
DRC: Fluid Mechanisms
Political Reorganization Just Before
the 2016 Elections

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
IS THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY A POLITICAL MACHINE READY FOR BATTLE?	4
A partisan set-up to support Joseph Kabila (2006-September 2015).....	4
The various options for Joseph Kabila to remain in power.....	5
<i>Changing the Constitution by unlocking Article 220</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Changing the voting system for President of the Republic.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Population census.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>The "shift" in the electoral timetable.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Territorial division and the appointment of "interim" governors in the new provinces</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Dialogue with the opposition parties</i>	<i>7</i>
Moves implemented	8
OVERVIEW OF THE INSTITUTIONAL OPPOSITION.....	11
The collapse of the MP machine and the emergence of the G7 platform.....	11
The main opposition parties	12
The fragmentation of the opposition.....	14
Attempts to rally for compliance with the Constitution	15
THE MAIN DYNAMICS FOR THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.....	16
The Kabila dynamic	16
The Katumbi dynamic	17
The Kamerhe dynamic	18
The other dynamics.....	20
CONCLUSION.....	21

Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is currently at a key moment in its political history. Careful observation of the changes in the Congolese political landscape is necessary to grasp the nuances, challenges and opportunities with regard to a peaceful political changeover which is a condition for lasting peace. The choices that the current President, Joseph Kabila, who has been in power since 2001, will make in the coming months, will indicate whether the DRC is on course towards a democratic process, or whether the country will be the scene of political intrigues with the sole purpose of retaining power. This article presents the resources available to the President Joseph Kabila, to remain in power beyond his second and last term. It also draws up an overview of both the Presidential Majority (MP) and the opposition parties, before assessing the various emerging trends for the 2016 elections.

Is the Presidential Majority a political machine ready for battle?

A partisan set-up to support Joseph Kabila (2006 – September 2015)

The Presidential Majority (MP) brings together in the broadest sense the political family which supports Joseph Kabila. This includes the presidential party, the People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD), which Joseph Kabila is the moral authority of, as well as a large number of satellite parties and other political partners (there are more than 200 political parties). The majority of the parties which make up the MP are called "briefcase parties" and are only limited to a formal existence headed by a party leader who is subservient to the government. Generally, these parties have no real political base at both national and provincial levels. This political structure creates an illusion of power for the Presidential Majority and helps to increase the number of seats in Parliament, due to the proportional voting system that is in effect in the DRC. The strategy, effective up to now, has been to increase the number of these small satellite parties in order to swell the ranks of the Presidential Majority.

Other parties receive firm support outside of the PPRD and form what can more or less be called "the heavyweights" of the Presidential Majority. They are present in Parliament and count a significant number of national deputies among their ranks. Most of these parties have a real base at provincial level; however their influence remains limited at national level. Among these parties is the Social Movement for Renewal (MSR), led by Pierre Lumbi, a former Special Security Advisor to the President (he has just been removed from office following a new reorganisation of the Presidential Majority in September 2015) and is originally from Maniema province. Another important party in the MP is Olivier Kamitatu's Alliance for the Renewal of Congo (ARC); he was formerly the Minister for Planning (he has just been removed from office after the last cabinet reshuffle) and is originally from Bandundu province. We should also mention Gabriel Kyungu wa Kumwanza's National Union of Federalists of Congo (UNAFEC). He is the President of the Katanga Provincial Assembly (only in its initial form; since then, the region has been divided into four separate provinces), he is from the Mulubakat clan like the father of the current President Kabila and is originally from North Katanga. Finally, Bahati Lukwebo's Alliance of Congo

Democratic Forces (AFDC) should be cited. He is originally from South Kivu and is the current Minister of the National Economy.

While not directly being part of the Presidential Majority, some parties are considered as allies and have been supporting President Kabila since 2006. This is the case for the Unified Lumumbist Party (PALU), historically Antoine Gizenga's party, who is originally from the Bandundu province. PALU is not incorporated into the Presidential Majority platform, but has been an ally since 2006, following the ad hoc agreement made between Joseph Kabila and Antoine Gizenga to beat Jean-Pierre Bemba, the leader of the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC, nowadays the opposition party), in the second round of the presidential election. In 2011, a constitutional change was made and the presidential election went from two rounds to a single round. On this occasion, PALU did not put a candidate forward and chose to align behind Joseph Kabila. That same year, following elections criticised by civil society organisations as well as the international community, PALU saw its number of deputies in Parliament decrease as compared to the 2006 parliamentary elections. To date, PALU continues to suspect the MP of having manoeuvred, due to the influence it had on the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), to make it lose many deputies, so that the party is weakened and easily absorbed by the Presidential Majority. It should be noted that these 2011 elections enabled several members of the Presidential Majority to win seats in Parliament, while strong suspicions of fraud marred the elections, particularly highlighting the partiality of CENI. The pastor Ngoy Mulunda, a former President of CENI who was forced to resign in 2013, has repeated several times in small circles that unelected deputies are currently sitting in the National Assembly.

