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Pro Deo et Patria.

Unfolding the Hybrid Governance and Political Participation of Religious Institutions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Sublime Nyundu Mabiala

PhD
The University of Edinburgh
2022
Abstract

The nexus between Religion and Politics has shifted in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) since 2016—a year that marked the end of Joseph Kabila’s constitutional two-term limit. This interdisciplinary thesis unfolds the public role played by the Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo (CENCO) that regroups all Catholic bishops on a national scale and l’Eglise du Christ au Congo (ECC), which is the confederation of 95 Protestant denominations, in that epochal change. Using qualitative and interpretive approaches, this thesis specifically looks at the interlinkages between those two major religious networks and the State to highlight the shift in the Catholic-Protestant communication, mobilization, and participation toward national Politics. It draws on ten months of fieldwork in Kinshasa, the capital-city, with two additional months of follow-up research in Brussels, Belgium and in Vatican-city, Italy. CENCO and ECC have functioned as hybrid governance institutions and actors by using their social influences to shape political order and to provide basic public services. With regards to previous researches in the expanding literature that explores the intersection of Religion and Politics, this thesis brings a particular and primary contribution in displaying how and why the Catholic-Protestant political engagement in the recent years changed considerably in the DRC.

The timeframe of this inquiry (that goes from 2016 to 2019) coincided with a specific moment when religious leaders emerged as active and critical voices. The Catholic bishops of CENCO first stepped up as mediators between Kabila’s administration and opposition leaders and fostered the signature of the Saint-Sylvester peace accord in December 2016. Joined later by their Protestant peers of ECC, they also
mobilized societal energies as protest catalysts alongside Christian laity and youth-driven civil movements that paved the road to the DRC’s first and historic peaceful transfer of power since its independence from Belgium. That event was concretized by the outgoing Joseph Kabila and the elected Felix Tshisekedi on 24 January 2019 on the lawn of the Palais de la nation. This work also paid a particular attention to historical, cultural, and theological underpinnings linked to this shift in religious political participation. The research relies on interviews conducted among Congolese religious elites, leaders, and laypersons over a period of two years. Despite its ambivalence as observed in post-2018 elections’ era, Religion served both as a cohesive and transformational political force in the DRC.
Lay Summary

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has witnessed a shift in the interplay between Religion and Politics from 2016 onwards. This interdisciplinary thesis seeks to unfold that epochal change and covers the period from the end of Joseph Kabila’s constitutional two-term limit to the country’s first peaceful power transfer since its independence from Belgium six decades ago. It draws on ten months of fieldwork in Kinshasa (where are the administrative headquarters of both political and Religious Institutions) with two additional months of follow-up research in Brussels, Belgium and Vatican-city, Italy. This qualitative and interpretive inquiry looks at how and why the political participation of Religious Institutions as hybrid governance actors has changed in the DRC during the past recent years. Purposely, it chose the Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo (CENCO)—that regroups all Catholic bishops on a national scale and l’Église du Christ au Congo (ECC), which is the confederation of 95 Protestant denominations, as case studies. The two Religious Institutions respectively represent and network Catholics and Protestants throughout the DRC. Demographically speaking, CENCO and ECC oversee over 80 percent of Congolese citizens who adhere to Christianity, the dominant Religion in the country.

The thesis offers a comparative and evaluative analysis of those two major Religious Institutions in terms of their historical trajectories and socio-political influences in the contemporary DRC. It was relevant to deploy such an investigation because it helps to grasp a full picture of the spectrum of Christianity that shaped the Congolese society. From 2016 onwards, religious leaders firstly played a preeminent role of mediators between the Kabila’s authoritarian regime and the opposition with the consensual
signature of a peace agreement that paved that road to the 2018 elections. On the other hand, they emerged as protest catalysts and mobilized both the local and international community in constraining Joseph Kabila to step down and not run for an unconstitutional third presidential term. The present study contributes to the increasingly global debate on the relationship between Religion and Politics. The recent shift in the political participation of Congolese Catholic and Protestant clergy as “public authorities from below” and the politicization of Religion since the election of the DRC’s fifth President Felix Tshisekedi in 2019 are illustrative of issues related to democratization, public services’ provision, post-electoral reconciliation, and social reconstruction.
Acknowledgements

A Congolese proverb states that “it requires an entire community to build huts in a village”. This thesis would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of many persons. Above all, the Triune God deserves my first and deepest gratitude for His unparalleled and multiple blessings during this phase.

I am indebted to my co-supervisors Dr. Barbara Bompani and Dr. Tom Boylston who helped me develop a critical perspective related to the interlinkage between Religion and Politics. Thanks to Reverend Dr. Kevin Ward and Dr. Emma Wild-Wood as external and internal examiners of this thesis for their constructive feedback during the viva.

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Heartfelt thanks to my parents, particularly my late mother, Marie Ntedika Mabiala, for being the first person to believe in my ability to overcome life hindrances and to further my studies. Her advice “the more you know, the better you serve God and humankind” still resonates in my mind. I’m thankful to my father, Daniel A. Mabiala for imparting in me the value of education and for being a model of resilience and hard work.

I particularly dedicate this entire work to my wife Rachel. Words will not be enough to express my thankfulness for her constant love and endurance during this research and writing journey.

Somnia Vera Facit.
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>ABMU</td>
<td>American Baptist Mission Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACI</td>
<td>Action Chapel International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFDL</td>
<td>Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI</td>
<td>Amnesty International</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMIPRO</td>
<td>Association of Friends of Protestant Missions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>APCM</td>
<td>American Presbyterian Congo Mission</td>
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<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUPC</td>
<td>Aumonerie Universitaire Protestante de la RDC</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMS</td>
<td>Baptist Missionary Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>CACH</td>
<td>Cap pour le Changement</td>
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<tr>
<td>CADC</td>
<td>Community of Assemblies of God in Congo</td>
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<td>CBM</td>
<td>Congo Balolo Mission</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>Continuation Committee in the Congo</td>
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<td>CCM</td>
<td>Coordination pour le Changement des Mentalités</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>Christus Dominus</td>
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<td>CDA</td>
<td>Critical Discourse Analysis</td>
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<td>CDD</td>
<td>Community-Driven Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEI</td>
<td>Commission Electorale Independante</td>
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<tr>
<td>CENCO</td>
<td>National Episcopal Conference in Congo</td>
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<tr>
<td>CENI</td>
<td>National Independent Electoral Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEPCO</td>
<td>Communauté Evangélique Protestante au Congo</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFS</td>
<td>Congo Free State</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<td>CJP</td>
<td>Commission Justice and Peace</td>
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<td>CLC</td>
<td>Comité Laïc de Coordination</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMA</td>
<td>Christian and Missionary Alliance</td>
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<td>CNS</td>
<td>Sovereign National Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNSA</td>
<td>A Council for the follow up of the Accord and the electoral process</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONELCO</td>
<td>Conseil National des Eglises Libres au Congo</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPC</td>
<td>Congo Protestant Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRA</td>
<td>Congo Reform Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCCM</td>
<td>Disciples of Christ Congo Mission</td>
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<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
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<td>ECC</td>
<td>Eglise du Christ au Congo</td>
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<td>ECZ</td>
<td>Eglise du Christ au Zaire</td>
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<td>EESSE</td>
<td>Emergency Equity and System Strengthening in Education Project</td>
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<td>EVD</td>
<td>Ebola Virus Disease</td>
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<td>FBO</td>
<td>Faith-based Organizations</td>
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<td>FCC</td>
<td>Front Commun pour le Congo</td>
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<td>FMCS</td>
<td>Foreign Christian Missionary Society</td>
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<td>FNSCC</td>
<td>Fond National de Solidarité contre la Covid 19</td>
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<td>GEM</td>
<td>Garangaze Evangelical Mission</td>
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<td>HBP</td>
<td>Health as Bridge of Peace</td>
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<td>HRW</td>
<td>Human Rights Watch</td>
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<td>IDS</td>
<td>International Development Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>IGF</td>
<td>General Inspectorate of Finance</td>
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<tr>
<td>IISD</td>
<td>International Institute for Sustainable Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>International Rescue Committee</td>
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<td>JNAG</td>
<td>National Day of Thanksgiving</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIM</td>
<td>Livingstone Inland Mission</td>
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<tr>
<td>LUCHA</td>
<td>Lutte pour le Changement</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEPS</td>
<td>Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Professional Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLC</td>
<td>Mouvement de la Liberation du Congo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONUSCO</td>
<td>United Nations Stabilization Mission</td>
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<tr>
<td>ODA</td>
<td>Official Development Assistance</td>
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<td>PCE</td>
<td>Post-Conflict Environment</td>
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<td>PD</td>
<td>Participatory Development</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLA</td>
<td>Participatory Rural Appraisal</td>
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<tr>
<td>POD</td>
<td>People-Oriented Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRA</td>
<td>Participatory Rural Appraisal</td>
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<td>RCD</td>
<td>Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie</td>
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<td>RI</td>
<td>Religious Institutions</td>
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<td>RMT</td>
<td>Rossy Mukendi Tshimanga</td>
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<td>RTNC</td>
<td>Radio et Television Nationale Congolaise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RRA</td>
<td>Rapid Rural Appraisal</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTNC</td>
<td>Radio Television Nationale du Congo</td>
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<td>SCEAM</td>
<td>Symposium des Conferences Episcopales d'Afrique et de Madagascar</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMF</td>
<td>Svenska Missions Forbunde</td>
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<tr>
<td>SR</td>
<td>Social Reconstruction</td>
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<td>ST</td>
<td>Social Trinitarianism</td>
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<td>SVC</td>
<td>Second Vatican Council</td>
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<td>TDK</td>
<td>Therese Dechade Kapangala</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>Truth and Reconciliation Commissions</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCC</td>
<td>Catholic University of Congo</td>
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<tr>
<td>UDP</td>
<td>Union pour la Democratie et le Progres Social</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNC</td>
<td>Union pour la Nation Congolaise</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations’ Development Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNIKIN</td>
<td>Université de Kinshasa</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPC</td>
<td>Protestant University of Congo</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>USIP</td>
<td>United States Institute of Peace</td>
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<tr>
<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>WCC</td>
<td>World Council of Churches</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>WM</td>
<td>Westcott Missions</td>
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<tr>
<td>YMH</td>
<td>Yambuku Mission Hospital</td>
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<td>Figure 2: ST and SR Commonalities</td>
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<td>Figure 3: PST Paradigm</td>
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1.1. Pro Deo et Patria: Religion-Politics Nexus in the DRC.

Religion and Politics have intermingled in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for several centuries. It started with the Portuguese exploration within the Kongo Kingdom’s territory and continued with the installation of Western missionaries (both Catholics and Protestants). As result of their enterprise, Christianity has become the dominant religion making the DRC one of the most Christianized nations in Africa and in the world estimated to 95.8 percent of its current 101.8 million inhabitants (Pew Research Centre, 2020; US Department of State, 2020). This reality also explains the social influences of Religious Institutions and the relevance of religious leaders in the Congolese society. The present study aims to show that the political participation of Religious Institutions as hybrid governance actors in the DRC from 2016 onwards is different than in earlier periods. It displays a significant shift as evidenced by the increasing political engagement of religious actors since the end of President Joseph Kabila’s second and last constitutional term in 2016 and on the other hand by the politicization of Religion in the post-electoral epoch.

Religion in Political Sphere from 2016 onwards.

The period that goes from 2016 to 2019 would certainly be remembered as a pivotal moment in the contemporary history of the DRC with regards to the interplay between Religion and Politics for five reasons. First, 2016 marked the end of Joseph Kabila’s constitutional two-term limit. His government’s attempt to change the country’s constitution for allowing him to run for a third mandate and its failure to organize elections
generated socio-political tensions on the national scale. Many observers of Congolese Politics and interviewees/informants/participants in this research project at that time predicted violence, even civil war in the DRC. Second, this turbulent period coincided with a specific moment when religious leaders, Catholic bishops of CENCO particularly, emerged as active mediators between Kabila’s administration and the political opposition with the signature of the Peace-agreement known as the Saint-Sylvester Accord signed by both groups on the 31st of December 2016. More details about this historic accord are provided in Chapter 2 where the multifaceted CENCO’s political action is debated.

Third, this timeframe is crucial for the inquiry because Religious Institutions and actors raised up as protest catalysts and mobilized both the local and international community in constraining Joseph Kabila to implement the Peace agreement and to step down and not run for an unconstitutional third presidential term. It evidences a seeming increase in direct religious commentary and engagement related to politics. Christian laypersons and the youth massively joined Catholic and Protestant Clergy in mobilization and protestation to reclaim elections in 2018. Three major public events marked the socio-political sphere in the beginning of that electoral year. The first was the critical speech of Laurent Cardinal Monsengwo on 2nd of January 2018, aired through social media, naming the State authorities at that time as “mediocre”. The Cardinal challenged and then publicly requested them to resign due to their human rights’ violations upon Christian protestors who marched two days earlier to reclaim the hold of elections. That march protestation was organized by the Catholic Laymen Coordination (CLC) with the approval of Congolese Catholic bishops. Some of those protesting on the streets were shot dead by the national police and security agents. Cardinal Monsengwo’s speech untitled ‘May the
mediocre clear out' had a significant impact on Christian citizens, particularly among the youth, and sparked street demonstrations in subsequent months because the Catholic clergyman called the Congolese people to take the country’s destiny in their hands and foster political change (Ndongala-Maduku & Mwana-Kitata, 2021, p.7-10). Chapter 4 will analyze the socio-political outcomes of this speech of Cardinal Monsengwo alongside his Protestant peer Francois-David Ekofo’s similar message delivered on 16 January 2018 in opposition to the ruling regime at that time.

The second event that pointed to Religion-Politics nexus was the allocution of President Joseph Kabila on 26 January 2018 after the violent public incidents against Christian protesters that occurred on a national scale. Joseph Kabila explicitly called for the separation between Religious Institutions and the secular State by quoting Jesus’ words in the Bible as follows, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:21, New Living Translation). The informants and participants of this study unanimously interpreted that as a warning to religious leaders not to get involved in the country’s political affairs. Because of a weak civil society, Catholic bishops emerged as critical voices calling for Joseph Kabila to step down. The prelates accused him and his government of deliberately not organizing elections since 31 December 2016, a deadline that constitutionally constrained him from staying in power or seeking a third presidential term.

This public engagement of Catholic bishops also affected Protestant and Revivalist Churches locally known as Eglises de Reveil au Congo (ERC) that progressively abandoned their previous a-political stance and attitude for more energetic public engagement in this predominantly Christian nation (Barrett et al., 2001; Deibert, 2013;
The third public discourse with a national repercussion came from the Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO). The outgoing General Lieutenant Derrick Mbuyiselo expressed concerns at the continued deterioration of the security situation and disclosed that “the solution to the DRC’s crisis is not primarily military but political” (MONUSCO, 2018). This African state has endured one of the deadliest documented conflicts since the Second World War (WWII) (Deibert, 2013; Kiteti-Boya, 2010). It faces an ongoing worrisome humanitarian crisis with a higher rate of internally displaced people (IDPs) despite the current presence of the largest and most expensive UN peacebuilding contingent in the world (Autesserre, 2010, 2014; Berwouts, 2017).

Yet progress on implementing the Saint Sylvester peace deal has stalled, and serious questions persisted about whether Joseph Kabila and his administration were committed to organize fair and transparent elections that were expected to run at the end of 2018, after another failed attempt in December 2017. On the 8th of August 2018 after the pressure of the Catholic Church and the international community, Joseph Kabila finally and officially chose the former government interior minister Emmanuel Ramazani Shadari as his successor and the nominee for the former ruling coalition’s party in the December 2018’s polls. Many observers of Congolese Politics predicted post-electoral violence, even civil war in the DRC in case Kabila’s successor were fraudulently declared the winner of those elections by the Commission Electorale Nationale Independante (CENI)—the National Independent Electoral Commission. In sum, the shift in religious political participation led by Catholic bishops and later followed by their Protestant peers
resulted into the organization of the 30 December 2018’s presidential and legislative elections.

Fourth, this period is particularly important in the country’s political history because the local and international community witnessed the DRC’s first peaceful power transfer on 24th of January 2019 since its independence from Belgium in 1960. This handover was concretized by the outgoing President Joseph Kabila and the new head of State Felix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi on the lawn of the *Palais de la nation*. The fifth and last reason of the importance of this timeframe is the new dynamics regarding the interlinkages between the State and Religious Institutions as non-state actors in the co-governance of the country in the sectors of education and health assistance. The launch of “free education” in 2019 by the Tshisekedi government has caused challenges and tensions in the educational sector. The 1977 agreement, co-signed by the State and Churches, continues as a functional framework of a “negotiated arrangement”. This accord assigned those religious networks to manage conventional-based schools while the State keeps the organizational power and financial funding. However, the Catholic Church and ECC as a confederation of Protestant denominations also own private schools which are competing with public ones to attract students. The clashes between Tshisekedi’s government and religious networks reached a climax when the State suppressed “teacher bonus fees” locally called “frais de motivation—motivation fee” that were used to supplement teachers’ salaries (Titeca et al., 2013). This inquiry evidenced the efforts of the Tshisekedi’s administration that relies on international donors and partners to promote and develop a clearer and longer-term vision for education system and its key actors in the DRC. In contrast to the clash observed in education system,
CENCO and ECC closely collaborated with the State in the health sector. For example, the DRC’s government sought the participation of those two religious networks to tackle Ebola and Covid-19. On 24 April 2020, just one month after the first official case of the pandemic in the DRC, President Tshisekedi consulted a delegation of religious leaders and appointed Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo as head of Fond National de Solidarité contre la Covid-19 (FNSCC—the National Solidarity Fund against Covid-19). This structure is led by 12 members as representatives of Religious Institutions in the country. It is currently presided by Reverend pastor Dominique Mukanya wa Banza, the former leader of the ECC’s humanitarian assistance department since 2004.

The Politicization of Religion in the post-2018 electoral era.

Tens of thousands of Congolese Christians streamed into the Pentecost Martyrs’ Stadium in Kinshasa on Sunday 23 June 2019. They gathered for a special meeting called Journée Nationale d’Action des Graces (JNAG)/National Day of Thanksgiving—in English, with keynote speaker: His Excellency Felix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi, the DRC’s head of state, symbolically dressed in white as a sign of peace and purity according to the national audience. Drawing from the second book of Chronicles in the Old Testament Bible, the newly elected President Tshisekedi launched his address by imploring God’s forgiveness for his own sins and for all his predecessors as an ethical prerequisite for divine healing of the land.¹ Here were his words in verbatim:

On behalf of all the children of God here present and throughout the country, I, Felix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, solemnly dedicate on this day, the Democratic Republic of Congo in the hands of the Eternal and Almighty God. I surrender my entire nation to your

¹ 2 Chronicles 7:14-15. These biblical verses state, “if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I (God) will hear from heaven, and I (God) will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place”. 

supreme authority. Sit on the throne of this land and reign as absolute Master. Be the King of Congo and occupy the place you deserve…\(^2\)

After his public declaration of Jesus Christ as the new ruler of the DRC and the country’s dedication to God, President Tshisekedi cancelled all negative words spelled against the country and any curses that may have kept it in bondage. The President Tshisekedi professed that spiritual darkness would no longer reign over the country by issuing a new decree on the nation declaring that the DRC is blessed and prosperous from now on in the name of Jesus Christ. This event was broadcasted by national radio and television (RTNC) allowing the Congolese population throughout the country to watch those moments of collective repentance, country’s dedication, and Christ’s enthronement as ‘the King of the DR Congo’. It is important to underline here that radio and television are still the most used media in the country (Media Landscapes, 2020). This ceremony was a sort of landmark in the DRC’s political practice as Felix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi became the first Congolese head of State to publicly perform a religious ritual by setting a covenant with God and to solemnly request for the kingship of Jesus Christ over the DRC.

This presidential declaration raised two opposite kinds of reactions among the population. The first reaction was excitement from those ones who see the role of Religion as an integral part of the political practice. The feelings of joy and satisfaction were easily perceived on the faces of those who attended the ceremony (fieldnote observation, June 2019). One of my informants who was part of the JNAG team spoke out in these precise words, “our country the DRC formerly known as Zaire has been cursed since the rule of

\(^2\) Fieldnote observations, June 2019. Kinshasa, DRC.
Mobutu when he voluntarily signed a pact with Satan to reunite the country in the early years of independence and by his use of witchcraft/occult as political force to seize power and dominion over his fellow citizens”.³ My interlocutor justified this assertion by pointing to Mobutu’s response to a Belgian journalist during the occupation of some regions of country by Congolese secessionist rebels.⁴ Another attender replied that “President Tshisekedi’s initiative to submit the country under the kingship of Jesus Christ is perceived as the reversal of the curse and the mandatory condition for a divine intervention to heal the DRC while referring to God’s promise to King Solomon, the builder and dedicator of Jerusalem’s temple”⁵. In addition, I was reminded by two informants that it was symbolic for this event to be held at the stadium called “of Martyrs” because it was built in the same place where the dictator President Mobutu made publicly hanged his political opponents who were accused of plotting against his regime.⁶ The second noticed reaction stemmed from lawyers and constitutionalists. Informants who belong to this professional category highlighted the legal incoherence in the President’s dedication of the country to Christ because the DRC is a constitutionally secular state regardless the

³ Semi-structured interview with Reverend Viviane Nzita Kini, 27 June 2019, Kinshasa, DRC. Rev. Kini is pastor of Communauté Baptiste au Congo (CBCO), one of the affiliated members of ECC. She is part of the JNAG intercessory team and journalist at Studios Sango Malamu (SSM), one of the most influential Christian Radio-Television broadcast channels in the city of Kinshasa.


⁵ Interview via phone with Reverend Pastor Bansimba, one of the event organizers. 24 August 2020.

⁶ During a press release held on June 19 (four days before the event), Apostle Angele Sola who was also the national coordinator of this day of prayer, indicated that God recommended her to mobilize as many Congolese Christians as possible to pray for the country at the stadium of Martyrs because it is mythical place that has seen the blood of many innocents flow (DRC / Prayer for the Nation: The Congolese People Invited to Cultivate Love - FAAPA FR, 2019).
larger adherence of its population to Christianity. This ritual of dedication of the DRC as a secular state to God by a President who claims to be a Pentecostal Christian raises discussion about the causalities of ‘the Congolese crisis’ and the interplay between Religion and Politics in the DRC.

1.2. Research Questions and Contributions

With the purpose of examining the shift that occurred in terms of the nexus between Religion and Politics, this study aimed to answer one central question: How and why has the political participation of Religious Institutions as hybrid governance actors changed in the DRC during the past recent years? Three enquiries (sub-questions) were formulated to diversify the main research question and to better collect data from informants and participants: 1) Did religious participation in the country’s politics change since 2016? If yes, what kind of organizations are leading this shifted public action, how and why? 2) What are their conceptual interpretations about the relationships that exist and/or should exist between Religion and Politics, and/or Church and State? 3) Are there any historical underpinnings, cultural motives and theological incentives that motivate Religious Institutions in this shift of attitude, strategies and actions in public sphere and how do

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7 Two perspectives emerged among those lawyers and constitutionalists. On one hand, some viewed the dedication of the DRC to God by President Tshisekedi as his political pursuit to impose Christianity on a secular state that stipulates religious freedom for each citizen. On the other, some thought that President Tshisekedi should follow the steps of Frederick Tshiluba who did not only declared Zambia as a Christian nation but also amended the country’s constitution. Dr. Chammah J. Kaunda in his book The Nation that Fear God Prospers: A Critique of Zambian Pentecostal Theopolitical Imaginations, stresses that “Zambia is distinguished as the only country in the world to openly declare itself a Christian nation, and to define itself as such in its constitution” (Kaunda, 2018, pp. 158–159).

8 His Excellency Felix A. T. Tshisekedi is the fifth President of the DRC since 24 January 2019. He publicly introduces himself as a born-again Pentecostal Christian. An active member of Centre Missionnaire Philadelphie (CMP) planted by pastor Roland Luhata Dalo and affiliated to La Communauté des Assemblées de Dieu au Congo (CADC)—Community of Assemblies of God in Congo, one of the Protestant denominations members of ECC. According to my informant Richard Kampala who attends this local church, President Tshisekedi has served as an active and devoted deacon before becoming the country’s head of State.
these play in social collective awareness and responsibility about political participation and the country’s social reconstruction?

When I began this research in September 2017, there was no existing academic publication that explored a comparative inquiry of both Catholic and Protestant political engagements in the DRC at an institutional level. On Catholic side, the first book to explore the link broadly and deeply between Religion and Politics in the DRC was published as recently as in 2016. Its author Ignace Ndongala-Maduku focused on the socio-political effects of Catholic bishops of CENCO’s speeches, the electoral expertise of the DRC’s Catholic Church and the street protests of Catholic Christians held in 1992 and 2012.\footnote{Ignace Ndongala-Maduku is a Congolese Catholic priest and professor at the University of Montreal, Quebec, Canada. He is the author of a book published in 2016 (in French) by Editions Karthala: Religion et politique en RD du Congo - Marches des chrétiens et paroles des évêques catholiques sur les élections. Regarding his academic qualifications, Ignace Ndongala Maduku holds a Doctorate in Religious Studies from University of Montreal. He also holds a doctorate in theology, and in religious anthropology and history of religions, respectively from the Institut Catholique de Paris (France) and the University of Paris IV-Sorbonne.} On Protestant side, Phillippe B. Kabongo-Mbaya’s \textit{L’Eglise du Christ au Zaire: Formation et Adaptation d’un protestantisme en situation de dictature} published by Karthala editions in 1992 is a referential landmark, well-researched and carefully written book (only available in French) that discusses the relationship between the Protestant Church/ECC with the Mobutu political regime.\footnote{Philippe B. Kabongo-Mbaya holds a doctorate in theology. He is a sociologist and Congolese pastor within the Protestant Church of France. Member of several scientific research institutions in religious history and sociology, he is also the author of numerous articles on Congolese Protestantism and the Churches of Africa. He is currently expert and in charge of missions at the Global Alliance of Reformed on behalf of the Churches of French-speaking Africa.} The meticulous reading of both works sparked the need and opportunity to fill the gap in carrying out an updated and primary investigation of the political participation of both Religious Institutions which have not yet been explored in other research. The original contributions of the thesis are threefold. It
offers the first comparative and evaluative analysis of the two major religious institutions in terms of their socio-political influences before, during and after the DRC’s 2018 elections. At that level, the particularity of this study points to its interdisciplinary character by incorporating political theology into a social scientist discourse to put forward a mixed paradigm. The first discipline is described as the approach of those who believe that their religious faith must shape the political order (Kahn, 2011; Lilla, 2014; Schmitt, 2005).

