

Kabila Returns, In a Cloud of Uncertainty

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 1960's, Laurent Kabila had led a group of insurgents against the dictatorial Mobutu Sese Seko government in Kinshasa, operating along Zaire's eastern border ¹. Kabila's group was one of the many rebel movements in the East that had arisen with the aim of furthering the political program of Congo's first prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, the popular and charismatic leader who was assassinated in 1961. The major Lumumbist insurgencies had been subdued by Mobutu using foreign mercenaries between 1965 and 1967. The small surviving groups such as that of Kabila posed no threat to the Mobutu regime.

The 1994 Rwandan genocide changed all that. Approximately one million Rwanda Hutu refugees fled to eastern Zaire, which was already near the boiling point due to conflicts over land use and political representation. In an effort to break out of its diplomatic isolation, the Mobutu government provided backing to the Hutu, including army and militia elements, thereby earning the enmity of the Tutsi-dominated government in Rwanda. Tutsi of South Kivu, the so-called Banyamulenge, staged an uprising in the summer of 1996, with the support of the Rwanda government. By the second half of that year, the alliance of Banyamulenge, Tutsi of North Kivu, and Lumumbists and others, headed by Kabila, had taken over substantial parts of eastern Zaire, with the corrupt and demoralized Mobutu army disappearing in the face of their advance. After a short seven month campaign, Kabila and the new armed coalition entered Kinshasa as Mobutu fled into exile.

Kabila's victory is significant on the local, national and international levels. Locally, in South and North Kivu, Tutsi victims of ethnic cleansing turned the tables on their rivals. Nationally, long-time opponent Kabila overthrew Mobutu and restored the country's name, Congo. Internationally, Mobutu can be seen as one of a number of French-supported dictators ousted or in difficulty, while Kabila can be seen as of a series of former guerrilla leaders now supported by Washington, along with the current heads of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda and Rwanda ².

The ethnic factor is found on all these levels. Locally, it is entwined with land rights. Nationally, the ethnic identities of leaders constitute resources and handicaps. However, one must beware of simplistic notions, e.g., Tutsi as a "cohesive, insular tribe." The Tutsi of Rwanda, Burundi and eastern Congo have distinct interests.

Kabila is dependent upon an ethnic minority and upon his foreign backers, in particular the Ugandan and Rwandan governments. His survival will depend upon his ability to dominate the Tutsi within his government, who have ties to their foreign backers, especially in Rwanda. To establish his autonomy vis-à-vis his foreign backers he will need more support

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v1/3/3.pdf>

from Congolese other than the Tutsi. It seems unlikely he will be able to gain such support without reaching a compromise with other anti-Mobutu forces including the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social, UDPS) and Unified Lumumbist Party (Parti Lumumbiste Unifié, PALU). Tutsi elements of the Kabila government likely would resist dilution of the coalition, unless the UDPS led by Etienne Tshisekedi and PALU expressed support for the demands of the Tutsi of North and South Kivu. Tshisekedi's complaint that Kabila is held hostage by "foreigners" feeds the resistance of the people of Kinshasa to the Tutsi and makes a compromise between Tshisekedi and Kabila less likely.

TURNING TABLES?

That Mobutu Sese Seko, who brought down Patrice Lumumba, should be brought down in turn by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, self-proclaimed Lumumbist, would seem an ironic full circle turn of the wheel. In reality, however, history never repeats itself. Unresolved grievances and long-lasting metaphors can give the appearance of repetition to a unique event which reflects a new situation. Such was the case during the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the fighting in Bosnia; so too in the Congo. There are many echoes of the decolonization of 1959-60 and the Lumumbist "rebellions" of 1964-65. Kabila claims the mantle of the martyred Patrice Lumumba but that claim, like any political claim, should be examined critically. In this article, a variety of claims by Kabila and his supporters, and a variety of characterizations of the Kabila movement, will be examined.

Is the victory of Kabila and the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaire, AFDL) to be understood in a national context, as a victory over Mobutu and his latest prime minister, General Likulia Bolongo? Or is it (as Kabila and some aides have suggested) a victory over the entire political class of the Mobutu era, including also Etienne Tshisekedi, the UDPS and the "Sacred Union" of opposition to Mobutu?

Alternatively, is the Kabila victory to be interpreted in geo-political terms, as a victory of one power or coalition over another? Specifically, was the victory of Kabila a defeat for France and a victory for the United States, seen as backers of Mobutu and of Kabila respectively? In regional terms, was this a victory of a coalition of predominantly English-speaking states to the East of Congo/Zaire led by Uganda, over French client-states to the West, including Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville and the Central African Republic?

Whether one adopts the intercontinental or the regional level of analysis, is the conflict to be analyzed in terms of cultural projects, of which "Francophonie" is the outstanding example? Is there, as the French have alleged, an American counter-project? If so, what is that project and does support for Kabila make sense as a reflection of that project? Or does it make more sense to "chercher le capitaliste", to look for the national or multinational corporations which may have sought to obtain or enlarge a foothold in mineral-rich Central Africa, as was the case in the 1960s^{3?}

Journalists and others in Kinshasa tended to interpret the Kabila movement as dominated by ethnic Tutsi. Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Paul Kagame of Rwanda were seen as

collaborating in a plan for Tutsi hegemony, and those Congolese who joined Kabila as "foreigners" carrying out that plan. Such a view is too simple but is there any basis for it in fact?

There were echoes of the 1960s in Kabila's invocation of Lumumba, and a number of newspapers and magazines exhumed Che Guevara's assessment of Kabila based on several months of collaboration in 1965-66, but the question remains, how seriously is one to take Kabila's claim to the mantle of Lumumba?