The various options for Joseph Kabila to remain in power

As a political and institutional instrument, the MP, coupled with (at least apparently) unconditional support from the security forces, Joseph Kabila has a very strong support in the Congolese political class which has enabled him to remain in power up to now. He is currently finishing his second term which should be the last according to the Constitution. However, several options are being considered by his entourage and without any doubt by himself, to stay in power beyond 2016.

Changing the Constitution by unlocking Article 220

This option is intended to allow Joseph Kabila to compete in the next presidential elections in 2016 by enabling him to serve a third term. This move aims to challenge Article 220 of the Constitution, which underlines the inviolable nature of the constitutional provisions and

impose a two-term limit for the position of President. This strategy would have been mainly supported by Evariste Boshab, the Minister of the Interior and Security and a former Secretary General of the PPRD (he was recently replaced as Secretary General by Henri Mova Sakanyi, the former ambassador of the DRC to Belgium).

Changing the voting system for President of the Republic

This would result in changing the voting system of the presidential elections from universal suffrage to an indirect system. In other words, the President would be elected by Parliament and not directly by the population as it is currently the case. This provision would also occur through a change in the Constitution and may have been inspired by the current electoral system in South Africa or Angola.

Population census

This alternative introduces the compulsory administrative census before any forthcoming electoral deadline, whether parliamentary or presidential. This census would be organised by the National Census Office (ONIP), an organisation led by Professor Adolphe Lumanu, who is a strategist for and close to Joseph Kabila. He was notably his former Director of Cabinet Office and then his Minister of the Interior and Security. The census process is not an easy undertaking in the DRC due to the enormity of the country. Therefore, such a move could allow President Kabila to remain in power by delaying, or making it impossible to organise parliamentary and presidential elections for "technical reasons" within the period required by the Constitution.

The "shift" in the electoral timetable

Just like the previous option, it would be a question of finding tricks for the presidential election to be postponed beyond the constitutional deadline of November 2016. The electoral timetable, which is the issue here, is the one published by the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), led by Abbot Apollinaire Malu Malu, close to President Kabila and who would allegedly be his advisor on electoral matters. Increasing the technical and/or financial prerequisites would make the organisation of the presidential election impossible within the required time frame. Thus, Joseph Kabila could remain in power for an additional two to three years¹.

1. At the time of finishing this article, in October 2015, Abbot Malu Malu had just been forced to resign for health reasons and the negotiations for his replacement are currently underway.

Territorial division and the appointment of "interim" governors in the new provinces

The resulting administrative and financial chaos from proceeding with the break-up into new provinces would particularly help to delay the election of new governors. The Constitutional Court recently notified CENI that this – supposedly - forthcoming election of governors in the recently created provinces should precede any other election. Pending these elections, the Constitutional Court has furthermore asked the government to make transitional arrangements. This strategy may have been developed by members of the Constitutional Court, under the leadership of the current Minister of the Interior, Evariste Boshab. It can also be stated that Professor Bob Kabamba, who is professor of Political Science at the University of Liège in Belgium and a Congolese citizen and naturalised Belgian, may have been discreetly consulted to this effect. Bob Kabamba² may be close to Évariste Boshab, President Kabila, and to some Belgian political networks, particularly the Reform Movement (MR) of the MEP and former Belgian Deputy Prime Minister, Louis Michel. Bob Kabamba was also consulted for his expertise in drafting the DRC Constitution, which was enacted in February 2006, and has significantly contributed to the peace process in the DRC and the Great Lakes area.

Dialogue with the opposition parties

This option consists of initiating consultations with the radical political opposition for the purpose of harmonising the requirements and convening a national dialogue. Conducting transparent and peaceful elections in compliance with the electoral timetable published by CENI should become the main goal in order to achieve consensus. The idea behind this move would be to succeed in convincing the opposition of the need for political transition in the DRC, which would enable Joseph Kabila to remain head of the country for several additional years, in return for power sharing. Such a transition could entail a new constitutional order and wiping the slate clean particularly with regard to the number of terms for President Kabila.