Secondly, this inquiry has investigated the leadership-style of all religious actors who led those two faith-based institutions and their respective positions towards political regimes and figures that ruled the country since its independence in 1960. Thirdly, the investigation of the Religion-Politics nexus in the DRC contributes to the debate with a fresh perspective on the country’s current societal changes due to the shifted religious political participation. This qualitative and interpretive study also enriches the English-speaking audience about the DRC as an under-studied francophone African State with a particular contribution of African and Congolese scholarship and authorship. There is much confusion about the relationships which exist or should exist between Religion and Politics. It remains an area of study needing further scholarly research (Covington-Ward, 2016; Ellis & Haar, 2007; Katongole, 2018; Meyer, 2004).

Geographically speaking, the DRC is the second African largest country where most Christians (over 80 percent of them) adhere to the Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches that are respectively and institutionally represented by La Conference Episcopale Nationale au Congo (CENCO)—the National Episcopal Conference in Congo and Eglise du Christ au Congo (ECC)— The Church of Christ in Congo, that is mainly referred as the Protestant Church of Congo (a national
confederation of 95 protestant denominations). The two Religious Institutions serve as case studies for this study and were chosen because of their collective implication and significant contribution to the political mobilization and change that happened from 2016 onwards at the national level. Chapters 2 and 3 will provide sustained details about their organizational status, their historical trajectories, and socio-political influences in the contemporary Congolese society.

1.3. The DRC as a land of paradoxes: Unfolding the crisis

The Democratic Republic of Congo is located on the basin of Central Africa as the second largest country of the continent. Its turbulent history comprises seven periods reflected by seven name changes: Congo Free State (1885-1908), Belgian Congo (1908-60), Republic of the Congo (1960-64), People’s Republic of Congo (1964-1966), the Democratic Republic of Congo (1966-1971), Republic of Zaire (1971-1997) and again the Democratic Republic of Congo (since 1997). From the establishment of King Leopold II’s colonial authority in 1885 to the modern day (when this study started), the socio-political situation has been instable and marked by violence. Adam Hochschild argues, “Congo would have been one of the major killing grounds of modern times” (Hochschild, 1999, p.3). Despite its independence from Belgium on 30 June 1960, the DRC endured five years of political strife and violence until the military coup of General Joseph Mobutu on 24 November 1965 (Deibert, 2013a). “For thirty-two years, Mobutu ruled with a rampantly corrupt regime that impoverished the country by nationalizing industries, engaging in foreign military escapades, and failing to invest in either human or physical capital” (Glaeser, 2011, p. kindle locations 1669-1670). In 1996, Laurent Desire Kabila rose in revolt against President Mobutu (Brett & Specht, 2004, p. 169). Kabila entered Kinshasa,
overthrew Mobutu, and established himself as President and ordered all foreign troops to leave the DRC (Brett & Specht, 2004, p.170). Rwandan and Ugandan troops (that supported him militarily to reverse Mobutu’s regime) rebelled and marched on Kinshasa on 2nd of August 1998 accusing L-D. Kabila of betraying the Lemera agreement he signed with Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, that allowed those two countries to exploit the mineral resources of the DRC (Diggs, 2012).

This tension led to the second Congo War, known as the first Africa’s First World War (1998-2002) that involved seven African countries as allies of the government or rebellion backers. Statistic reports disclose that 5.4 million “excess deaths” occurred in the DRC from August 1998 to April 2007 (Eichstaedt, 2011, pp. 1–9). An estimated 2 million deaths happened after the signature of the Sun-city/South Africa peace deal in 2002 and more than 3 million were killed in the eastern provinces (Couture, 2007, pp. 22–23; Rupp, 2008, pp. 27–29). The DRC is labelled as a Post-Conflict Environment (PCE) in view of previous two civil wars (1996-2002) and bloodshed military rebellions in the Eastern parts of the country (2006, 2012 and onwards). The country has endured a humanitarian crisis, considered as the world deadliest documented disaster since WVII (Autesserre, 2010; Berwouts, 2017; Deibert, 2013b; Diggs, 2012; Huggins & Vlassenroot, 2005; Kiteti-Boya, 2010; Stearns, 2011; Trefon, 2016; Trefon & Kabuyaya, 2018; J. Verweijen, 2017).

Drawing from the expanding literature on the Congolese crisis and conflict, this study attempts to put the causes of this problem in two categories (external & internal) in addition to community resources as potential future solutions. The Congolese author Loso Kiteki-Boya provides the most panoramic and authentic description of this complex reality
alongside the socio-economic and political indicators of the DRC’s crisis and its consequences on the Congolese people over the past five hundred years since their first interaction with the European explorers and missionaries in 1482. “The history of the DRC is the story of people familiar with tears and bloodshed, saddled by economic hardships on a rich and bountiful land, and mired in endless political conflicts, often promoted and sustained by outside alien forces” (Kiteti-Boya, 2010, p. 20). Based on this, colonial exploitation, cold war policies and proxies, and the greed of multinational corporations and of African/neighboring countries that back local militia or rebel groups can be mentioned as external causes of the DRC’s trouble. In Congo’s Violent Peace, Kris Berwouts recognizes three layers that lifted the conflict beyond the local issues due to the difficult cohabitation of different communities in that war-torn region. For this Belgian scholar, those three factors overlap and mutually reinforce each other: 1) the collapse of the Congolese state authority after its various mutations, 2) the continuation of the Rwandan interethnic conflict on Congolese territory and 3) the plundering of the country’s abundant mineral resources with extreme cruelty on local populations (Berwouts, 2017, pp. 4–7). In this regard, the death of several million Congolese has a strong economic underpinning and incentive. “The key actors of economic wars against the Congo include the familiar western and Asian mining companies operating through shadowy intermediaries, the Asian and European entrepreneurs, and the Ugandan, Rwandan, and Burundian officials posing as private sectors dealers. These actors are funding and maintaining the conflicts using the Rwandan, Ugandan, and Burundian backed militias” (Kiteti-Boya, 2010, p. 169; see also Diggs, 2016 and Stearns, 2011).
For the purposes of our study, it is worth noting that some religious leaders paid for their lives in this political phase of the DRC’s contemporary history. The most illustrative case remains the Archbishop Christophe Munzihirwa who led public protests both the internal dictatorship of President Mobutu and the external invasion from surrounding countries. This clergyman acquired a large reputation for his impartial condemnation of violence and sexual abuses in the Eastern DRC regardless of the identity of the perpetuators, “Archbishop Munzihirwa stood as the last hope that hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees in his province might escape massacre” (Jenkins, 2011, p. 183). In 1996, this Catholic prelate was savagely murdered by pro-Tutsi Rwandan troops surging over his province of South Kivu and his body was left on the streets. One of the sections in Chapter 4 also discusses on the martyrdom of Congolese Christian youth in the city of Kinshasa as outcome of political activism and protestation against the authoritarian regime of Joseph Kabila. Domestically, the Congolese people, above all the leaders are not blameless either. The lack of democratic and people-oriented regimes since the country’s independence from Belgium and the illicit and unbalanced enrichment of the minority in leadership in detriment of the majority are considered as internal causes. In contrast to those external and internal causalities, the country has enormous potentialities to become one of the world prosperous nations. The first points to its human resources. The majority of the Congolese population is under 25 years old. Its wealth in terms of natural resources constitutes the second asset of the

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country’s reconstruction. At the last, the DRC hosts a higher percentage of Christians who make up over 90 percent of the country’s population. In Durkheimian and Weberian perspectives, religion serves both as cohesive and transformational force in the DRC, described by Theodore Trefon as “a place of paradox that fascinates and disturbs” (Trefon, 2016, p. 1). Subsequent Chapters will discuss how religious institutions and actors dealt with and/or addressed societal challenges across different political regimes that ruled the country, and why this religious political participation has been relevant in the country’s social reconstruction. As Louise Fawcett and Yediz Sayigh point out, “Religious Institutions being part of civil society have a valuable function because they empower local communities with genuine liberties to participate in social engineering and transformation” (Fawcett & Ṣāyigh, 1999, pp. 54–55).


1.4.1. Notes on the concept of Hybrid Governance.

In the subsequent Chapters of the thesis, Religious Institutions (CENCO and ECC as case studies) are defined and considered as “hybrid governance organizations” in view of their historical (see Part II of the thesis) and contemporary (see Part III of the thesis) interlinkages and/or overlaps with the State in shaping and/or regulating political order (i.e. The 1977 State-Church convention on education, the Saint-Sylvester Peace Agreement in December 2018, the monitoring of the 2018 electoral process by religious networks etc.), and in public services’ delivery in the DRC, labelled by the United Nations’ Development Programme (UNDP) index as a failed/weak state (UNDP, 2018). The public implication of Religious Institutions is identified as “hybrid governance” because they have made organizational arrangements, through their actors, to partner with the State without
losing their legal autonomy in the sectors of education, healthcare, and development to meet the basic needs of the population and fill the gaps due to the State incapacity and failure/weakness. In this view, Francesco Colona and Rivke Jaffe formulate a thorough definition that deserves attention,

The concept of hybrid governance has been theorized in a range of ways by authors working within the interdisciplinary field of development studies. Generally speaking, ‘hybrid governance arrangements’ can be defined as arrangements in which non-state actors take on functions classically attributed to the state and, in the process become entangled with formal state actors and agencies to the extent that it is difficult to make a clear distinction between state and non-state. These are arrangements in which diverse governance actors become co-rulers, sharing control over territories and populations (Colona & Jaffe, 2016, p.2)

Based on her work in DRC, Camilla Lindstrom asserts that the hybrid character of the Congolese State is evidenced by the fact that Religious Institutions and the State work together in close symbiosis and this form of governance dates back from colonial times (Lindstrom, 2019, p. 79). Practically, hybrid governance can be viewed as “the sum of many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs” (Ba, A, Ellerby; K, Green D et al., 2019, p.1). Chapter 5 (see Part III of the thesis) broadly discusses on this concept with a theoretical/literature review and empirical details how such a hybridity of governance (public co-management) has evolved in the DRC in the domains of education and health assistance alongside its outcomes and challenges.12 Moreover, this thesis implicitly intertwines “hybrid governance” with “political participation” of Religious Institutions/actors. It deploys the term “political participation” to display the civic engagement of Religious Institutions, and it borrows from both political scientists

12 In his book For God and my Country (Carney, 2020), J.J. Carney who provides a detailed account of the influence of Catholic social teaching on leadership in the local and public life of Uganda, also attests that the Church became especially known for its work in healthcare and education in much of the rest of sub-Saharan Africa.
Trevor Munroe and Ngoma-Binda’s viewpoints that summarize “political participation” as a major form of political behavior and the extent to which citizens use their rights such as the right of free speech, the right to protest, the right to vote, to influence or to get involved in political activity (Munroe, 2002, pp. 4-5; Ngoma-Binda, 2019, pp. 111-128). With regards to Munroe and Ngoma-Binda’s perspective, the active involvement of Religious Institutions as non-state actors in shaping and/or regulating political order at the institutional/conventional level is perceived as a participation in the country’s governance (different from the government) as hybrid public authorities. At that level in the Aristotelian view, Politics entails decision-making for the collective good or public interest (Jackson & Tansey, 2015, p.4). How did the hybrid governance and religious political participation intersect in the DRC?

1.4.2. Religious Figures as Hybrid Governance Actors in the DRC.

In this regard, Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo of CENCO and Reverend pastor Pierre Marini-Bodho of ECC are the most illustrative examples of how hybrid governance and religious political participation intersect in the DRC. L. Monsengwo is one of the few people who personally witnessed many crucial phases of the country’s political history. “In fact, he is among those who experienced and endured the three types of state

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13 Yannis Theocharis and Jan W. van Deth in Political Participation in a Changing World (Theocharis & Jan W. van Deth, 2019) also brings a valuable contribution in addressing several scholarly debates related to exploring how, when and why citizens engage in politics. These scholars include in the discussion current societal development such as globalization, digitalization, and individualization by identifying five distinct modes of participation. John H. Redekop’s Politics Under God specifically provides a biblically focused consideration of Christian political participation. The Canadian Anabaptist scholar urges Christians to take politics seriously and get involved in the institutions of government unless their demands of obedience conflict with God’s prescriptions. Redekop argues, “there are many ways in which a Christian presence will influence what happens in political arena. These include participation in political party activities, holding elected offices up to a point, working in civil service positions, undertaking legitimate lobbying, submitting views, suggestions, and critiques, and practicing intercessory prayer, a specific directive given to Jesus’ followers” (Redekop, 2007, pp. 196–198).
authoritarianism in the Congo” (Ndongala-Maduku, 2016, p. 106). In other terms, this prelate served both as a religious actor and political leader during the eras of President Mobutu and the two Kabilas (Laurent Desiré and Joseph). He assumed the role of President of CENCO during the democratization moment (1984-1992) while concomitantly acting as President of the Sovereign National Conference (CNS). The CNS refers to the national gathering in Kinshasa, the capital city of DRC, opened on 7 August 1991, and ended on 6 December 1992, with 2,842 delegates with the mandate to make recommendations for the country’s transition to political pluralism and progress toward democracy (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002, p.190). The demise of the Soviet empire and the end of the Cold War launched “the third democratic wave” most vividly in Africa in the late 1980s and 1990s. The Benin government in 1989 initiated a national platform to discuss political reform and provided a model that was widely replicated in many other Francophone African countries. For Louise Fawcett and Yediz Sayigh, “these conferences became a powerful catalyst for raising pressures on authoritarian regimes to accept political pluralism” (Fawcett & Sayigh, 1999, pp.37-42). Cardinal Monsengwo was also elected as President of the High Council of Republic and HCR-Parliament of Transition (1992-1997), and constitutionally became the DRC’s head of state per interim for only few days after Mobutu’s forced exile in Morocco and before L-D. Kabila’s self-proclamation as President in May 1997. He was present at the signature of the pact on security, stability, and development of the Great Lakes’ region in 2006.

Reverend pastor Pierre Marini-Bodho of ECC is another case of the intersection of “hybrid governance” and “religious political participation” in the contemporary political history of the DRC. The ECC’s activism in the political sphere was apparent during the
second DRC civil war (1998-2001). This faith-based institution under the leadership of Reverend pastor Marini-Bodho, initiated and held a national consultation at the Cathedrale du Centenaire Protestant in Kinshasa from 24 February to 11 March 2000 as “a framework for consultation intended to reconcile the daughters and sons of the DRC and to level the different asperities of a divided society raised in the past”. This event gathered 1,659 delegates of all Religious Institutions in the DRC, of political parties and civil society. In addition, it is worth noting here that Reverend Dr. Pierre Marini-Bodho (while still leading the ECC) also served as the President of the Transitional Senate from 2003 to 2006. An interviewee adds, “He was unanimously chosen at the State second-in-rank position ‘after the country’s President’ because most Congolese politicians remembered his leading role in the 2000 national consultation and also viewed him as a reasonably neutral and consensual figure, and as a representative of the organized religion of civil society and was honored with the title of senator-for-life”. In sum, “hybrid governance” and “political participation” intersect in a functional level and blends for their teleological goals. The first refers to a negotiated organizational groundwork that allow non-state actors, like religious entities and authorities, to get involved in policymaking, in the shaping of socio-political order and in the provision of public services due to the State failure or incapacity to meet the needs of its population. The second is broader and includes all forms of civic involvement for the wellbeing of the ‘polis’ in private and public sectors.


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14 Interview with Reverend Dr. Daniel Ngoy-Boliya, 21 February 2019, Kinshasa, DRC
15 Interview with Dr. Nyamankank Mushila, Emeritus Professor at UPC and ECC’s pastor, on 14 March 2019, Kinshasa, DRC.
The term “Religious institutions” (RIs) is preferably used in this inquiry with regards to “collections of interrelated rules and routines that define appropriate action between roles and situations” which are applied by the two Faith-based organizations (FBOs) under investigation (Leftwich, 2004, p. 10). Precisely, they are categorized as “Institutions” because they shape, what Douglas C. North calls the “rules of the game of a society” (North, 1995, p. 23; see also March and Olsen, 1989). Unlike the secularization theory that underlines the irrelevance and withdrawal of religion from the public sphere, this study seeks to analyze the political pursuits and influences of religious bodies in the Congolese society. Both institutions respectively represent the Catholic Church and the Protestant denominations that have been involved in the country’s political affairs across different regimes and eras (see. Chapters 2 and 3). In An Introduction to Religion and Politics: Theory and Practice, Jonathan Fox provides an assertion that needs to be taken in consideration, “Religious Institutions are high profile organizations which often have political connections. They have the physical resources for mobilization, including a place to meet, organizational and financial resources, an experienced leadership, and manpower. They have a status in society that...allows them to be a bridge between different elements of society and makes governments reluctant to challenge them” (Fox, 2018, p. 81). Additionally, this thesis investigates the interlinkages between political actors and religious circles, religious values, and religious ideas. The DRC’s case is very illustrative and informative on that matter.

16 J.G. March and J.P. Olsen (March & Olsen, 1989)’s book, “Rediscovering institutions” proffers a broad guide to better understand and analyze institutions in political science. B. Guy Peters’ Institutional Theory in Political Science is another textbook that display a thorough examination of institutions from a range of theoretical and functional perspectives (B. G. Peters, 2019).
The intersection of Religion and Politics in the DRC, alongside this country’s complexities, paradoxes, and potentialities, has evidenced both its relevance and its ambivalence. Based on the civic engagement of Catholic and Protestant elites, Religion serves as a cohesive and political force for social change. With regards to widespread religious adherence in the DRC, this “Durkheimian-Weberian” argument has been displayed in two ways. First, religious leaders played a preeminent role of mediators between the Kabila’s authoritarian regime and the opposition with the consensual signature of a peace accord that paved road to the 2018 elections. Second, religious leaders as protest catalysts mobilized both the local and international community in constraining Joseph Kabila to step down and not run for an unconstitutional third presidential term. That pressure also resulted to the DRC’s first nonviolent transfer of power since the country’s independence from Belgium in 1960. Religion, on the other side, has become a tensional factor particularly since the official proclamation of Felix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi as the DRC’s fifth president by the Constitutional court. This study also evidences that Religion has the capacity to cause societal rifts and Politics, in its turn, can become a divisive element in the religious circle.

1.5. Research Methodology.

1.5.1. Qualitative Method.

I conducted a 10-month qualitative fieldwork in Kinshasa, DRC (September 2018-March 2019; June-July 2019, and January 2020) for data collection (Creswell, 2013; Griffths et al., 2017).

17 The central argument jointly draws both 1) from Emile Durkheim’s definition of Religion as “unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere…”(Durkheim & Swain, 1965), and 2) Marx Weber’s that views it as a “force for social change”(Weber, 1905). A Panoramic description of those two intermingled perspectives and their integrating impact in society is contained in the Chapter 15 of Introduction to sociology (Griffiths et al., 2017).
Fetterman, 2010). Additional follow-up research travels were made in Brussels, Belgium (September 2019)\(^\text{18}\) and in the Vatican-city, Rome, Italy (October 2019).\(^\text{19}\) To answer my research question(s), I drew on data collected from three groups/categories of interviewees. The first group comprises Catholic and Protestant Clergy who actively and personally participated in the re-shaping of political order and in the mobilization of local and international community that raised the pressure on Kabila’s administration for the country’s democratization, the respect of constitutional law and peaceful political transition. The second group refers to Christian laypersons (both Catholic and Protestant, male and female, old and young) who played significant roles in street march protests the Kabila government to reclaim the hold of elections. As mentioned in Chapter 4, I stayed at a Catholic guesthouse that became a hiding refuge for the leadership team of CLC under arrest warrant from the Kabila administration at that time. I took advantage of this “fortuitous” opportunity to deploy semi-structured and informal interviews with all of them. Follow-up conversations with some of them continued after the 2018 elections. The Clergy and Christian laypersons in diasporas were the third targeted group for interviews

\(^{18}\) This follow-up trip in Brussels, Belgium (on September 15-21) was scheduled to coincide with the President Felix Tshisekedi’s first journey in Europe after his 2018 election and in-swearing ceremony in early 2019. With his visit alongside an entourage of politicians and religious leaders that accompanied the Head of State, I had the rare opportunity to grasp new insights for this thesis while testing some of my findings from my previous fieldwork in Kinshasa during the pre-electoral campaign. The Federation of Belgian Enterprises (FEB), that signed agreements in the private sector and the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture Belgium-Luxembourg-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific hosted a dinner with the DRC’s President and his delegation. As participant observer, I have also attended the dialogical meeting between President Felix Tshisekedi and the Congolese diaspora in Belgium and Europe at one of the Heysel palaces of Brussels Expo. Some unstructured interviews were deployed with few pastors who currently act as the President’s close advisers to get their viewpoints about the outcomes of the DRC 2018 elections and the role of religion in the country’s search for national post-electoral reconciliation and reconstruction.

\(^{19}\) I travelled to the Vatican-city, Rome, Italy to attend as participant observer at the consistory held on 5 October 2019 for the nomination of 13 new Cardinals by Pope Francis. The Congolese prelate Fridolin Ambongo Besungu, Archbishop of Kinshasa was one of the nominees. Another rare opportunity for participant observation and interviews. See more details about this data collection journey in Chapter 6.
(see footnotes, p. 23). In total, 72 semi-structured and un-structured interviews were collected from Catholic and Protestant clergy and laypersons. Participant observation and archival documentation were also deployed for those purposes. The libraries and archives of the Catholic University of Congo (UCC) and the Protestant University of Congo (UPC) provided useful resources for my research. Unstructured conversations with professors and students within those universities’ schools of theology and political science were also helpful.

To overcome the heaviness of bureaucracy and protocol once I arrived on the ground, I changed strategies of data collection and opted for more casual, spontaneous, and flexible approaches that included several opportunities of being embedded on Sunday and weekly Church services and conferences, political activities of religious leaders and actors. In addition, some occasions of observing in-situ such as peaceful march protests, media like local channels, and locally published newspapers. Archives and unpublished documents such as sermons and teachings, pastoral letters, symposiums’ reports that were only available in Kinshasa were consulted at the headquarters of religious institutions under investigation for discourse analysis.

1.5.2. Theologically Engaged Anthropological Approach.

The use of theological registers in respect to social scientific norms, provided special pathways to analyze the data that was collected from my selected informants and participants with regards to their knowledge or deployment of theological concepts such as Covenant, the social Trinity, Incarnation, Reconciliation etc. One of the three sub-questions sought to understand the theological incentives of the current Christian ecumenism and political participation of religious institutions in the DRC in the past recent
years (Chapter 6). At that level, it seemed significant to put forward an interdisciplinary analytical framework that considers the rationale of theological epistemology due to the Congolese Christian demography under the influential leadership of those selected religious organizations.

There are new tendencies and voices among theologians and anthropologists of religion advocating for a constructive dialogue and dynamic interchange between both disciplines (Boylston, 2018; Cortez, 2010, 2018; N. Haynes, 2018; Lemons, 2018). It is considered, by these scholars, beneficial for them (theologians and anthropologists) to working together without surrendering their distinctiveness and at the same time considering each other’s limits with an openness of being mutually enriched. Furthermore, Robbins confirms that “anthropologists can learn from theology about responsible ways of making any kind of judgments and theologians can learn anthropologists about the depth and complexity of kinds of cultural expressions they are often called upon to judge” (Lemons, 2018, p. 242; Robbins, 2006, p. 285). Such a quotation finds echo in Weberian viewpoint stating that any belief or religious idea has socio-political effects (Weber & Kalberg, 2011). On the same line, Paul Gifford endorses the prominent place of theology in the shaping of people’s worldview and public action because it “can legitimize new aspirations, new forms of organizations, new relations and a new social order” (Gifford, 1998, p. 26). With this perspective, interpretive approaches are secondly utilized to critically examine major concepts in political theology that are applied in this research data analysis (Bernard, 2011, pp. 17–19, 415–416). The former method concerns the scope, aims and sources of inquiry, and how it commences and is sustained (P. L. Allen, 2012; Swinton & Mowat, 2006). The latter “aims at interpreting understanding from the
perspective of faith not only the biblical text but also life and the reality—the totality of God-Self-World” (Yong, 2006, p. 7).

1.5.3. Constructivist Triangulation.

What does Constructivism mean? In their outstanding work, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Berger and Luckmann introduced the term in social science discourse and laid out its epistemological theory. They explain that social reality is essentially composed of the structures, roles and ramifications that humans use to order and make sense of their world (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In other terms, the centrality of this paradigm elucidates three facts. First, it leads to a creation of concepts or mental representations of collective interaction over time. These concepts eventually become habituated into reciprocal roles played by the actors in relation to each other. Second, to the institutionalization of those roles and reciprocal interactions. In a dialectic process, such roles, norms, and institutions that make up social reality work back on the individuals who constructed them. Third, the meaning is embedded in society. Knowledge and people’s conceptions (and beliefs) of what reality is, become embedded in the institutional fabric of society. Objectively, this reality is “constructed” in a three-phase continuous process whereby an individual externalized himself/herself to the world, his/her actions then become objectified by the ambient society as observable shared reality and finally internalized by the individual. Some constructivist scholars defend the objectivity by arguing that social institutions do not exist independently from their human makers.

A clear explanation about the place of “constructivism” in qualitative research comes from Swinton and Mowat. For them, “Constructivism assumes that knowledge and
the ways in which it is perceived by human beings and human communities is, to greater or lesser extent, constructed by individuals and communities” (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, p. 35). Regarding this statement, the researcher evolves in the epistemological process not as a distant observer but as an active participant and co-designer of the interpretative experience. In this study, constructivist triangulation is deployed to cross-examine theological knowledge and public experiences of interviewed religious figures of CENCO and ECC with the societal reality. This triangulation helps to grasp different perspectives of the same phenomenon under observation and archival collected data related to the shifted religious political participation in the DRC. One of the study’s enquiries (sub-questions) aimed to grasp my interviewees’ viewpoints about the theological and historical underpinnings of the change of religious political participation in the DRC to better understand the spirituality of such a civic engagement. Their commentaries are critically analyzed in Chapters 2, 3 and 6.

1.5.4. Scope and Delimitation of the Research.

The study delimits its focus on the metropolitan city of Kinshasa, the capital-city of the DRC as the fieldwork-site where are located the administrative headquarters of both political and Religious Institutions, and also the residence of their principal leaders and actors. The informants and participants were selected among Congolese theologians, 20

20 According to Wikipedia (Kinshasa, 2021), Kinshasa recently becomes the most populous city in Africa overtaking over Cairo, Egypt and Lagos, Nigeria with an estimated population of 14,950,000. It is the capital and the largest city of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Kinshasa is also counted as one of 26 administrative provinces but hosts the headquarters of all political, diplomatic, and religious institutions. Among books written on Kinshasa, “Suturing the City: Living together in Congo’s Urban worlds” of Filip de Boeck & Sammy Baloi (Boeck & Baloi, 2016) appears to be the most informative by providing both a detailed ethnographic and photographic data of the urban sites in the city and its surroundings. In turn, Leon de Saint Moulin’s Kinshasa Enracinements Historiques et Horizons Culturels (Saint Moulin & Ndaywel è Nziem, 2012) provides a profound and well-documented historical development of the city across centuries. I also recommend Katrien Pype’s The Making of Pentecostal Melodrama: Religion, Gender and Media in Kinshasa (Pype, 2012).
both Catholics and Protestants assuming leadership roles at ecclesiastic and academic levels and in meantime actively engaged in the country’s politics. In addition to qualitative methods such as interviews and participant observation, the research benefited of some secondary data obtained from books, primary documents, and academic journals, as well as archives and meetings’ reports held by CENCO and ECC in the past recent years.

