widely held rules, thus enabling conflicts to escalate and the persistence of activities threatening peace. The history of armed conflict has eroded state institutions' ability to govern effectively. With the state largely absent and no capacity to secure its entire territory, the armed groups control large swathes of territory, especially those rich in natural resources. Furthermore, the army is weak and not as equipped as the heavily resourced armed groups. The army was weakened due to a history of appointing people who shared ethnicity with the governing elites to occupy critical positions. This trend extended to other state institutions, resulting in their weakening. It also eroded trust between the government and the citizenry.

The inability of the state to absorb people into the economy and growing poverty contributes to the creation and multiplication of armed groups. Owing to limited livelihood and economic opportunities in the country, joining the armed groups is a means of survival. It is easy for the armed groups to recruit

the marginalised youth to join them in the illicit exploitation of natural resources that are traded in the illegal underground markets.

The NRM in place, governing the exploitation and trade of natural resources and distribution of wealth generated from natural resources, has not been transparent. Mineral concessions were awarded to enterprises perceived to have close relations with the government of the time. Exacerbating the issues is the culture in which the governing elites appropriated natural resources for private gain. The government failed to institute mechanisms that are responsive to the citizenry and anchored on transparency, accessibility and inclusive participation. There is a lack of transparency and accountability relating to the distribution of wealth generated from natural resources. Furthermore, there is limited oversight over informal and artisanal mining. This facilitates ease of diversion, as natural resources are smuggled outside the country and result in loss of revenues for the state. Capable institutions are crucial to ensuring the effectiveness of NRM.

Against this background, the absence of institutions to capably manage existing disputes legally has resulted in intractable cycles of conflict. The state institutions cannot resolve conflicts, especially contestations around access and control, as well as disagreements over the exploitation of high-value natural resources, through a legal system. Capable state institutions are better equipped to address the root causes of conflict, prevent the outbreak of violent conflict and provide the right kind of incentives through a legal system (McCandless, 2009).

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

While the previous chapter presented the findings in detail and analysis through the application of the analytical framework, I discuss the findings as they relate to the possibilities of conflict transformation in the CAR in this chapter. Building upon the buttressed analysis of findings provided under section 5.10 in the previous chapter, I reflect on the possibilities of conflict transformation in this particular conflict context. I use the three elements – actors, institutions and context – in the analytical framework as the themes and identified areas for transformation whilst highlighting concrete efforts that the CAR government undertook to address the natural resource dimensions of the conflict in the country.

The rest of the chapter is arranged into four sections: section 5.2. presents an analysis on the possibilities of conflict transformation in the CAR and I divided it into three sub-sections. I provide a summary of the analysis under section 5.3. I close with conclusions and recommendations under 5.4.

5.2 POSSIBILITIES OF CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN THE CAR

Drawing on the study's analysis so far, I ponder on the possibilities of conflict transformation. Given the complexities around the natural resource dimensions of armed conflict, the transformation of such contemporary conflicts is a considerable feat. It presents a radical but increasingly accepted strategy for addressing the root causes of protracted conflicts in pursuance of sustaining peace. Firstly, viewing conflict as inherent in societies owing to incompatible goals and as such a possible vector for change is a good starting point. Secondly, conflict transformation (a multi-level process centred on national consensus) requires inclusive participation of multiple actors. These

actors not only own the process, they have an opportunity to carve out a shared future collectively.

While there are opportunities in the transformation approach, the challenge lies in 'what' and 'how' to transform (McCandless, 2020b). I stick with the three elements (actors, context, institutions) to ponder the possibilities of their transformation. To do so, I borrow from Miall (2004)'s five areas of transformation as mentioned in chapter two. Doing so highlights what needs to be transformed and shows that transformation efforts take time, and it should be viewed as a long-term endeavour. It requires simultaneous efforts by all actors involved and ought to be done in a way that does not create new conflicts. Further, this process needs vision accompanied by capable institutions.

5.2.1 Actors transformation

While there is scope for conflict transformation to be applied in the armed conflict in the CAR, it is doubtful whether consensus among the various actors could be reached in the short term. There is a plurality of actors competing over access to natural resources who are prone to extending violence to achieve their aims. Besides conflict related to natural resources, there are historical grievances which emanate from disparities in the different regions of the country. Control of the areas rich in mineral deposits appears to be both an end and a means for some actors to ascend to political power. Kisangani (2015) contends that some actors have no inclination of addressing legitimate grievances. Further complicating matters is the plurality of armed groups that continue to fragment and perpetuate insecurity, some with external influences. As these groups fragment, they form alliances, mostly along ethnic lines and based on evolving interests and power arrangements (Isaacs-Martin, 2016; Ukeje et al., 2019).

Recognising the link between natural resources and conflict in the CAR, the 2019 PAPR included stipulations on access to the benefits of natural

resources. The CAR government made a commitment to distribute the income from natural resources equitably while the signatory armed groups undertook to forego the predation of natural resources (PAPR, 2019). This aligns with recommendations by several scholars to include natural resources in post-conflict settlement and economic recovery processes (Edelen et al., 2014; Lujala & Rustad, 2011, Maphosa, 2012; Rustad & Binningsbø, 2012; Wennmann, 2011). It is necessary to prevent causing new grievances that could lead to relapses and the risk of protracting the conflict further. However, peace agreements have been violated by some signatory groups, especially armed groups (UN, 2016; B2). D1 opined that armed groups have created opportune conditions of being perpetually in negotiations to position themselves for political positions.

Considering that several peace initiatives and agreements have achieved only intermittent peace, conflict transformation could be the much-needed approach for sustaining peace in the CAR. Interventions in the CAR have merely focused on stabilising episodic violent confrontations rather than addressing root causes (Knoope and Buchanan-Clarke, 2017). A serious limitation of past conflict resolution efforts is excluding the general population both as an actor and a beneficiary of the processes (Zahar & Mechoulan, 2017). The implication of this is that the local communities cannot own a process in which they were excluded. A national deal or peace agreement does not translate to local communities who bear the brunt of the armed conflict.

It is important to note that actors involved in the natural resource dimensions of the conflict are not limited to CAR nationals. Regional and international actors collude with armed groups as shown in the previous chapter. Also, state actors issue licensing permits fraudulently. These actors take advantage of the limited government oversight and the prevailing insecurity to loot CAR's resources.