In his march across the Congo and in consolidation of his power in Kinshasa, Kabila made it clear that he regarded the internal opposition to Mobutu as part of the problem. The internal opposition, starting with Tshisekedi, claimed (at least) an equal standing with the Kabila insurgency. The easy victory of Kabila would not have been possible, they argued, had not the Mobutu regime been undermined by years of work by the internal opposition. To evaluate this argument, one shall have to place the internal and external opposition in the context of the Mobutu regime, its social base and its external alliances.

Clearly, there is a surfeit of explanations of the Kabila victory, many of them oversimplifications if not caricatures. The explanations range from the individual level of analysis (e.g., Kabila's background and personality) to the global (e.g., the Franco-American rivalry in the post-colonial era). In this article I shall examine a number of preliminary assessments as reported in the press. Then I shall suggest several elements of a more satisfactory explanation, linking various levels of analysis. Ethnicity and democratization will be examined in their local, national and international forms.

A DEFEAT FOR FRANCE?

The fall of Mobutu was widely interpreted as a loss for France, his most consistent international backer, and his replacement by Kabila as a victory for the United States ⁴. The reality was more complex and the ability of the patrons to control their supposed clients was doubtful. However, the Congo crisis of 1996-97 was shaped by the collapse of the "troika" (France-Belgium-United States) which had been promoting peaceful political change in Congo/Zaire, and by resurgent rivalry between Paris and Washington.

Nzongola Ntalaja wrote in the mid-1980s that "the United States eventually replaced Belgium as the major arbiter of Zaire's destiny, but continues to deal with Zairian affairs within a multilateral strategy of imperialism in which Belgium and France are its key partners." For Crawford Young, Mobutu's survival was due in large measure to his success in multiplying external patrons. These views are complementary, in that Mobutu's Zaire was both dependent and uncontrollable ⁵.

France and the United States have a long history of rivalry in the Congo. They pursued opposed policies in 1960-63, with France supporting secessionist Katanga while the U.S. sought to establish a strong pro-Western central government in Leopoldville/Kinshasa. Belgium backed the Katanga secession led by Moïse Tshombe, then cooperated with the U.S. in suppressing the Lumumbist insurrections of 1964. The 1965 coup d'état was widely interpreted as a victory of the American-backed Mobutu over the Belgian-backed Tshombe ⁶.

Belgian interests suffered under Mobutu, due mainly to the efforts of Mobutu and the politico-economic elite to pursue their own interests in the name of nationalism, by expanding

the sphere of the state at the expense of the church and the colonial corporations. However, the former colonial power remained the "significant other" of Mobutu. Until the very end, the dictator continued to care deeply about assessments of him in the Belgian press ⁷.

In the meantime, relations with the Americans prospered. There was a momentary chill in 1973-74, when Mobutu spectacularly broke relations with Israel, announcing his decision before the General Assembly of the United Nations, and setting off a wave of breaks with Israel by African states. The "Zairianization" of foreign property, including oil company facilities, deepened American discontent with their former protégé ⁸. However, the Angolan civil war of 1975 convinced the American government that it needed Mobutu as an ally. Jimmy Carter, who had declared human rights to be his foreign policy priority, appeared to pose a threat to Mobutu but invasions of Katanga by the Angola-based Front for the National Liberation of the Congo (Front pour la Libération Nationale du Congo, FLNC) led to a partial reversal of Carter's skepticism. Under Ronald Reagan, Mobutu again became a trusted ally ⁹.

Successive French governments worked to supplant Belgium in the Congo. Starting in 1973, France became an important military supplier. President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing received a triumphal welcome to Kinshasa in 1975, an apparent sign that Mobutu was distancing himself from Belgium and the U.S. The radio and television installations of the Voice of Zaire, the largest in Africa, were built by French companies with government aid ¹⁰. Zaire, supposedly the second largest French speaking country in the world, became a leading participant in the Francophone movement.

When the FLNC invaded Katanga for the second time, in 1978, Belgium and France sent paratroopers to rescue the Europeans at Kolwezi in Shaba (i.e. Katanga). Planning to negotiate with the FLNC, the Belgians proceeded cautiously, landing their forces at Kamina. Their hand was forced when the French landed directly at Kolwezi and counterattacked ¹¹. Again in 1989, France upstaged Belgium when President François Mitterrand told the Francophone Summit that his government was writing off debt totaling US\$ 2.6 billion owed by twenty-five of the world's poorest states, including Zaire. The subsequent announcement that Belgium was writing off or rescheduling much of its own debt appeared anticlimactic ¹².

The end of Cold War competition in Africa, together with the shortcomings of his regime, led the Americans, Belgians and French to jointly pressure Mobutu to oversee the transition to democratic government and to depart voluntarily. In 1992, the United States, France and Belgium all extended official support to the Tshisekedi government. Had the "troika" remained united behind Tshisekedi, he might be the leader of the Congo today. Instead, they all became disillusioned with the leader of the "radical opposition" but failed to maintain a common position.

The troika split over the questions of Rwanda and Angola. Belgium and the U.S. distanced themselves from the Hutu in the aftermath of the genocide of Tutsi but France implemented "Operation Turquoise," which not only sheltered Hutu from the forces of the Tutsi-dominated Front Patriotique Rwandais (Rwandan Patriotic Front, FPR) but also allowed Hutu soldiers and militia members to escape to Zaire with their weapons. France allowed Mobutu out of quarantine because of his cooperation on the Rwandan question ¹³.