Here is the scheme that illustrates my research’s methodological structure:

**Figure 1: Methodological Structure**

![Methodological Structure Diagram]

1.6. Accessibility, Positionality and Ethical considerations.

Three main factors provided significant tools to conduct this study. First, I am originally from the DRC with parents, some of my siblings and relatives living in the capital city Kinshasa, my fieldwork site. Second, my fluency in French, the educational official language in the DRC and in Lingala, as a *lingua franca* spoken by most of Congolese
locally and in the diasporas. Additionally, my deep knowledge of the DRC’s politico-religious history and situation. For many years, I have lived, worked, and travelled throughout the country and have made personal and professional acquaintances with local politicians, and clergymen of the selected religious institutions. The third asset is my academic background in theology, intercultural and peace studies. Apart from my personal safety and wellbeing while conducting fieldwork, there were some challenges I encountered. The first related to my status as “native” researcher. I risked impacting the objectivity of my data with biased viewpoints and there was also a risk probability of “siding with the participants” (Creswell, 2013, p. 59). As solution, I committed myself to provide multiple and opposing viewpoints.

The second challenge referred to the openness, trust and sincerity of informants and participants due to my position as a Congolese from the diaspora residing in the UK, the West. Some of them were hesitant to publicly disclose their political viewpoints or allegiance fearing prosecution by the authoritarian regime of that time. I resolved this problem of suspicion, mistrust, and fear by reassuring them about my neutrality and engagement of confidentiality. I promised to not write or disseminate any sensitive information without their consent and consistently checked how my informants and study participants wanted to be quoted and/or represented. The third difficulty was my confessional background as Protestant believer and minister. The study’s goal was to investigate the political participation of both Catholic and Protestant clergymen and the hybrid governance of their religious institutions. As results, Catholic informants and participants were more opened and relaxed to discuss on the country’s politics rather than ‘my fellow Protestants’. Uncertainty and anxiety about what the future could bring became
the last challenge I faced. The DRC presidential elections were scheduled to be held during the first phase of my fieldwork (September 2018-March 2019). The country has already endured much bloodshed and brutal political repression since 31 December 2016, a deadline that marked the end of President Joseph Kabila’s constitutionally mandated two-term limit. Many observers of the Congolese Politics at that time predicted post-electoral violence, even civil war in the DRC in case Kabila’s successor were fraudulently declared the winner of those elections by the CENI.

1.7. Layout of Chapters.

This study composes of four parts and seven chapters. The first part comprises the Chapter 1 as General Introduction. It starts with an informative account of the nexus of Religion and Politics in the contemporary DRC and then, proposes a theoretical overview where key concepts such secularization, hybrid governance, political participation, Religious Institutions (RIs) and post-conflict environment (PCE) are explained. The aim is to help unpack the internal and external causalities of ‘the Congolese crisis’ that remains, either less explored or misunderstood by the international community and/or scholarship. Those sections of Chapter 1 are followed by elements of the study related to its scope and delimitations, the research central question and its sub-inquiries, methodological approaches, accessibility, positionality and ethical considerations, and its rationale and contribution to the literature. Part 2, which consists of Chapter 2 and 3, looks diachronically into the history of the two selected religious institutions, CENCO and ECC, with the goal to discuss on their theological and socio-political legacies. Chapter 2 traces the historical trajectories of Roman Catholicism in the DRC from the first European

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discovery of the mouth of the Congo River in the 15th century AD to the civic engagement of Catholic bishops across the different political regimes that ruled the DRC. Chapter 3 focuses on Protestantism in the DRC. It examines the disparity between Western Protestant missions in Belgian Congo and the contemporary ECC as offspring of the CPC with regards to their respective approaches to political authoritarianism. Part 3, which includes Chapters 4 and 5, offers a comparative and empirical inquiry of both religious institutions. Chapter 4 provides a critical analysis of the political rhetoric of religious leaders, Catholic and Protestant, and its effects on the Christian youth political mobilization and martyrdom during Kabila’s administration. Chapter 5 evaluates the hybridity of governance between the two selected religious institutions and the State in the DRC, and their impact on human development with a specific emphasis on the sectors of education and health assistance. The fourth and last part (Chapter 6) adopts a constructivist and prognostic approach. It discusses how Theology, viewed as *Fides Aquaerens Intellectum, (Faith seeking understanding)*, influenced the shift in the religious political participation and in social reconstruction debates, processes, practices, and prospects. The seven and last Chapter concludes with a set of the findings of this qualitative and interpretive research alongside theoretical and practical implications and remarks for future investigation.
PART II

Chapter 2: ‘From Mass to Masses’: Unfolding the Role of Catholic Bishops and the CENCO in the Shaping of Politics in the Democratic Republic of Congo

In the face of the on-going misery and sufferings of our fellow-citizens who half adhere to the Roman Catholic Church, we as shepherds, I mean Cardinals and bishops regrouped within the CENCO can’t either keep silence or be inactive. We have a two-fold responsibility, spiritual and social. We must convey God’s word through pulpits but also bring hope from the mass to the masses at the public place.22

Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo, 6 March 2019, Kinshasa DRC.

2.1. Introduction

This Chapter shows, in a diachronic way, how and why the Roman Catholic Church in the DRC shifted from being a colonial state supporter to a resisting voice against political authoritarian regimes that have ruled the country over the years after independence. Scholars who explored the relationships between Religion and Politics in the African context agree that two different processes have intimately interlinked the two concepts (Bediako, 2000; Bompani, 2007; Ellis & Haar, 2004; Ellis & Haar, 1998; J. Haynes, 1994; Kaunda & Hinfelaar, 2020; Morier-Genoud, 2019). The first process relates to African history that highlights the ‘often-ambivalent’ role played by Western missions and Churches during the colonization. As we will underline in this chapter, Catholic missionaries as religious figures collaborated with political actors who represented the Belgian Monarch in the colony. The second process points to the African

22 From my interview with late Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo on 6 March 2019 at Sainte Anne Procure in Gombe-Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. The late Emeritus Cardinal of the DRC Laurent Monsengwo has played several political functions. Actively engaged in the process of democratization of the DRC since 1990, the Catholic prelate was successively President of the National Sovereign Conference (CNS) in 1991, then President of the High Council of the Republic (HCR) and the High Council of the Republic-Transitional Parliament (HCR-PT) from 1992 to 1997. He was interim Head of State for few days when President Mobutu stepped down in 1997. Monsengwo also served on the Council of Cardinal Advisers to the Pope (also known as the C-9) since its inception in April 2013. He passed away in Versailles, France on July 11, 2021, aged of 81.
worldview to Religion that synergizes cultural and socio-political components. In other terms, the African approach to Religion is holistic and permeates all facets of the community’s life. In the same vein, the Chapter discusses four main issues. Firstly, it traces back to the historical diplomatic relationship between the Papal Authority and his local representatives in the Congo. It examines the first contacts of the Holy State of Vatican with the Catholic Church in the Congo since the sixteenth century that marked the first phase of evangelization of this Central African region. This historical legacy of many centuries, despite the presence of other Christian communities has shaped the contemporary religious configuration of the DRC. According to statistic reports, the DRC’s population is 50 % Catholic (CIA, 2018). The DRC becomes ipso facto the largest Catholic country in the continent, considered by Allen Jr., as the African Catholic powerhouse in view of the quantitative allegiance of its population to the Roman Catholic faith (Allen Jr., 2018). Secondly, the Chapter explores how Second Vatican Council (SVC), held between 1962 and 1965 in Rome, Italy, influenced the birth of the Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo (CENCO). It is worth noting that CENCO oversees the spiritual and social activities of the Catholic Church at the national level. This hierarchical organization is a network whose goal is to connect all Congolese Catholic Church as an ecclesiastic corpus. “Even though all bishops of CENCO are Catholics but not all Congolese Catholics are part of this policy-making structure. CENCO is to the DRC’s Catholic Church what the head is to the body or shepherds to the sheep” remarks Bishop Gerald Mulumbu Kalemba in a conversation we had in Kinshasa.23 In the quotation that opens this Chapter, Cardinal

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23 Interviewed on 7 October 2018, Kinshasa DRC, Gerald Mulumbu Kalemba (8 July 1937-15 Avril 2020) was a Congolese prelate of the Catholic Church and an active member of CENCO. He assumed the role of Bishop of Mweca in the Province of Western Kasai from 1989 to 2017. The Emeritus Bishop of Mweca was the young brother of Etienne Tshisekedi and paternal uncle of Felix Tshisekedi, the fifth and current
Laurent Monsengwo endorses thus metaphor and clarifies the two-fold responsibility (spiritual and social) of Roman Catholic prelates as the Pope’s ambassadors within the Congolese society and the country’s citizens. Thirdly, it analyzes the positions of the Catholic Church during the dictatorial rule of Joseph-Desiré Mobutu (1965-1997), of Laurent-Desiré Kabila (1997-2001) and of Joseph Kabila (2001-2019). This section specifically portrays Cardinals who led the DRC’s Catholic Church across those three authoritarian regimes (from 1965 to 2019) by examining the footprints of their political strategies, discourses and praxes in the country’s landscape and statecraft. Fourthly, the chapter investigates the increased political participation of CENCO as religious entity in a particular period that goes from the end of Joseph Kabila’s constitutional second presidential term in December 2016 to the swearing-in of Felix Antoine Tshisekedi on 24 January 2019 as the newly elected fifth President of the RDC. The Catholic bishops of CENCO have played a prominent role in the country’s democratization process (Ndongala-Maduku, 2016; Ross et al., 2017). Their recent civic engagement, that resulted in the country’s first peaceful transfer of power in 2019, sheds new light on debates regarding the nexus between Religion and Politics in contemporary Africa.

2.2. Roman Catholicism in the Congo: History and Theological-Political Legacies.

The first encounter between Roman Catholicism with Congolese people traces back to the Portuguese exploration at the mouth of the Congo river in the 15th century, which also coincided with the first evangelization of this West Central African region (Ndaywel., 2012; Thornton, 1983a; Van Reybrouck & Garrett, 2014). The author of *Congo: The Epic History of a People* gives a stunning record of it in these words:

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[1] president of the DRC. In 2019, two years after his retirement, he was appointed by his nephew to serve as Head of the President’s civil house.
In 1482 the coastal inhabitants of that empire had seen something extremely remarkable: huge huts looming up out of the sea, huts with flapping cloths. When those sailing ships anchored off the coast, the people along the shore saw that there were white people in them...But these were Portuguese sailors who, in addition to linen, also came bearing the consecrated wafer. The King of the Bakongo, Nzinga Kuwu, allowed them to leave four missionaries behind in his empire and sent four dignitaries with them in exchange. When the latter returned a few years later with weird and wonderful stories about that distant Portugal, the king burned with the desire to learn the Europeans’ secrets and, in 1491, let them christen him Don Joao...His son, Prince Nzinga Nvemba was to become a deeply devout Christian and to rule over the Kongo Empire for four decades (1506-43), under his Christian name of Afonso I (Van Reybrouck & Garrett, 2014, p. 21).

Scholars may diverge on the precise time and the historical circumstances of the founding of the Kingdom of Congo however they all agree that Nтинu Wene (Nтинu means “king” in Kikongo) was the first ruler enthroned around 1270 (212 years before the arrival of the first European explorer) by the consented union of several clans who pledged to live together under the leadership of a royal chief. That expansion resulted in successive additions of new clans and territories through military conquests, intertribal treaties, and royal intermarriages (Cuvelier, 1946, p. 253; Heywood & Thornton, 2007; Hochschild, 1999, pp. 6–10; Loso Kiteti Boya, 2010, pp. 27–34; Thornton, 1983b). The arrival and instalment of Portuguese Catholic priests and emissaries in the kingdom of Kongo in 1491, nine years after the discovery of the Congo river mouth, marked “the beginning of the first sustained encounter between Europeans and a black African nation” (Hochschild, 1999, p. 8).

During the reign of king Nzinga Nvemba alias Alfonso I, the diplomatic ties between Catholic Portugal and his empire expanded and made Christianity flourish among the Bakongo people. “His cooperation created so much goodwill with the Portuguese that Afonso was allowed to send one of his sons to Europe to attend seminary. In Lisbon the son in question, eleven-year Henrique, learned Portuguese and Latin and then moved to Rome, where he was enthroned Bishop—the first black Catholic Bishop in history—before
returning home” (Van Reybrouck & Garrett, 2014, p. 22). For the purposes of examining the nexus between religion and politics, Don Henrique (1495-1526) in his status as royal prince of the Kongo kingdom (political) and Roman Catholic prelate (religious) remains an interesting case. He was born in Mbanza Nsundi, located 75 kilometers south of the city of Kinshasa. Don Henrique’s birthplace lays on the current Inkisi river in the modern-day southwestern province of the DRC. Being part of a joint delegation (from the Kingdoms of Kongo and of Portugal), he arrived in Rome on 12 March 1514, with letters of obedience written by the Kongo King Nvemba Nzinga to the Pope Julius II. At the time of their arrival in the Vatican-city, Pope Julius II died, and Pope Leo X was elected as the new leader of the Roman Catholic church. Don Henrique and his fellow delegates modified their plans as they could not officially present the King of Kongo’s letters of obedience destined to the deceased Pope Julius II. Instead, Leo X as new Pope accepted their gifts and agreed to the consecration of Don Henrique as a Bishop. One year later in 1521, he returned to his native Kingdom of Kongo with the title of Bishop of Utica (Tunisia). Don Henrique’s 15 years of study in Portugal made him the most highly educated Kongo person of his age who as a prince also became the first Bishop of the Kongo Kingdom.

The Congolese historian Isidore N’daywel-è-Nziem states that the life of the bishop Don Henrique serves to remind us that “Christianity in the western region of Zaire/DRC has very ancient roots. His life also stands as testimony to the existence of a small group of literate Africans who flourished during the golden years of the Kingdom of Kongo” (Ofosu-Appiah, 1977, p.34). Portuguese Jesuits and Italian Capuchins helped to Christianize the DRC by reaching the upper levels of society. The wealthy were baptized,
had access to education, learnt to read and write, and some received royal titles from Portugal. The spread of Roman Catholicism in this coastal empire led to the burning of cult objects (fetishes in French) related to witchcraft or ancestral worship. A Cathedral was built in the capital, Mbanza-Kongo and governors in the provinces allowed the construction of churches.

However, the interstate relations between the Kingdom of Kongo and Portugal began to deteriorate after the decapitation of the Kongolesse King Antonio I by the Portuguese army following his military defeat at Mbwila on October 23, 1665. The governors of the provinces and the loyal vassals began to question the authority of the king and refused to collect and turn over taxes. The kingdom slowly descended into chaos as mini kingdoms were formed and fought each other for supremacy and territorial control. The Portuguese colonists and the European merchants seized the moment to accelerate the trafficking and export of the Congolese slaves to Brazil, the Caribbean and North America. The persistence and ferocity of internal wars among the pretenders to the throne generated a strong antiwar sentiment among the population. The peasants massively followed the young preacher Don Beatriz Kimpa Vita who advocated peace in the land and a return to harmoniously community living and ancestral values while maintaining faith in Jesus Christ. She was the first to seek “to Africanize the Catholic Church and denounced the European-sponsored transatlantic slave trade that was in full swing between the coast of the Congo and the Americas” (Loso-Boya, 2010). The Congolese King Petro IV and the Catholic missionaries decided to arrest her on charges of heresy and to have her burned alive at the stake in 1706 at the age of 22. The peasant peace movement and rebellion of Kimpa Vita’s followers called “Antonians” continued after her
execution and intensified as did the power struggles between the royal families of the kingdom and intertribal confrontations. Afterwards, the Christian Empire of Kongo went through many crises at doctrinal, social, and political levels. The foundations of the traditional authority and the influence of the tribal chieftains were undermined. Centuries-old social forms wore away. Anarchy took place. Political bonds between villages and families were completely disturbed by new economic alliances between outside traders.

“Even the once so powerful Kongo Empire became dissolute. A gigantic political vacuum arose. International trade was flourishing, but resulted in total chaos far into the African interior” (Van Reybrouck & Garrett, 2014). Inter-tribe quarrels and local civil wars continued until the late nineteenth century that witnessed the second wave of European arrivals in the Congo started in the mid-1800, led by British missionaries and explorers. This reality explains why the coastal Congolese offered little resistance to the new colonial invaders, resulting in the partition of the African continent under the General Act of Berlin in 1885. Let’s examine how the Roman Catholic Church behaved in Leopoldian and Belgian colonial epochs.

In *Missions and Empire*, Norman Etherington explores the evolving connection between the expansion of Christianity in the non-Western world with imperialism and colonial conquest (Etherington, 2005). The model “aimed at changing people’s faith and culture—Christianization and civilization through colonialization” (Morier-Genoud, 2019, p. 92). It coincided with the spread of European economic and political hegemony. On the same line, Clifton Craig sees the mission station as “a colonialist institution par excellence that communicated many of the essential ingredients of British rule and the capital world economy” (Craig, 1992, p.104). The establishment of Catholic Missions in
the Congo during Belgian colonial epochs did not differ from historical and empirical cases related to other African countries like South Africa\textsuperscript{24}, Central Mozambique\textsuperscript{25}, and French Cameroon\textsuperscript{26}. Following their fellow Western explorers, Belgian missionaries also arrived in Central Africa driven by Western influences, preaching the superiority of a Western religion, technology, and cultural practices. They assumed the responsibility of being God’s envoys and social engineers in the service of the King of Belgium. The Roman Catholic Church was part of what scholars call the “Colonial Trinity” (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002; Young & Turner, 1985). The administration, Catholic missionaries and large companies helped the Belgian colonial edifice to maintain its oppressive authority and domination over the colonized Congolese people. “It is important to recognize that not only was this triple alliance a virtually seamless web but each component in its area of activity was without peer in tropical Belgian Africa in the magnitude of its impact” (Young & Turner, 1985, p. 10). In other terms, the three entities did not only collaborate in the colony being under the command of King but also supported one another. A pastor, with whom I conversed during my fieldwork in Kinshasa a month before the presidential elections of December 2018, recounted the story narrated by teachers in elementary school describing the arrival of what is called the three “M”: Militaries, Merchants and

\textsuperscript{24} Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991), \textit{Of Revelation and Revolution, I, Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa}. The Comaroffs view the London Missionary Society’s stations as “performing civilization” in the hope of educating the Tswana to adopt the Western cultural practices through the power of display.

\textsuperscript{25} Eric-Morier-Genoud, author of \textit{Catholicism and the Making of Politics in Central Mozambique}. Using the diocese of Beira between 1940 and 1980 as case study, the book explains how the Roman Catholic Church works, how its politics are made, and how the latter impacts its environment. Additionally, it also points to the societal outcomes of African nationalism and the reforms of Vatican II on local Catholic congregations in the post-colonial times.

\textsuperscript{26} Roger Onomo Etaba (Onomo-Etaba, 2007), \textit{Histoire de l’Eglise Catholique du Cameroun de Gregoire XVI à Jean-Paul II}. 
Missionaries” who all came out of the same anchored boat.\(^{27}\) According to my informant, they were assigned different but complementary goals in order to facilitate the colonizing objective of the King. On other hand, the pastor plead for Christianity to be extricated from this colonial relationship. However, Protestant missionaries from Great Britain, the United States and Scandinavia either felt restricted in their activities or controlled by the Belgian colonial administration that considered them either as threats or opponents to the King of the Belgians (Markowite, 1973). The official concession of the Free State of Congo (previously known as the personal propriety of King Leopold) to Belgium in 1908 continued to offer privileges to the Catholic Church until the country’s independence in 1960. For the purposes of expanding the discussion on that matter, the next chapter will explore the works and experiences of Western Protestant missionaries in a pro-Catholic Belgian Congo between the mid-eighteenth century, considered as the second evangelization of that region, and post-colonial times.

What does the history of Catholic missions in Congo tells us about the present? Roman Catholicism is still viewed, by some of my Protestant informants, as a Western-imported religion due to the ongoing interference by the Papal authority based in Rome in the local Catholic Church. The way Catholic missionaries and their fellow administrators worked together during the turbulent colonial period continues to negatively affect some people’s conception toward Roman Catholicism (from my fieldwork notes, October 2018). The indifference of the Catholic missionaries during the transatlantic slave trade and the burning of a local peasant preacher Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita are today considered as colonial abuses of Western European Imperialism under the Roman Catholic Church's

\(^{27}\) Collected from my observations in Kinshasa on 25 October 2018.
Proto-nationalistic religious movements like Bundu-dia-Kongo request for an embedding of Christian message in Congolese traditional culture. Being largely debated during the Second Vatican Council in Rome, the concept of inculturation that leads to the enrooting of the Catholic Church in non-Western cultures and realities deserves particular attention in order to address the dilemma between embracing modernity or upholding traditions, and the ability of reconciling African and Christian worldviews. The following section strives to relate the connection between the Vatican II with the creation of CENCO.

2.3. CENCO, An Offspring of the Second Vatican Council.

As previously noted, Christian missions worked hand in hand with Western imperial states in Africa during the colonial times. The association of the Catholic Church with colonialism also affected the hierarchy, structure, and membership of episcopates throughout the colonized continent. For illustration, the Conference Pleniere des Ordinaires des Missions du Congo Belge et Ruanda-Urundi, literally Plenary Conference of Missions’ Ordinaries in Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi that was officially created in 1930 only comprised of foreign Bishops. Until 1956, indigenous priests could not attend the Conference’s General Assembly because none of them had the required status of Bishop. In other terms, the General Assembly in the Belgian Congo was entirely composed of an expatriate clergy. The first Congolese Bishops consecrated by the Pope before the DRC’s independence were Mgr. Kimbondo, apostolic auxiliary vicar of Kinsatu

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28 In her book *Gesture and Power: Religion, Nationalism and Everyday Performance in Congo*, (Covington-Ward, 2016) Yolanda Covington-Ward defines Bundu dia Kongo (BDK) as a nationalistic movement seeking to address the political and economic marginalization of Kongo people by combining religion, politics, and cultural revitalization. The larger goal of BDK is to gain autonomy by restoring the precolonial Kongo Kingdom in the present-day.

According to Abbot Georges Kalenga of the CENCO, the Catholic Church of the DRC benefited greatly from the Second Vatican Council (SVC) held in Rome between 1962 and 1965. For the first time, the churches of the newly independent nations like the DRC were given equal recognition and status like those of other continents. Influential local clergymen like Joseph Albert Malula, who became the first Congolese cardinal in 1969 and Tharcisse Tshibangu attended this event. The Catholic church in the DRC reaffirmed its own heritage after centuries of European colonization and domination. In addition, Tshibangu earned his doctorate in Theology from the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium and was invited by Pope John XXIII to participate in the Council as the sole African theologian (Tshibangu, 2010). At that Council, Tshibangu advocated for Africans to have distinct approaches to theological questions in lieu of simply adhering to Western patterns of thinking. In 2017, his address in a conference on African Christian Theology held in Rome, Monsignor Tshibangu insisted that, “Christ has brought us universal salvation, but we must remain authentically African” (J. L. Allen, 2017). The echoes of Tshibangu’s theological stand since 1959 triumphantly resonated nine years later through the Pope Paul VI’s request for the articulation of an “African Christianity” expressed in Kampala, Uganda in 1965. It is particularly important to underline that this visit was recorded in the Catholic Church’s history as the first trip of a Pope in the African continent. In sum, the attendance of the Congolese prelates at the Second Vatican

29 Abbot Georges Kalenga is the current second assistant to the General Secretary of the Conference Episcopale Nationale au Congo (CENCO). I interviewed him at the Headquarter of CENCO in Kinshasa on 10 November 2018.
Council and the call for a distinct African pattern of “theologizing” paved roads to the creation of a national episcopal conference in the Congo.

The first article of the CENCO’s bylaws summarizes the nature, objectives, and the headquarters of this religious institution:

The National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO) is erected by the Holy See according to the spirit and the letter of the decree Christus Dominus n°37 of the second Vatican Ecumenical Council, in accordance with the Code of Canonic Law (canons 447-459) and these bylaws. This Conference is the assembly in which the Catholic Bishops of Congo exercise jointly and in accordance with the law, certain pastoral charges to promote the good that the Church offers to men, through forms and methods of apostolate suitably adapted to the circumstances of time and place (cf. canon 447). CENCO has its headquarters in Kinshasa but it can validly sit in another place of its choice (Actes de La CENCO & Documents, 2013, p. 10).  

As mentioned in the article, Christus Dominus (CD) relates to the SVC’s decree on the pastoral Office of bishops. 2,319 delegates at the Council approved the text that was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on 28 October 1965. This document called for strong local episcopal conferences of bishops that set standards for the Catholic Church in their own regions while fully supporting the Vatican and Pope. The holding of the Second Vatican Council, opened in 1962 and lasted until late 1965, unleashed a new dynamic in the Catholic modern world. Like in many other African countries, the Council reforms had two major effects in the post-colonial Congo. First, they resulted in the creation of a National Episcopal Conference in 1964 under the leadership of a local clergy. These significant changes within the Universal Catholic Church enhanced the ordination of new local bishops and priests aiming toward a Catholicism organized “nationally”. Second, the Council facilitated the blossoming of inculturation theology promoted by prelates like Joseph Malula and Tharcisse Tshibangu. SVC encouraged non-Western Catholic

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30 This article comes from the bylaws of CENCO consulted at its headquarters in Kinshasa.
believers to embrace the Christian message that transcends all cultures. In this perspective, Christianity encounters people’s culture, enriches it and transforms it by highlighting all its values. “This fostered a new sense of ownership of the Church among Catholic believers as well as a new sense of cultural pride” (Morier-Genoud, 2019, p. 96). As we will see in the following section, this new cultural paradigm fed into the rise of nationalism and on other side shaped the Catholic clergy’s political engagement in the post-independence era.