For transformation efforts to work, various stakeholders must buy into the process. This includes those in support of the continuation of armed conflict and those affected by the ongoing violent conflict. Further, the mining communities, including artisanal miners, and traditional leadership ought to be part of initiatives towards transformation. Peace will remain elusive if efforts are not inclusive and the root causes are not holistically addressed. Efforts to transform the conflict wholly, a process that requires time and need to be pursued in an integrated manner, will require building trust and forging a social contract among all the actors in the CAR.

5.2.2 Institutions transformation

The regulation and management of natural resources in the CAR have been opaque at best and beset by institutional incapacity. The 2009 Mining Code was used as a regulating framework that stipulated, among others, that the state was the custodian of all its natural resources. BECDOR oversees the production of and trade in diamonds and gold. However, the responsible institutions (in particular the Ministry of Mines and Energy and BECDOR) appear to lack the necessary resources and administrative tools to effectively manage the sector, which is mainly informal and reliant on artisanal mining (World Bank, 2018). The government failed in the recent past and historically to regulate and manage the mining sector, resulting in the widespread illicit exploitation of and trade in natural resources in the country (Edelen et al., 2014). Historically, political leaders appropriated public institutions and used natural resource revenues for self-enrichment and patronage networks along ethnic lines to the exclusion of other ethnic groups (ICG, 2010). Grievances arose due to the exclusion and disparity between regions, which contributes to the protracted conflict.

The informality and quasi-legal nature of mining in the CAR continue to pose challenges for the government. It is difficult for the government to track and account for exploited resources due to the informality in which production takes place. In the most remote and insecure regions (especially northeast CAR),

mining administrative representatives continue to be absent near mining sites, with only 23 mining offices across the CAR – most of which are not staffed (Jaillon & De Brier, 2019; World Bank, 2018). Monitoring and regulating informal artisanal mining are challenging, especially when mineral deposits are widely dispersed over vast territories (Malpeli & Chirico, 2014; DeWitt et al., 2019). Without a formalised way of keeping record of all artisanal miners and operators, as well as all other relevant information, it is easy for valuable information to fall through the cracks. The miners, mostly transient, avoid registering and being afforded legal status (Malpeli & Chirico, 2014). This implies that some production will not be accounted for, as they can easily bypass the system to the detriment of the country. Cameroon is cited as the foremost destination for exporting minerals (DeWitt et al., 2019, Obale, 2016; A1; B2; C1), followed by Nyala in the Darfur region of Sudan (Matthysen & Clarkson, 2013). B1 opined that all the neighbouring countries are now used as transit points.

The CAR government appears to be making strides in its efforts to improve governance of the sector amid persisting insecurity and myriad constraints. In 2015, a new constitution was adopted that gives the national assembly oversight powers over permits awarded for the exploration and exploitation of the country's natural resources (World Bank, 2018). This is aimed at increasing transparency and accountability. The government can no longer grant these clandestinely for a personal share of profits. However, this is only good on paper, considering that the government does not have control over the remote regions that are practically divided among the multiple armed groups. Also, some officials are implicated in corruption (A3). These groups have imposed parallel administrations, and the actual power of the government and its institutions remain limited.

The effectiveness of the Kimberley Process (KP) sanctions in the CAR is questionable. The country remains under the KP sanctions, with only a partial lifting in a few sub-provinces in the western parts of the country since 2015. The compliant sub-provinces are Berberati, Boda, Carnot, Gadzi and Nola

(DeWitt et al., 2018). Despite the presence of MINUSCA, the north-eastern regions are awash with rebel activities and the plurality of actors who continue to gain revenues from natural resources. Diamonds in particular continued to flow out of the CAR into international markets even when the full embargo was still in force (Obale, 2016). It is suspected that these actors have established trading networks outside the borders of the CAR and can bypass the KP (Kah, 2013; B2; Glawion & De Vries, 2018). The unintended consequences of the KP sanctions, however, are that the country can only use the natural resource revenue gained from the western parts while losing what could have been gained in all the regions to improve total government revenues (A3). The government remains constrained in its efforts to address the role of natural resources in insecurity and financing of rebel activities, as well as combatting illicit exploitation of and trade in these resources.

While emerging debates about the link between NRM and conflict suggest that when natural resources are appropriately governed, conflicts can be prevented and resolved to lead to mutual relations (Frerks et al., 2014), this can only work in cases where natural resources are purely a cause of the conflict. This appears not to be the case in the CAR. Yes, this aspect contributes to the conflict, as alluded to by Jensen et al. (2009) and Edelen et al. (2014). But it is only one aspect of the conflict in addition to other factors. Improving NRM, as the CAR government is currently doing, is a positive start. It provides an opportunity for the government to use revenues gained for economic recovery and the much-needed funds to start investing in the peripheral regions. However, there can be no development amid insecurity. The various armed groups continue to resist the deployment of recently trained FACA in those regions (UN, 2019; B1; B2). As long as these groups retain control of the remote regions, there remain limited avenues for the government to achieve its goals.

Nonetheless, transforming the governance of the mining sector and overall NRM, as the government has already started, will go a long way in turning things around. Not only will this increase transparency and accountability, but

it will also improve the generation of income for the government, which in turn could be invested in socio-political imperatives and development of the country in the long term.

5.2.3 Context transformation

This study finds that natural resources are widely dispersed, making them more vulnerable to capture. Complicating matters in the CAR is the geographic context in which these natural resources are located, in addition to their features. Diamonds and gold in the CAR are alluvial, which makes them highly lootable because they are easy to hide and smuggle (Malpeli & Chirico, 2014; DeWitt et al., 2018). These resources are widely dispersed in vast territories far from the capital. Moreover, the state is largely absent from these areas and the national army is ill-equipped to secure the resource-rich territories. The ease of extraction, done through informal artisanal mining, makes the high-value resources in the country vulnerable for exploitation and capture by non-state actors. The collected data showed how mining sites are coveted by groups in both the western and eastern regions. The armed groups fight one another but also collaborate when it is mutually beneficial.