This alternative would be supported mainly by Kalev Mutond, the Director General of the National Intelligence Agency (ANR), as well as Joseph Kabila's Director of Cabinet Office, Maître Mwilanya Néhémie, and Maître Norbert Nkulu, also a former ambassador of the DRC to Rwanda.

2. See his biography: <<http://reflexions.ulg.ac.be>>.

Moves implemented

These various options have been considered and the idea of changing the Constitution has been on the table a long time. However, this possibility seems to have been deemed too risky, mainly after the events of 19 - 23 January 2015 and the international pressure that followed them. Indeed the population, particularly in Kinshasa, Goma, Bukavu (North and South Kivu provinces), and to a lesser extent in Kisangani (Eastern province) and in Kimpese (Lower Congo province) overwhelmingly rose up against the government to protest against the Senate vote to amend Article 8 of the electoral law. This controversial article would have made the elections conditional upon a national census and would have enabled President Kabila to remain in power by extending his term. Yet, this popular uprising, which claimed many victims³, led the Parliament to modify Article 8 from the electoral law, thus marking a victory for the population against the current government. Following these events, the Presidential Majority seems to have taken a new position and understood that it would now be difficult to impose this type of decision on the population.

Hence, the government has had to review its political strategy and rely on new options, in particular the procedure of dividing the provinces up in order to delay the electoral deadlines. In January 2015, the National Assembly voted a law focusing on a new administrative division of the country which plans for the establishment of 26 provinces instead of 11 provinces. This division has been effective since June 2015 and is supposed to create provinces that would be more on a human scale, and in the context of decentralisation, would bring the rulers and the governed closer together. However, the timing of enacting the law on this division is probably not insignificant. The main motives here seem to be holding onto power and limiting the influence of some leaders of Katanga province, particularly Moïse Katumbi and Kyungu wa Kumwanza, who are deemed too independent, too influential or even likely to escape the President's authority. The "rich" Katanga province has just been split into four provinces, which could exacerbate the community partitions of a region already fairly significantly divided according to such logic between North Katanga (Kabila senior's clan) and South Katanga (divided mainly between the Rund, who are the majority, and the Bemba, Moïse Katumbi's community).

In his political calculation, Joseph Kabila is well aware that the unified Katangan clan could represent a threat for him, and sooner or later challenge his authority. Playing the communitarianism card would therefore be a way of dividing and weakening the Katangan leadership.

3. 42 dead according to the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), figures available at: <<https://fidh.org/fr>>.

Furthermore, a draft ruling by the President of the Republic, adopted in the Council of Ministers as part of the division of provinces, would enable special commissioners and their deputies to be appointed pending the "normal course" of the election of governors. The current dilemma in the presidential camp is to consider whether they should appoint senior civil servants or politicians to these "provisional" governor posts.

Regarding the issue of the national dialogue, the major opposition parties, namely Étienne Tshisekedi's⁴Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS), Jean-Pierre Bemba's Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) (the candidate beaten in the presidential election in 2006 and held at the ICC [International Criminal Court] since 2008), and Vital Kamerhe's⁵Union for the Congolese Nation (UNC), initially greeted this sudden overture by the Kabila camp with great suspicion. They continue to suspect the potential traps that could be lurking behind such a "dialogue". In the Congolese political arena, Joseph Kabila is renowned for his versatility, his wait-and-see attitude, and his difficulties in complying with his commitments. He has been more of a divider than a unifier, which does not reassure the opposition leaders. Hence, most of the opposition parties have rejected the political dialogue in the format proposed by Joseph Kabila.