2.4. Catholic Cardinals’ Resistance to Political Authoritarianism.

Before analyzing the diversity and complexity of political action by Catholic Cardinals, it is important to talk about religious freedom in Zaire/DRC during the three authoritarian regimes that ruled from 1965 until 2019. In what sense can the DRC be described as an authoritarian country or a country with past authoritarian experience? What does it mean in terms of limited freedoms? How does this influence religions and religious expression? As we will see in subsequent sections, Mobutu’s relationships with the Catholic Church were in tension and the dictator restricted the freedom of speech to any religious actor who dared to contradict or oppose his political views. During Mobutu’s totalitarian rule, there were many human rights’ violations on record, and he used his presidential position to interfere into the Church’s affairs by coercion and influenced the appointment of pro-Mobutu bishops and priests for leadership positions at the Church. Religious freedom and tolerance partially evolved after Laurent-Desiré Kabila overthrew Mobutu in May 1997. Driven by his Marxist-Leninist vision of state governance, L.D. Kabila put in place what he called, “The Comités du Pouvoir Populaire/CPP” literally means Popular/People’s Power Committees. His government banned all political parties
and regulated that all religious activity had to be approved by the CPP that monitored the Congolese population and served as a security force on the behalf of Kabila’s regime. Country Reports for 2000 indicates that the majority of Congolese people widely criticized Kabila’s presidential decree instituting the CPP and directing all activities through them (US Department of State, 2001). Delegates at the National Consultation organized by all religious institutions under the direction of the Protestant Church (ECC) called on the government to ban the CPP as part of a list of recommendations to improve civil rights. Reportedly, CPP declined in significance after the assassination of L.-D. Kabila in January 2001 and were, alongside other groups, officially absorbed into Joseph Kabila’s new political party—*Parti du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et la Democratie* (People’s Party for Reconstruction and Democracy, PPRD) (Coordination LMK, 2003; Radio France International, 2003; Digital Congo, 2003). Unfortunately, the dissolution of CPP and its incorporation into PPRD by President Joseph Kabila virtually led to a rift between some Laurent-Desiré Kabila ideological loyalists and his son’s supporters (Le Potentiel, 2006).

Even through the constitution of the Third Republic, drafted by the CNS in 1992 and promulgated by Joseph Kabila in 2006, provides for freedom of religion and prohibits discrimination based on religious belief, there are many cases of human rights’ violations related to religious expression during Joseph Kabila’s administration. Pentecostal-revivalist pastors like Albert Luvungi Lukusa and Kutino Fernando were incarcerated for their political viewpoints. The biographer of the first victim discloses, “his sermons did not flatter politicians, some saw him as their enemy and put him in jail. He passed away in December 2004 in Kassapa prison, in Lubumbashi due to health complications”
The latter, Pastor Kutino Fernando was arrested on Sunday, 14 May 2006 on his way back to his local church after a Gospel rally at stadium Tata Raphael where he preached in front of more than 100,000 people. Drawing on the reconstructive appeal of Prophet Jeremiah in the Old Testament “Let’s rise and rebuild”, Kutino launched a religio-political movement called “Sauvons le Congo” (Let’s Save the Congo). For him, “this movement is all at once. A slogan of combat to mobilize, a movement that brings together hundreds of thousands of Congolese and many foreign supporters, a conviction of my fight for a new Congo and a vision of a saved Congo. It is a great vision for the liberation and construction of a new Congo” (Mulongo, 2018).

Wrongly accused of possession of weapons of war and for an attempted coup d’Etat, reverend Kutino was unfairly sentenced to 20 years on 16 June 2006 by the Military Tribunal of Kinshasa. After having many stroke attacks, he was released on 14 September 2014 and lives now in Paris where he continues to get medical care. In addition to those specific figures, it has been recorded that the Kabila’s government subjected religious organizations and leaders, most prominently Catholic, to intimidation, arbitrary arrest, and in some cases violence due to the Catholic Church’s support for credible elections and involvement in protest marches. Security forces used lethal force to disrupt peaceful protests organized by the Catholic Lay Association (CLC) and some Protestant Church leaders in support of credible elections and an implementation of the December 2016 agreement. Many Catholic activists and protesters like Rossy Mukendi, Therese Kapangala (an aspirant nun) and others were killed by Kabila’s army because of

their religious identity and expression. We will further discuss this issue in one section of Chapter 4 related to the place of Religious Martyrdom in the DRC’s Politics. The ensuing section will describe and comment on how Catholic Cardinals, who led the Archdiocese of Kinshasa from 1965 until 2019, coped with the three precedent dictatorial regimes.

Politically, Joseph Mobutu’s military coup of 24 November 1965 launched a five-decade period of authoritarian regimes that lasted until the country’s first peaceful power transfer on 24 January 2019. Authoritarianism can be defined as a governmental system led by strong central authority with restricted political freedoms, the will to preserve the status quo, the erosion of the rule of law, power asymmetry and lack of democratic voting procedures (Cerutti, 2017; Cheeseman & Fisher, 2019; Hagmann, Reyntjens, & Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2013; Riedl, 2016).

Through the analysis of the first three cardinals, who all served with the position of Archbishop of Kinshasa, and their individual contribution to the country’s socio-political change. As previously introduced, this chapter shows how and why the Roman Catholic Church shifted from being a colonial state supporter to a resisting voice to the dictatorial rule of Joseph Mobutu (1965-1997), of Laurent Desire Kabila (1997-2001) and of Joseph Kabila (2001-2019).


33 For more information, there is a 2018 well-detailed document of the US Department of State on the religious freedom report in relation to the Democratic Republic of Congo.
Van Reybrouck described Joseph-Albert Malula as an extremely intelligent man who had personally witnessed the struggle for independence. He envisioned “a Congolese Church in a Congolese State” and later became a direct opponent of Mobutu (Van Reybrouck & Garrett, 2014, p. 277). This Congolese religious figure was born on 17 December 1917 in Leopoldville (modern-day city of Kinshasa). After three years of studying philosophy and five years of Theology at the Catholic seminary of Kabwe in Western Kasai province, he was ordained a priest on 9 June 1946 on behalf of the diocese of Leopoldville. In 1951, he created the group called “Conscience Africaine”, a kind of an indigenous think tank that aimed to gather Congolese Christian intellectuals, locally called “Les evolues” for concertation and reflection about socio-political matters. This group subsequently published a bi-monthly journal known as “Le Manifeste de la Conscience Africaine” to publicize their thoughts and revendications to the Colonial state (Young & Turner, 1985, p. 297,505).

Reacting to the scheme of Jef Van Bilsen (van Bilsen, 1993) that planned the independence of the DRC in subsequent 30 years from that time, J.-A. Malula denounced paternalism and advocated for the self-determination and authenticity of Black Africa. In other terms, he envisioned an African visage of the Catholic Church and looked for an earlier independence rather than a later one. Partisan of a social synthesis between African traditions and Western input, J.-A. Malula elaborated an ecclesial, pastoral and socio-political project. It conciliated the rejection of the political instrumentalization of religion with the disqualification of all subordination of political agendas over religious values. On 7 July 1964, he was appointed as Archbishop of Leopoldville and his ecclesiology was enriched by his participation in the Second Vatican Council. The
following year, Mobutu became President. And J.-A. Malula expected that presidency to be democratic (Bilsen, 1993; Mpisi, 2005; Ndaywel., 2012; Ndongala Maduku, 2016; Saint Moulin, 2010).

As previously stated, the Catholic Church supported the Belgian government and represented the Vatican in the colony. After the country’s independence in 1960, “the bishops were anxious to establish a working relationship with civil authorities and to leave behind the animosities that had characterized church-state relations at the end of the colonial period. Moreover, the turbulent first five years of independent Congo and initial postcolonial upheaval disposed the Bishops to join other Zairians in 1965 in welcoming the stability Mobutu promised” (Boyle, 1992, p. 52). Even in his inaugural allocution, Malula insisted, “Mr President, the Church recognizes your authority, because authority comes from God. We will loyally apply the laws you establish. You can count on us in your work of restoring the peace toward which all so ardently aspire” (Ndaywel è Nziem, 2009, p. 532). But Mobutu’s authoritarian consolidation of power turned the position of the Church into a confrontational stance.

K. L. Adelman and P. Boyle inform that the clash between the Catholic Church and President Mobutu started after the adoption of the *Manifesto de la N’sele* in 20 May 1967 (Adelman, 1975; Boyle, 1992). 54 bishops of Zaire (of whom 36 were Zairian and 27 foreign) felt uncomfortable with the anti-religious rhetoric of the regime’s political statements.34 In article 4 of the Second Republic’s Constitution adopted in June 1968, the

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34 The country’s name changed from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) into Zaire in October 1971 and regained the same name when L-D. Kabila overthrew Mobutu in 1997. In this study, the adjective Congo refers to the country and people of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and not those of the Republic of Congo-Brazzaville even though this country also uses the same qualifiers of “Congo” and “Congolese”. Indeed, the territory has changed names several times: Independent State of Congo (1885-1908), Belgian Congo (1908-1960), Republic of Congo-Kinshasa (1960-64), Republic of Zaire (1995-1997).
single-party M.P.R. was listed as the “supreme institution” and all other institutions, including the Catholic Church, were to be subordinate to it and functionally under its control. Like his peers, Joseph-Albert Malula expressed opposition against the dictatorial tendencies of Mobutu. The Prelate spoke up for the first time in front of President Mobutu on 4 January 1969 during the Mass commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Leopoldville riots. He advocated for the poor and the powerless by condemning the enrichment of Mobutu’s new government elites and urged for a more equitable distribution of wealth.

Another issue that undermined the relationship between the President and the Cardinal was to the refusal of the Catholic Church to allow the participation of seminary students in the political activities of the J.M.P.R. (the youth wing of the party). The full report of the national episcopal conference clearly denotes, “In effect, the President promised on his honor that while he was directing the country, there would not be any question of involving members of the clergy and the religious orders in the hierarchical structure of the M.P.R. or J.M.P.R.” (Adelman, 1975, p. 106; Actes de La XI Assemblée Plénière de L’Épiscopal Du Zaire, 1972). In addition to the Catholic Church’s battle over the party in seminaries, Malula’s public criticisms of Mobutu’s government on January 4th, 1969 while the nation was honoring its martyrs of freedom and at the country’s 10th anniversary of independence on June 30, 1970 in front of Baudouin, the King of Belgium

and again (1997-). Before the 1885 Berlin Conference, the Kongo Empire included regions of countries as the DRC, Congo-Brazzaville, Angola and Gabon.

35 *Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution* (Popular Movement of Revolution in English). Mobutu founded this political single party in 1967 to consolidate his authoritarian politics.

36 Interview with Professor Isidore N’daywel, November 2018, Kinshasa, DRC.
also deteriorated the relationships between the President and the Cardinal. The editorial and pastoral letter of Bishops criticizing the party for using church tunes and prayers with words changed to praise the President Mobutu.

Church-State quarrels amplified in January 1972 after the publication of an editorial in a local catholic magazine that vehemently condemned Mobutu’s campaign for the creation of a national ideology called “Zairian Authenticity”. The editorial and pastoral letter of Catholic Bishops criticized the party for using Church tunes and prayers with words changed to praise the President Mobutu. Through the state radio, the government considered the editorial as a slight to the President and attributed it to the Cardinal. “Malula, an outspoken advocate of the Africanization of the church and a peer of Mobutu, denied authorship of the editorial but repudiated the presidential order to drop Christian names and he urged other bishops to do the same” (Boyle, 1992, p. 60). In consequence, the Cardinal was expelled by President Mobutu and took exile in Rome. Mobutu converted Malula’s official residence in Kinshasa into J.M.P.R.’s national headquarters and threatened that his government would confiscate any Catholic school resources that support the Cardinal.

J-A. Malula was one of the first advocates of the country’s independence, an influential figure who had done much to make the Catholic Church in the DRC an indigenous institution. As the Archbishop of Kinshasa, he encouraged an entirely Zairian/Congolese leadership in the ecclesiastic hierarchy, introduced traditional dances and songs into the Mass and gained the authorship of many liturgical adaptations in the local language. Other bishops of the National Episcopal Conference disagreed with the
cliché of “renegade of the revolution” tagged to the cardinal by President Mobutu and his government. The prelates expressed their disapprobation in these terms:

Everyone knows that the ignoble campaign of defamation which took place, without a modicum of manners, against the Cardinal, was an eye-opener only for the ill-informed. The point that the Political Bureau and the press kept repeating: ‘We are not against the Catholic Church but only against a subversive element and a traitor to his country’ signifies absolutely nothing (Adelman, 1975, p. 108; see the same quotation in. Zairoise, 1972, p. 10)

The discursive dissonances between the Cardinal J-A. Malula and President Mobutu seemed to turn around the applicability of the doctrine of Authenticity. Substantially, both sought to promote the cultural ontology of Congolese people and reduce Western influence on them, but their approaches differed from each other. The Catholic bishops gave credit to the cardinal who brought innovative ideas and insisted that the Church’s reforms towards inculturation began in 1963, two years before Mobutu accessed to power. The “Malula Affair”, as Adelman calls it, contributed to a teleological change in the government’s campaign from “the return to authenticity” to “the recourse to authenticity” (Adelman, 1975). With the intention to address the Church criticism, President Mobutu argued not to blindly return to all traditional customs but to select what fitted ‘to our modern world’. However, the Catholic Church under the leadership of the Cardinal Malula viewed Mobutu’s ideology and use of occultism as a threat to Christianity and an appeal of traditional practices opposite to the Christian faith. What was Mobutu’s doctrine of Authenticity occult or Christian-based? The Cameroonian theologian Elias K. Bongmba stresses that “inculturation reflects a rootedness of Christian faith in a local culture” (Lauterbach & Vähäkangas, 2019, p. 199). In the same line, J-A. Malula called for a dynamic but discerning encounter between Christianity and African religious
traditions while refusing Mobutu’s unbridled and improvised idea to reprise all ancestral customs without examination.

This episode of the Church-State conflicts in the Mobutu era illustrates both the capacity of Church leaders for prophetic tenure at the individual level and the tendency for the institution at large to act to protect its institutional basis. Even through, the Catholic Church appeared as the only serious obstacle in the path of Mobutu’s drive to absolute power from the mid-1970s through much of the 1980s, the dictatorial regime effectively fractured the abilities of the Catholic hierarchy to serve as a unified voice of opposition (Oyatambwe, 1997; Young & Turner, 1985). Despite a festering of opposition that would surface occasionally in carefully worded pastoral letters denouncing corruption, the regime successfully divided groups of bishops against one another, co-opted those bishops who could be used and isolated those who could not, shut down unacceptable Church publications and, most of all, encouraged a culture of censorship. The President continued to respond somewhat favorably to the requests of Catholic bishops if they fully cooperated with him. He only allowed them to meet as long as they consulted him for approval and swore not to criticize state actions and intentions (Adelman, 1975; Ndongala-Maduku, 2016). This is an important point that marks a difference between this particular era and the contemporary scenario and Catholic public corporate action from 2016 onward. It was not until after the death of Malula in 1989 and significant shifts in international politics that hierarchal Catholic clergy again took the risk of direct public confrontation with the Mobutu regime.

2.4.2. Frederic Etsou-Nzabi Bamungwabi: A Pro-Mobutu but Opponent of the Kabilas (1990-2006).
Ignace Ndongala-Maduku remarks that the death of Cardinal J.A. Malula on 14 June 1989 in Leuven, Belgium came as a surprise for the Congolese Catholic community (Ndongala Maduku, 2016, p. 97). His death occurred at the moment when the continental synod, in its embryonic phase, was planning to discuss the Africanization of the Catholic Church for which Malula had been a pioneering figure. His absence left a vacuum and gave space for a lot of speculations about the cause of his death and the name of his potential successor. In view of Malula's longtime individual opposition to the Mobutu's regime, I remembered as growing up myself in Kinshasa hearing rumors of him being murdered by the President through poisoning. Regarding his replacement, the majority of Catholic believers wished for the Papal choice to be Laurent Monsengwo who was already presiding over CENCO at that time and also was considered relationally and doctrinally closer to Malula than other Congolese bishops. Contrary to these expectations, Pope John Paul II elevated Frederick Esou-Nzabi Bamungwadi to the position of Cardinal and Archbishop of Kinshasa. Many Congolese were disappointed and suspected a political interference in this Vatican's nomination because Bishop Esou-Nzabi was a blood-related relative of President Mobutu. Etsou studied philosophy and theology at the Catholic seminary of Kabwe, Western Kasai in the DRC. His ordination as a priest in the congregation of the Fathers of Scheut took place on 13 July 1958 in Lisala located in the DRC’s province of Equator. After a full year at the Institute Lumen Vitae in Brussels, Belgium, he went back to his native country and was appointed vicar in Kintambo and Saint Peter in the commune of Kinshasa. In 1964, he resumed his studies

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37 From my interview with Congolese priest who requested his identity to remain anonymous, November 2019. Kinshasa, DRC.
38 From the same anonymous informant.
and earned a diploma in sociology in Paris, France. On 11 November 1977, the Pope nominated him as Bishop of Mbandaka-Bikoro and he then became the Vice-President of the National Episcopal Conference. He was officially appointed as Malula’s successor in the archdiocese of Kinshasa on 14 August 1990 and consecrated Cardinal by Pope John Paul II on 29 May 1991 (Makiobo, 2004; Oyatambwe, 1997).

The author of *Eglise Catholique et Pouvoir au Congo-Zaïre*, J.B. Mukanya Kaninda-Muana mentions five facts that seemed to hinder the socio-political action of Cardinal F. Etsou during the Mobutu’s era (Kaninda-Muana, 2008). First, Catholic adherents compared him to the charismatic personality and the achievements of his predecessor J.A. Malula in the socio-political arena. Under the leadership of Malula, the archdiocese of Kinshasa served as a counterforce to Mobutu’s dictatorial rule and critical voice in the society. “One of the expectations of Christians of Kinshasa was to see the institutions of their Church invest in other social domains beyond caritative, educative and sanitary activities. The popular consultations initiated by President Mobutu, the totalitarian emprise of the State-single political party, the end of West-East bipolarity and the entrance of the African church in synod had a shadowing incidence on the episcopate of F. Etsou” (Ndongala-Maduku, 2016, p. 98). Second, the Cardinal Etsou was tagged as a pro-Mobutu agent regarding his complaisance to his dictatorial regime. Additionally, Mobutu and Etsou were both natives of the same province and born in the same town. Third, the Catholic prelate stepped into this episcopal office when Mobutu’s regime was declining and was rejected by most of the Congolese. He found himself in a dilemma of either not betraying President Mobutu or prioritizing his sacerdotal responsibility and prophetic vocation over ethnic identity. the Fourth, his inaction and indifference when the
Catholic laity of the *Comite Laic de Coordination* (CLC) organized public protests on 16 February 1992 to reclaim the re-opening of the Sovereign National Conference (CNS) banned by President Mobutu. Cardinal Etsou distanced himself from other Catholic bishops and priests who backed and marched with the organizers of that contestation. In one of my interviews, Father José Mpundu still remembered what happened that day: “For C ENCO, I was assuming the role of Executive Secretary and Representative of the Commission of Justice and Peace. I would like to inform here that Cardinal Frederick Etsou refused to give us permission for the march because we were planning to protest against Mobutu. Despite the Cardinal’s refusal and disagreement, we put together a clear itinerary-map for the march and banners with a description claiming an unconditional reopening of the Sovereign National Conference. The organization of this march costed me my position because I was later kicked out of my role in that episcopal commission”.

Van Reybrouck estimates that more than a million people flowed to the streets in that march, called “the March of Hope”, that makes it the biggest mass meeting in the country’s history (Van Reybrouck & Garrett, 2014, p. 402). It ended in a bloodbath. At least thirty-five civilians lost their lives, and many priests and parishioners were injured.

However, Cardinal E. Etsou renounced what Ndongala-Maduku describes as, “his pastoral complaisance” after the overthrow of Mobutu on 17 May 1997 (Ndongala Maduku, 2016, p. 100). The forced exile of his relative Mobutu to Morocco and the political change in the DRC with Laurent-Desiré Kabila as self-proclaimed President by a military coup released the Cardinal from his complaisant attachment with the former regime. The Cardinal’s change of position toward to the in-coming government resulted in a renewed

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39 Interview with Father Jose Mpundu on 23 November 2018, Kinshasa DRC.
support of his archdiocese and he became more critical and got more involved in the emergence of the rule of law in the DRC. Four activities describe his political engagement for the wellbeing of the Congolese people. First, in January 2000 during the Congo second war (1998-2003), Cardinal Etsou led a delegation comprised of Congolese leaders of all religious confessions at the UN Security Council in New York, and in February and March of the same year he traveled throughout the US and Canada to plead in favor of the war victims in the Eastern part of the DRC. Second, he officially represented the Catholic Church in Sun-city, South Africa during the 2001 inter-Congolese dialogue that resulted in a peace agreement between the government and belligerent political actors. Third, the Archbishop of Kinshasa openly denounced the implication of Rwanda and Uganda in the bloodshed armed conflict in the eastern part of the country. He considered Presidents Paul Kagame and Yoweri Museveni responsible for the atrocities by using ethnic frustrations to plunder the natural resources in this part of the country.

The last public clash between Cardinal Etsou (before he passed away on January 6, 2007) and Joseph Kabila related to the outcomes of the December 2006 presidential elections. The Catholic prelate contested Abbot Malu Malu, the president of the Commission Electorale Indepandante (CEI) and accused the government of electoral fraud. Because of this outcome, Kinshasa endured a bloody confrontation between Kabila’s troops and the guards of Jean Pierre Bemba, his electoral challenger on 22 and 23 March 2007 (Ndongala-Maduku, 2016, pp. 97–105). What does the above evidence tell us in relation to the main points of this Chapter? The case of the second Congolese Cardinal and archbishop of Kinshasa demonstrates that the Church ‘s engagement in the political arena can be hindered or regulated by ethnocentrism. His shift from
complaisance with Mobutu’s regime to public contestation to L.D. Kabila and J. Kabila is due to his ethnic affinities with the first dictator. As we will see in Chapter 4, ethnicity in most accounts has been and still is a factor of differentiation, affiliation, and exclusion even within religious institutions. It contributes to the debate on the politicization of ethnic identities and their intersection on Church-State relation. Additional details about this issue are discussed in Chapter 4.

2.4.3. Laurent Pasinya Monsengwo: Cleric-Critic surfing on the Third Wave of Democratization (2007-2018)

On Wednesday 6 March 2019, while I was on my way to the Ste Anne Catholic guesthouse, which is in Gombé, Kinshasa, I had a fortuitous encounter.40 While walking up the entrance stairs, I noticed a man wearing a black lay suit with a pastoral collar around his neck stretching his right-hand fist toward me as an unusual way of greeting (probably to avoid handshaking). I responded by reaching my fist to his’ and when I looked up to see his face, surprisingly it was Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo. That was my first time to meet him in person. I had hoped for a long time to have the chance to interview him about his legendary engagement in the country’s politics. I chose to stay at the Sainte Anne Catholic guesthouse because it was known to host foreign and local clergy who visit Kinshasa or for personal spiritual retreats. My casual encounter with the Cardinal attested to this evidence. I promptly introduced myself to the Cardinal as a PhD student from the University of Edinburgh sojourning in Kinshasa for fieldwork and that my project aims to analyze the nexus between Religion and Politics. The Cardinal seemed discernibly

40 That day coincided with Ash Wednesday. Some local and expatriate Catholic clergy, including Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo, were present at Ste Anne guesthouse chapel to begin the Catholic month of Lent.
interested in my research and expressed his availability to chat with me while he was waiting for his driver to pick him up. I took advantage of this opportunity to ask him about the importance of political participation by Religious Institutions as hybrid governance actors in the DRC and his own civic engagement through CENCO. The quotation at the start of this chapter came from our semi-structured conversation. I was impressed by his openness and promptness to sit down with me on one of the comfortable couches at the guesthouse reception hall to answer my questions. At the end of our brief but worthy exchange, the Cardinal asked about my congregation. I responded that “I was a Protestant”. He was surprised and said, “No way!” The Cardinal humorously explained that my way of talking, and behaving was like a Catholic priest (probably because at that time I wore a small black cross that was very visible on my white shirt). I informed him that I attended a Catholic boarding school for my primary and secondary education even though I came from a Protestant family. During this conversation, Cardinal Monsengwo explicitly emphasized on the spiritual and social intertwined mandate of the Church. He underlined that the civic engagement of Catholic prelates as shepherds for God and of His people is linked to their pastoral oath.

L. Monsengwo was born on 7 October 1939 in Mongobele in the Bandundu province, in the Southwest. Like his predecessors J.A. Malula and F. Etsou, he studied philosophy at the Catholic seminary of Kabwe in Kasai Occidental. But for his distinctive case, Rome was where he pursued his theological education. He was ordained priest on 21 December 1963. In 1971, he became the first African with a doctorate in Biblical Sciences. After his return to Kinshasa, he taught at the Catholic faculties of Theology and was appointed in 1972 as the General Secretary of CENCO. Eight years later, on 4 May
1980, Pope John Paul II made him Bishop in the diocese of Inongo and then in Kisangani. His status changed to Archbishop on 1 September 1988. From 1984 to 1992, he led CENCO as its president. In 2007, he concomitantly took over the archdiocese of Kinshasa after the death of Cardinal F. Etsou and the presidency of International Pax Christi until 2010. In addition, Monsengwo presided the Pan-African Association of Catholic exegetes and the *Symposium des Conferences Episcopales d’Afrique et de Madagascar* (SCEAM). On 20 November 2010, Pope Benedict XVI consecrated him as a Cardinal. The next section will examine his pastoral ministry and societal dynamics in the archdiocese of Kinshasa.

L. Monsengwo is one of the few people who personally witnessed many crucial phases of the country’s political history. “In fact, he is among those who experienced and endured the three types of state authoritarianism in the Congo” (Ndongala-Maduku, 2016, p. 106). In other terms, he served within the Catholic Church in favor of Congolese people during the eras of President Mobutu and the two Kabilas (Laurent Desire and Joseph). He was the President of CENCO during the democratization moment (1984-1992), President of the Sovereign National Conference (CNS) in 1991-1992, President of the High Council of Republic and HCR-Parliament of Transition (1992-1997) and constitutionally became the DRC’s head of state per interim for only few days after Mobutu’s forced exile in Morocco and before L-D. Kabila’s self-proclamation as President in May 1997. He was present at the signature of the pact on security, stability, and development of the Great Lakes’ Region in 2006. In the section CENCO: Promoter of Democracy, I refer again to L. Monsengwo’s legacy while he was presiding over both CENCO and the Sovereign National Conference (CNS).
When L. Monsengwo stepped in the position of Archbishop of Kinshasa in 2007, the DRC has survived socio-political turbulent times. The Government was (and is still) struggling to provide public services to its inhabitants. After many years of civil war, called the two Congo Wars (1996-2003), the country endured structural and institutional challenges which include a disastrous social situation locally known as the phenomenon “Kuluna” (urban juvenile violence) and insecurity in the Eastern regions due to the presence of militias backed by the armies of neighboring countries (Prunier, 2009; Trefon & Kabuyaya, 2018). Politically, the country just ended a three-year power-sharing transition resulted in the organization of presidential, senatorial, and legislative elections. His nomination by the Pope at the head of the Archdiocese of Kinshasa was largely approved by the population and sparked hope for the country’s reconstruction with regards to his major contribution in the DRC’s democratization process since his presidency at the Conference Nationale Souveraine in 1991-1992. This forum, led by Cardinal Monsengwo, promulgated the Third Republic’s constitution framed within democratic values and the adherence to Human Rights and International treaties. It was adopted by popular referendum in 2006 and still serves as the legal groundwork for the Congolese State until now.