The proximity of the resource-rich regions to the neighbouring countries which are themselves in conflict adds to their vulnerability for illicit exploitation, capture and trade, and further complicates the conflict in the CAR. These countries neighbouring include Chad, the DRC, Sudan and South Sudan. With porous borders and the CAR' government's lack of territorial authority, ex-soldiers, rebels and armed groups move into and out of the CAR with ease (Meyer, 2015; Knoope & Buchanan-Clarke, 2017). These neighbouring conflicts contribute to the flow of arms and create conducive conditions for the looting and illicit trading of the CAR's natural resources, especially diamonds.

In collaboration with the CAR government, the IPIS conducted mapping of artisanal mining sites in the western region from April to July 2019 (Jaillon & De Brier, 2019). Also, the CAR government is increasing its presence in the

resource-rich regions, but the deployment of the recently trained and ill-resourced FACA continues to be resisted by the heavily armed and well-trained armed groups (UN, 2019; B1; B2). Initiatives such as these mentioned above allow the government to take necessary steps towards transforming the sector, which is mainly informal and artisanal. However, insecurity remains a challenge. The CAR government cannot acquire heavy weaponry due to the arms embargo, and the FACA cannot withstand an offensive from the heavily resourced armed groups (B1; B2). Until the CAR government can exercise authority over its entire territory, it would prove difficult to displace the armed groups in mining sites.

5.3 SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

In summary, the analysis shows a multifaceted and complex interplay of actors, context and institutions in the natural resource dimension of the conflict in the CAR. While the 2012-armed conflict erupted due to longstanding grievances over the disparity in government investments between the southern and northern regions, the plurality of armed groups since then complicates efforts towards finding and sustaining peace. The positions and interests of actors around natural resources are two-fold. While some actors are motivated by resource capture, either through direct or indirect looting, others' existence around these regions is strategic. Armed groups use control of these regions through violence to bargain for political power and representation as they also amass wealth from diamonds and gold capture. These groups continue to capitalise on unresolved grievances and the limitations of the state.

What makes resource capture by various armed groups feasible are the longstanding structural factors of weak state institutions and the state's absence in the remote regions. To date, the government is yet to have state authority in all its territory. The informality of the mining sector, which relies on artisanal operations, also creates opportune conditions for predation of natural resources. The government has made strides to improve the governance of the mining sector and capacitate the state institutions amid a myriad of

constraints. Moreover, the government has reached out to armed groups to ensure inclusivity and stability.

Given the complexities around the natural resource dimensions of armed conflict in the CAR, efforts towards conflict transformation ought to be pursued in an integrated manner to avoid generating new conflicts. It must go beyond episodic violence. It is crucial, therefore, to not only focus on the natural resource dimensions to the exclusion of other factors, especially the historical grievances of the populations in remote regions of the country. Other factors worth considering are incapacities of the state such as weak state institutions and poor NRM, the use of violence as a bargaining tool by the armed groups that are essentially politico-military entrepreneurs, the colonial legacy and the regional dynamics. It is also imperative that transformation efforts involve the general population as actors and potential beneficiaries of the outcome.

While the conflict transformation approach is lauded as a relative success in South Africa, it has not been the case with the DRC, a country neighbouring the CAR and rich in natural resources. The political and social transformation in South Africa, from apartheid to a constitutional democracy, is commended for its extent and limited violence (Kriesberg, 2011). However, McCandless (2020b) observes that some can argue that the transformation project in South Africa is incomplete, making the country prone to conflict. Zondi (2017), cited in McCandless (2020b), avers that to achieve lasting peace, the inherited post-colonial state, society and politics have to be radically transformed. In the case of the DRC, conflict transformation has not worked due to many factors. Amongst these factors are the involvement of the neighbouring countries, the involvement of militias in unregulated mining activities, and international parties and third parties' competing political and economic interests, and challenges of consolidating the state amongst others (Ahere, 2012). The afore-listed factors for failure in the DRC manifest in this case study of the CAR.

In this particular case of the CAR, the fragmentation of the armed groups and new coalition and power arrangements, as well as their expansion into new

areas of control and operation, make it difficult to reach consensus. The conflict transformation approach cannot be imposed. The proliferation of armed groups, some with foreign elements, poses challenges to conflict transformation. It makes it difficult to reach consensus and build national ownership towards addressing root causes and preventing further conflict. Another important consideration for conflict transformation is the attitudes and behaviours of the conflicting actors, and how they relate with one another. Failure to do so could seriously undermine the fragile peace process and any intended efforts towards conflict transformation. Transforming the conflict wholly will require building trust and forging a social contract among all the actors in the CAR.

Nonetheless, the CAR conflict presents with the complexities that require a transformation approach to break the cycle. Lederach and Maiese (2009) recommend the conflict transformation approach in cases where the cycles of conflicts are deeply rooted and recurrent with destructive patterns for its potential of bringing about systemic change. Conflict transformation's appeal is that it widens the scope of actors involved and encourages building relations and cooperation among actors of differing status (Reimann, 2005; Miall, 2004). There is need for the CAR to widen the scope of actors beyond that of armed groups in pursuance of solutions and sustaining peace. I posit that transformation efforts should pay attention to all the sources of conflict relating to the interaction between the actors, context and institutions to turn things around in the CAR. Also, the CAR needs to build capable institutions to regulate resources and resolve disputes legitimately.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This last section presents conclusions and recommendations based on the research findings and analysis drawn from both the application of the analytical framework and the reviewed literature on the natural resource dimensions of armed conflict in the CAR. This research demonstrates that the conflict transformation approach offers possibilities in protracted conflicts through its

attention to addressing root causes. The first step, in this regard, is to analyse the conflict to understand its origin, actors involved and how the conflict is expressed. However, a limitation in the application of conflict transformation approach could be when there is no shared vision and no consensus among various actors to rally behind this vision and undertake to collectively address the root causes and prevent escalation of the conflict.

5.4.1 Conclusions

The study established that since 2012, non-state actors (armed groups) have fragmented and multiplied, competing over access to and control of natural resources but also forming opportunistic alliances. While some actors appear to be motivated by looting, others are using control of the resource-rich territories strategically as a means to bargain for political power. This has been made feasible by several factors, including: (i) ineffective institutions with limited oversight throughout the territory and lax mechanisms for regulating and managing natural resources; and (ii) natural resources being widely dispersed in remote regions. In addition, the proximity of the resource-rich regions to neighbouring conflicts exacerbates the vulnerability of the CAR's natural resources to illegal exploitation and trade. The fragmentation of the armed groups that has resulted in competition over resources, while at times leading to opportunistic alliances, makes it challenging to have a national consensus for transforming the armed conflict in the CAR.