In the meantime, the U.S. had cooled on Mobutu. First, his effort to promote an agreement to end the Angolan civil war failed ¹⁴. Second and more serious, from the American point of view, Mobutu allied himself to Islamist Sudan.

During the AFDL campaign, November 1996-May 1997, the differences of orientation of France and the United States were crucial. The most important American contribution was the intervention that did not happen, when France led the effort to send an international military force to protect Hutu refugees in eastern Congo/Zaire. The French obviously planned to use humanitarian intervention as a means of protecting Mobutu while the United States was willing to sacrifice the Hutu refugees in order to protect Kabila. In the last weeks of the Mobutu regime, the U.S. apparently persuaded Morocco not to intervene on Mobutu's behalf, while France promoted a transfer of power to Msgr. Laurent Monsengwo (archbishop of Kisangani, former chair of the National Conference), a military operation on behalf of Mobutu, and allegedly an assassination attempt against Kabila ¹⁵.

France's interpretation of the Kabila campaign as "Anglo-Saxon" was adopted by Congolese. English classes reportedly increased in areas controlled by the AFDL, and two French businessmen were killed in the days after the fall of Kinshasa.

France's actions and attempted actions throughout 1996-97 were designed to protect not only the Mobutu regime but a network of client regimes in Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Cameroon and other states of the region, organized under the Francophone banner. The question remains, to what extent did the United States have an alternative political or cultural project? French political scientist Jean-François Bayart writes that the only discernible long term thinking on the part of the Americans is their opposition to the Sudanese regime ¹⁶. Others see Kabila as the latest recruit to a group of former guerrilla leaders committed to good governance rather than democracy and exemplified by Museveni ¹⁷. In order to evaluate this claim we shall have to examine the African scene in the wake of the Kabila victory.

AFRICAN INTERVENTION?

Former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere declared flatly that the international forces which had helped put Kabila in power were African and it does seem that events of 1996-97 reflect Central African rivalries. Congo/Zaire borders on nine states, many of which harbor exiles ("rebels") from neighboring states. Uganda supported Sudanese fighting the Khartoum regime, while Sudan was supporting exiles attacking Uganda from Zairian soil. Uganda supported Rwandan rebels who overthrew the Habyarimana government in Kigali, a government supported by France and Zaire. Katangans launched two invasions of their home province from Angola in 1977 and 1978 ¹⁸.

Uganda apparently supported Kabila as a means of eliminating Ugandan opposition groups on Congo/Zaire soil, and perhaps also to punish Mobutu. Similarly, Rwanda wished to eliminate the Hutu refugee forces in Congo/Zaire, and perhaps to punish Mobutu. The Angolan government was motivated by a wish to punish Mobutu and to strike a blow against its opponents, the Cabinda separatists as well as Jonas Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Angola-based Katangans apparently joined the fighting on Kabila's side, while UNITA fighters aided Mobutu, as did Rwandan Hutu ¹⁹. Former "front line

states" (on the front line in the battle against white domination of southern Africa) may have wanted to get rid of Mobutu because of his betrayal of their cause.

Rwanda was given a free hand in eliminating its Hutu opponents as compensation for its aid to Kabila. It will be interesting to see how Kabila's government pays back the Angolan government for its help.

A TUTSI REBELLION?

The Mobutu regime had alleged from the beginning that the insurrection was in fact an invasion and that Kabila was a "marionette." At the end of October 1996, "anti-Tutsi hatred" swept Kinshasa²⁰. Tutsi strongman Paul Kagame of Rwanda claimed in July that Rwanda had put Kabila in power²¹. Was the AFDL insurgency a "Tutsi rebellion"?

American journalists Duke and Rupert attribute Kabila's ability to consolidate his control over the Congo to "a powerful constituency within his alliance: the ethnic Tutsi military and political leaders who led the fight to oust Mobutu Sese Seko." Kabila and "Western-trained technocrats" in his government represented the public face of the AFDL but real power lay elsewhere. Citing "numerous Congolese and Western analysts," Duke and Rupert claimed: Tutsi political and military leaders-many with close links to neighboring Rwanda and Uganda-are often more powerful than the top civilian officials²².

The power of these Tutsi supposedly was "like a net" around Kabila. Local administrators in areas under AFDL control since the early stages of Kabila's rebellion "defer to" or "are intimidated by" the Tutsi-dominated military, according to Duke and Rupert. The rebellion began with Banyamulege Tutsi uprising in South Kivu, and members of the "Tutsi core" of the movement "believe their sacrifices give them the greatest standing within the alliance movement."

Key Tutsi figures included Déogratias Bugera and Bizima Karaha. "Tutsi influence in the military and in the alliance's political structure appears to converge in the person of Mr. Bugera," according to Duke and Rupert. A Tutsi architect from Goma, North Kivu, Bugera was an important figure in the alliance's relationship with Rwanda and reportedly played a key role in recruiting for the AFDL army. Bugera was named regional commissioner (governor) of North Kivu. Bizima, a Tutsi from South Kivu with a medical degree from South Africa, is Kabila's Foreign Minister and a spokesman for the new regime.

Duke and Rupert attribute the death of André Ngandu Kissage, an AFDL leader, to divisions within the AFDL military. They discount the official AFDL explanation that he was killed in an ambush by Mobutu's army and allege (on the basis of an informant in the alliance) that Kissage was killed because of his persistent questioning of Tutsi domination of the military²³.