According to his biographers, his episcopal motto "In fide Veritas" translated as “In faith, the Truth” regulates his political rhetoric and engagement (Saint Moulin & Gaise-N’Ganzi, 1998). Ndongala-Maduku describes it as follows:

To the inevitable incentive that democracy represents to him, he includes a spiritual quest: faith in Jesus Christ. This is not doubt for him, guided by the light of Christ, the Kinois have to get involved in the restoration of the authority of the State, the emergence of the rule of law and the rejection of clientelism. His episcopal devise is an act of faith and of hope…that is followed by ‘ethopoiese’: In fide Veritatis (in faith, the truth). Truth is for Monsengwo, a kind of lived authenticity that irrigates his positional stance as Congolese
patriot, pastor, and Catholic Bishop. He made it one of the mobilizing values of his episcopate (Ndongala-Maduku, 2016, p. 108).

In his inaugrating allocution in a crowded football stadium on 3 February 2008, L. Monsengwo drew from Isaiah 60: 1 and the Sermon of the Mount to summarize his episcopal program as, “Rejoice Kinshasa, the glory of God is upon you, rise up and shed the light of Christ”. This imperative invited the Catholic Church to shine in the Congolese society like a lamp on the hill (relating to the biblical reference in Matthew 5:17) which constituted the leitmotiv of his ecclesiology and political stand. L. Monsengwo used this rhetoric to legitimate his viewpoints related to the country’s political affairs and to mobilize his diocese, the city inhabitants, and Congolese to play their civic role in the country’s reconstruction. As an illustration, during the mass of his installation as the new Cardinal on 5 December 2010, he insisted that, “An authority and a power that does not first take care of the common good and of the people but of his own interests is a purposeless power”(Correig, 2013, p. 35). This was his modus operandi which targeted local politics.

Under his leadership in the Archdiocese of Kinshasa, L. Monsengwo fought for “the political visibility of faith” and used three strategies to achieve his episcopal objectives. The first is what one can call as a “Mass Celebration”. Since his appointment in 2007 as Archbishop in this metropolitan city of more than 12 million people, the stadium became a privileged place to organize public eucharistic celebrations. More than his predecessors, Malula and Etsou, the regular utilization of Radio and TV broadcasts constituted the second tool for the Catholic prelate. Describing this newness in the Congolese Catholic scenario, Ndongala-Maduku testified that, “Those celebrations are perceived as indication of vitality, of intensity and of the density of pastoral work in process in Kinshasa. Without any idea of public performance, showing them through media
provide a social visibility to the Church…the acquisition of a television channel by the archdiocese participates in this visibility and proximity.” (Ndongala-Maduku, 2016, p. 109). In a Weberian way of viewing Religion as “a force for social change” (Weber, 2013), L. Monsengwo intensified his notoriety in the public sphere with social media (i.e., radio, television, publication, and the internet) as his vehicle of mobilization, protestation and proclamation. His third technique relates to the Masses’ mobilization. Church holidays such as Christmas, Palm Sundays, Passovers, and youth gatherings were specific opportunities to inform the public audience about his viewpoints regarding social and political issues.

In agreement with his biographers mentioned above, Cardinal Monsengwo’s model proffers considerable trends related to the Religion in Politics discourse. Unlike his predecessor, Malula who endured severe restriction in terms of freedom of speech and died during the cold war era, Monsengwo emerged as a major prophetic voice of the Church that challenged the country’s three authoritarian regimes (1991-2018). Drawing on his episcopal motto “In fide Veritas” and ecclesiological stand, he extended the visibility of the Catholic Church as Christ’s light in the Congolese society utilizing Mass celebration, media, and mobilization as political strategies. Some of his speeches are analyzed in Chapter 4. His approach marks a watershed in the way the DRC’s Catholic Church engages in the public space. First, his political engagement as President of CNS (1991-1992) and of the Transitional Parliament (1992-1997) while concomitantly leading the CENCO as the country’s largest religious institution (1984-1997) heightened his ability to shape the DRC’s politics positively and effectively “from the top and within”. Second, Monsengwo used his transnational status respectively as President of SCEAM and being
one of the Pope’s nine advisors to raise awareness and advocacy on behalf of the DRC. Braeckman and Ndongala Maduku agree that L. Monsengwo was a valuable clergyman in the DRC with regards to his intellectual erudition, his ministerial career and his political contribution to the reconstruction of the DRC (Braeckman, 2009, p. 136; Ndongala-Maduku, 2016, p. 106). He will be remembered as one of the few religious figures who engaged in Politics in a conventional way by assuming official roles in the State. His political speeches and actions might surely serve as an inspirational reference for African scholarship and literature related to political theology and to what Gifford calls “ecclesiastical externality” (Gifford, 1998, pp. 44–47). He also remains a legendary figure of and for CENCO as a corporate religious entity in the DRC.41

2.5. Multifaceted Political Participation of CENCO

CENCO, as a top-down platform within the Catholic Church, is functionally well-organized, and operational throughout the national space. It has a General Assembly with 18 Emeritus Bishops; a President and 2 Vice-presidents; a General Secretariat with two assistants; and Episcopal Commissions (Doctrine of Faith, Evangelization, Seminaries and Clergy, Laity Apostolate).42 CENCO includes all Catholic bishops serving in the six ecclesiastic provinces: Kinshasa (as also the headquarters and Cardinalate’s siege), Mbandaka, Kananga, Kisangani, Bukavu and Lubumbashi. Each region is coordinated by an Archbishop. The details regarding the names and functions of those currently in office

41 This section only refers to the first three Congolese Cardinals who also served as Archbishops of Kinshasa: Joseph Albert Malula died in 1989, Frederic Etsou died in 2006 and Laurent Monsengwo died in 2021. They respectively assumed this episcopal function from 1964 to 2018. Pope Francis appointed Fridolin Ambongo Besungu (currently in office) as the new Archbishop of Kinshasa in November 2018 and elevated him as the fourth Congolese Cardinal on October 5, 2019. Some of his speeches and activities will be examined in the subsequent Chapters.

42 Data collected from the official website of CENCO (http://cenco.org/#).
are listed in the appendices. It is a hierarchical and nationally represented institution with relevant socio-political impact in the DRC in fields of democracy, peace mediation and protestation.

2.5.1. CENCO in Front as Promoter of Democracy

It was not until the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s that the Catholic leaders reappeared as a critical voice in the public sphere. Mobutu’s authoritarian regime restricted political opposition and impeded freedom of speech. However, as largely discussed in the first chapter, the demise of the Soviet empire driven by the Perestroika launched a new era labeled by political scientists and experts in international relations as the “third wave of democratization” (Coppa, 2003; Gaddis, 1998; Gifford, 1998; J.Haynes, 2016; Huntington, 1997). On the background of this global process of democratization, in DRC the Catholic Church arose as a counterforce and catalyst for democracy. At the closure of this national forum on 6 December 1992, the clergyman Monsengwo recommended all 2,842 participants “not to betray the societal project of the Third Republic as it appears in the Constitution’s draft and in the various acts that the Assembly has adopted” (Saint Moulin & Gaise N’Ganzi, 1998, p. 24). In a precise way, J.B. Mukanya Kaninda-Muana adds:

The Church’s social mission was to liberate Congolese modernity by liberating the State and all institutions and structures—enterprises, army universities, banks, and sometimes the church itself. There has been a desire to establish an essential link between the appropriation of Catholicity at the level of the individual, structures and social connections at one hand and the advent of a true social modernity at the other (Kaninda-Muana, 2008, p. 452)

CENCO, through L. Monsengwo, recommended Christian participants of that national forum to be the “salt” and “light” of the society, to be what Bompani & Valois defined as active ‘Christian citizens’ (Bompani & Valoise, 2017). Even though, the newly drafted
constitution was rejected by President Mobutu, it was later adopted in 2006 before the presidential, senatorial, and parliamentary elections. During one of my interviews on the role of CENCO in the Congolese society, Leonard Santedi Kinkupu gave a metaphor to illustrate its three-fold mandate.\textsuperscript{43} He portrayed it as a solid root sustained by three pillars-verbs: “Announce, Denounce, Renounce”. This theologian points to the evangelical, prophetical, and moral responsibility of the Episcopal Conference in relation to socio-economic and political transformations in the country. Chapter 4 will offer a detailed comparative analysis of the political participation of Catholic and Protestant Leadership.

2.5.2. CENCO ‘au milieu du village’ as Peace-Mediator and Negotiator

The second sphere of influence for CENCO relates to its Peace Mediation between Kabila’s government and the opposition. In his speech to the nation on 28 November 2015, a year before the end of his presidential term, President Kabila called for a reflection on the possibility of adopting a new electoral system and law that would allow the Government to reduce the cost of the elections with cheaper materials. The another issue of dissonance between both parties related to the unexpected decentralization and sub-division of the country’s provinces from 11 to 26 (Ndaywel-è-Nziem, 2018, pp. 110–115). According to Dr. Philemon Muamba-Mumbunda, the government of President J. Kabila strived to delay as longer as possible the required 2016 presidential elections in which he was forbidden by the constitution to run for re-election.\textsuperscript{44} This political \textit{quid pro quo} lasted

\textsuperscript{43} Leonard Santedi Kinkupu was ordained priest on 1 August 1985. After three years of priesthood service, he went to pursue his doctoral studies in France where he obtained two doctorates in Theology at the Catholic Institute of Paris and Religious Anthropology at University of Paris Sorbonne IV. LSK assumed the role of General Secretary of CENCO from 1996 to 2006 and currently acts as Rector of the Catholic University of Congo since 2006.

\textsuperscript{44} This is based on my interview with Philemon Muamba in November 2018. He has a doctorate in Administrative and Political Science from the University of Kinshasa (UNIKIN) where he teaches the course

Instead, President J. Kabila and his government in the mid-2016 opted for a dialogue with the civil society and opposition leaders to find a consensual alternative in view of the legal, geographical, and financial reasons that made the holding of elections according to the timeframe as required by the Constitution. They argued about the government’s incapacity to collect the necessary funds and to dispatch all materials needed for voting throughout the country in only six remaining months. In the meantime, political forces of opposition gathered in conclave under the auspices of Etienne Tshisekedi in Genval, Belgium (8-9 June 2016). Congolese journalist and dramaturge Cheik Fita\(^45\) stated that nine political platforms which participated at the conference decided to reunite and create a mega-structure “Rassemblement des Forces Acquises au Changement” with Etienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba as President of its Board of Sages.\(^46\) Unlike President J. Kabila and his government, the newly created coalition expressed “its indefectible loyalty to the constitution and its strict respect” and its members required “the organization of elections within the constitutional timeframe, and the presidential election before 19 December 2016 in regards to article 73 of the constitution, the immediate and unnegotiable release

\(^{45}\) Cheik Fita lives in Brussels and is one of the influential persons among the Congolese diaspora in Belgium. Author of *DRC: Sans Un Coup de Feu* in which he analyzes the political situation of the DRC from 2016 to the election of the current President Félix Tshisekedi in January 2019. I interviewed him in Brussels on 10 June 2019.

\(^{46}\) The political platforms who attended the Conclave of Genval: UDPS and allies, La Dynamique de l’Opposition, le G7, l’AR, le Front du Peuple, le MPP, le G14, la Convention des Republicains and the Civil Society.
of those who have been arrested for their opinions, political prisoners, human rights activists and journalists”.  

The above opposition leaders’ stance was in disagreement with the Kabila’s government and their scheme of “glissement” (i.e., slip over the constitutional date-limit). Despite the refusal of Tshisekedi’s coalition to dialogue with his government, Kabila commissioned the facilitator Edem Kodjo. After Kodjo failed to convince Tshisekedi and allies, he convoked a dialogue with the presidential majority and other opposition leaders comprised of Vital Kamerhe and a few recalcitrant members of UDPS and of MLC of Jean Pierre Bemba. This forum coordinated by Kodjo, was held from 1 September to 18 October 2016 and gave birth to a “mort né”. This project proposed elections between October 2017 and April 2018. In the meantime, Etienne Tshisekedi called the population for a protest rally and in-sit at the office of the Electoral Independent Commission (CENI) on 19-20 September to reclaim elections at the end of 2016 as regulated by the constitution. According to Jason Burke the Africa correspondent of The Guardian, uncountable crowds of protesters participated in this contestation (Burke, 2016) It was locally called “Premier Carton Jaune a Kabila”—first yellow card to Kabila like during the soccer game as first warning. Unfortunately, the events turned to bloodshed with more than 100 persons killed. The Congolese authorities were accused of excessive armed backlash by the international community (Burke, 2016). How did CENCO react and what role did it play regarding this political impasse? Ndaywel-è-Nziem explicitly answers this question in the statement:

The Inclusive Ultimate National Dialogue, assigned to CENCO by the Head of State under the pressing advice of external 'friends', resulted in a satisfactory ending, because it was

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48 Former General Secretary of UA and former Prime Minister of Togo.
49 This metaphor means that this forum produced nothing substantial.
able to gather, all the ‘forces vives’ of the nation. We counted two groups of participants: The signatories of the Political Agreement of 18 October and the non-signatories of this agreement for not having taken part in the Dialogue of the city of the African Union. As the founding act of this new "transition" from the end of Kabila’s term "to the assumption of the new President, it deserves to be analyzed in its most essential articulations (Ndaywel-è-Nziem, 2018, pp. 115–116).

CENCO intervened as mediator and succeeded to bring Kabila’s government and the two branches of opposition (the Rassemblement and of de Cite de l’OUA) to sign on 31 December 2016 a consensual accord locally known as the Saint-Sylvester Transitional Agreement (Africanews, 2017). It paved the way for elections and the country’s first peaceful democratic transfer of power. Two international actors also deserve credit for this achievement. First, Pope Francis was actively involved in the signing of this agreement and the peaceful transition of power in the DRC (Garrey, 2016). He had delegated his longtime friend and the Argentinian apostolic nuncio Luis Mariano Montemayor who represented the Vatican in the DRC when this event took place. Second, Tom Perriello represented US President Obama’s administration and made several trips to Kinshasa to negotiate in favor of a smooth transition in the DRC (Gambino, 2017). Despite what was signed, President Kabila and his government later disappointed the Congolese and international community when they refused to fully implement the clauses of the signed peace agreement. That shifted CENCO from mediator to President Kabila’s most outspoken contestor.

2.5.3. CENCO as Protest Catalyst: Shepherds mobilize the Sheep to Challenge the Lion

In the article Congolese Catholic Church moves from state partner to a spiritual opposition, Ryan Lenora Brown stated that, "Kabila’s rule has dragged on, the Catholic
Church’s role in the Democratic Republic of Congo’s political crisis has morphed from one of quiet moral condemnation to active resistance” (Brown, 2018). What really happened? How did Kabila and his backers break their previous consent to carry out the Saint-Sylvester accord signed by both parties, the government, and the opposition coalition?

Christine Bell, author of “On the Law of Peace” classifies peace agreements into three stages: pre-negotiation, substantive/framework and implementation (Bell, 2008, pp. 56-63). The latter part of the mediation requires loyalty to the duties, rights, and privileges that each party has under the agreement terms. The two parties (President J. Kabila/his government and the opposition) agreed to the following dispositions. The first points to the respect of the constitution and laws of the Republic. Second, the incumbent President would stay in office until the installation of his newly elected successor. Third, the parliament and provincial assemblies would remain operational. Fourth, the Government would be led by a Prime Minister chosen by the opposition coalition called the Rassemblement and nominated by the Head of State. Fifth, the elections should be held in one sequence the latest in December 2017: Presidential, legislative (national and provincial). Sixth, a council for the follow up of the Accord and the electoral process (CNSA) should be put in place. With 28 members, it should be presided by the President of the Board of Sages of the Rassemblement. The last disposition insists on the release of political prisoners particularly emblematic figures either jailed or in exile.

My informants stated that President J. Kabila sabotaged the clauses by the following elements. First, his categoric refusal to nominate a Prime Minister from the

50 See the original Peace Agreement with its entire content in the appendices.
51 Religious leaders interviewed during my pre-electoral fieldwork journey in Kinshasa (Sept-Dec 2018).
Rassemblement uniquely chosen by Etienne Tshisekedi in his status of the leader of the board of sages as stipulated the agreement. Second, his rejection of appointing the person who took over Tshisekedi’s position at the Board of Sages after his death on 1st of February 2017. Third, the failure to release political prisoners and other human rights’ activists and the prevention of exiled figures to come back to their homeland and run for election. Fourth, his unilateral nomination of the President of CNSA who were not approved by the Rassemblement coalition. Fifth, the abrogation of the original agreement as co-signed by CENCO and the unilateral signature of the amended document by his backers and recalcitrant opposition figures in the presence of the Presidents of the Senate and National Assembly. “This demarche was publicly denounced by the bishops of CENCO” (Ndawel-è-Nziem, 2018, p. 117).

After feeling betrayed by President J. Kabila, the Catholic bishops of CENCO silently observed the political affairs until 31 December 2017 (the time scheduled by the peace agreement for elections). President Kabila and his government once again presented excuses for not organizing elections despite an extended year. The Comité Laïc de Coordination/the Laity branch of the Catholic Church launched massive anti-government protest marches on the last Sunday of 2017 under the leadership of professor Isidore Ndaywel-è-Nziem with the full approval and active participation of the Catholic clergy. More empirical details about the CENCO’s political strategies will be analyzed in the Chapter 4. The following timeline schema chronologically traces the DRC’s turbulent events from 2016 until the sworn-in ceremony of the elected President:

- Nov-Dec 2016: Negotiation & Signature of St Sylvester Peace Agreement by Kabila’s government and opposition leaders with the mediation of the CENCO.
• 1 February 2017: Death of Etienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba in Brussels, Belgium at the age of 84. He is remembered as the backbone of this Peace Agreement.
• Feb-March 2017: Unilateral Abrogation and Amendment to the original document by President J. Kabila.
• December 2017: Breaking of the Peace accord by postponing election.
• 31 December 2017 (Sunday): Protest marches with churches as starting points.
• 31 January 2018: Protest marches.
• 25 February 2018 (Sunday): Protest marches
• 8 August 2018: President J. Kabila ended the suspense of running for a third anti-constitutional presidential term and chose Emmanuel Ramazani Shadari as dauphin and presidential candidate.
• 30 December 2018: Presidential, Legislative—national and provincial elections
• 10 January 2019: Election results
• 24 January 2019: The DRC’s first peaceful power transfer and President Felix Tshisekedi’s sworn-in ceremony.

This last section discussed the multifaceted political engagement of CENCO as religious institution in the DRC since early 1990s with more emphasis on the two last turbulent and unconstitutional years of J. Kabila’s rule. First, the contribution of CENCO as promoter of democracy is evidenced by their active participation in the CNS during the post-Cold War. Catholic Bishops invested their pastoral and reconciliatory abilities to put the DRC in the orbit of democracy after the rule of one of the world most cruel dictatorial regimes (J.-F. Bayart, 1993; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2004). Second, CENCO shifted from being peace mediator to becoming a catalyst of political contestation during the end of Joseph Kabila’s second and last constitutional term in 2016 until the country’s first peaceful transfer of power in early 2019. Whereas international analysts said that “neighboring strongmen Denis Sassou Nguesso in Congo-Brazzaville and Paul Kagame in Rwanda have easily pushed through constitutional changes to allow for third terms”, Kabila didn’t succeed to take such a blunt approach (Burke, 2016). At the climax of tempestuous moments between Kabila’s administration and opposition parties, CENCO
offered mediation that birthed a peace agreement at the end of December 2016. It argued that widespread conflict in the DRC would sprawl borders by reaching its nine neighboring countries and spark regional instability. Bishops of CENCO served both as peace watchers and trumpet blowers in a country at the brink of political violence and deconstruction. This model sustains the argument pointing to the societal relevance of religious political participation in a war-torn country with a higher percentage of Christians like the DRC.

2.6. Conclusion

As resonated in the statement of the late Emeritus Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo in the beginning of this Chapter, Catholic bishops in the DRC actively assume both sacerdotal and social responsibility on behalf of the Congolese society. It indicates that religious actors must not only offer the interpretation of the Word but also need to be engaged for the transformation of the world (Moltmann, 1993, p. 84). The case of the Catholic Church in the DRC proffers a contribution to the Religion in Politics discourse. Particularly in this chapter, it extends the debate on the interplay of Roman Catholicism with the State in Africa generally and in the DRC in particular. The civic engagement of the Catholic Church in this nation reflects several forms of religious engagement in politics. It shifted from being in association with Colonialism to becoming a resisting voice to political despotism, a pro-democratic force, and a mobiliser of masses.

Along with a brief notice of the first diplomatic ties between Vatican with some aristocrats of the Kingdom of Kongo like Dom Henrique, the first black Catholic Bishop in history, this Chapter re-evaluates the pioneering contribution of Congolese religious figures, by occurrence, Joseph Malula and Tharcisse Tshibangu at the Second Vatican
Council. The first became the leading modern champion of Africanization of Christianity and had the unenviable task of leading the Catholic Church in the Congo through the crisis of decolonization (Akyeampong & Gates 2012). As direct repercussion, the Pope facilitated the creation of indigenous national episcopal conferences to be adapted to their cultural authenticities. This outcome facilitated the birth of CENCO as a national institution in 1964. CENCO offered a structural space for Catholic Bishops to raise their voices in relation to the country’s political affairs. Cardinal Malula’s “political” ecclesiology sustained by his episcopal project of “a Congolese Church in a Congolese State” is still worthy of a scholarly inquiry with regards to the contemporary role of the Catholic Church in DRC’s public sphere. The second Congolese clergyman and theologian contributed through his academic plea for, what Paul Hiebert calls “Self-theologizing”, in the African Catholic circles. This perspective sees “Theology as comprising human interpretation of the biblical revelation with specific contexts. Consequently, different theologies are bound to emerge because different cultures ask different questions and view reality in different ways” (Hiebert, 1985, p. 47). Epistemologically, a theology rooted in African cultural contexts as advocated by Monsignor Tshibangu deserves a particular attention and might inspire contemporary scholars in the study of African Christianity and its interplay with contemporary Politics in Africa.

The relationship between political participation and efficacy levels is another theme in political discourse (Acock & Clarke, 1990). Unlike his predecessors and his current successor, the late emeritus Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo assumed conventional political functions as president of the Conference Nationale Souveraine (CNS) and later the head of the country’s transitional parliament. His status and impactful contribution to
the democratization process, as both a religious figure and political actor, provides a solid argument for scholars who links effective societal transformation with active participation of the clergy in politics. A detailed discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of this model will follow in Chapter 4. Undoubtedly, the significant role of CENCO in the mediation between Kabila’s government and opposition leaders and its activism in protest mobilization until the December 2018 elections sustains our thesis’ argument with regards to the societal outcomes of religious political participation in the eras of democratization, post-conflict reconciliation, and State reconstruction. The following chapter traces historical and political trajectories of Protestantism as another branch of Christianity and its impact on the Church-State relations in the DRC and how it regulates the political engagement of the ECC which is the second largest Religious Institution in the DRC.
Chapter 3: Congolese Protestantism and Politics in the DRC: Unfolding the Disparity between Protestant Missions and the Contemporary ECC toward the State.

For several decades, the DRC has been in a disastrous socio-economic situation. The Church that accompanies the State in search for the well-being of the population cannot remain indifferent to this situation. To do this, the Church must be present in spaces that provide for reflection and analysis on social, economic, and sustainable development issues. She must also have the tools for collecting information, monitoring, informing, advocating, and researching on the issue of governance in our country.


3.1. Introduction

This Chapter diachronically examines the disparity between Western Protestant missions in the colonial epoch and ECC as offspring of the CPC in the contemporary era with regards to their respective approaches to political authoritarianism. In front of a crowded audience at the Cathedrale du Centenaire Protestant, which is the symbol of the centenary of the Protestants’ Unity since 1878, in November 2017 Reverend Dr. André Bo-likabe Bokundoa conveyed his inaugural speech as the newly elected President of the Eglise du Christ au Congo (ECC). ECC is a nationwide confederation of ninety-five Protestant denominations, locally called “communities”. Each community is autonomous, having its own legal standing with the government, its own elected leadership, its own contribution, policy, doctrines, and programs” (McGavran & Riddle, 1979, p.97). In his

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52 The inaugural speech of Reverend Dr. André Bokundoa bo-likabé was entirely published by La Reference Plus Number 6891 of Monday November 27, 2017. This daily and nationally distributed Newspaper covered and reported all details about the installment ceremony of the third and current President of the ECC at the Cathedrale du Centenaire Protestant located in the commune of Lingwala in downtown Kinshasa. The building was inaugurated in 1994 by Bishop Jean Ifoto Bokeleale, the first ECC’s president and it has a capacity of 7,600 seats. Among the guests were the President of National Assembly who represented the former President Joseph Kabila, his Chief, Ambassadors, National Senators and Deputies, Presidents, and Provincial representatives of all 95 ECC’s affiliated communities, leaders of other religious confessions, Government ministers. Some students at the Protestant University in Congo (UPC) and of Conventional Protestant Primary and High schools were also visibly identifiable in the crowded audience.
allocation, Dr. Bokundoa disclosed his vision of Church-State relations and imperatively quested for Congolese Protestants to participate in the reconstruction of the DRC actively and collectively. This speech was relevant for this study because it called for an abandonment of an apolitical stand as mostly adopted by Congolese Protestants since the creation of the ECC in March 1970 and stimulated them for a more civic engagement in the country’s political affairs. For many observers of the Congolese Politics, that was a significant shift in comparison with his two predecessors who previously aligned with dictatorial regimes of Mobutu and the Kabilas (fieldnotes, November 2018).