The natural resource dimensions of armed conflict in the CAR cannot be understood in isolation and other interrelated issues must be interrogated in efforts of transforming the armed conflict in its entirety and sustaining peace. Addressing the root causes and instituting a veritable transformation of institutions are two areas that are crucial for conflict transformation outcomes (Ballentine & Nitzschke, 2005; McCandless, 2020b). This entails directing attention to and radical change of issues of contention, positions, interests and activities of the various actors around natural resources, rules and the very structures that give rise to conflict in the CAR. Resolving one aspect without

the others leaves room for various actors to exploit and manipulate these other unresolved issues and it will, consequently, result in the persistence of armed conflict.

Within this context, attention must be paid to the history of mismanagement of the natural resource sector and resource wealth. This has been a source of tension owing to lack of government investment in the remote northern regions of the country. The armed groups were galvanised in their rebellion in 2012 by these grievances and they still use them to bargain with the government during various peace negotiations. Establishing state presence and improving governance in these regions would be a positive start. Effective regulation and management of the natural resources, particularly the informal artisanal mining, could provide the government with much-needed capital for economic recovery and investment towards developing the regions of the country that have been neglected for decades.

The current government shows a positive disposition towards addressing the natural resource dimensions of the armed conflict in the CAR amid pressing and myriad constraints. Among efforts undertaken are reforms in the governance of the mining sector geared at increasing transparency and increasing state presence in the remote regions. However, the government's efforts continue to be undermined by the plurality of actors with varied vested interests and their proneness to expend violence in pursuit of these interests. It would be challenging to reach consensus owing to the fragmentation of these groups, opportunistic alliance formation and expansion into new theatres of operation. Moreover, the proximity of the country, especially the remote north-eastern regions, to conflict hotspots (Sudan, South Sudan, Chad, Cameroon and the DRC) presents further challenges for the CAR government. It would require an initiative geared towards building ties and mutual trust among the various actors for them to own and carry the process of change forward collectively.

Limitations include a small sample size of interviews, but this was complemented with primary and secondary sources for an in-depth account. The scope of this research was on a small scale and I only engaged with six experts. These did not include non-state actors, especially the armed groups implicated in the misappropriation of the country's natural resources. Although combining expert interviews and documentary analysis of primary and secondary sources provided a detailed account, the findings cannot be generalised. Also, this research was limited to the extractive non-renewable natural resources, which were also not covered exhaustively owing to a few scholarly articles solely focused on these aspects. Finding databases of the various natural resources as well as information on the other resources proved to be a limiting factor but also presents an opportunity for a dedicated study.

Other limitations encountered in this study included COVID-19-related constraints, internet challenges and the unavailability of potential experts. The lockdown imposed by many countries in the fight against COVID-19 restricted travel to Bangui (CAR) to engage with various actors and interactions were thus done virtually. The study coincided with preparations for the December 2020 elections in the CAR and owing to this busy schedule and other constraints imposed by COVID-19, some experts across the sectors could no longer participate. Some of the targeted experts stopped responding after introductory letters and semi-structured questions were sent. Internet challenges were a constant feature throughout the data collection and writing process. Nonetheless, this study contributes to scholarly research on the armed conflict and its associated natural resource dimensions in the CAR. The research findings undoubtedly enrich the debate and will inform policy considerations towards conflict transformation and sustaining peace efforts in the country.

The findings of this study present several opportunities for further research. Most of the available scholarly work is from outside the African continent, mainly from Europe and the United States of America. An African scholarly voice is much needed. Dedicated studies can examine the evolution of the

armed groups from their inception and the reasons for their fragmentation, as well as shifting alliances concerning natural resources, armed groups' use of violence as a bargaining tool, and regional interests and influence on the natural resource dimensions of armed conflict in the country. Considering that the western and eastern regions have varying levels of insecurity, a comparative study focused on the natural resource dimensions in these regions could illuminate the contributing and restraining factors. Another area worth studying further is the applicability of a hybrid resource governance mechanism in the CAR, factoring in the mainly informal artisanal mining in the country. Also, there is a need to study sanctions regimes such as the KPCS embargo on diamond trade, their effectiveness and their impact on the CAR.

5.4.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and analysis of this study and drawing from conflict transformation, I proffer recommendations on possible actions for addressing root causes and preventing conflict in the CAR. I use the three elements of the analytical framework (actors, context and institutions) to organise the recommendations for the consideration of the CAR government as follows:

(i) **Actors**: **Forge a culture of inclusion aimed at social cohesion and preventing competition among various actors.**

- Consistently seek and pursue peace, from which all efforts will flow because there can be no socio-economic development without peace.
- Initiate conversations about building a national identity to address the deepening divisions along ethnic, religious and other social fault lines, with the ultimate aim of facilitating social cohesion.
- Endeavour to continuously engage with all the actors in society nationally, at both province and sub-province level, to galvanise and build an inclusive process around issues of peace, security and socio-economic development.

- Create and introduce platforms for broad-based participation in policy processes to enable social ownership and increase awareness of government initiatives underway.
- Institute mechanisms to mediate differences and grievances legitimately and peacefully while providing space for the wider populace to exercise their rights and articulate their positions non-violently and freely.

(ii) **Context**: **Improve access to remote regions rich in natural resources and collaboration with neighbouring countries.**

- Invest in improving infrastructure, including building roads to access remote regions rich in natural resources.
- Enhance collaboration bilaterally and through a regional mechanism with neighbouring countries (the DRC, the RoC, Chad, Cameroon, South Sudan and Sudan) to put measures in place to hamper the smuggling of natural resources and arms supply across borders.

(iii) **Institutions**: **Support institutions to effectively regulate and manage natural resources and to resolve conflict non-violently.**

- Prioritise improving the security of the entire territory and reassert state control, specifically in the remote regions and areas rich in natural resources.
- Inculcate a culture of good governance responsive to all citizens without discrimination.
- Ensure the presence of the state, physically and through investment, in the historically marginalised remote regions aimed at alleviating conflict issues central to the grievances of the population in these regions.
- Capacitate state institutions, especially those in charge of the regulation and management of natural resources, and address the opacity hampering governmental efforts/progress.
- Transform the largely informal mining sector, facilitate the formalisation of artisanal mining and strengthen internal controls –

promoting transparency and accountability on both ends to curb corruption and illicit exploration of resources.