However, the largest opposition party, namely Étienne Tshisekedi's UDPS – in the past very hostile to President Kabila, accusing him of stealing the victory in 2011 – declares its readiness to participate in the dialogue nowadays, provided that the event is chaired by a mediator from the international community. In order to legitimise its approach, the UDPS refers to the Addis-Ababa framework agreement and to Resolutions 2098 and 2211 of the Security Council which advocate an inclusive dialogue in preparation for the 2016 elections. However, it should be emphasised that the UDPS is not actually in a positive dynamic and is experiencing internal divisions, with an ageing and ill leader, who has not managed to renew or create a significant recovery within his party. His son, Félix Tshisekedi, is regularly accused of negotiating with the Kabila camp to ensure his own political survival, taking advantage of his family ties and the state of his father's health to influence his decisions outside of the party lines. Félix Tshisekedi's approach is criticised not only by the UDPS' grassroots level, but also and above all by other party leaders. A group of rebels has recently criticised Étienne Tshisekedi's presidency and called for early elections to appoint a new political office. However, it should be noted that the UDPS has just given Kabila an ultimatum to convene the political

4. Historical opponent, Étienne Tshisekedi came in second in the 2011 presidential election. Today, aged 80 years and in poor health, he lives in Belgium.

5. Formerly close to Kabila and President of the National Assembly, Vital Kamerhe went over to the opposition in 2009. He came in third place in the 2011 presidential election.

dialogue at the end of November 2015 at the risk of dissociating themselves from the process.

With regard to the other two main opposition parties, the MLC and the young Union for the Congolese Nation (UNC), they consider that a political dialogue in the format proposed by Kabila is not currently appropriate and that if a dialogue were to emerge, it should be restricted to a technical tripartite discussion Majority - CENI - Opposition. According to them, CENI remains the appropriate body to deal with arrangements concerning the electoral process, particularly the timetable and the prioritisation of the order of elections.

Overview of the institutional opposition

While there is a majority and an opposition in the DRC today, a more subtle overview suggests that strategic alliances can be established beyond the political divisions. These political groups are formed as much by ties as by opportunism and the current set-ups are still likely to experience changes. We will try to provide here an insight into the political parties which are now opposed to President Joseph Kabila and will evaluate the various trends emerging for the 2016 elections.

The collapse of the MP machine and the emergence of the G7 platform

The dramatic departure of seven political parties from the Presidential Majority has recently made the headlines. These parties were thrown out by the political office of the MP for having taken a stand against the "presidential family" line. Indeed, they have spoken out in favour of strict compliance with the Constitution and political changeover, two key issues which so far have had no response from the MP.

These seven parties which espouse some of the opposition's arguments have just grouped together around a platform called the G7⁶. However, according to the statements of the leaders of these parties, they have not formally joined the opposition. They claim above all to be defenders of republican values, as well as of compliance with the Constitution and political changeover. The G7 includes the following parties and leaders: Pierre Lumbi's Social Movement for Renewal (MSR), Olivier Kamitatu's Alliance for the Renewal of Congo (ARC), Dany Banza's the Future of Congo (ACO), Christophe Lutundula's Alliance of Democrats for Progress, Jose Endundo's Christian Democrat Party (PDC), Kyungu wa Kumwanza's UNAFEC, and Mwando Nsimba's National Union of Federalist Democrats (UNADEF). These parties represent in total slightly over 90 deputies and senators in the Parliament out of more than 600 parliamentarians. The MP has certainly been weakened by these defections, but nevertheless retains a comfortable majority. However,

6. See Radio Okapi: "RDC: le G7 devient une plate-forme politique", 17 September 2015, available at: <www.radiookapi.net>.

it should be noted that the G7 does certainly not plan on stopping there and will try to rally other political parties in the coming months. These could join the G7 platform because of their ideological proximity or for purely opportunistic considerations.

An increasingly obvious link appears to be emerging between the G7 and the now ex-governor of Katanga, Moïse Katumbi⁷. The leaders of this platform do not openly state this, but they will increasingly have trouble concealing their support if the latter announces his candidacy for the 2016 presidential election, which seems to be taking shape if his recent activity in the media is to be believed. Furthermore, observers state that Moïse Katumbi, who would have become considerably richer during his term as the head of Katanga, could be the one-man-band behind the creation of the G7 and that he would be ready to begin his campaign for the 2016 presidential election.

The main opposition parties

Currently, the opposition parties which have not only a provincial, but also a national base, are Étienne Tshisekedi's historical party, the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS), Jean-Pierre Bemba's MLC and Vital Kamerhe's UNC. From an institutional point of view, these three parties are represented in Parliament and the UDPS is the second most represented party in the National Assembly after the People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD) founded by Joseph Kabila.