Duke and Rupert, and most other writers, fall short in explaining the nature of the Tutsi identity. Duke and Rupert claim that the Tutsi, who make up no more than 1 percent of the Congolese population, are a "cohesive, insular tribe." In contrast, French political scientist Gérard Prunier writes, "contrary to a commonly held belief, Hutu and Tutsi are not tribes. They are two social divisions of the Barundi and Banyarwanda tribes who may have had a different racial origin in the distant past but who have lived together, spoken the same language, and

intermarried for hundreds of years. Their social conflicts existed before colonization but had never reached the level of open and massive violence that developed in the 1960s and after" ²⁴. This is more satisfactory than the Duke-Rupert characterization but leaves one wondering, what is a tribe?

Rather than attributing cohesiveness to the Tutsi (Duke and Rupert's characterization of Tutsi as "a cohesive, insular tribe" is reminiscent of anti-Semitism) one more usefully might ask what elements of common interest led to the emergence of an apparent Tutsi coalition. The forging of a coalition of Tutsi of South Kivu (so-called "Banyamulenge"), North Kivu, Rwanda and to a lesser extent Burundi is due in large measure to Mobutu's promotion of ethnic rivalries and to anti-Rwandan measures adopted at the National Conference. Rwanda-speakers began arriving in what became North Kivu over two centuries ago. During the colonial period, the Belgians recruited Rwandans, mainly Hutu, to work in the Congo, which was seen as under-populated. A third wave of Rwandans consisted of Tutsi fleeing the Hutu revolution of 1959-63. And of course the fourth wave consisted of Hutu fleeing the FPR army which overthrew the Hutu-dominated government in 1994. In some areas-around Masisi for example-Rwanda-speakers formed the majority of the population. Local ethnic groups such as the Hunde feared that elections would deprive them of control over local administration. Mobutu used the Rwanda as allies against the local people. When the National Conference began in 1991, delegates from North and South Kivu aired their grievances against "strangers" living in their regions. As Prunier puts it, the National Conference "decided to apply selectively an already unjust and contradictory set of citizenship laws," disenfranchising the Rwanda speakers. By 1993, North Kivu was the scene of a three-way war, between Tutsi, Hutu, and locals. The arrival of armed Hutu from Rwanda in 1994 led to ethnic cleansing and the flight of Tutsi refugees from North Kivu into Rwanda ²⁵.

The Banyamulenge, Rwanda-speakers living in South Kivu for nearly two centuries, realized that what was happening to the Tutsi of North Kivu probably would happen to them as well. When with Mobutu's support, other ethnic groups of South Kivu formed a coalition against them, Banyamulenge sought the aid of Kagame and the FPR government in Rwanda. The result was the formation of the AFDL, originally a coalition of four anti-Mobutu groups, including one representing the Tutsi of North Kivu and another representing the Banyamulenge ²⁶. The spokesman for the group was Kabila, who (as we have seen) for decades headed a guerrilla movement based in Bembe country i.e., the hills above Fizi, along the border between South Kivu and Katanga. Backing the AFDL gave Rwanda a means of smashing the armed Hutu forces in and around the refugee camps of North and South Kivu, and ultimately of overthrowing its enemy Mobutu.

DICTATORSHIP AND DEMOCRATIZATION

The collapse of the Mobutu dictatorship led to a collision between two forms of opposition to Mobutu, the internal opposition exemplified by Tshisekedi, committed to non-violent direct action, and the armed opposition, based abroad, exemplified by Kabila. Major parties of the internal opposition have faced violent repression while figures associated with the ousted regime have been welcomed into the Kabila entourage.

Beyond personal rivalries as to who will lead the new Congo, there are differences of political culture reflecting widely varying experiences over the years. Both the internal parties and the external ones represent the revival of political categories of the 1960s. Mobutu's banning of party politics from 1965 to 1990 meant that political vocabulary did not adjust to changing realities but remained stuck in the categories of 1960: religious vs. secular parties, centralist vs. federalist, moderate vs. radical. When the Mobutu regime restored multi-party competition in 1990, many of the parties resembled those of 1960. There were two main differences, however. First, while overtly ethnic parties had been common in 1960, ethnic labels now were banned. Second, 25 years of Mobutu's dictatorship had discredited the centralist tendency, so that even parties claiming to reflect the Lumumbist heritage conceded the need for decentralization²⁷.

In the course of the seven-year "transition" which began in 1990, Congolese acquired a new vocabulary, reflecting influences from elsewhere in Francophone Africa. Along with the concept of the "National Conference," they borrowed the term "civil society," to refer to non-party groups which participated in the conference and in political life in general²⁸.

However, Kabila and his Parti de la Révolution Populaire did not take part in the so-called "transition" and in particular stayed out of the National Conference. When the AFDL took over Kinshasa, they spoke in an unreconstructed Marxist-Leninist vocabulary of the 1960s, telling residents of their intention of "having the peasants elect the people's representatives, so as to institute a true democracy at the grass roots level" after "re-education." Peasants are to be organized in "production brigades," perhaps under the leadership of former Mobutist soldiers²⁹. This is the Lumumbism not of Patrice Lumumba himself but of the insurrections carried out in his name in 1964-67 and in particular of Kabila's maquis, which survived into the 1980s.

Kabila recognizes the population's desire for democracy. Proclaiming the "Democratic Republic of the Congo," he promised to form within 72 hours a "provisional government of public salvation." Foreign minister Bizima said the AFDL wanted "free and fair elections, of which everyone can be proud." However, Karaha noted that it would take time to create the conditions in which elections could be held. If he was referring to the need to restore the communications network and to carry out a census, it is difficult to disagree. If he was referring to the supposed need for "re-education," then there is likely to be trouble, since many Congolese consider that they are politically aware and ready for democracy. When the AFDL took over various cities, conducted educational programs, then conducted elections, UDPS leaders often were chosen³⁰.