- Institute democratised management and distribution of income generated from natural resources to advance socio-economic development fairly, justly and equitably.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire

	Question	Answers
1	Who are the actors (local, regional and international) involved in the CAR conflict?	
2	Where are these actors based? • Is there a link between the places where these actors are based and the mineral resources? • If so, which resources are found in these places?	
3	What are the positions and interests of these actors around the non-renewable (extractive) natural resources in the CAR? • Which resources have been exploited by non-state actors? • What strategies (and/or forms of violence) are used by these actors? • Are there patterns of cooperation between actors in respect to these resources? If so, how do the actors cooperate?	
4	What is the history of addressing issues that arose concerning natural resources in the past? • What has the government done to address the resources dimensions of the conflict in the country? • What were the challenges that the government faced in addressing these dimensions? • How did the various actors respond to the government's initiatives in addressing the issues around natural resources?	

	Question	Answers
5	How is the extractive industry regulated and managed in the country? • What policy mechanisms are used to regulate and manage natural resources? • What are the difficulties, if any, around the regulation and management of natural resources in the country?	
6	How does the government manage the extraction of mineral deposits in the remote north-eastern and western parts of the country?	
7	What are the alternative arguments about the causes and drivers of conflict in the country?	
8	How do the alternative arguments link with natural resources?	
9	What efforts have been pursued to restore peace in the country since 2012?	
10	What could be the reasons why peace initiatives since 2012 (e.g. peace agreements signed in the past) have not brought lasting peace in the CAR?	
11	Have peace agreements since 2012 included the management of natural resources? • If so, what aspects were included? • What were the main bargaining points of the various actors?	
12	What are the possibilities of transforming the natural resource	

	Question	Answers
	dimensions of the armed conflict in the country? • What are the views of different actors on durable peace in the country? • What aspects require attention in order to restore peace? • What are considered as spoilers, and how could these be addressed?	

Appendix B: Introduction Letter

2 St Davids Place
Parktown
Johannesburg
2050
July 2020

Dear Mr/Ms/Dr/Prof./H.E. Amb. (Title followed by Name)

Ms Vonani Mhlanga, a student at the University of Witwatersrand, hereby request your assistance in participating in research on *'Transforming Natural Resource Dimensions of the Armed Conflict in the Central African Republic'* in fulfilment of the Master's in Management in Public Policy (MM-PP). My supervisor is Associate Professor Erin McCandless. The research is aimed at answering the following question: *How has the CAR government sought to address the natural resource dimensions of the conflict and, based on lessons arising, what are the possibilities of conflict transformation in the CAR?*

The research will be conducted in July 2020. Your voluntary participation in this study is kindly requested.

Attached to this letter are:
- My contact details
- Consent Form
- Questions and areas of interest for discussion in our interview

The format of engagement will be a 45 minute to one hour individual interview with semi-structured questions. Although questions are attached, your indulgence for the researcher to probe further during the engagement will be appreciated. Your participation will be treated with confidentiality and anonymity should you so wish. A numbered alphabet will be used to capture participants' responses in the final report. The findings of this research will be published by the Wits Library. The researcher undertakes to discuss findings should you wish to do so at a convenient time after due processes are concluded at Wits University.

I thank you in advance for taking part in the interview.

_____
V.A. Mhlanga (Ms)

Appendix C: Consent Form

Research Title: Transforming Natural Resource Dimensions of the Armed Conflict in the Central African Republic
Name of Researcher: Ms V.A. Mhlanga
Position of Researcher: Postgraduate Student at Wits School of Governance
Contact Details: 9702844t@students.wits.ac.za

I hereby agree to be a participant in the study '*Transforming Natural Resource Dimensions of the Armed Conflict in the Central African Republic'*.

I have been duly informed of the process that will take place during the interviews, and a letter to request my participation was provided before the interview. I am further aware that it is not obligatory that I do this interview and should I choose to participate, I can withdraw at any point during the interview. I have also been made to understand that I have the right not to answer questions as I deem necessary.

Furthermore, I understand that my identity will remain confidential should I wish to do so, and any information gathered during this interview will not be directly linked to my person.

_____
Name of Participant **Date:**

_____
Signature

_____
Name of Researcher **Date:**

_____
Signature

Appendix D: Interviewees (Experts) Sheet

INTERVIEWEES (EXPERTS) SHEET					
Targeted sectors	**Targeted professional**	**Justification**	**Institutions**	**Ascribed alphabet and number**	**Highest qualification(s) and experience (postgraduates)**
Diplomatic Corps	Diplomats and experts	Participants were selected due to proven expertise working on the CAR at the national, regional, continental and international level.	Embassies, Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), African Union (AU), United Nations (UN)	A1	Honours in Political Science and International Relations; the participant has worked on the CAR since 2013, with previous experience of deployment in the Central Africa region
				A3	Seasoned diplomat from the Central Africa region with in-depth knowledge of African politics in a multilateral context
Government	Officials			B1	Postgraduate; intimate knowledge of history, developments and the various actors involved in the conflict as well as peace initiatives
				B2	BCom Honours, currently pursuing MBA; researcher with particular focus on socio-economic and political developments in the CAR
Civil society organisation (CSO)	Mediation practitioner	Extensive knowledge and experience of working in protracted conflict situations, providing	The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes	C1	Postgraduate; country representative with in-depth knowledge on developments in the country and access to various actors; involved in

		training on various aspects and facilitating dialogue aimed at bringing African solutions to affected countries in conflict			capacity building on negotiation and mediation for the government
Think tank/Academia	Experts, researchers and analysts	Proven expertise in research and analysis in the peace and conflict field, as well as access to other written or presented material on the CAR	Institute for Security Studies	D1	PhD; originally from the Central Africa region; lectures on African peace and conflict

Appendix E: Notes on the Interview with D1[i] (date: 11 August 2020)

Introductory remarks

Expert D1 was thanked for agreeing to take part in this interview. The interviewer confirmed that the expert had received the introductory letter and the consent form. Due to the busy schedule of the expert, the discussion did not follow the guide. Expert D1 needed clarity on the definition of natural resources in the title of the study: *'Transforming Natural Resource Dimensions of the Armed Conflict in the Central African Republic'*. It was explained that the study's focus was limited to extractive non-renewable natural resources. The interviewer explained that most studies globally focused on diamonds; therefore, this research would go beyond diamonds and look at the extractive sector to see how it interacts with the persistence of armed conflict in the CAR. It was explained that the aim was to explore possibilities of conflict transformation in the CAR.