The UDPS, the historic party of the Congolese opposition, was already present in President Mobutu Sese Seko's time, and continues today to present itself as the only "real opposition" in the DRC, and therefore argues that the leadership rightfully belongs to it. Due to this stance, the UDPS appears to have difficulty in organising joint actions with the rest of the opposition. The latter is both weakened and at mercy of exploitation by the government. With regard to the current political context, geographical settings, and complexity of the ethnic situation in the DRC, it is unlikely that one political party is capable of winning major elections alone. The iconic leader of the UDPS, Étienne Tshisekedi, originally from Kasai, remains one of the rare political leaders in the country to have succeeded in overcoming the ethnic and tribal divides, and mainly in the context of popular resistance to President Mobutu's government. This is also evidence that when the stakes are high, the Congolese are capable of overcoming their divisions to espouse a common cause. Étienne Tshisekedi is now 82 year-old and in poor health. He will certainly have difficulties joining in the competition for the 2016 presidential

7. See RFI: "RDC : Moïse Katumbi est-il à la tête du G7 ?", 1 October 2015, available at: <www.jeuneafrique.com>.

election. However, he has not transferred control in terms of current issues. His son, Félix Tshisekedi, is tentatively trying to become involved in the political game, but is struggling to convince people, including in his own camp. In addition, Félix Tshisekedi increasingly appears to be solicited by the Kabila camp which is trying to negotiate an agreement with the UDPS by promising its leaders – including Félix Tshisekedi – they would hold positions in a government of national unity. This government would open up the way for a political transition which would allow Kabila to remain in power beyond 2016. However, this option still seems far from being unanimous within the UDPS and the assumption of a rapprochement between Félix Tshisekedi and the Kabila camp seems, on the contrary, to be helping to accentuate the divisions within an already weakened party. However, it should be noted that the UDPS has recently presented Kabila with an ultimatum to convene a political dialogue by the end of November 2015 at the risk of "dissociating themselves from the process".

The MLC is also experiencing divisions, because of the long detention of Jean-Pierre Bemba at the ICC, which is weakening his authority over the party. A short time ago, the Secretary General of the MLC, Thomas Luhaka, originally from Maniema province, was "poached" by the Kabila camp for the position of Deputy Prime Minister. This defection helped to weaken the MLC even further. Thomas Luhaka was expelled from the party and replaced by Ève Bazaiba following a decision by Jean-Pierre Bemba. It is worth mentioning the ambiguous game that Jean-Pierre Bemba appears to be playing, who continues to have control over his party from the ICC. It is possible that he is exploiting the division within the MLC itself to prevent the emergence of new leaders who could remain beyond his control. However, in light of recent events, particularly the demonstration by the opposition on 15 September 2015⁸, it appears that Ève Bazaiba has managed to withstand the internal divisions and further seems to be asserting her leadership in the party.

Vital Kamerhe's UNC is a party created in 2010 and which until now has withstood the now infamous "poaching". Nevertheless, destabilisation attempts in relation to the UNC remain high. In September 2014, its Secretary General, Bertrand Ewanga was arrested and jailed for one year for "insulting the Head of the State, members of the government, and members of Parliament" the day after a demonstration by the opposition intended to denounce any initiative amending the Constitution. The President of the UNC, Vital Kamerhe has also suffered legal problems, but attempts to arrest him have so far been contained due to popular pressure and support from civil society and the international community.

8. See *Le Monde*/AFP: "Violents affrontements en marge d'une manifestation d'opposition en RDC", 15 September 2015, available at: <www.lemonde.fr>.

The fragmentation of the opposition

Many other opposition parties exist, but they are smaller and of a provincial nature, more localised and mainly characterised by the predominance of a charismatic leader. An example of this is José Makila, who has just created the Labour Alliance for Development (ATD). A former governor of the Équateur province, his political support is far-reaching in Mbandaka, the capital of this province. This is the same for Jean-Lucien Busa, founder of the Democratic Current for Renewal (CDR) and also originally from Équateur. We could also mention Jean-Claude Muyambo, who is currently in prison for political reasons according to his lawyers. In any case, he was arrested after having left the MP and founded the Congolese Solidarity for Democracy and Development (SCODE), which is mainly based in South Katanga. Finally, let us mention Martin Fayulu, founder of the Commitment to Citizenship and Development (ECIDE), mainly based in Kinshasa, and who has managed to win over a part of the Congolese diaspora.