One of Kabila's main problems is that he heads one of the least representative governments to rule the independent Congo. He created a provisional government or executive committee of the AFDL in March 1997, including seven commissioners or ministers, one deputy commissioner, and two provincial commissioners (for North and South Kivu). This included men who had been with Kabila from the beginning of the rising, including Tutsi of North and South Kivu, but also the Tetela Raphaël Nghenda and the Luba-Katanga, Gaeten Kakudji. Also included were Mwenze Kongolo and Mawampanga Mwana Nanga, leaders of the All North America Conference on Zaire before returning to join Kabila. In Kinshasa, Kabila formed a "government of public safety," based on the executive committee, adding two members of the UDPS and two of the Patriotic Front. One of the UDPS members was Justine Mpyo Kasavubu,

daughter of the first Congolese president, Joseph Kasavubu. Later, Julienne Lumumba, daughter of Patrice Lumumba, until then a journalist in Paris, was named a minister ³¹.

Kabila's government remained politically and geographically unrepresentative. It was based on the Swahili-speaking eastern provinces of North and South Kivu and Katanga, despite the inclusion of two members of the Kongo ethnic group, Mawampanga and Kasavubu. Street demonstrations of the past few years had confirmed the popularity of the UDPS and the Parti Lumumbiste Unifié (Unified Lumumbist Party, PALU) of Antoine Gizenga yet these two parties were excluded; Tshisekedi made it clear that Kasavubu and agriculture minister Paul Bandoma did not represent the UDPS. These two parties staged large demonstrations against Kabila and several demonstrators were killed by Kabila's troops ³².

The struggle between Mobutu and the self-proclaimed "radical opposition" including the UDPS and PALU, after 1990, had confirmed a minimal definition of the state. Key institutions included the presidency, the security services, the central bank, and the networks of diplomatic representatives overseas and territorial administrators within the Congo. Mobutu retained control over these institutions and thus remained head of state, despite losing control of the legislature and the prime ministership on several occasions and being forced to concede substantial autonomy to regional political and economic institutions.

Kabila now finds himself in a similar position in that he controls key institutions but lacks broad support. He is dependent upon an ethnic minority and upon his foreign backers, in particular the Ugandan and Rwandan governments. His survival will depend upon his ability to dominate the Tutsi within his government, who have ties to those foreign backers. To establish his autonomy vis-à-vis his foreign backers he will need more support from Congolese other than the Tutsi. It seems unlikely he will be able to gain such support without reaching a compromise with other anti-Mobutu forces including the UDPS and PALU. Such a compromise would entail recognition of the validity of the internal opposition to Mobutu. As regards PALU, it would entail recognition of a shared legitimacy as heirs to Lumumba. Tutsi elements of the Kabila government likely would resist such dilution of the coalition, unless the UDPS and PALU expressed support for the demands of the Tutsi of North and South Kivu.

ETHNICITY: BROTHERS AND OTHERS

Recent events in the Congo suggest the need for a reconceptualization of ethnicity and nationalism and the links between the two. As a starting point, let us take the observation of Crawford Young that identities are multiple, shifting in response to context and situation. As Young puts it, ethnicity is rooted in a collective recognition of affinity, to which social and emotional meanings are attached. Its imputation of intimacy finds reflection in the frequency with which kinship metaphors are used to express it; a co-ethnic is a brother, not a mere friend ³³.

I would add to Young's formulation that kinship metaphors express inequality. Not only is a father or an uncle senior to the son or nephew, but in Congo one rarely hears the term "brother" without a modifier: "big brother" or "little brother." Even when it is not explicit, as when Tshisekedi calls Kabila his "brother," the seniority of Tshisekedi is implied.

"We" assumes meaning in relationship to "they" but "we" and "they" are not simple equivalents. As Young observes, "we" normally attaches positive connotations to the cultural properties believed to define its identity; the sundry "they" groups found in its cognitive map frequently have negative characteristics and evoke condescending feelings or fear. "We" is likely to simplify its map by reducing "they" to an easily comprehensible number of others, grouping those who appear to have similar languages, cultural practices, or regions of origin.

I would add that "they" are not merely others, they are "strangers," people from elsewhere. When Kasavubu delivered a speech on "the rights of the first occupant" in 1945, he was expressing a deeply held Congolese value³⁴. This value would find expression in many conflicts of the decolonization era and of the past year.

Instrumentally, ethnicity is asserted when it is useful to a group in securing advantage or resisting deprivation. Its activation may also reflect the interest of an ethnic elite in buttressing its claim to political leadership. Ethnicity is activated when circumstances dictate its political use, in a context in which actors perceive competition, conflict, or threat as ethnically textured. Elections tend to activate ethnicity, Young observes; so too does civil war, as events of 1996-97 make clear.

The potency of ethnic mobilization depends on its primordial dimension, according to Young. Ethnic consciousness rests upon shared symbolic meanings, emotionally laden and deeply rooted, which can trigger fears, anxieties, and animosities. The capacity of these affective symbols to supply "we" and "they" demarcations lies in their ability to project themselves as primordial attachments, however novel or ill-defined a given identity may be (e.g., Banyamulenge).

Ethnicity in Congo operates on a number of levels, the broadest of which is the country's four vehicular language zones. In a song composed for the 1970 elections, Franco (the late famous musician) sang, "Mokongo no, Mongala no, Moluba no, Moswahili no; we are all brothers" The terms Mokongo and Moluba include not only people who accept the Kongo and Luba labels as primary ethnic identity but others from the regions where Kongo and Luba are the vehicular languages. This solidarity is strong, even though in other contexts such people might be bitter rivals. The capture of Kinshasa in 1997 provoked a reaction of Ngala-speaking locals (many of them ethnic Kongo) against Swahili-speaking "strangers."