The interviewer reiterated that the expert's participation in this study was voluntary and granting the interview implied consent had been given. Expert D1 was reminded to email the signed consent form.

Questions and responses: Focusing on the conflict since 2012

1. What are the positions and interests of these actors around the non-renewable (extractive) natural resources in the CAR?

D1: There is too much talk about the way the illegal exploitation of natural resources funds armed groups. There are very few detailed and evidence-based accounts of how exactly the illicit extraction of natural resources and trade directly contributes to funding armed non-state groups. This is despite that people say that a lot. Very few people have proof. For example, one of the armed groups, the UPC, was considered to be making much money by controlling spaces rich in diamonds and gold. There was an assumption that they were making money from diamond and gold without proven facts to back it. The UPC made considerable money in controlling migrating routes of cattle. Most people in the eastern regions are herders of cattle. By taxing and offering protection of herders along these routes, the UPC gained much more money. It is, thus, critical to bear in mind that it is complicated to get money from extractive natural resources because the chain is long and complex. This chain includes control of artisanal mining, extraction and a much longer process to

[i] The interview was not recorded. The responses are not verbatim, as it is not a transcription of the conversation but notes on the answers.

trade. It is essential to rely on empirical data before saying that non-state armed groups fund themselves from particular extractive resources; natural resources do play a role. Sometimes armed groups like to control mineral-rich areas. It is essential to know precisely what role natural resources play in the chain.

2. One of the reports by the UN Panel of Experts stated that some of the non-state armed actors use their control of resource-rich regions to negotiate and bargain for positions. How does this play out?

D1: Conflict is political bargaining that got out of hand, and people started using arms to have their voices heard. Armed conflict always signals the failure or defeat of the use of non-violent means to resolve disputes. This is where strong institutions play a role. Strong institutions should mediate different interests in a society within a framework that ensures that everyone's interests are taken care of and refereed non-violently. For example, an election is one form which offers a platform for a battle of opposing views on how a society is managed. Without an election, there is war. Even in a country with a single party like China, for example, there are elections.

3. You mentioned that institutions play a role in mediating conflicts or varying interests peacefully, and this is lacking in the CAR. Would you say that institutions have contributed to the armed conflict in the country?

D1: Lack of strong institutions in the CAR contributes largely to the situation in that country. Violent conflict is always a symptom of something that went wrong in a country. In the CAR, it is among others the incapacity of the political class to build institutions since independence that could mediate between the different interests in the society.

4. On alternative arguments for the armed conflict in the CAR, most authors say that the conflict is as a result of the differences between the regions and the lack of government investment in the remote regions.

D1: Expert D1 had an issue with this assertion considering his extensive travel in the country. Bangui is very poor in terms of infrastructure. One would not consider it privileged in contrast to others. Yes, this could be relative to the citizens of the CAR. There is hardly a tarred road outside Bangui. There are some considerations to be made. When you are a leader of a poor country, political leaders must prioritise. Leaders of the Séléka claimed disparities, but it is not necessarily true when one looks at the regions closely. The difference in the areas is insignificant. Presidents have to make difficult calls based on demographics. For example, if you build schools, you look at your

demography, then prioritise places with a higher density of population. In regions with more people, the needs are more pressing compared with lower density regions. In the remote areas, especially the eastern areas, there are few schools and few hospitals. Those regions are empty, and population density is very low. This should not be taken as being anti-Muslims. Of course, Muslims have indeed been discriminated. Investments have been small, but there are rational reasons and not a political choice to neglect the regions. When you are a violent entrepreneur, you manipulate facts to boost your cause.

5. If there are no significant differences in government investment between the regions, what motivated the Séléka armed groups to stage a coup in 2012, an armed conflict which the country has not recovered from?

D1: There is discrimination. Access to schools is also another consideration. But one needs to factor in that Muslims live within a culture where people would instead send their kids to herd cattle than to go to school because traditionally they are cattle herders. The state has not invested much effort to convince them otherwise. Consequently, there are fewer educated people from the region. Fewer nationals from those regions are represented in higher levels of government administration, defence and security. They do not have the requisite skills. For example, if there were entry exams, they would not be able to pass it. In a way, this entrenches discrimination. The population has also grown. The state has not adjusted investment according to the growing population in the remote regions.

6. Could the insecurity be used as a reason why there has not been investment in the remote regions?

D1: It is a chicken and egg situation. The remote regions have not always been insecure. Yet, at the same time, non-investment is also a consequence of insecurity.

7. The groups seem to have multiplied since 2012. Why is that?

D1: It is a combination of control of resources, bargaining for positions, and merely to survive. There is a culture of getting into positions of power through violent means. Almost all presidents before Touadéra ascended in this way. Armed group or a coup has been a way of getting into power. It gives you power in a region. They raise a tax, terrorise the population and claim to be protecting the community. That gives them some power. They become part of political negotiations and might eventually become a minister in the government. It is problematic in that people think being a rebel grants you

opportunities of ending up in government. It has become a political culture in the CAR.

8. Can this culture be transformed?

D1: Of course. There are other examples on the continent and beyond where there was conflict transformation. It would, however, take time.

9. Is there a possibility to get everybody to rally behind a national vision to transform the conflict entirely?

D1: It is a long road. It would take time, with setbacks along the way. What complicates matters in the CAR is that the political class also plays the game. As soon as someone is elected and not enough opponents appointed in government, those left out form coalitions and start devising means to get you out of power. Even civilians do not contribute to appeasing the political climate.

10. How active is the civil society in the CAR?

D1: Everything is extremely politicised in the country. Civil society behaves like political parties. Civil society is mainly interested in doing political work, and many of them are interested in having political positions. When they are vocal, it is because they want posts or consideration in something they want to gain.

Closing remarks: The expert indicated availability for further consultation or to be used as a sounding board should it be necessary. D1 was thanked for making time for this conversation.