Other political figures can be mentioned to complete this comprehensive overview of the Congolese opposition, including Ne Mwama Nsemi, a political-religious player in the Central Congo province or Jean-Claude Mwemba, from the same area. Furthermore, the boundary between the government and the opposition is not always absolutely clear. A proof of this would be Léon Kengo wa Dondo, an important political figure in the DRC in his capacity of current President of the Senate and moral authority of a platform called the Republican Opposition. Despite its name, it is considered close to the government and some of its members are in the current government.

In order to understand the variety of political opposition in the DRC, it is important to note that Kabila and his administration have consistently worked towards fragmenting the opposition in order to prevent its structuring and continuity into a more legal framework. Also, at Parliament level, the President of the National Assembly, Aubin Minaku, and Évariste Boshab, his predecessor, may have previously managed to prevent the opposition from electing its spokesperson. Indeed, all written requests by the opposition for the purpose of convening a plenary session in Parliament to elect its spokesperson have all been consistently blocked in the Office of the National Assembly. The government has also weakened the opposition by a game of fairly regular poaching, offering the leaders of some opposition parties, government posts or positions in public institutions. This strategy has so far been invaluable for the government up to now and gives national and international opinion the feeling that the institutional opposition is weak, disorganised and unreliable.

Attempts to rally for compliance with the Constitution

Shortly before the events of 19 January 2015, the political opposition started to organise around some joint actions, which among other factors may explain the "success" of the demonstrations of 19 - 23 January. The parties which played a leading role in these demonstrations are Vital Kamerhe's UNC, Martin Fayulu's ECIDE, Jean-Claude Muyambo's SCODE, and Jean-Pierre Bemba's MLC. The call to action relayed by these parties particularly had an impact on students in Kinshasa, in central Congo, in both Kivus, and less markedly in the Eastern province. The young and student population, remained very active in the street, particularly in Kinshasa and the Kivus, up to the time when the Senate, under pressure, withdrew Paragraph 3 of Article 8 of the electoral law which linked the organisation of the presidential election scheduled for 2016 to a population census. Once the objective was achieved, Vital Kamerhe and other opposition leaders asked the population to stop the demonstrations which scaled down shortly thereafter. It should be noted that the President of the Senate, Léon Kengo wa Dondo, incurred the wrath of the "Kabila clan" by stating publicly during the review session of the law that the senators had heard the voice of the people and that they had made the right decision.

It remains interesting to note that initially, the UDPS leaders did not want to be associated with the preparations for the demonstration on January 19. Nevertheless, following the extent of the events, the UDPS appears to have tried a recovery policy by calling for a popular uprising. However, this watchword was not followed and the youngsters withdrew from the street following the removal of Paragraph 3 of Article 8. Furthermore, the UDPS was not represented during a rally held on 15 September 2015 at Kinshasa bringing together the different opposition parties calling for compliance with the Constitution and political changeover.

Thus, the mapping of the opposition shows a fragmented body, where parties come together more easily around charismatic leaders than key values which however could enable them to reorganise for the next electoral issues. If the opposition wishes to achieve a political changeover in 2016, then it seems essential that it is agreed on common issues and chooses a spokesperson, for want of a single candidate, to present more consistency and cohesion in these actions.

The main dynamics for the 2016 presidential election

The Kabila dynamic

Outwardly, everything suggests that Joseph Kabila's regime controls all the instruments of power: institutions, security apparatus, the judiciary, etc. However, there is a growing frustration within the Presidential Majority and this has emerged along with the appearance of the G7 platform. In the shadows, some prominent figures from the Majority, including the PPRD, are beginning, in turn, to call for compliance with the constitutional deadlines and to question the appointment of Joseph Kabila's successor. The latter continues to remain ambiguous about his political future. He generally has very little confidence in those around him and does not seem inclined to promote one of the prominent figures from his Presidential Majority. Everything suggests that Joseph Kabila hopes to find that "special person" who would share his vision and could replace him while remaining under his influence. Before identifying the suitable person, Joseph Kabila will doubtlessly have no other choice than to implement a strategy which would allow him to cling onto power for as long as possible. Indeed, his attitude seems to indicate that he will try to remain in power beyond 2016, even if changing the Constitution no longer seems to be the priority.

The assumption that Joseph Kabila will be in power after 2016 is fairly widely supported within the Presidential Majority. One of the main reasons for this support is that, in its current form, the Presidential Majority is built more on opportunistic alliances than on shared values and programmes. Those who want to see Joseph Kabila stay in power present him as the candidate of stability. Ultimately, he is the one who would allow them to keep their privileges.