The region or province constitutes another level of politically relevant solidarity. Katanga is the clearest example. Although the area is multi-ethnic, there is a strong sentiment of attachment to that originally artificial administrative unit. As a Katangan, Kabila was more readily accepted in that particularistic province than a Congolese from another province would have been. However, he fell into a trap as he attempted to broaden his movement beyond its initial Kivu-Tutsi base. He may have thought he was strengthening the Congolese component by bringing in Katangans, including a number of his Luba-Katanga co-ethnics, but these are seen by many not as Congolese in general but as Katangans in particular³⁵.

Journalists may suggest that "Kabila put ethnicity back on the agenda" but in my view he entered a political scene already dominated by ethnicity. Mobutu's declaration of 1990, opening an era of multi-party politics, created new opportunities and new threats. Ethnic parties were banned but ethnicity was pervasive. The new parties sought to use prominent members of various ethnic groups to secure support in the home areas of those persons.

Ethnicity is crucial also on the level of individual leaders. In the drama of the so-called "transition" of 1990-96, three ethnic identities were particularly important: those of Kengo, Mobutu and Tshisekedi. Transitional premier Léon Kengo wa Dondo is a bundle of ethnic symbols -partly white, partly Jewish, partly Rwandan, a "white Ngbandi"-each with a well-defined meaning in Zairian political culture. The Constitution prevented Kengo from challenging for the presidency since he is not of Zairian parentage, but he was brought up in Zaire and educated with other members of the political class. Western governments claimed to believe in Kengo's fiscal competence and integrity; he was named prime minister by Mobutu partly because of the Western belief, but especially because he lacked a political base within the country.

Mobutu's relevant identities are first, Mongala (Ngala-speaker), second, man from Equateur region, and third, Ngbandi. The President gave most of his speeches in Ngala. From the beginning of his regime, he surrounded himself with people from Equateur.

At the time of independence, few people outside of northern Equateur would have heard of the Ngbandi ethnic group. After thirty years of Mobutu rule, the Ngbandi were well-known as Mobutu's "tribe." Mobutu began with military and police leadership somewhat skewed toward his Equateur region and neighboring Orientale, but purges and selective promotion led to further skewing. By the late 1980s the heads of "special" services were all Ngbandi. The Special Presidential Division reportedly was recruited almost entirely from the Ngbandi, a fact which facilitated its against other armed forces e.g., mutinous paratroopers in 1992.

The Ngbandi have a reputation as a "backward" group, or a warrior people, which is a more positive way of saying the same thing ³⁶. Mobutu opponents often claimed that the Ngbandi are strangers i.e., recent immigrants from the Central African Republic. One legacy of the Mobutu era may prove to be an unsettled area along the border with the Central African Republic, particularly if the Ngbandi come to feel that they are being punished collectively for the sins of Mobutu.

The Luba-Kasai ethnic label has been a mixed blessing for Tshisekedi since the Luba-Kasai are both respected and resented. The Luba are known as "the whites of the Congo" or "the Jews of the Congo." When Congolese say that one of their number is like a white man, they imply selfishness. Both Luba and others tend to attribute the same positive and negative stereotypes to the Luba: intelligent, hard-working, haughty, tribalistic. The Luba are considered to have greatly profited from the opportunities represented by colonialism. Resettling outside their homeland, the Luba progressively became the leading "cultural brokers" first in the Kasai, then in Katanga, then throughout the Congo, with the exception of the Lower Congo area. "And, as they did so, they became internally derived 'strangers' in the country" ³⁷.

Tshisekedi is seen as conforming to the stereotypes: intelligent and hard-working but also haughty and tribalistic. Resentment of the Luba facilitated Mobutu's efforts to divide the opposition, although bribes presumably helped as well. The president also exploited the internal division between up-river and down-river Luba e.g., using the Luba-Kasai Joseph Ngalula against Tshisekedi ³⁸.

Starting in 1996, the ethnic identities of Kabila and of his Tutsi allies came into play. Kabila is a Luba from northern Katanga; Luba-Katanga speak a rather different language from the Luba-Kasai and are regarded as belonging to a related group rather than the same group. His

"Katangan" and "Lumumbist" identities are more salient on the national level than the specific Luba-Katanga identity.

Ethnic mobilization is fed by feelings of unfair advantage. Resentment of the Luba-Kasai, of Tutsi in the Congo, of mulattos and of "strangers" in general, is based on the perception that they owe their privileged position to the colonialists. Resentment of Tutsi, as of Ngbandi, was fed by their perceived advantages under Mobutu. Congolese nationalism is another level of ethnicity and has a xenophobic streak. As Chajmowiez suggests, the National Conference reinforced anti-Tutsi sentiment by adopting the principle of "geo-politics," according to which each area had to be represented by its own sons (or daughters), and so-called "civil society" i.e., those participating in politics as representatives of churches, human rights organizations, etc., did nothing to defend the Tutsi of Kivu from ethnic cleansing³⁹.

In one sense, the problem between Tshisekedi and Kabila is simply that each feels entitled to be the leader of the Congo. However, there is a specifically Congolese tone to this problem, typified by Tshisekedi's complaint that Kabila had not met him but had sent a younger aide: "My brother Kabila [is held hostage by] people I don't even know, foreigners..." Such a declaration, feeding the resistance of the people of Kinshasa to the Tutsi, makes a compromise between Tshisekedi and Kabila less likely.