Appendix F: Answered Questionnaire[ii] by Expert B2

	Answers
1	Local: The government, political parties, civil society, armed groups, youth, religious leaders, business and women. Regional: ECCAS, Chad, Sudan, DRC, Republic of Congo, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. International: France, Russia, China, US, EU, UN, AU, World Bank and IMF.
2	Government, civil society and political parties practically based in Bangui, the capital, where there is limited mineral resources. Majority of youth and women spread in communities severely affected by conflict where there are mineral resources. Armed groups control mineral-rich areas in the north, northeast and eastern parts of the country (nine provinces). Diamonds, gold, cobalt and uranium. Oil has been recently discovered in the north and north-western parts bordering Chad. France is in Bangui and French companies in other major cities with diamonds. Russia is in Bangui and other mining areas in the north-eastern parts of the country. China is concentrated in the northern parts of Bangui in mineral-rich provinces. US in Bangui, not certain in which provinces, as well as outside Bangui. Sudan, Chad and DRC are present in Bangui but have a large number of fighters in the armed groups based in the north, northeast and eastern parts.
3	Non-state actors are focusing mainly on diamonds, gold and uranium. China also focuses on timber.

[ii] The answered questionnaire is attached in its original format as received from the expert. Questions have been removed due to word count.

	Answers
	Armed groups are artisanal in their nature of operation. They attack local population, MINUSCA and CAR Armed Forces (FACA) to deter them from securing these areas. Recently they have started using land mines to deter MINUSCA and FACA. Foreign actors like France, US, China and Russia have contracts with government, but also have clandestine agreements with armed groups so that they do not clash with them in areas where these foreign actors are active. In some areas, armed groups have reached cooperation agreements not to stumble in each other's space of operation; while other groups are in constant clashes over some territories. The FPRC and the UPC, for example, share information on possible actions by MINUSCA and FAC in their areas. China employs armed groups as security in the areas where they operate.
4	In the past, a number of peace agreements have been signed between the government and armed groups to foster peace in the country and government have included armed groups in government as per their demands; this has not yielded positive results. Armed groups violated all peace agreements blaming the government for reneging; in some cases, this was not true. Armed groups sign agreements but tend to make other demands outside the agreements. Their leaders who sign agreements have little control over their followers as a result;, these agreements mean nothing to the fighter on the ground. Moreover, leaders are greedy, as they tend to forget their supporters once in power. Some leaders like Sidiki ABBAS of the 3R (Return, Reclamation and Rehabilitation) sign agreements but preach a different tune to their followers; they are not interested in peace at all. One major challenge is that the government does not have resources to sustain former combatants once they disarm, which then forces them not to disarm due to absence of guarantees. Most of these are unskilled and cannot survive the challenges of life after disarmament.
5	The government has put policies in place for the regulation and management of extractive industries; however, due to weak state institutions, the implementation is a big challenge.

	Answers
	Moreover, the weak national army and police are not in a position to enforce law in the country, which then leaves room for armed groups to exploit the void. Corruption among government officials is also rife. Some of the officials collaborate with armed groups to exploit the weaknesses of government.
6	Government has no control over the areas mentioned. Although there is limited control in the west, minerals in the western areas have not attracted armed groups; hence, their concentration in the north, northeast and the east.
7	Arguments include uneven distribution of economic resources by government, porous borders which allow easy movement of armed groups, easy flow of illicit arms and other forms of trafficking. Lack of political will from armed groups to relinquish power. Involvement of foreign powers which tend to use armed groups to maintain instability in the country for their own benefits. Lack of impartiality from MINUSCA and other international forces. Lack of loyalty from CAR Armed Forces. Government's inability to enforce laws due to poor state institutions.
8	Inequitable distribution of resources means those who are disadvantaged should find alternative ways to fight for equality and also to obtain means for livelihood, be it legal or illegal. Quick ways of making a living is to plunder resources and sell them on black markets/networks where there is no red-tape. Once these networks are established, they become so strong and they assist in the fight against the government. Once entrenched, the concept of cession is inevitable. This leads to continued strife and a circle of violence.
9	Since 2012, more than 4 agreements have been reached with armed groups. A transitional government was put in place in 2014, elections were held in December 2015 and March 2016. Cabinet was reshuffled a couple of times since the transitional government in order to accommodate armed groups in government. The latest reshuffle was done following the Political peace agreement signed in February 2019 in Bangui following talks in Sudan in January 2019.

	Answers
10	The major reason why the agreements signed in the past have failed is: Armed groups are not interested in peace because the existing conflict in the country allows them to plunder resources in the country. This is because leaders of the majority of armed groups are foreigners from Chad, Sudan, Niger etc who have no interest in achieving peace in the CAR. Some of these are unable to return to their home countries in fear of prosecution or even execution. Continued instability in the CAR provides them with a safe haven and regular income to sustain themselves. Foreign powers are also using the armed groups to ensure that the CAR government continues to be dependent on these foreign powers for ease of manipulation.
11	Yes, they have, but armed groups have remained opposed to it. They agree on paper but act differently on the ground. The laws on permits and licenses exists and has been referred to now and again. There is no clear ground for armed groups on this point. They always demand positions in government like the post of Minister of Mines and that of Defence just because they want to be protected in their daily activities in the mines.
12	Different actors share the view that partners and friends of the CAR must support peace initiatives by the government and provide financial support for the government to be able to develop the country and open economic opportunities in areas dominated by armed groups. Some actors like Russia are of the view that the government must be empowered to fight the armed groups directly and eliminate them as these have no intention to seek peace in the country. 1. The CAR government needs to be empowered financially and trained in effective and efficient governance. 2. Armed groups must be declared terrorists and treated as such. 3. The national army must not include former armed groups because they defect all the time, given that they are not loyal to the government but to their leaders within armed groups. 4. Application of the rule of law.

	Answers
	5. Strengthening of the police and the justice system. The negative role played by foreign players who secretly arm various armed groups are major spoilers in the conflict. The CAR government needs to expose them to the international community, providing all the evidence so that the United Nations can act on them. The problem with this is that these actors have created dependency so much that the CAR authorities fear that withdrawal of these actors will leave the country in dire straits. The short-term solution is for all African leaders to unite behind the CAR government and fight the armed groups directly to severely weaken or eliminate them. Also, the UN needs to change its mandate and allow MINUSCA to attack and repel or even eliminate the armed groups in the CAR.