According to statistical reports, the ECC is institutionally the second largest religious entity in the DRC after the Roman Catholic Church (Ross et al., 2017). Its headquarters is situated on the avenue de la Justice n° 25, commune of Gombe in downtown Kinshasa in a walking distance from the Palais de la Nation, where the country’s President works and resides. ECC has representatives in 11 administrative provinces serving more than 30 million adherents, statistically 40 percent of the total population of the country (Pew Research Centre, 2019). The numerical growth of Protestantism in the DRC stems from the second wave of evangelization launched by Protestant missionaries in the 19th century. For the purposes of comprehending the recent shift that occurred in religious political participation in the DRC, which is the central focus of the present thesis, this chapter displays how Protestant missionaries in the pro-Catholic Belgian Congo and the ECC’s leadership in the contemporary history respectively engaged in Politics. It critically focuses on the specificities of Congolese Protestantism along with hermeneutical diversity on Church-State relations and its political moves across different eras and regimes that ruled over the country. The chapter discusses four
main issues. Firstly, it analyzes the arguments of some contemporary Congolese theologians about the concept of “two kingdoms” as developed by Protestant missionaries and explorers in the areas of human rights and human promotion during the Belgian colonization in the Congo which was recorded as one of the world most atrocious and abusive tragedies (Ande, 2010; Hochschild, 1999; Ndaywel-é-Nzem, 2012; Slade, 1962; Stearns, 2011). Secondly, it explores how Protestant missions organized and defended themselves in a colonial State which favored Belgian Catholic missionaries. It portrays prominent Protestant figures who disclosed and/or defied the political abuses of Leopold II and of the Belgian government from 1908 to the independence of the Congo in 1960. Particular attention is paid in chapter 6 to the prophetic and healing of Simon Kimbangu which debunked the Belgian colonial Politics, in meantime, stressing the contemporary and transnational influence of his millenarian, messianic and Afro-centric message. Thirdly, the chapter offers an analysis of the relationships between the Congo Protestant Council (CPC) and ECC in more recent times. It is relevant to trace the embryonic phases and the collateral outcomes of ECC’s creation at ecclesial and socio-political levels for two reasons. Primo, it displays the epistemological and political incentives that ignited Protestant missionaries to seek unity and solidarity in a Catholic-majority country. It is notable that through ECC, Protestant Churches have acted with more unity than they have elsewhere in Africa and the world (Bokundoa, 2020). Secundo, it provides a better understanding of the interference of the State in the Church’s affairs and the complicity of the ECC’s leadership with authoritarian politics of Mobutu and the Kabilas.

Fourthly, the Chapter strives to display and address the disparity between Western Protestant missions in pre-independent Congo and Congolese Protestantism in
contemporary times. Such an analysis helps to comprehend the present-day appeal for implementing Protestant ethics and values in the DRC’s political arena as quested by the current President of ECC in his November 2017’s inaugural speech and on the other hand the shift observed in Protestant political attitude, strategies, and action in the recent past years.53

3.2. Protestantism in the Congo: History and Theological-Political Legacies

I was in Kinshasa, DRC in February 2019 when the Université Protestante au Congo (UPC)—the Protestant University in Congo, celebrated its 60th anniversary. During this special occasion, I solicited an interview with Reverend Dr. Daniel Ngoy-Boliya, the current rector of this academic institution affiliated with ECC.54 During our conversation, the Rector disclosed the strong ties of partnership that exist between the University and German Christian institutions. As illustration, the Rector stated that Congolese scholars

53 The discourses and actions of Dr. André Bokundoa as the 3rd and current president of ECC are analyzed and employed in the fourth and fifth Chapters.

54 Interviewed in his office at the UPC, Kinshasa, 27 February 2019.
like Dr. Nyamankank Mushila\textsuperscript{55} and Dr. Ngamayamu Munduku\textsuperscript{56}, currently Emeritus professors at the UPC, received scholarships in the mid-1970s to study theology at the University of Hamburg in Germany. Being curious about his statement, I asked for the reason of choosing Germany instead of other Western Protestant countries like Great Britain or the United States. My interlocutor replied that Global Protestantism originated from Germany with Martin Luther who was a prominent pioneer in the Reformation movement. In brief, Dr. Ngoy Boliya acknowledged the ongoing influence of the 16\textsuperscript{th} century Protestant Reformers on UPC where most of the ECC theologians and Protestant leaders are trained. Today, the ECC is a unified and pluralistic network of members from diverse Protestant denominational branches (Lutherans, Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Anabaptists, Pentecostals, etc.). However, all 95 affiliated communities within the ECC adhere to two principal communalities: 1) their understanding of God’s sovereignty as a prophetic metaphor which repudiates claims to absolute power and 2)

\textsuperscript{55} Reverend Professor Nyamankank Mushila was born May 8, 1945. He completed his primary studies at the General School of Itunda and then at Balaka, from 1954 to 1960; secondary school in Mukedi, from 1960 to 1964. He did pastoral and theological studies successively in Kajiji, Kimpese and Kinshasa, from 1966 to 1970. He did his license in Kisangani, Kinshasa, and Hamburg, from 1971 to 1980. He obtained his doctorate in Hamburg, Germany in 1980 and the title of his thesis: "Interpretation Theologique sur le Processus de l’Emancipation en Afrique Sub-Saharienne " University of Hamburg, 1981(Mushila, 1981). He was ordained pastor in Idiofa in October 1984. According to Professor Ekofo Bonyeku, Emeritus Professor Mushila obtained his doctoral scholarship while he was in his first undergraduate degree, thanks to Bishop Bokeleale of happy memory following his already remarkable merits. In his efforts, the bishop obtains two scholarships from the Germans. This is how Mushila and Munduku would go to Germany together (Ekofo, 2010, p. 30). For the professional career, Mushila was: Primary school teacher from 1965 to 1966; secondary school teacher from 1970 to 1971; Professor of theology at the university from 1983 to 2010; Parish Pastor in Duisburg / Walsun in Germany from 1981 to 1983; Permanent consultant at the Missionsakademie of the University of Hamburg since 1980; Visiting professor at the University of Hamburg from 1998 to 1999; Professor at the Grand Seminaire Jean XXIII from 1992 to 2010; Editor-in-Chief of the Revue Congolaise de Theologie Protestante (RCTP) from 1996 to 2004; Head of Department of Mission Sciences, Ecumenism and Religious Sciences from 1996 to 2010; Dean of the Faculty of Theology from 2004 to 2010; Senior Policy Advisor at the Vice-Presidency of the Republic from 2004 to 2007. He passed away on 20 December 2020 in Kinshasa, DRC.

\textsuperscript{56} The title of his doctoral dissertation is "Missions et Sociétés Autochtones Africaines". University of Hamburg. 1982.
their consent in theories of government stressing the priesthood of all believers (Jeffrey Haynes, 2009, pp. 26–47). In relation to my research project, Reverend Dr. Daniel Ngoy Boliya confirmed that many political lessons can be learned from the 16th century Reformers’ free stance against religious and imperial absolutism. “In a context of the DRC ravaged by decades of societal unrest due to politics despite its Christian-majority population, the political thought of Luther and other Reformers serve as a framework to help Congolese Protestants grasp the ‘sacred-secular’ divide and re-evaluate their approaches to the country’s politics” the UPC Rector emphasized. In a 417-page doctoral dissertation entitled “Essai de Contextualisation de la Pensée Théologico-Politique de Martin Luther et son Implication au Processus de Développement de la RD. Congo”, José M. Phuati Khonde specifically debates on Martin Luther’s concept of “two kingdoms” and its theologico-political applicability and/or adaptability in the Congolese political environment (Université Protestante au Congo, 2010). This Congolese Protestant scholar starts his investigation by a deep exploration of the ‘sitz in lebem’, socio-historical context in which the reformation movement occurred to evaluate its contemporary relevancy and implications. The launching of Protestantism as a new branch within Christianity ensued Luther’s disappointment and shock in view of the corruption and depravity at the religious sites during his visit to Rome (MacCulloch, 2004; Orta, 2017; Ryrie, 2017).

The publication of Luther’s Ninety-five theses not only addressed theological questions such as God’s forgiveness and Justification by faith in Christ but also highlighted the turbulent politics of that time. Luther posted his theses during the period

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57 Interview with Reverend Dr. Daniel Ngoy Boliya, 27 February 2019, Kinshasa, DRC.
his native city of Wittenberg (located in Saxony) was part of the Holy Roman Empire. Administratively, the rulers of those states called “electors” appointed the Holy Roman emperor with the approval of the Pope. Luther’s reforming efforts “created a great rift in Western Christianity and dominated European politics for several centuries as western Europe split into a largely Catholic south and a Protestant north. France straddled the fault line and four much of the later 16th century was engulfed by religious conflict. The Lutheran doctrine, combined with Tudor power politics, led to England’s ultimate break from Rome in 1534. Years of Catholic-Protestant tensions in England prompted the Pilgrims to embark for the New World” (Orta, 2017). Comparing the societal context of the 16th century Europe with the political situation in the DRC, Munduku and Phuati-Khonde raise the pertinent question if the medieval principle of the two realms, as stipulated by Luther and other Reformers has shaped or continue to shape the political hermeneutics and engagement of Contemporary Congolese Protestants (Munduku, 1982; Université Protestante au Congo, 2010). It is crucial to underline that, since the Reformation, mainline Protestants have had different approaches to politics. Pietism, which rejects any political activity considered as the domain of Satan, is a doctrine held by Baptists, Anabaptists, etc. This tendency opts for the strict separation between the Church and the State. There are also those who consider politics as a domain in which God must carry out His Sovereignty. Among those are Lutherans, Reformed, Calvinists, etc. who tolerate the union between the Church and the State (Université Protestante au Congo, 2010). There is also a third and intermediary branch called ‘the Concordat’ which signifies that the Church is autonomous but signs a series of conventions with the State. This is more applicable to the Roman Catholic Church and their relationship with
sovereign states. This plurality of approaches has prevented and continues to hinder Congolese Protestants, who have inherited these doctrinal traditions, from adopting common hermeneutics and collective action related to the country’s Politics. However, Luther and other Protestant reformers initially urged for the separation of the Roman Catholic Church and State. For those pioneers, the Church’s task was not to dictate matters to the State, nor to serve as its lackey but to play a moral role holding the State accountable for its actions (Freston, 2016; Orta, 2017).

Luther’s view of Church-State relation is well-articulated in his 1523 tract, On Secular Authority, how far does the obedience owed to it extend? (Deutsch & Fornieri, 2009). His famous doctrine of “two kingdoms” splits the adamic humankind into two realms: the first belongs to the Kingdom of God composed of Christ’s followers and the second to the kingdom of the world with unbelievers. For Luther and other Protestant reformers, “God has ordained two governments, the spiritual realm which fashions true Christians and just persons through the Holy Spirit under Christ, and the secular or worldly government which holds the unchristian and wicked in check and forces them to keep the peace outwardly and be still, like it or not” (Baylor, 2011, p. 4). John Calvin, in his own words, clarifies the thought in these terms, “there are two governments to which mankind is subject, one ruling over the soul and pertaining to eternal life, the other concerned with establishing merely civil and external justice, a justice in conduct” (Höpfl, 1991, p. 47). Today’s adherents of ECC insist on the Lordship of Christ over any religious and political authority. It insinuates that Christ heads the spiritual government pertaining to eternal life. Although, Protestantism as promulgated by Luther and other mainstream Protestant thinkers still raises doctrinal and ethical questions in Protestant circles in the
contemporary DRC related to 1) Christian participation in a secular government whose function seems to be in contradiction to Christian moral values, and 2) the extent of Christian obedience and resistance to either religious or political authority. We will come back to these issues in subsequent Chapters. Let’s now investigate how this dualistic perspective, inherited of the Reformation, shaped Protestant explorers and missions in Congo.

Protestant missionaries arrived in those areas four centuries after the first wave of evangelization of the Kingdom of Kongo by led by Catholic missions. For Philippe Kabongo-Mbaya, the Scottish explorer and missionary David Livingstone played a significant role in mobilizing philanthropists, volunteers, and missionary agencies in favor of Central Africa. His death in 1873 stimulated many people to respond to the missionary call while others decided to continue his fight against slavery in Africa. It was in that social context that Livingstone Inland Mission (LIM) was created and commissioned two missionaries, Henry Craven of Liverpool and a Danish sailor named Strom. They both arrived on 28 February 1878 in Boma which is located in the lower Congo (Conley, 2000, p. 54; Kabongo-Mbaya, 1992, pp. 10–12). In the same year, the Baptist Missionary Society received an important donation from a British businessman Richard Arthington, to resume the evangelization of the ancient Kingdom of Kongo (Hawker, 1909). While serving in the Cameroons with Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), George Grenfell and Thomas J. Comber responded to the appeal to extend the organization’s outreach to this region. In his evaluation of Grenfell’s work and legacy, Brian Stanley asserts,

In the ranks of the great Victorian missionary explorers of the Central African Interior, George Grenfell stands second in importance only to David Livingstone. Although he never wrote a book and never attained the general public renown that Livingstone enjoyed, Grenfell did more than any other person to open up the vast Congo basin to missionary
endeavor. Like Livingstone, he was more a geographic pioneer than a church planter. Only after his death in 1906 did his labors bear fruit in substantial church growth, most noticeably in the upper Congo (Stanley, 1997, p. 120).

Grenfell was born at Sancreed in Cornwall on 21 August 1849 but spent most of his childhood in Birmingham, UK. His family was Anglican but as a boy, he began to attend the Sunday school of Heneage Street Baptist Church, where he was baptized as a believer and received into church membership in 1864. He was interested in missionary work in Africa and followed closely the exploits of Livingstone and Alfred Saker, the Baptist pioneer in the Cameroons. In 1873, Grenfell local church commended him for training for missionary service and in September he entered Bristol Baptist College. After only a year in College, Grenfell seemed to prioritize his missionary calling over theological training. This can be evidenced by his regular excursions on Saturdays to the Cumberland basin in Bristol and his passionate observation of the shipping in what was considered, at that time, one of the busiest harbors in England. Finally, in November 1874, the board of the BMS commissioned Grenfell for missionary service in the Cameroons. He sailed the following month with Alfred Saker to the Cameroons (Dickins, 1910; Green, 1998; Hawker, 1909; Hemmens & Payne, 1949; Johnston et al., 1910; Stanley, 1997).

As previously indicated, Livingstone Inland Mission (LIM) and Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) were the two first Protestant missions in southwestern Congo before the Berlin Conference. In 1884, LIM counted 26 missionaries, 8 stations, a steamer, and few schools but the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (ABFMS) took over its ministry and extended northward (Kabongo-Mbaya, 1992). However, Swedish missionaries of LIM who did not join ABFMS created Svenska Missions Forbunde (SMF) with their headquarters in Stockholm, Sweden. With their two steamers Peace and Goodwill and
under the pioneering work of Grenfell, BMS opened missionary stations along the Congo river in Manyanga, Lutete, Stanley pool (current city of Kinshasa) and in the region of Kwango-Kwilu (Kabongo-Mbaya, 1992; Ndaywel-è-Nziem, 2012; Smith, 1993). In 1885, the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) from New York resided in Bas Congo. The Garangaze Evangelical Mission (GEM) of the Scottish F.S. Arnot explored and reached the Kingdom of M’siri in 1886 and the American Presbyterian Congo Mission (APCM) founded its first missionary station in 1891 in Luebo. In 1895, the missionaries of the Disciples of Christ Congo Mission (DCCM) arrived in the Congo from Boston, Massachusetts and inherited the ABFMS’s stations in the region of Equator when the latter decided to focus its efforts on the provinces of Bas Congo and Kwango (Kabongo-Mbaya, 1992; McGavran & Riddle, 1979). Refer to the map of Congo divided by Protestant mission stations, Protestant missions (almost all of them) entered Congo through the mouth of the Congo River. The newcomers benefited from the experience of their predecessors not only in terms of knowledge of the terrain, but also in methods of evangelism. This reliance has a double importance. Early on, the missionaries learned to help each other in various areas. Furthermore, the same spirit of solidarity and spiritual communion animated the Protestant missionaries. Protestant missions therefore had common features in their form of establishment and teaching. Exchanges of African personnel in evangelism were common as well as the passage of missionaries from one association to another. But this Protestant effort was overtaken by a massive influx of Belgian Catholic missions (Irvine, 1978). It is crucial to examine how Protestant missions survived in a pro-Catholic colonial State.
The entry and implantation of the missions were accomplished in two historic periods. The first was the Leopoldian era, from 1885 to 1908. Before he died, the Belgian sovereign bequeathed his territory to Belgium. The Belgian Parliament, after some hesitation, agreed to take over the tutelage of the colony. A second period began, from 1908 to 1960. Many missionary associations settled in the Congo at the beginning of this second period until the First World War. Conventional treaties on the Congo, from the Berlin Act to the Saint Germain-en Laye convention, via the Belgian colonial charter, recognized freedom and tolerance in religious matters. Article 6 of the Berlin Act required signatories to protect and promote, regardless of nationality or religion, all missionary institutions and enterprises (Meeus & Steenberghen, 1947, pp. 32–35). Without openly prohibiting Protestant presence and activities, the Leopoldian state prevented them from functioning well by reserving its support and favors only for Belgian, so-called national missions. This special status greatly benefited Catholics, particularly in matters of land acquisition. In 1906, the Leopoldian State signed a concordatory type agreement with the Holy See which would legalize and officialize this situation. “The missions were to fulfill several tasks for the State, notably in the field of education and scientific research. For its part, the State undertook to allocate cultivable land ranging from 100 to 200 hectares to the missions. These concessions were given free of charge and as perpetual and inalienable properties according to the agreement between the Belgian Congo and the Holy See” (Devos & Piron, 1959, p. 779).

Thus, under the Leopoldian State, the Catholic missions totaled 14,425.44 hectares of land granted free of charge, while the Protestants counted only 526.31 rented as reimbursement (Markowite, 1973, p. 44). This discrimination raised a wave of
disturbance and disappointment. Protestants then began to interpret the terms of Article 6 of the Berlin Act and showed that the words "protect and promote" did not imply the idea of aid and assistance to all missions without distinction. The king was said to be free to reserve his assistance for certain missions, in this case, national missions (Meeus & Steenberghen, 1947, p. 36). Foreign missions had to challenge the general benevolence advocated in Article 6 of the Act. This interpretation allowed the Leopoldian state to continue to favor the Catholics to the detriment of the Protestants. The relationship between the Protestant missions and the Leopoldian state greatly deteriorated when the Protestant missionaries denounced the cruelties perpetrated against black populations by state agents concerning the rubber harvest (Lagergren, 1970). “In bringing to light the atrocities of so-called ‘Red Rubber’ regime, the Protestants became important opponents of Leopold’s rule” (Markowitz, 1970, p. 235).58 This crisis contributed to the annexation of Congo by Belgium in 1908. However, the same religious policy which privileged national missions continued. Protestantism in the Congo suffered lasting discrimination which was gradually institutionalized with the distinction between "Belgian national missions”, the Catholic ones, versus "foreign missions", the Protestant ones. One of the foundations of this religious discrimination should also be emphasized. In terms of colonial administration, the Catholic party in Belgium monopolized the ministry of the colonies. From 1908 to 1960, among the 29 ministers of the successive colonies, 23 came from the Catholic party. Of the General Governors who succeeded each other in Leopoldville, 7 belonged to the Catholic party (Markowitz, 1973, p.27). The same was true for senior

58 Red Rubber was the title of a book written by Edmund D. Morel who reported the atrocities of Leopold’s agents of the Congo Independent State against Congolese who violently forced them to collect rubber and Ivory for the State.
officials of the judiciary. Undoubtedly, these realities clearly reflect the source of the religious hegemony of Catholicism in Congo.

The first meeting of evangelical missions occurred from 18-21 January 1902 in Stanley-Pool (now Kinshasa), which brought together representatives of eight Protestant associations. These were: 1) American Baptist Mission Union (ABMU), 2) American Presbyterian Congo Mission (APCM), 3) Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), 4) Congo Balolo Mission (CBM), 5) Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA), 6) FMCS (Foreign Christian Missionary Society of "Disciples of Christ" - cf. DCCM), 7) Svenska Missions Forbunde (SM) and 8) WM (Westcott Mission) (Kabongo-Mbaya, 1992, pp. 11–19). The Garangaze Evangelical Mission (GEM) and the mission of Bishop Taylor were not represented at this conference. The general theme of the conference was: "All United in Christ Jesus". The purpose of these meetings was to institutionalize through an organization of a fraternal and informal nature called ‘The General Conference of Protestant Missions in the Congo’. Protestant missionaries continued to meet in this framework until 1911 except during the First World War (Irvine, 1978, p. 17). The General Conference of Protestant Missions in the Congo, which was held in Bolenge (province of Equator) in 1911, made two important decisions concerning the life and activities of Protestantism. The first being the creation of the Continuation Committee in the Congo (CCC) in accordance with the recommendations of the International Missionary Conference of Edinburgh (1910) —with the advent of this committee, the General Conference of Protestant Missions in the Congo decided to adopt a new name for the structure which would reunite all Protestants in the Congo. The second decision was the creation of a newspaper, Congo Mission News. Many other achievements demonstrated
that the majority of Protestant missionaries were already thinking of transforming the Continuation Committee into a broad. In 1924, a resolution authorized the creation of the CPC. While all over the world this type of coordinating council for Protestant missionary action bore the acronym “Christian Council”. In Congo, to make a clear distinction, the word “Protestant” was added disclosing the difficulty of their coexistence with Catholics.

The creation of this Council required a request for its legal recognition. The initiators of this protestant platform tried twice (in 1920 and 1929) to submit that demand to the Governor-General. However, the colonial administration did not welcome this attempt to federate Protestant associations. It was only on 23 April 1941 that the deputy Governor-General P. Ermens signed an order which officially recognized the Congo Protestant Council (CPC). What caused this change of perspective in the Belgian government toward Protestant missions in the Congo? “The arrival in government of a social-liberal coalition in Belgium brought about some changes in the alliance between Catholic missions and the colonial state. An anticlerical surge thus weighed on colonial religious policy. Protestant missions took advantage of this situation” (Kabongo-Mbaya, 1992, p. 18). We will see later that the CPC was an organization without power over member missions but its authority was strictly advisory. After reviewing the historical circumstances through which the CPC came into existence, let’s unpack how Protestant missions interrelated with the colonial Politics.

59 The first step in this direction dates from 1920 (cf. the letter from the Minister for the Colonies) dated 25/2/1920 n16, 7th direction, as also the letter from the Governor-General, dated 16/4/1920, number 267. Quoted in the letter from the Minister for the Colonies of 16/11/1929, addressed to the Governor-General.
3.3. Protestant Missions versus Belgian Colonial Politics.

While serving in a pro-Catholic Belgian Congo, Protestant missionaries gathered in 1911 to attempt the creation of a unifying platform for mutual support and protection. Chronologically, their meeting in the Congo echoed the resolutions of the World Missionary Conference held one year before in Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom in 1910. Its eighth commission focused on ‘Co-operation and Promotion of Unity’ which led to the formation of the International missionary council, one of the pioneering instruments of ecumenism in the twentieth century. To examine the interaction of Religion and Politics, it appears worthy to analyze the extent to which imperial states in the 1885 Berlin Summit regulated the second evangelization of Congo launched by Protestant explorers and missionaries. In other terms, the section seeks to find out if the ‘conquering’ politics of Western governments at that time intentionally or unintentionally influenced the outcomes of the 1910 Edinburgh Conference with regards to Congo.

First and fore, it is crucial to grasp the initial incentives related to the imperial invasion of the African continent in general and Congo particularly in the late 1800s and the early 1900s, a period that coincided with the spread of Protestantism in the Congo. Pakenham informs us about Leopold II and his schemes for Congo as follows, “Africa was sliced up like a cake, the pieces swallowed by five rival nations: Germany, Italy, Portugal, France (with Spain taking some scraps)—and Britain. Britain and France were at each other’s throats. At the center, exploiting the rivalry, stood one enigmatic individual and self-styled philanthropist, controlling the heart of the continent: Leopold II, King of Belgians” (Pakenham, 1992, p. xxiii). In his meticulous inquiry on the multi-faceted phenomenon of the partition of Africa, M.E. Chamberlain put in evidence the economic
factor of imperialism that caused that rivalry between Western countries while annexing and exploiting new territories in the tropical Africa (Chamberlain, 2010). In the same line, Bernard Porter reveals that in the nineteenth century, “Britain was already a declining power. Its industry, although still growing, was not keeping pace with those of Germany and the United States. Britain’s expansion was not, as it appears at the time, the result of overflowing confidence, but a desperate rearguard action to retain its place in the world” (Porter, 2012, p. 24). European countries were in the age of industrialization and greatly needed raw materials beyond their homelands. For this specific reason, European nations acquired colonies and protectorates throughout Africa. This reality led to more competition in terms of expanding their exploratory and imperialistic endeavors in the unknown continent. Fieldhouse gives a very clear explanation, “Imperialism may best be seen as the extension into the periphery of the political struggles in Europe. At the centre the balance was so nicely adjusted that no positive action, no major change in the status or territory of either side was possible. Colonies thus became a means out of the impasse” (Chamberlain, 2010, p. 92; Fieldhouse, 1973, p. 205). It was in this particular historical and geo-political context that Leopold II, the King of Belgium raised up. In 1876, he began to manifest interests in the Congo Basin region to international commerce after Henri Morton Stanley’s three-year exploration of that region from the east to the west (1874-1877) (Hochschild, 1999; Ndaywel., 2012; Van Reybrouck & Garrett, 2014). Let’s look now at the role played by Protestant explorers and missionaries during the imperial occupation of Congo.

When the first Protestant missions arrived in Congo around 1878, they were threatened by the possibility of Portugal attaining sovereignty over that region. Leopold
II, King of the Belgians, was seen as a natural ally in view of his plans of annexing the Congo. The King’s promise of establishing a free territory throughout the Congo River basin seemed both philanthropic and Christian in its objectives. The project appeared very attractive to the British Protestant missionaries from LIM and BMS. Leopold II’s call for a Congo free-trade zone also insinuated that missionaries could enter and circulate without hinderance. “Leopold welcomed and cultivated the support of the Protestant missionaries and aided their efforts to build mission stations in the Upper Congo. There can be little doubt that the aid of the Protestant missions had been helpful, if not instrumental, in obtaining the establishment of Leopold’s dominion in Congo under the Berlin Act of 1885” (Markowitz, 1970, p. 234). In a precise way, M.E. Chamberlain points to the disappointment of Britain when Leopold II secured an agreement with France in 1884 stating that his interests in Congo would revert to the French if he wished to relinquish them. Being alarmed by this probable agreement between Belgium and France, the British signed a treaty with Portugal defining northern boundaries of Angola and Portugal’s historic claims to the Congo. Other Western States expressed their objections to these bilateral agreements and called for the Berlin Conference (Chamberlain, 2010). It was opened on 15 November 1884 and ended on 26 February 1885. This international conference’s General Act in effect laid down the ground rules for the partition of Africa in absence of Africans. In sum, the 14 signatory powers agreed on a free trade throughout the Congo Basin. Six months after the conference’s closure, the properties occupied by Belgian King’s International Congo Society officially began the Congo Free State (CFS). In what ways does the European colonization in Africa, as strategically planned at the
Berlin Conference, echoed the story of Christian missionary penetration in this continent in general and in the Congo particularly?