CONCLUSION

Recent events in the Congo pose a challenge to the academic sub fields of Comparative Politics and International Relations, each of which tends to simplify reality in a characteristic fashion. If one takes the political or politico-economic system of Congo/Zaire as the unit of analysis, then the other states of the region as well as major states outside the region are situated in the "environment" of the system. From the perspective of the international system, the configuration of states is crucial and the internal characteristics of a given state are background information. In the Congo case however, the internal characteristics of the regime and the configuration of states both were important but the particular set of linkages between international and internal politics, particularly along the eastern border, proved crucial.

Kabila's victory is significant on the local, national and international levels. As mentioned, in South and North Kivu, Tutsi victims of ethnic cleansing turned the tables on their rivals by establishing links to other groups, in the Congo and in neighboring states, which had their own reasons for aiding the Tutsi of Kivu. Kabila overthrew Mobutu by means of a transnational coalition and his victory may represent a shift in power from the oil-producing states of the Atlantic to the mining states of southern Africa. Mobutu can be seen as one of a number of French-supported dictators ousted or in difficulty, while Kabila can be seen as of a series of former guerrilla leaders now supported by Washington, along with the current heads of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda and Rwanda.

Recent studies by Makifiri and De Boeck reveal the complexity of linkages between ethnicity and local interests including land ownership along the Congo's frontiers with Rwanda and Angola, respectively⁴⁰. Such linkages between the very local and the international exist in other zones of conflict-Israel/Palestine and Bosnia are obvious examples-and are crucial to conflict resolution.

Finally, events in the Congo push the political scientist to take another look at the concept of "political culture" and in particular (a) ideas of nationalism and ethnic subnationalism and (b) ideas held by Congolese regarding the nature of the political community including the laws defining citizenship.

Notes

1. An account of Kabila's 20-year maquis in the Fizi area is forthcoming in *Cahiers Africains* (the former *Cahiers du CEDAF*, Brussels).
2. Leymarie, Philippe. *Sous le choc de la révolution congolaise*. *Le Monde Diplomatique*, July 1997 p. 12.
3. Roche, Marc. "Triomphe de Jean-Raymond Boulle, l'homme d'affaires financier des rebelles." *Le Monde*, May 18-19 1997, 3; "Kabila yaka!" *Africa Confidential*, April 11 1997, 7. The fragmentary information at my disposal does not suggest that the mining companies initiated the Kabila campaign but does suggest that their payments to the AFDL made possible Kabila's victory.
4. "Un Waterloo en Afrique." *Le Nouvel Afrique Asie*, June 1997, 10-11; Buchet, Jean-Louis. "Une déconfiture prévisible." *Jeune Afrique*, May 28-June 3 1997, 56.
5. Nzongola-Ntalaja. *Crisis and Change in Zaire, 1960-1985*, in *The Crisis in Zaire: Myths and Realities*. Nzongola-Ntalaja, Editor. Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1986, p. 3-25. Young, Crawford. *Zaire: The Unending Crisis*. *Foreign Affairs*, 1978. 57(1): p. 169-185. Lemarchand, René. *Zaire: the Unmanageable Client State*, in *American Policy in Southern Africa: The Stakes and the Stance*, René Lemarchand, Editor. Washington: University Press of America, 1981. p. 145-165.
6. Lemarchand, René. *The C.I.A. in Africa: How Central? How Intelligent?* *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 1976. 14(3): p. 401-426. Gérard-Libois, Jules. *The Katanga Secession*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966.
7. Braeckman, Colette. "Une carapace très sensible aux coups de plume." *Le Soir*, September 9 1997, 1, 9.
8. Young, Crawford, and Thomas Turner. *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985, p. 369 and chapter 11. The low point in U.S.-Zaire relations (prior to 1997) came in 1975, when Mobutu accused the CIA of plotting his overthrow (p. 373).
9. Yakemtchouk, Romain, *Les Relations entre les Etats-Unis et le Zaïre*. *Studia Diplomatica*, xxxix (1 1986): 5-115.
10. Young and Turner, *Rise and Decline*, pp. 374-5.
11. Yakemtchouk, Romain. *Les deux guerres du Shaba: les relations entre la Belgique, la France et le Zaïre*. *Studia Diplomatica*, 1988. XLI(4-5-6): p. 375-735. Willame, J.-C. *La Seconde Guerre du Shaba*. Genève-Afrique, 1978. XVI(1).
12. "Zaire-Belgium: Relations Normalised," in *Africa Research Bulletin/Economic*, Aug. 15, 1989, p. 9358-9.
13. Fottorino, Eric. *France-Afrique, les liaisons dangereuses*. *Le Monde*. 24-25-26 July, 1997.