Appendix G: Comprehensive List of Active Armed Groups in the CAR

No.	Name	Acronym	Leader(s)/ Ethnicity	Date established	Stronghold	Origins/ Association	2019 PAPR signatory/ non-signatory
1	*Front Démocratique du People Centraficains*/Movement of Central African People	FDPC	Martin Koumtamadji (known as Abdoulaye Miskine-Sara)	2003, left Séléka April 2013	Foro, Zoukombo, Nguia-Bouar (western CAR)	Ex-Séléka/ Association with a neighbouring country	Signatory
2	*Séléka Rénovée*/ Reformed Séléka *Convention Patriotique du Salut du Kodro*	Formerly CPSK	Achafi Daod Assabour (Mohamed Moussa Dhaffane-bournu)	June 2012/after the dissolution of the Séléka	Kaga-Bandoro (central CAR)	Ex-Séléka	Signatory
3	*Union Pour la Paix en Centrafrique*/Union for Peace in the CAR	UPC	Ali Darassa (Nigerian Fulani Oudda)	Sept/Oct 2014	Alindao, Bokolobo Ouaka, Basse Kotto and Mboumou Eastern CAR Béma (near the DRC border)	Ex-Séléka/ Association with a neighbouring country	Signatory
4	*Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique*/Popular Front for the Renaissance of the CAR	FPRC	Michel Djotodia (Runga), Nourredine Adam (Runga)	Aug 2014	Vakaga and Hauto-Kotto provinces, Birao, Ndélé, Bria, Kaga-Bandoro (northern and eastern CAR)	Ex-Séléka	Signatory
5	*Rassemblement pPtriotique pour la Renouveau de la Centrafique*/Union for Central African Renewal	RPRC	Zakara Damane (Gula), Djono Ahaba	Nov 2014	Bria, Tiringou (central and eastern CAR)	Ex-Séléka	Signatory
6	*Mouvement des Libérateurs Centraficains pou la Justice*/Movement of Central African Liberators for Justice	MLCJ	Tamou Deya Gilbert (Kara)	Late 2008, left FPRC late 2014	Birao, Bria (northeastern and central CAR)	Ex-Séléka	Signatory
7	*Coordination Nationale des Libérateurs du Peuple*	CLPC	Édouard-Patrice Ngaïssona	June 2014	Roy-Rabe, Boeing (Bangui)		Signatory

No.	Name	Acronym	Leader(s)/ Ethnicity	Date established	Stronghold	Origins/ Association	2019 PAPR signatory/ non-signatory
	Centrafricain /National Coordination of the Liberators of the Central African People						
8	Anti-Balaka-pro Bozizé		Maxime Mokom	May 2015	Bossangoa Gobongo (north of Bangu)		Signatory
9	Anti-Balaka		François Bozizé, Francis Bozizé		Bossangoa Gobongo, Boy-Rabe, Combattant (Bangui)		Non-signatory
10	*Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique*/ Central African Patriotic Movement	MPC	Mahamat al-Khatim (Chadian Arab-Salamat)	July 2015	Kaga-Bandoro (central CAR), Moyenne-Sido (north and central CAR)	Ex-Séléka	Signatory
11	*Rassemblement des Républicains*/ Rally of Republicans	RDR	Gaetan Boadé	Aug 2017	Ndassima	Former anti-Balaka	Non-signatory
12	*Mouvement Nationale pour la Liberation de la Centrafique*/ National Movement for the Liberation of the CAR	MNLC	General Ahmat Bahar	Dec 2017	Bémal (north-western CAR)	Ex-Séléka	Non-signatory
13	*Groupes d'Auto-Defense - Bangui (PK5)/*Self-defence groups – Bangui (PK5)				PK5 (Bangui)	Ex-Séléka	Non-signatory
14	*Front du People Congolais pour le Changement et la Démocratie*/ Congolese People's Front for Change and Democracy	FCCPD	John Tshibangu (arrested in 2018)			Ex-Séléka/ Association with a neighbouring country	Non-signatory
15	*Révolution Justice*/Revolution Justice	RJ-Sayo	Armel Ningatoloum Sayo	Aug 2013	Paoua area (north-western CAR) on the border with		Signatory

No.	Name	Acronym	Leader(s)/ Ethnicity	Date established	Stronghold	Origins/ Association	2019 PAPR signatory/ non-signatory
					Chad and Cameroon		
16	*Révolution Justice*/Revolution Justice	RJ-Bélanga	Bertrand Belanga		Paoua area (north-western CAR)		Signatory
17	*Groupes anti-Balaka Locaux*/Local anti-Balaka groups				Mainly in the south		
18	Lord's Resistance Army	LRA	Joseph Kony		Obo, Sam-Ouandja, Yalinga area (eastern CAR)	Ugandan origins/links	Non-signatory
19	*Retour, Reclamation et Rehabilitation*/ Return, Reclamation and Rehabilitation	3R	Sidiki Abass (Cameroonian Fulani)	Dec 2015	Koui (north-western CAR)	Association with a neighbouring country	Non-signatory
20	*Commission Nationale de Defense et de Sécurité*/National Defence and Security Committee	CNDS	Abdoulaye Hissène (Runga)	Oct 2016	Ndélé, Bria, Kaga-Bandoro	Ex-Séléka/ Military wing of FPRC	Non-signatory
21	*Mouvement Siriri*/ Siriri Movement (*Siriri* means peace in Sango)		Baro Ndianigue Ardo Abba (Cameroonian Fulani)	Dec 2017	Amada Gaza, Abba (south-western CAR)	Split from 3R/ Association with a neighbouring country	Non-signatory
22	*Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique – Siriri*	MPC Seriri	Mahamat Abdel Karim (Chadian Arab [Salamat])	July 2017	Noufou, Gamboula, Mambéré-Kadei (close to Cameroon border)	Ex-Séléka/ Association with a neighbouring country	
23	*Parti du Rassemblement de la Nation Centrafricaine*	PRNC (splinter of RPRC)	Nourd Gregaza (Goula)	May 2019	Birao (northeast)		Non-signatory

**Sources: Dukhan, 2018; IPIS, 2018; UN, 2016, 2017, 2019; PAPR, 2019