The Article 6 as confined in the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference’s first Chapter deserves greater attention for two main reasons. First, it called the Western imperial states that signed the document to favor religious and charitable institutions who aimed at instructing the ‘natives’ and bringing to them the blessings of the European civilization. Second, Christian missionaries were promised a special protection by the signatory governments. 25 years later, representatives of missionary agencies gathered in Edinburgh with the same ‘civilizing’ mission purpose to strategize the evangelization of the non-Western world.

Brian Stanley explains this reality in the following words,

Edinburgh 1910 was conceived as a great deliberative council of the Protestant that would prepare its missionary armies to launch a concerted and final onslaught on the dark forces of heathendom that still ruled supreme beyond the frontiers of western Christendom. Those who responded with quiet determination by committing themselves anew to this militant and intensely serious calling could, like the crusaders of the medieval age, be sure of the eternal blessing of God on their united endeavors. Crusading language was often implicit and occasionally explicit at Edinburgh (Stanley, 2009, p. 4).

In comparing the two mentioned conferences (Berlin and Edinburgh), there are two common features that can be put in light. The first is the virtual absence of Africa and Africans in both gatherings. In one side, the Berlin Conference from November 1884 to February 28, 1885 hosted the representatives of 14 Western countries: Germany, France, Britain, Portugal, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Demark, Sweden-Norway, Netherlands, Turkey and United States (Chamberlain, 2010; Pakenham, 1992). In the other, the World Missionary Conference held in the city of Edinburgh, Scotland welcomed delegates of major Protestant denominations and missionary agencies, predominantly from Northern
Europe and North America (Stanley, 2009). The second relates to their achieved objectives. Participants of both conferences adopted strategies to implement their common goals. The Berlin Conference aimed at the partition of Africa with ground rules to avoid rivalry and regulate international free trade throughout African rivers such as the Congo River. The Edinburgh Assembly adopted the “comity agreements” or “zones of action” for each Euro-American Protestant denomination to spread the Christian message in the non-Western world in respect to each autonomy but with co-operation (McGavran & Riddle, 1979; Thomas, 2010).

After getting the approval of the 14 signatory Imperial states in the Berlin Conference and the moral support of Western missionaries, Leopold II unfortunately established an autocratic and brutal rule in the Congo Free State. Protestant missions reacted to break the social injustice and the inequality striking their local followers and their own missionary endeavor in the pro-Catholic Belgian Congo. The following lines portray the most influential foreign Protestant figures who raised their voices to disclose the committed atrocities in the territory under the control of the Belgian King. The first is George Washington Williams (16 October 1846 - 1 August 1891). Adam Rochschild describes George Washington William as “the first great dissenter” who wrote “An Open letter to His Serene Majesty II, King of the Belgians and Sovereign of the Independent State of Congo” and “A Report upon the Congo-State and Country to the President of the Republic of the United States of America”. In those two documents the Afro-American Protestant Baptist minister exposed human rights’ abuses among the King’s subjects in the Congo and called for a deeper investigation by international journalists (Hochschild, 1999, p. 102). “Sometime during the half of the 1867, when they both spent at various
army posts in Kansas, Williams’ path may have crossed that of a young newspaper correspondent, Henry Morton Stanley” (Hochschild, 1999, p. 103). After his graduation at the Newton Theological Institution in 1874, Williams married and pastored the Twelfth Street Baptist Church, a major black congregation in Boston. Funded by the American railroad baron Collis. P. Huntington, who was a minor investor in the planned Congo railway and with credential approval of the US president Benjamin Harrison, Williams sailed around the African continent: the Boers’ Transvaal republic, Zanzibar, Egypt. However, his most important visit related to Congo where he sojourned for six months and considered all the charges against Leopold’s Congo state as “crimes against humanity” (Hochschild, 1999, p. 112; Morel, 2018). Of the hundreds of Europeans and Americans who traveled in the Congo in the state’s early years, Williams remains the only one on record who collected empirical data interviewing Africans about their personal experience with Stanley.

The second figure is William Henry Sheppard (8 March 1865- 25 November 25, 1927). The Reverend Dr. William Henry Sheppard of the American Presbyterian Congo Mission (APCM) was an African American missionary. He distinguished himself and the Church through service in the Congo Free State, Africa, from 1890 to 1910. During the first decade of the 20th century, his public image was substantially defined by his militant opposition to the cruel and exploitative treatment of peoples in the Kasai district of the Congo by the Kasai rubber company during the reign of the King Leopold II of Belgium (Kennedy, 2013; Matthews, 1984; Phipps, 2002). In 1899, Belgium’s King Leopold II, the Congo’s colonial ruler, had faced international criticism for his exploitation of the region's peoples and natural resources, all of it carried out under a banner of claimed
humanitarianism. The colonial government of the Congo Free State used Africans as slaves to harvest rubber and build railroads, setting one African tribe against another in order to find traders with whom they could deal in the traffic of human lives (Kennedy, 2013).

At first reluctant to bring controversy to his mission and to confront white Europeans, Sheppard decidedly applied his familiarity with Africa to the task at hand. The Belgians' African allies came from a tribe called the Zappo-Zaps, whom they had armed with rifles and given the task of punishing uncooperative peoples (Van Reybrouck & Garrett, 2014). These included the Kuba, and Sheppard was dismayed to find some of the villages he had visited seven or eight years before reduced to destitution. Sheppard located a village where Zappo-Zap warriors had demanded payment in rubber, slaves, and food from a group of Kuba, a ransom the Kuba could not produce. They were slaughtered and left to rot in a courtyard in the steaming tropical air (Kennedy, 2013).

Sheppard made an exact count of severed hands in the courtyard, noting 81 of them in a report that was later presented to colonial authorities, initially with little result (Phipps, 2002). Back in the United States once more, Sheppard began to publicize his findings and wrote an article about them for a Presbyterian magazine (Sheppard, 2017). His allegations gained international attention, and by the later part of the twentieth century's first decade, Sheppard had become well known around the United States and Europe as a human rights activist. In 1908 he and William Morrison, his coworker, were sued for libel by Belgium's state-controlled rubber company and were put on trial in the colonial capital of Leopoldville. Publicity surrounding the trial, where the chargers were ultimately dropped, was heavily covered in American newspapers exposing many corrupt
practices in the Belgian Congo (Kennedy, 2013). Sheppard’s political discourse against the Leopoldian regime and his human rights’ activism inspired protests from other European journalists and explorers interested in the situation in the Congo.

The last and third reference is Edmund Morel and his Congo Reform Association. This Association was first formed in 1904 by Edmund D. Morel. Morel was a human rights activist and passionate force against Leopold II of Belgium who enslaved the entire Congo region for the rubber and ivory trades. As a shipping clerk for Elder Dempster Company in Liverpool, Morel discovered the only goods Belgium was shipping to the Congo were guns, chains, and ammunition. At great risk to himself and his family, Morel resigned from Elder Dempster to expose Leopold’s crimes against humanity to the world (Hochschild, 1999; Van Reybrouck & Garrett, 2014).

Funded by the generosity of the Quaker chocolate millionaire, William Cadbury, Morel gathered the most notable authors, celebrities, politicians, and religious leaders in Europe and America of the day to form the Congo Reform Association (Pavlakis, 2016). Worldwide outrage was galvanized against Leopold's brutality and oppression of the Congolese people. The Congo Reform Association (CRA) courageously stood against Leopold II, countless other Congolese would have surely perished. Members of the CRA included: 1) Mark Twain, who wrote the political satire, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, 2) Booker T. Washington, American civil rights advocate, and educator, 3) Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, author of Sherlock Holmes’ series and *Crimes of the Congo*, 4) Joseph Conrad, author of *Heart of Darkness*, 4) William Morrison, American missionary to the Congo, 5) Roger Casement, an Irish human rights advocate, 6) Anatole French, French poet, journalist, and Nobel Prize Winner for Literature, 7) John Hobbis Harris, English
missionary to the Congo and later, member of Parliament, 8) Alice Seely Harris, an English missionary and early documentary photographer (Congo Reform Association, 2019; Morel, 2018). Harris used the Kodak Brownie camera, documenting the earliest photojournalism of human rights abuses (Morel, 2018).

Through published books, tracts and 'Lantern Lectures' attended by thousands, the Congo Reform Association held mass rallies exposing the brutal regime of Leopold II to the world. Morel's courageous and relentless leadership of the Congo Reform Association laid the earliest foundations for today's human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. The protestation led by western Protestant figures against the colonial politics in the Congo also sparkled in midst of indigenous peoples after World War I. In sum, it is worth denoting that those western Protestant missionaries (mostly from America, Great Britain, and the Scandinavia) inspired, encouraged, and sometimes aligned with local leaders to boost the decolonization process and hasten the country’s independence. Religio-political movements such as Kimbanguism and Kitawala are very illustrative.

3.4. ECC’s Leadership and Political Authoritarianism in the DRC

The Protestant Church in the DRC functions as a confederation of 95 Christian denominations that adhere to the basic tenets of the 16th century Reformation movement. This Religious Institution is a contemporary emanation of the historical growth of Protestantism in the DRC. As previously denoted, the Protestant explorers and missionaries entered in this Central African country in February 1878 through the mouth of Congo River. Since their arrival in the Congolese territory, Western Protestant missionaries felt the need for solidarity, mutuality, and cooperation in several domains of
their missionary work. For Philippe Kabongo-Mbaya, three reasons pushed them to seek intra-protestant rapprochement and structural complementarity: 1) the colonial religious politics that favored Catholic missions, 2) the mistrust of colonial companies and, 3) the hostilities of Catholic missionaries (Kabongo-Mbaya, 1992, p. 11). Taking account of those religious and socio-political reasons, Western Protestant missionaries in service in the Congo decided to create the Congo Protestant Council (CPC) in 1928 following the recommendations of the 1910 Edinburgh Gathering and the Jerusalem World conference on World Mission that same year. But this Protestant platform only became legalized and recognized by the Belgian deputy Governor-General P. Ermens on 23 April 1941. The CPC represented the Protestant Missions to the colonial government during the years after World War II. Having a general secretary within the CPC allowed the availability of a permanent, knowledgeable representation of the Protestant missions to the State. In his grassroot evaluation of Protestantism in the colonial and post-independent Congo, Donald Mc Gavran comments,

From 1948 to present, subsidies have been given to Protestant schools, which make a liaison with the government of even more importance to the Missions. In 1960 the CPC voted to put the responsibility for the council in the hands of Congolese, with missionaries playing the role of technicians. At the General Assembly in February of that year, Rev. Joel Bulaya was elected President and Rev. Pierre Shaumba as General Secretary, a post he held until 1968 when he was succeeded by Dr. Bokeleale. The CPC rendered great service to Missions and missionaries by providing an annual opportunity to meet, discuss mutual problems, and pray together (McGavran & Riddle, 1979, p. 67).

Mc Gavran’s statement indicates that ECC grew out of the vital roots of the CPC. With the independence of Congo in 1960, Protestant missionaries decided to hand the leadership of their agencies over to the Congolese. Political chaos ravaged the newly independent Congo like a firestorm in the following seven years. Civil war, mutinies,
economic collapse, and anarchy decimated old institutions offering little opportunity to build new ones, but Churches were the exception. Because of the societal unrest, most foreign missionaries were evacuated, and some even martyred. National leaders emerged to assume their positions. In line with this evidence, Thomas explains, “out of the chaos grew the yearning for a new united Congolese Church, it was Jean Bokeleale, elected General Secretary of the CPC in 1968, who articulated the challenge of the new era” (Thomas, 2010, p. 202). For those reasons, the by-laws of the CPC needed to be changed to transform a missionary entity into a local ecclesiastic institution. Two resolutions were articulated at the end of its 48th general assembly held from 23 February to 31st March 1969 in relation to missionary agencies in service of Congo and the project of federating all Protestant Churches. The first resolution clarifies,

To end the shameful conflicts and divisions in our Churches and Missions, the General Assembly decides that the Churches and the Missions merge and that they have only one civil personality, that of the Church. But in the case where the Church has no civil personality, that the mission bequeaths its civil personality to the Church. However, to resolve in a serious and effective way the conflicts and the current divisions within our Protestant Churches and Missions in Congo, the General Assembly recommends to the National Executive Committee, in collaboration with the secretary general of the Protestant Council of Congo, to study these conflicts in depth, to concretize each case and to decide on a final solution in order to assume the organic unity of the Church of Christ in the Congo, consequence of the existing spiritual unity.60

The second resolution pointed to the creation of a national organization with the main goal of uniting all the mainstream Protestant churches that resulted from missionary activities. It stipulates the clauses in these words,

Within the framework of the Church of Christ in the Congo, the General Assembly delegates power to the National Executive Committee to study the union of the Church of Christ in the Congo; to draw up a draft constitution and to give the report to the next General Assembly. To avoid the too high expenses that must be incurred by members having to sit in communion to study the problem of the union of the Church of Christ in

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60 Constitution of ECC 1970.
Congo, the national executive committee bequeathed the power to the secretary general of the CPC to develop a draft constitution following the discussion initiated for the concretization of the organic unity of the Church of Christ in the Congo in diversity.\textsuperscript{61}

A better comprehension of socio-political circumstances related to the creation and development of the ECC as a national religious institution requires two inquiries. First, the life trajectory and works of Jean Ifoto Bokambanza Bokeleale who served as the last General Secretary of CPC (1968-1970) and also became the first President Legal Representative of ECC (1970-1997). Such an investigation helps to understand the parameters of transition from CPC to the present-day ECC. Second, his relationships with President Mobutu who ruled the country from 1965 to 1997. The complicity between the two personalities provides areas of reflection for scholars interested in Protestantism, cultural nationalism, and Politics.

3.4.1. Jean Ifoto Bokambanza Bokeleale, Builder of the ECC’s Unity but Ally of Mobutu

Bokeleale was born on 23 December 1919 at Bompoma near Djombo in the Equator province at the North-Western part of the DRC. Geographically he originated from the same region as the dictator Mobutu. As we will see later, his critics deplored his complacent silence toward the authoritarian regime of Mobutu. Bokeleale came from a polygamic family, second child of his mother Mputu, one of his father’s four wives. After attending primary and secondary schools, he worked as a teacher at the Christian Institute of Congo in Bolenge (Kabongo-Mbaya, 1992). From his marriage with Amba Bokaa were born seven children. One year after his appointment as an assistant pastor at Ikongo in 1936, Bokeleale met Pastor Jean Bomenge who persuaded him to enter the Disciple of Christ (DCCM) primary school in 1937 in Lotumbe. He completed the four-

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
year program within two years and joined the Congo Christian Institute at Bolenge for his secondary education, which he finished in 1942 with distinction. He was ordained as a pastor on 24 August 1956. From 1961 to 1963, he studied at the Faculty of Protestant Theology of Brussels, Belgium and got a Masters’ degree in Theology. Back in Zaire/DRC, he deepened his relationships with the American counterparts of Disciples of Christ (DCCM) through several trips to the United States and also during his training in public administration in that country (Akyeampong & Gates Jr, 2012, pp. 481–482). He received his doctorate honoris causa from the Christian Theological Seminary of Indianapolis, Indiana, USA (Loombe Ifindi Bosunga, 1985).

Bokeleale’s leadership ability was quickly acknowledged by the DCCM missionaries who saw him as “a major leader of an African-led Church” (Loba Mkole, 2017, p. 135). This consideration led him to assume several leadership positions. He was elected as the head of the Disciples of Christ in Congo in 1963 during the nationalization of the DCCM (Kabongo-Mbaya, 1992, p. 390). When Mobutu took power in 1965, Bokeleale sought more support from Protestant Church leaders. Bokeleale availed himself as Mobutu’s ally and adviser while using this opportunity to consolidate his authority over Protestant churches and promote Mobutu’s authenticity movement. In 1975, he requested that the Protestant synod consider the ordination of some leaders as bishops and was himself consecrated as bishop on 16 May 1977 despite strong opposition from the Protestant leaders. Despite doctrinal clashes, Bokeleale initiated many projects in the domains of socio-economic growth by increasing the Church’s participation in the educational sector, health assistance, social development, micro-
finance, and business enterprises like industrial fishing and printing. In this perspective, Robert Bibi-Bikam N’kwim stresses,

L’Eglise du Christ au Congo as religious structure came into existence in March 1970. Today it comprises and oversees 95 Protestant denominations and has become the largest and most unified Christian federation in the world with more than 30 million adherents throughout the country. During the period from its conception in March 1970 until the early 1990s, this institution opted for an apolitical attitude and engaged more in social activities like education, health, and development.  

Dr. N'kwim implicitly refers to the authoritarian reign of Mobutu that prohibited any religious interference into the country's politics. However, Kabongo-Mbaya and Susan Asch disagree with this “apolitical” character of Bokeleale's leadership. The two authors mention the ideological campaign of the state mono-party MPR launched by President Mobutu and also clarify that ECC under the leadership of Bokeleale collaborated with the dictator's regime unlike the Catholic Church (Asch, 1983, pp.71–79; Kabongo-Mbaya, 1992, pp. 279–282). For Jeremy Rich, Bokeleale’s goal of uniting all Congolese Protestant Churches was sanctioned by President Mobutu Sese Seko and the head of ECC relied on cultural nationalist arguments to criticize his opponents in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Rich, 2016b, pp. 66–92).

Mobutu systematically suppressed all political opposition and nationalized private companies (Zairean nationalism). One sector escaped his control because it was not a part of the political domain. It was the socio-cultural sector comprised of churches and education institutions. The policy of resorting to authenticity served as a weapon to attack this sector. Congolese Protestantism was put to the test under Zairean cultural nationalism. The method of which was 1) the nationalization of universities and higher

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62 Interviewed on 12 October 2018, at the Université Protestant au Congo (UPC), Kinshasa DRC.
institutions as well as primary and secondary schools affiliated to religious confessions, 2) the obligation for all Protestant denominations to be part of a single, and monolithic Protestant entity, 3) the obligation for all religious institutions to instill in their followers the civic spirit in accordance with the principles of the *Manifesto of the N’Sele*. This ideological project presented Mobutu-ism as a religion, the single-party MPR a Church, and Mobutu himself as a messiah “that would restore self-confidence in Congolese traditions” (Rich, 2016b, p. 87).

The dictator Mobutu resolved to consolidate the unity of all Protestant denominations as a counterweight in his struggle to subjugate the Roman Catholic hierarchy (Munayi, 2013). Until 1969, the various Protestant missions and their planted local Churches were grouped together within the CPC. Despite the opposition of US-evangelical and conservative missionaries, ECZ as a new platform was created by a majority vote on 8 March 1970. Board members of the US-evangelical missions met in Chicago on 6 August 1970 and urged Congolese evangelicals to withdraw from the ECZ. They accused ECZ to be controlled by “liberal” World Council of Churches (WCC) and encouraged evangelical Churches in Congo to form their own organization (Kabongo-Mbaya, 1992; Rich, 2016a). The Assemblies of God missionary, William Lovick, considered by ECZ partisans, as “the ringleader of the revolt”, managed the funds from US evangelical missions to maintain the dissident movement. On 27 January 1971, this fraction of Protestants created *le Conseil National des Eglises Libres au Congo* (CONELCO)—the National Council of Free Churches in Congo. On 16 April 1971, the organization was renamed *la Communauté Évangélique Protestante au Congo* (CEPCO)—the Evangelical Protestant Churches in Congo, which became CEPZA in
October 1971 when the country’s name changed from Congo to Zaire (ECZ, 1973; Kabongo-Mbaya, 1992; Munayi, 2013).

American missionaries funded and organized evangelical and other dissident Churches. President Mobutu and ECZ partisans considered this schism an act of foreign imperialism. Consequently, the Zairian/Congolese government voted on 31 December 1971 to ban all Protestant denominations that were not officially part of the ECZ. Under the pressure of Mobutu, the dissident CEPZA unwillingly joined the ECZ as a monolithic Protestant Church lead by Bokeleale (ECZ, 1973; Makanzu, 1973). In the following year, Mobutu asserted in front of Belgian journalists that Congolese Protestants were not a concern for him since they “do not get their orders from outside” unlike the Catholic clergy who answered to the Vatican. (Mushete, 1978; Rich, 2016).

The ECZ’s leadership publicly displayed their support for Mobutu’s political philosophy. This reality is evidenced by synodal declarations of the ECZ in the first years of Mobutu’s dictatorial regime. In February 1972, its National Executive Committee held an extraordinary session to debate on “L’Église et l’authenticité zairoise”—literally “Church and Zairean authenticity”.

It was followed by a message from the ECZ chairperson on Christmas with the title, “Authentic Christians in the Politics of Zairean Authenticity”. The Second session of the National Synod occurred in March 1973 axed on the “Recourse to the Bible for an authentic Christianity” while the topic of its third

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64 ECZ, L’Église et l’authenticité zairoise, Kinshasa, CEDI, 1973, p. 6
65 ECZ, 1973, pp. 6-17
66 ECZ, Second Ordinary Session of the National Synod, Kinshasa, March 10-17, 1973

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ordinary session was “Where the People are, there must also be the Church”. In short, the ECZ’s leadership called Protestants to adhere to MPR as the state-one party and embrace President Mobutu’s doctrine of authenticity driven by cultural nationalism.

Bokeleale assumed the role of the ECZ/ECC’s president for 27 years and stepped down in 1997, the same year Mobutu was overthrown through a military coup led by Laurent-Desire Kabila. Pierre Marini Bodho as acting vice-President became the second President of the ECC.

3.4.2. Pierre Marini Bodho, Mobutu’s Challenger but Defender of the Kabilas (1997-2017)

Born on 30 March 1938 in Zeu, Mahagi territory in Ituri Province, Reverend Marini holds a doctorate in Theology from the Faculte Libre de Theologie Protestante de Paris and degrees in comparative Law (EF Kisangani, 2016). Unlike his predecessor who was criticized for not speaking out about the authoritarian excesses of Mobutu, Marini emerged as critical voice to Mobutu’s government. The first public contestation on record from a President of ECC against the political authority in Congolese history occurred after the aircraft catastrophe of 8 January 1996 on a market erected just next to the Ndolo Airport in Kinshasa. An Antonov 32-B cargo plane crashed into a market called Marche’ Type K made of wood and iron shacks, killing at least 350 people and injuring more than 500. According to the newspapers, the plane, allegedly on its way to deliver supplies to Jonas Savimbi’s rebel group UNITA in Angola backed by Mobutu, had been filled beyond its capacity and failed to take off. It ran off the runway straight into the market where it tore through shacks, people, and cars before bursting into flames. Several people were burned and mutilated in the crash, only 66 of the bodies could be identified (SAHO, 1996; ECZ, Troisième session ordinaire du Synode national, Kinshasa, 2-9 Fevrier 1975. Là ou se trouve le peuple, là doit être aussi l’Eglise.

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67 ECZ, Troisième session ordinaire du Synode national, Kinshasa, 2-9 Fevrier 1975. Là ou se trouve le peuple, là doit être aussi l’Eglise.
New York Times, 1996; Airlines.net, 1996). In front of the government delegation led by Mobutu’s Prime Minister, Leon Kongo wa Dondo who attended the ecumenical mourning service held in the Cathedrale du Centenaire Protestant, Reverend Dr. Marini-Bodho publicly deplored the illicit enrichment of political elites in detriment of the impoverished majority. Through his sermon on the epistle of James, the Protestant Church leader counted the Mobutu’s administration responsible and complicit to the misery of Congolese people (EF Kisangani, 1997). He predicted God’s wrath on political actors unless they repented, turned away from their wicked ways and looked for the welfare of their fellow-citizens. Consequently, the ECC under the auspices of Reverend Marini-Bodho articulated some recommendations via a circulatory pamphlet,

Let us love our country Zaire (Congo), protect our wealth, and share its income fairly; guarantee the security of our country, gift of God and sign of his love towards us. Let social and distributive justice prevail in Zaire (Congo). Respect the rights of each other by recognizing the men and women of this country’s right to life, right to work, right to a decent salary, the right to speak, to participate, and to manage the property of our country so favored by God, our Father (Marini Bodho, 1996, p. 15).

Informed observers of the Zairean (Congolese) political scene of that time remembered that Marini’s voice had indeed been the sound of a prophetic trumpet marking the start of a political awakening for Protestants (Kabongo-Mbaya, 1992). Reverend Dr. Marini-Bodho took over the leadership of the Protestant Church/ECC in 1997 and witnessed firsthand the fall of Mobutu on 17 May of the same year due to the military insurrection of AFDL (Alliance des Forces pour la liberation du Congo) created in October 1996 with the backing of Rwandan, Ugandan and Burundian armies. The invasion of foreign troops alongside anti-government Congolese rebels is considered as the DRC civil war (1996-1997). Isidore N’daywel-ë-Nziem considers Alliance des Forces
Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo (AFDL) as “a structure for political-military action with the objective of dismantling the fascist government in power in Congo and of establishing a real democratic regime for which the Congolese people sought, namely: a government really based on popular legitimacy” (Ndaywel-é-Nziem, 1998, p. 795). AFDL was an armed movement for the overthrowing of Mobutu’s regime and the restoration of a democratic political system as a solution to the Congo crisis. Later, Laurent Desiré Kabila installed another autocratic rule by prohibiting political pluralism as recommended by the National Sovereign Conference in 1992.

The Protestant Church activism in the political sphere was apparent during the second DRC civil war (1998-2001). This faith-based institution under the leadership of Reverend Dr. Marini-Bodho, initiated and held a national consultation at the Cathédrale du Centenaire Protestant in Kinshasa from 24 February to 11 March 2000 as “a framework for consultation intended to reconcile the daughters and sons of the DRC and to level the different asperities of a divided society raised in the past”.68 This event gathered 1659 delegates of all religious institutions in the DRC, of political parties and civil society.

The ecumenical national consultation presided by ECC pursued seven objectives: 1) to promote dialogue between the Congolese people themselves; 2) to identify all obstacles to national cohesion and harmony; 3) to bring the Congolese to exchange freely and constructively throughout the country; 4) to identify obstacles to peace and the real causes of war; 5) to propose solutions that call for immediate action; 6) to achieve reconciliation for lasting peace in the country; 7) to prepare the inter-Congolese dialogue

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68 Interview with Reverend Dr. Daniel Ngoy-Boliya, 21 February 2019, Kinshasa, DRC.
at the national level (Acts of the National Consultation 2000, p.223). As achievements, in April 2003, the belligerents of the Second Congo War (1998-2003) adopted a peace agreement, signed in December 2002 in Sun-city near Pretoria South Africa that was dubbed the ‘Global and all-inclusive Agreement’. This inaugurated a transitional period that would last up to the organization of General elections in 2006 (J. Verweijen, 2017, p. 41).