14. Crocker, Chester A. *High Noon in Southern Africa. Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1992, p. 486.
15. Fitchett, Joseph. *France Paints U.S. Role As Crucial in Zaire Crisis*, *International Herald Tribune*, 8 November, 1996, p. 9. Angeli, Claude. *Chirac a jou, les parrains de Mobutu jusqu'à la catastrophe*, *Canard Enchaîné*, 2 April 1997, p. 4. Malley, Simon. *Six tombeurs de Mobutu*, *Nouvel Afrique-Asie*, May 1997, p. 6-9.
16. "L'ère de l'après-Mobutu," *Croissance*, 403, April 1997, p. 15.
17. Gourevitch, Philip. "Continental Shift." *New Yorker*, August 4 1997, p. 42-55.
18. Willame, Jean-Claude. *Contribution à l'étude des mouvements d'opposition au Zaïre: Le FLNC*. Cahiers du CEDAF, 1980. (6).
19. Prunier, Gérard. *The Great Lakes Crisis*, *Current History*, 96: 210, 1997, p. 193-199. Buckley, Stephen. *Uganda Helps Rebels In Zaire, Diplomats Say*. *International Herald-Tribune*. March 5, 1997, p. 2. *mplication de l'Angola? La Presse (Tunis)*, April 25, 1997, p. 12.
20. Braeckman, Colette. *La haine anti-tutsi souffle sur le Zaïre*, *Le Soir*, 31 October-1 November 1996, p. 8.
21. *Kigali a planifi, la chute de Mobutu*, *La Presse (Tunis)*, 10 July 1997, p. 1, 8.
22. Duke, Lynne, and James Rupert. *Power Behind Kabila Reflects Congo War's Tutsi Roots*, *International Herald Tribune*, 29 May 1997, p. 7.
23. Duke and Rupert; some Lumumbists apparently blame Kabila for the death of Ngandu Kasesse, according to Braeckman, Colette. *Comment le Zaïre fut libéré*. *Le Monde Diplomatique*, July 1997, p. 13.
24. Prunier, Gérard. *The Great Lakes Crisis*, *Current History*, 96: 210, 1997, p. 193-199. Newbury and Newbury emphasize the creation of Tutsi and Hutu among Rwanda speakers, rather than the creation of the (Banya-) Rwanda group from Tutsi and Hutu: Newbury, Catharine. *The Cohesion of Oppression. Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860-1960*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988; Newbury, David. *The Invention of Rwanda: The Alchemy of Ethnicity*, presented to Annual Meeting, African Studies Association. Orlando, 1995.
25. Prunier, *The Great Lakes Crisis*; Willame, Jean-Claude. *Banyarwanda et Banyamulenge. Violences ethniques et gestion de l'identitaire au Kivu*. *Zaïre, annales 90, volume 6*, Brussels, Paris: Institut Africain-CEDAF; Editions L'Harmattan, 1997; Chajmowicz, Monique. *Kivu: les Banyamulenge enfin à l'honneur! Politique africaine*, 1996. (64): p. 115-120.
26. Other groups in the AFDL were: 1. *Conseil de Resistance Nationale pour la Démocratie (CRND, National Council of Resistance for Democracy)*, led by André Ngandu Kasesse, who had broken away from one of the splinter groups of the MNC-L (*Mouvement National Congolais-Lumumba*); 2. *Alliance Démocratique Populaire (People's Democratic Alliance, ADP)*, led by D'ogratias Bugera; 3. *Mouvement Révolutionnaire pour la Libération du Zaïre (Revolutionary Movement for the Liberation of Zaire, MRLZ)*, led by Mosasa Myintega. (*Africa Research Bulletin*, p. 12663.
27. Young, Crawford. *Zaïre: the Shattered Illusion of the Integral State*. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 1994. 32(2): p. 247-263.

28. Turner, Thomas. Zaire: Flying High Above The Toads: Mobutu and Stalemated Democracy, in *Political Reform in Francophone Africa*, D.E. Gardinier and J.F. Clark, Editors. Boulder: Westview Press, 1997. p. 246-264.
29. Braeckman, Colette. Comment le Zaïre fut libéré, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, July 1997, p. 12-13. Speaking to international audiences, members of the Kabila government spoke of an "économie sociale du marché," a policy which sounds like that of France under Lionel Jospin! (Andriamirado, Sennen. "Kabila n'est pas seul." *Jeune Afrique*, May 28-June 3 1997, p. 53.) The actual socio-economic policies of the new regime remain unclear.
30. Sotinel, Thomas. A Kisangani, les séminaires idéologiques et politiques à des partisans de Laurent-Désiré Kabila. *Le Monde*, April 24, 1997, p. 2.
31. For the composition of the governments see *Africa Research Bulletin*, 34, 4 p. 12663 and 34, 5 p. 12675. Kasavubu later was named minister/ambassador to Belgium and the European Union, resident in Brussels. To some Congolese this isolated her from Kabila.
32. Congo: manifestations ensanglantés. *Le Soir*. 26-27 July 1997, p.7.
33. Young, Crawford, Ed. *Rising Tide of Cultural Pluralism: the Nation-State at Bay?* Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1993, pp. 21-25.
34. Gilis, C.-A. *Kasa-Vubu au coeur du drame congolais*. Brussels, éditions Europe-Afrique, 1964.
35. Braeckman, "Comment le Zaïre fut libéré."
36. Early in the Mobutu years, a popular song named "Nyama ya Zamba" (beast of the forest) was banned, because it was taken as a reference to Mobutu's origins.
37. Jewsiewicki, Bogumil. *The Formation of the Political Culture of Ethnicity in the Belgian Congo*, in *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, Leroy Vail, Editor. University of California Press: Berkeley, 1989.
38. Willame, Jean-Claude, and Laurent Monnier. *Les provinces du Congo: structure et fonctionnement*. Cahiers économiques et sociaux, Collection d'Etudes Politiques, 1964. (II: Sud Kasai_Uele_Kongo Central).
39. Chajmowicz, *Kivu: les Banyamulenge enfin à l'honneur!*, p. 119-120.
40. Mafikiri Tsongo, "Pratiques informelles, phénomènes informels et problèmes ethniques au Kivu (Zaïre)" and De Boeck, Filip, "Identité, résistance et 'effervescence' sociale: perspectives locales et globales au Zaïre." both in *Phénomènes informels et dynamiques culturelles en Afrique*, ed. G. de Villers, Brussels, Paris: Institut Africain-CEDAF; Editions L'Harmattan, 1996.