Joseph Kabila is also trying to obtain the support of his peers in the sub-region (Angola, Congo-Brazzaville, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, and even South Africa), in the name of regional stability and solidarity between heads of state. Although on some occasions the latter have expressed a certain weariness with regard to Joseph Kabila, they could be tempted to listen carefully to him, especially since several of them are or will likely find themselves in a similar situation (this is particularly the case for Denis Sassou N'guesso and Paul Kagamé).

It would also appear that Joseph Kabila is trying to get closer to Russia and China by hoping to convince them to play the non-interference card if a resolution were to be voted on at the UN Security Council against a possible third term or a postponement of the elections. He recently made a trip to China which was widely publicised by Congolese national TV channels showing China as the great friend of the DRC and President Kabila. With regard to a rapprochement with Russia, Joseph Kabila has just appointed an experienced diplomat as ambassador to Moscow in the person of Valentin Matungul. The analyst, Jean-Jacques Wondo also states that the DRC regularly purchases Russian military equipment and that Russian instructors may be training the presidential guard (the GR)⁹.

Furthermore, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is a figure who has played a significant role in the DRC peace process. She would be a less publicised ally for Joseph Kabila, but with whom he would have maintained a close relationship.

However, the limited support which Kabila seems to receive from his so-called traditional allies could weigh against him, particularly if his remaining in power was accompanied by the worsening of the security situation in the country.

The Katumbi dynamic

A dynamic seems to be focused on Moïse Katumbi via the new G7 platform¹⁰. This group of seven parties was the first to cross the red line, by publicly stating their opposition to Kabila remaining in power after 2016 and by calling for a political changeover. Apart from compliance with the Constitution, which appears to be the only common demand, this group seems to be formed on a more opportunistic than ideological basis. The distancing of this G7 platform in relation to the Presidential Majority also appears to be the result of a growing frustration of parties in the MP. Some of them have indeed noticed a decrease in the allocation of government or institutional posts, while the share of the PPRD representatives is increasing. Also, some parties may be tempted to also leave the MP in a similar opportunistic impetus.

Within the G7, Moïse Katumbi is considered to be the most influential as he is wealthy and has a strong network, in the country and abroad. He would be able to finance a presidential campaign by himself, as well as political parties for the parliamentary elections. He is considered to be charismatic, sometimes populist, and often enjoys

9. See Desc-wondo.org: "Une hyper-militarisation suspecte de la Garde républicaine", 14 March 2014, available at: <<http://desc-wondo.org>>.

10. See above.

great popularity due to his football team, the Tout Puissant Mazembe, which he has managed to rank among the greatest African clubs. However, he is suspected of having greatly enriched himself while being governor of Katanga province. Some also accuse him of prioritising projects with visible impact, such as roads or bridges, but which would only have a limited effect on the reduction of poverty. His main detractors consider that Moïse Katumbi could, as President of the country, perpetuate the much criticised predation system in the DRC. In any event, it can be asserted that outside of Katanga, he knows very little about the Congo and does not appear to be developing much connection with the western part of the country. Similarly, the security issues in Kivu, while crucial for the stability and development of the DRC, are not subjects that Moïse Katumbi has fully mastered.

Some leaders of the Katangan clan, particularly Albert Yuma, would have sought to bring Joseph Kabila and Moïse Katumbi together before the latter's resignation from the post of governor of Katanga. This rapprochement would be promoted in the name of cohesion of the political family, and it can be noted that Moïse Katumbi is trying for the time being to avoid a direct confrontation with Joseph Kabila. Yet, the personal relationship between the two men has been deteriorating in the recent years, and they greatly distrust each other nowadays. The government through its spokesperson, Lambert Mende, has made allusions to the fact that Moïse Katumbi could sooner or later be put on trial for financial wrongdoing. It may be suggested that even if the facts were proved, this might appear as a settling of political accounts. In government circles, the name of the Israeli billionaire Dan Gertler, close to President Kabila, is also mentioned as a player who has worked for a rapprochement between the two men.

The Kamerhe dynamic

Among the potential winners of the presidential election, Vital Kamerhe is the one who has the greatest experience and who knows the regional issues best. He was very close to Joseph Kabila and was one of the strong men in the government, particularly as former Secretary General of the presidential party, the PPRD, and President of the National Assembly. He had the task of establishing the PPRD throughout the country, which has allowed him to build up a significant network. He switched to the opposition in 2009 following fundamental differences with Joseph Kabila in Parliament, mainly on the issue of "Chinese contracts" between Chinese companies and the Congolese government in terms regarded as disadvantageous for the

Congolese part. He tendered his resignation following his disapproval of the entry - without the prior agreement of Parliament - of Rwandan battalions in North Kivu (a province bordering Rwanda) as part of the joint operation *Umoja wetu*¹¹. Vital Kamerhe then founded his own party, the UNC, in 2010 and came third in the 2011 presidential elections. Compared to Étienne Tshisekedi who seems on "his way out" and Jean-Pierre Bemba still held at the ICC, Vital Kamerhe can count on the support of a large part of the opposition. One of his weaknesses is his political past which marks him as a candidate from the "Kabila system". However, it should be noted that the former closeness between Vital Kamerhe and Joseph Kabila can also be a strength and an opportunity for him. Indeed, he could appear as an element able to make the link between the government and the opposition by presenting himself as the man of consensus, likely to give the most guarantees to the different actors. Another advantage of Kamerhe is his knowledge of the four national languages. On the other hand, in contrast to Joseph Kabila and to Moïse Katumbi, Vital Kamerhe does not have the financial capacity to support a presidential campaign on his own.

Some political figures from the Presidential Majority, especially Thambwe Mwamba, current Minister of Justice, Katintima Basengezi, former Minister of Agriculture, the traditional chiefs Mwami Ndeze, Mwami Kabare, and Mwanti Yav (Supreme Chief of the Rund, originally from Katanga), or even the current governor of Kinshasa province, André Kimbuta, have tried to bring Joseph Kabila and Vital Kamerhe together in view of their prior relationship. While attempts at rapprochement are indeed being undertaken, there is no indication that they will now produce results as the animosity between the two men still appears to be strong.

Conversely, other Congolese figures, including Pierre Lumbi, former Special Security Advisor to Joseph Kabila, and Olivier Kamitatu, former Minister for Planning and co-founder of the G7 platform, as well as foreign actors, are advocating a rapprochement between Moïse Katumbi and Vital Kamerhe to ensure a changeover in 2016. A meeting between these two men was recently held in London. While nothing has leaked out of the meeting, the issue still seems to be forming a common opposition-G7 front against the revision of the Constitution and fostering opportunities for a changeover in 2016.

11. In this joint military operation, the Rwandan and Congolese armies tried to dismantle the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). The presence of the FDLR was considered as one of the main reasons for a conflict which is tearing the eastern DRC apart. The operations took place from January - February 2009 and will have helped to weaken the FDLR.

The other dynamics

Besides these three major trends, some less organised figures politically could play a significant role in the coming months. This is particularly the case of D^r. Mukwege or even Freddy Matungulu (a former Minister of Finance and an ex-civil servant at the IMF); both of whom have substantial support among the Congolese diaspora. It may also be worth mentioning that Olive Lembe, Joseph Kabila's wife, and Jaynet Kabila, his twin sister, seem to harbour some ambitions that they have not however openly expressed.

Within the Presidential Majority, some actors show political ambitions exceeding their current prerogatives. We can mention among these, the Prime Minister Matata Ponyo, the President of the National Assembly, Aubin Minaku, and Évariste Boshab, current Minister of the Interior and former Secretary General of the PPRD. All of them may see themselves embodying the role of Joseph Kabila's successor; however, apart from their institutional stature, they have fairly limited popular support on the ground.

It could also create some ambitions in the judiciary or within the security apparatus in the Kabila camp, particularly among police officers and soldiers (including the Presidential Guard, most of whom are Katangan or Kivu) who believe they are underpaid.

Conclusion

These different elements show that the re-appointment of Joseph Kabila in 2016 as head of the country is not clear. He faces very real opponents. These mainly rely on public opinion which overall seems hostile to his remaining in power. This trend seems to be true in all provinces and suggests that even if the political class managed to find an arrangement regarding power-sharing which would enable Joseph Kabila to remain in power, the country would be subject to widespread popular demonstrations. Furthermore, it cannot be ruled out that foreigners are paying a high price for popular frustration. For example, a certain irritation towards the Chinese community had been observed during the events in January 2015. In working-class districts, members of this community are suspected of having ties with the Kabila camp and saw their shops ransacked. For its part, the international community could be accused of passivity and of complicity if Joseph Kabila managed to remain in power beyond his last mandate.