This paradigm for double political and military power sharing resulted in the withdrawal of invading foreign troops from the Congolese territory. The peace agreement, paved by the national consultation under the direction of religious leaders, launched a new political era with concrete achievements such as the reunification of the country, reconciliation between former rebellion leaders of Mouvement de la Liberation du Congo (MLC) and Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie (RCD) with the government, the promulgation of a new constitution limiting the presidential term to a 5-year term with one re-election possibility, and the organization of elections at local, provincial, legislative, senatorial and presidential levels in 2006. In addition, it is worth noting that Reverend Dr. Pierre Marini-Bodho (while leading the Protestant Church/ECC) also served as the President of the Transitional Senate from 2003 to 2006. An interviewee adds, “He was unanimously chosen at that State second-in rank position ‘after the country’s President’ because most Congolese politicians remembered his leading role in the 2000 national consultation and also viewed him as a reasonably neutral and consensual figure, and as a representative of the organized religion of civil society and was honored with the title of senator-for-life”.

Nonetheless, his opponents criticize him of becoming later a loyal ally of Joseph Kabila (who are both from the same linguistic and ethnic group). During his

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69 Interview with Dr. Nyamankank Mushila, Emeritus Professor at UPC and ECC’s Pastor, on 14 March 2019, Kinshasa, DRC.
leadership as the head of ECC, Marini-Bodho regularly played the role of a counterforce on behalf of J. Kabila’s administration to oppose the Catholic Church. The positioning of this Protestant clergyman with J. Kabila’s authoritarian regime is labeled by Kabongo-Mbaya as “pratique d’inféodation du religieux à la politique”. It objectively means to “be closer with political power and while being one’s self in the power”. (Kabongo-Mbaya, 2019). Mgr. Marini-Bodho adopted this closeness toward Laurent-Desiré Kabila then but even more so with Joseph Kabila. A full integration into the very heart of Kabilist power while assuming the role of President of the Transitional Senate, Mgr. Marini-Bodho was also Executive Chair of L.D. Kabila Foundation. He became a form of emanation of the Kabilist’s system within the Congolese Protestantism as the head of ECC. It was indeed, following an arrangement of convenience by Reverend Marini-Bodho, that Joseph Kabila and Marie-Olive Lembe were able to receive the blessing of their marital union on 17 June 2006 and that his sister Jaynette and brother Zoé Kabila were baptized as Protestant believers. Since then, the Kabila’s family has been attached to the international parish of the Cathedrale du Centenaire Protestant with approbation of Reverend Marini-Bodho.

In sum, despite the efforts of the Protestant leadership for the dismantlement of Mobutu’s dictatorial regime in the late 1990s and for the success of the national consultation in the early 2000s, ECC has adopted an apolitical and complaisant attitude toward the consecutive authoritarian regimes in the DRC. There is still a certain weakness in terms of collective Protestant engagement in political activities. This study found that, at a grassroots level, Protestant citizens are insufficiently informed about the daily political issues. Indeed, in the Congolese Protestant milieu, “getting involved in politics remains a subject of taboo given its biased reputation of being an art of the lie” commented
Reverend Esther Nlandu Moyo. In view of this, the Protestant communities within the ECC must reinterpret the concept of the separation between Church and State as pronounced by the Protestant reformers of the 16th century in the contemporary context of the DRC. Politics must be considered as a vocation for altruist service and a “legitimate sphere of activity for Christians” in order to extend the Kingdom of God on earth for the welfare of others (Hunter, 2010, p. 12).

3.5. Conclusion

The Chapter attempted to explore and address the disparity between Protestant missions during the Belgian Colonial era and the ECC in contemporary history with a special focus on their respective approaches to authoritarian politics. Protestantism, as a branch of Christianity, started as a protestation against religious and political absolutism which reached non-Western regions through missions. As historically and statistically demonstrated by Robert D. Woodberry in his article “The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy”, Conventional Protestantism has contributed to colonial reforms, religious liberty and the rise and spread of stable democracy throughout the world (Woodberry, 2012). In many of cases, Protestantism has a tendency of freeing inner/individual conscience from external despotism (Freston, 2009; Fukuyama, 2018; Mushila, 1981). Alexis de Tocqueville, in “De la Democratie en Amerique” specifies that Protestantism comprises of a “democratic DNA” because it is inherently and intrinsically related to pluralism based on individualism (de Tocqueville, 2019). This fact linking Protestantism with democratization is also evidenced by scholars like Paul Gifford and Jeffrey Haynes

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70 Interviewed on 28 November 2018. Esther Nlandu Moyo teaches at the Protestant University of Congo (UPC) and serves as Pastor in CEAC, one of the ECC affiliated Protestant denominations.
in the respective studies on the interplay between Religion and Politics in Africa (Paul Gifford, 1998; Jeffrey Haynes, 2009). In the context of the DRC, Protestantism appeared as a ferment of pluralism and freedom of conscience in the epochs of King Leopold II during the time of Belgian Congo. Protestant missionaries, mostly from the United States, the United Kingdom and Scandinavian countries (Pro-Protestant nations), stood against the indescribable atrocities carried out by Belgian colonizers on the local population in the rubber affair. They have advocated and significantly contributed to the dismantling of the Leopoldian order in Congo. The struggle for social equality, mutuality and solidarity led by Protestants laid the first foundations of religious freedom and diversity in the Congolese society. The most striking example remains the emergence of Kimbanguism labeled as an African form of Protestant faith. As we will see in more details in Chapter 6, Simon Kimbangu embraced the Christian faith as a Protestant Baptist believer through the missionary work of the British-based BMS in the lower region of Congo. His short prophetic and healing ministry, accompanied by an Afro-centric and millenarian message, greatly impacted politics in the pre-independent Congo.

Drawing from the reading of material produced by ECC and my fieldwork interviews and observations, the analysis ends with two conclusions. First, Protestant figures in the colonial era and the ECC’s leadership in contemporary history adopted different approaches to despotic Politics. Except the brief opposition at the end of Mobutu’s reign (1996-1997) and the supervision over the national consultation in the early 2000s, the ECC’s leadership has been in complicity with authoritarian regimes of Mobutu through Reverend Bokeleale (1970-1997) and of the Kabilas through Reverend Dr. Marini-Bodho (1997-2017). In other terms, the alignment of the ECC’s leadership with
dictatorial regimes since its creation in 1970 is viewed to be in antipode with Protestant missionaries in pre-independent Congo. The second and last finding is the deficiency of a collective “bottom-up” political participation of ECC despite being the country’s second largest Religious Institution with 30 million adherents. At this stage, I agree with Paul Freston (Freston, 2016, pp. 26–47) and Roger Mehl (Mehl, 1966, p. 270), that the weaker communal dimension of Protestantism usually undermine its ability to kindle mass mobilization and participation “from below” because “the more a religion sees God relating to individuals, the more difficult it becomes to sustain notions of a ‘holy commonwealth’” (Haynes, 2009, p. 29). The existence of ECC as a unifying body since 1970 strived more to enhance solidarity among affiliated Protestant denominations rather than mobilizing their social energies for collective political participation.

Today, Congolese Protestants are at a crossroad. As publicly and solemnly quested by the current President of ECC, in office since August 2017, Congolese Protestantism needs to re-appropriate its historical memory, and redefine its values and ethics. It is first a matter of identity and not of social positioning. With regards to the societal challenges of the contemporary DRC, the quest for updating the core of Protestantism appears relevant and expected. In the next Chapters there is an empirical, comparative, and thematic analysis of the commonalities and differences between CENCO and ECC in terms of their political participation and contribution to the current debate on democratization, post-electoral reconciliation, and state governance. It is relevant to do this kind of comparative inquiry because it helps to have a full picture of the Christian spectrum that highly influenced Congolese people and to display some communalities that have emerged while the reality was very different in the past.
PART III

Chapter 4: Protesting Catholics and Catalyst Protestants: Unfolding the Shift of Clergy’s Political Rhetoric in the Contemporary DRC.

“IT is time for the truth to prevail over the systemic lie, for the mediocre to clear out so that justice and peace reign in the DRC”\textsuperscript{71}

Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo, 2 January 2018, Kinshasa, DRC

“I particularly like races: relay races, where a person hands over the baton to a second person, then a third and a fourth…it’s the same thing in the history of the country. We take the helm and pass it on to others. We must bequeath to our children a country where the State really exists. I mean a real State. Because I have the impression that the State does not really exist”\textsuperscript{72}

Reverend Pastor François-David Ekofo, 16 January 2018, Kinshasa, DRC

4.1. Introduction

This Chapter offers a comparative and empirical inquiry of how and why the political rhetoric of the Catholic and Protestant Clergy as hybrid governance actors has regulated the shift that occurred in Christian political mobilization and participation in the DRC during the past recent years. The beginning of 2018 was politically turbulent in the DRC, particularly in the capital city of Kinshasa, due to the failure of Kabila’s administration to organize presidential elections as stipulated by the Saint Sylvester Peace Accord between the government and the opposition under the mediation of the CENCO (Cheik-Fita, 2019; Ndaywel-è-Nziem, 2018). People, both locally and in the diaspora, viewed the delay of elections by Kabila’s allies as a betrayal because they intentionally refused to implement the bi-lateral agreement to hold elections twelve months after signing it in the presence of Catholic Bishops and opposition leaders on the

\textsuperscript{71} Extract of his speech delivered at the Archbishopric of Kinshasa with the presence of many local and foreign journalists.

\textsuperscript{72} Extract of his sermon conveyed at the Cathedrale du Centenaire Protestant in front of Kabila’s supporters, political authorities, accredited diplomats in the DRC and various distinguished attenders.
31\textsuperscript{st} of December 2016 at the Centre Interdiocesain de Kinshasa. This raised feelings of dissatisfaction and incertitude about the future of the country. Lamin Sanneh points out that “religious institutions represent an important hope in a time of great uncertainty” (Sanneh, 2012, pp. 2–3). Indeed, in these difficult times also in the DRC, religious leaders as Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo from CENCO and the Protestant Pastor François-David Ekofo of ECC quoted above, emerged as critical public voices. Their ‘prophetic’ speeches filled the vacuum in terms of advocating for a ‘political democratic alternation’ viewed by many Congolese scholars and citizens at that time as the prerequisite for a better future of the DRC (Bauma, 2017; Gambino, 2017; Ka Mana, 2017; Muamba-Mumbunda, 2016; Mvemba-Dizolele, 2017; Ndaywel-è-Nziem, 2018). The political rhetoric of faith-based actors also shaped discussions and actions in the subsequent months. They became a “new reservoir of political creativity and a driver of citizens’ public action with very specific religiously driven expectations and motivations” (Bompani & Valoise, 2017, p. 22).

Indeed, due to the State repression on the opposition and civil society, Catholic bishops stood up at the frontline urging J. Kabila to step down since the 31\textsuperscript{st} of December 2016, a deadline that constitutionally constrained him from staying in power or seeking for a third presidential term. This new call-to-action also affected Protestants and other Christian denominations that progressively abandoned their previous apolitical stance and attitudes for a more energetic public engagement in this predominantly Christian nation, estimated to over 95% (Barrett et al., 2001; Hanciles, 2008; Pew Research Center, 2019; Ross et al., 2017; S. W. Sunquist & Noll, 2015).
Drawing from empirical research conducted from 2018 to 2020 in Kinshasa, this Chapter analyzes societal effects of the Catholic and Protestant clergy’s political rhetoric. It also investigates the role of social media in political mobilization and mass protests by Christian Congolese citizens during DRC’s transitional epoch which went from the constitutional end of Joseph’s second term to the country’s first historic peaceful power transfer in January 2019 and beyond. The Chapter argues that religious sermons and/or teachings can motivate Christian listeners’ political participation. Speeches delivered by Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo of CENCO and Reverend pastor François-David Ekofo of ECC with an intense Media coverage of videos and images of killed protestors sparked mass demonstrations at interconfessional and national scale against the Kabila’s administration from the beginning of 2018 until the DRC’s first historic peaceful power transfer in January 2019 and beyond. Before analyzing the empirical outcomes in the case of the DRC, let’s firstly look at how the concepts of rhetoric and politics theoretically intermingle with reference to other spatial contexts.

4.2. Rhetoric and Politics: Argumentation that leads to Action

The relationship between “rhetoric” and “politics” is not new. It can be traced back to ancient philosophers such as Aristotle, Ciceron, etc. This oratorical art maintains an old bond with city management. Constantin Salavastru (Salavastru, 2005) analyzed the theoretical trends on which contemporary rhetoric was based and identified the sources of the linguistic interpretation of eloquence, in order to open a lucid discussion on the relations between the discourse of power and the power of discourse. “The oratory art has found in the realm of politics the most fertile ground for its manifestation. As the art of organizing the city and society according to the distribution of power relations, politics
has constituted itself as a completely open field for the discursive manifestation of the human being” underlines the scholar (Salavastru, 2005, p. 9). A clear and simple explanation of those two concepts was articulated by James Martin, “Rhetoric is the art of speech and persuasion, the study of argument and, in classical times, an essential component in the education of the citizen. For rhetoricians, politics is a skill to be performed and not merely observed” (Martin, 2013, p. 31).

There is an increasing interest in social science literature that explores the interplay between religious rhetoric and politics. Some American scholars have addressed the nexus between religious communications and political behavior (Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2012; P. A. Djupe & Gilbert, 2008; P. Djupe & Calfano, 2013). A range of publications argue the use of religious rhetoric by American politicians from President Ronald Reagan’s regular consideration of America as “a city on a hill” to President Barack Obama’s deployment of spiritual language in describing social policy (Chapp, 2012) and the political instrumentalization of Religion by President Donald Trump (Sider, 2020; Whitehead & Perry, 2020). Recent research considered the political implications of religious communications in Latin America as well (Cerqueira & Tuñón, 2019). Some researchers have focused either on human resources and skills emanating from the link between religiosity and political participation (Brady et al., 1995; Campbell, 2004; Jones-Correa & Leal, 2001; Verba & Nie, 1972), the habits (Chhibber & Shastri, 2014), the attachments to social identities (Longman, 2009; Wilkinson, 2006), or the social networks (Wald et al., 1988) related to religious practice. Among those analyses that focus on religion in the African continent, they tended to focus on the organizational resources of

This Chapter draws from the works of Ruth Amossy (Amossy, 2009) and Patrick Charaudeau (Charaudeau, 2005). Both scholars provide the theoretical and logical framework underlying three rhetorical appeals through which a socio-political discourse can be scrutinized: Logos (Message), Ethos (Ethics of the Speaker) and Pathos (Feelings of the audience). Logos comes from the Greek term for ‘logic’ and presents facts and evidence to provide proof to a claim with the objective of convincing the audience what they are hearing or observing is well-researched. Ethos constructs the credibility of the speaker by establishing a variety of factors including status, awareness, celebrity endorsement, quotations, etc. It envisions making the audience trust what the speaker is saying. Pathos represents how the audience feels or experiences the message. Its appeal makes a person feel either excited, sad, angry, motivated, or any other number of emotions that may persuade them to act based on what the speaker says (Ruth Amossy, 2017; Charaudeau, 2005). In the Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis, James Paul Gee and Michael Handford remark, “a discourse is commonly used in various senses, including a) meaning-making as an element of the social process, b) the language associated with a particular social field or practice, c) a way of construing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective” (Gee & Hanford, 2012). This three-

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73 R. Amossy understands “argumentation in discourse” as “a discipline relating speech to a social place and institutional framework going beyond the text/context tandem” (R Amossy, 2009, p. 72). According to the author, the status of the speaker, the socio-historical circumstances in which the orator takes the word or pen, the nature of the target audience, the target audience, the prior distribution of roles that the interaction accepts or tries to play, are all factors that construct a discourse and of which internal analysis must consider.
fold discursive framework (Logos-Ethos-Pathos) are employed in the following sections to analyze how the Catholic and Protestant clergy’s speeches impacted political participation in the DRC.

4.3. Pulpits and Pews as Politics: Effects of Catholic and Protestant Sermons on Citizen Participation

DRC political events occupied the forefront of global news in the beginning of 2019 (from my fieldnotes, January 2019, Kinshasa). The local and international community witnessed the first historic, democratic, and peaceful handover of political power since its independence from Belgium six decades ago. Observers of Congolese politics attributed this particular achievement to Catholic bishops and some of the Protestant clergy with regards to their political engagement (Alfani, 2019; Eneflo, 2019; K de Freytas-Tamura, 2019; Kabongo-Mbaya, 2019; N’Kwim, 2018; Ndaywel-è-Nziem, 2019). From the constitutional end of Joseph Kabila’s second term in December 2016 to the election of Felix Antoine Tshisekedi in early January 2019, religious teachings, sermons, and pastoral letters of clergymen enhanced mobilization toward social change in this African state. McClendon and Riedl’s “From Pews to Politics” (2019) enriches the political science literature by proving how exposure to religious messages influences political endeavor by providing spiritual guidance that regulates listeners’ response to political opportunities (McClendon & Riedl, 2019). In line with McClendon and Riedl’s empirical analysis conducted in Kenya, this section examines the content of some religious sermons, declarations and pastoral letters deriving from the Catholic and Protestant clergy. It evaluated their effects on the public engagement of listeners, readers, believers, and unbelievers. When I asked about which religious figures and speeches most influenced
the Christian political participation during the DRC turbulent pre-electoral period and afterwards, Dr. Philemon Muamba-Mumbunda disclosed,

In my opinion, Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo of CENCO and Pastor Francois-David Ekofo of ECC have been the two principal vessels God has used to awaken His people in the DRC when the opposition leaders became ostracized by Kabila’s authoritarian regime. Those clergymen stood up without fear to request for Kabila to step down and organize fair elections. Their messages really ignited something I could call ‘revolutionary’ in the minds of many Congolese, believers, and unbelievers. As shepherds, they took their courage and determination to show us the path for change.  

The names of Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo and Pastor Francois-David Ekofo were unanimously cited by all my interlocutors as the two major religious figures who publicly and respectively raised their voices to challenge Kabila’s administration. It is significant to notice that my informant sees Catholic and Protestant voices as equally important in this matter. The Catholic prelate spoke on the 2nd of January 2018 and the pastor conveyed his message two weeks later (precisely on the 16th of the same month) at the Cathedrale du Centenaire Protestant. Both communications were aired on national television and disseminated on social media outlets, such as Youtube, offering the opportunity to millions of Congolese throughout the national territory and abroad to hear the messages of the two clergymen. Their sermons served as, what McClendon and Riedl call “sources of metaphysical instruction” (McClendon & Riedl, 2019, p. 5) because they informed the audience’s understanding of how things were evolving in the political sphere and tackled deep questions about the causes of the Congolese crisis, and the possibilities for change. The political viewpoints of religious leaders matter with regards to the moral and referential status in the midst of the community. The scrutiny of the discourse content of those two sermons (of Cardinal Monsengwo and Pastor Ekofo) with the lens of Logos-

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74 From my interview with Dr. Philemon Muamba-Mumbunda, 18 November 2018, Kinshasa, DRC.
75 From fieldnotes, Sept-December 2018, Kinshasa, DRC.
Ethos-Pathos framework can help to unpack their effects on the social and political atmosphere in the DRC in 2018 and afterwards.

In front of several journalists who represented local and international media that were invited to the Centre Lindongé that serves as the archbishopric of Kinshasa, Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo started his speech as follows,

> It is no longer a secret that the situation of the country in general and in the capital, is characterized by renewed fear and nervousness, and uncertainty if not panic. We are witnesses to unfortunate incidents that occurred on Sunday, 31st of December 2017 during the peaceful and non-violent march organized by the CLC to demand the real application of the global and inclusive political agreement signed at the Centre Interdiocesain de Kinshasa that has been willfully violated. This creates a socio-political malaise that crosses our dear and beautiful country of the DRC as the bishops said in their plenary assembly of the 24th of November. We can only denounce, condemn, stigmatize the actions of alleged valiant men in uniform which, unfortunately reflect barbarism. 

At the beginning of this discourse, the Catholic prelate provided the facts and evidence by claiming himself as one of the witnesses of what happened on Sunday, the 31st of December 2017. His statement portrays the socio-political circumstances in which the protest took place in Kinshasa and at a national scale. The Cardinal enumerates the feelings of renewed fear, nervousness, uncertainty, and panic that drove most of his fellow believers and citizens after the brutal military repression that caused the death of Christian protesters. As a reminder, the march was initiated by the Comité Laic de Coordination (CLC) with the approval of Catholic bishops. The Apostolic N nonce who is the official representative of the Pope in the DRC, expressed his agreement for the march to be held. It was organized to oblige J. Kabila and his government to respect the clauses of the Peace Agreement under the mediation of the CENCO, among other demands, to

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76 Message of Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo, 2nd of January 2018. At Centre Lindonge/Archbishopric of Kinshasa, DRC.
guarantee the holding of presidential elections as stipulated by the Constitution. During our conversation held at Sainte-Anne Catholic guest house, Professor Isidore N’daywel-è-Nziem the CLC’s coordinator revealed to me that the preparations of this Christian protestation were meticulous. There were several exchanges between the CLC, and the senior priests attached to the archbishopric of Kinshasa within the parish of Saint Raphael and the Lindongo Centre where the Cardinal officially lives. According to Professor N’Daywel, the program of the march was made public to the press in the parish of Saint Joseph on Sunday 17th December 2017 (N’daywel-è-Nziem, 2019, p.179). This is the call for the march of the 31st of December 2017 “to liberate the future of the Congo” in its conclusion:

As we want credible elections, an essential condition for putting an end to the current crisis of legitimacy, as we want a Congo free from the dictatorship of corruption, impunity, injustice, and the confiscation of public and judicial institutions, let us free ourselves from fear, resignation, and guilt inertia. Let’s get up and walk, in the capital, in the provinces or abroad. Let us stand up and walk, women and men of faith; of any condition and generation; engaged or not in political and associative activity. Let us stand up and march to unlock the future, and make our country a land of peace, dignity, hospitality, and progress for all. This Sunday, 31 December 2017, hand in hand, we will march to save the Congo, our common heritage, with sacred respect for people and their belongings (Ndaywel-è-Nziem, 2019, pp. 179–180).

The CLC’s decision to mobilize Christians for a national contestation resulted after a long process. The country’s transition to democracy combined, in a very complex way, many local, regional and international pressures (Ndongala-Maduku, 2016). The tension between the Catholic Church and Kabila’s government arose on 27 June 2017 when the Congolese authorities declared “unrealistic” the organization of elections before the end of the year 2017. As repercussion, the Catholic bishops spontaneously reacted by a

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77 Interview with Professor Isidore N’daywel, 18 October 2018, Kinshasa, DRC.
declaration denouncing that the instability in the country was due to the refusal by the ruling government to organize elections. J. Kabila violently accused the Bishops of wanting to “create disorder”. In October 2017, the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) announced that the incompletion of the operations of registering voters and disclosed its inability to organize elections before 2019.

Pressed by the US government through its special envoy to the United Nations, Ambassador Nikki Haley during a three-day visit (on 21-24 October 2017) in the DRC and by the CENCO, the CENI finally set the date for presidential elections as 23rd December 2018.  

78 At the end of their 53th Plenary Assembly (held from 22 to 24 November, 2017), the Catholic bishops of CENCO asked Joseph Kabila not to run as a candidate to the subsequent elections as agreed in the clauses of the St. Sylvester Peace Agreement. On behalf of the Catholic bishops, The General Secretary of CENCO, Father Donatien Nshole solemnly declared, “Mr. President of the Republic, we urge you to reassure the population by a public declaration that you would not be the candidate for your own succession. We are convinced that this would contribute to the appeasement of political tensions” (CENCO, 2019).

The Catholic laymen of CLC brought public support to the prelates in their request to President Kabila but the tension rose at its highest level on the 5th of December 2017. The deans of the archdiocese of Kinshasa, through the circular letter of their eldest

78 During this three-day visit in the DRC in 2017, the US Ambassador to the UN at that time Nikki Haley respectively met, the CENCO president Monsignor Marcel Utembi and his staff, the Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) President Cornelle Naanga and lately the outgoing DRC’s head of state Joseph Kabila. After her second meeting, she publicly remarked as follows, “If the elections are not organized in 2018, the DRC cannot count on the international community. It is important that the elections be held in 2018” (see https://apnews.com/article/380dbcc16db743a3a8763b1c477afb43 Accessed on 20 January 2018).
representative *primus inter pares* Father Vincent Tshiomba, asked the curators “every Thursday from the 14th of December 2017, to ring the bells at 9pm for fifteen minutes”. (Radio Okapi, 2017; Sarr, 2017; VOA Afrique, 2017). The prelates invited “Catholics and the Congolese population in general to accompany the bells with all kinds of clamor and din, banging on the pots, whistles and vuvuzela horns” (ibidem). Unfortunately, the first anniversary of the signing of the St-Sylvester Political accord on Sunday the 31st of December 2017 was celebrated in violence. As echoed in the Cardinal’s speech, the peaceful demonstrations of Catholics, banned by the Kabila administration, were repressed in blood. At least 8 people were killed, hundreds wounded and arrested. “It was extremely tense on that Sunday” testified an anonymous priest. He added, “The police took place at the entrance of our Parish to prevent the mass celebration, but the Church members confronted them. The Mass took place an hour before violent clashes. This was the case everywhere in Kinshasa and in the provinces” (CENCO, 2019). On Monday 1st January 2018, CENCO denounced the repression suffered by the Church. The General Secretary of CENCO, Father Donatien Nshole reacted, “This is the first time that places of worship have been attacked while people are there to pray! And we have to go back to 1992 to see a march of Christians repressed in the street and the arrest of priests” (Sarr, 2018). The spokesman of Catholic bishops reminded the national collective memory about the bloodshed of the Christian protest held on 16 February 1992 in opposition to Mobutu’s decision of suspending the National Sovereign Conference (CNS) led by Laurent Monsengwo at that time. Father Nshole highlighted similar outcomes between both events excluding the desacralization of churches on 31 December 2017 when security forces chased and beat protesters inside the parishes using extreme brutality.
For this analysis, it is significant to point out how persuasively Cardinal Monsengwo described the political reasons of this Christian public protestation after the mass celebration on Sunday 31st of December 2017. The lack of respect by the government toward the Peace Agreement and the reclamation of elections was mentioned as the principal motive of this nationwide uprising. Church buildings were used as starting points of contestation against the political institutions. In this perspective, McClendon & Riedl explain that Catholic and Mainline Protestant sermons focus more on the structures and incentives in which people are embedded than simply on the internal lives and characters of individuals (McClendon & Riedl, 2019, p. 33). For those scholars, such messages increase citizens’ willingness to participate in forms of sanctioning politicians for not acting in their interests. The Catholic prelate denounces the ‘barbarism’ of soldiers in military suits who profaned the places of worship by throwing tear gas during the Eucharistic celebrations alongside the theft of money, telephone devices, the systematic chase and search of people within the Church buildings and in the streets. The Cardinal’s discourse delivered on 2nd January 2018 rallied by the journalists attracted the local and international community’s attention. The media screened how the Kabila’s troops killed with bullets armless and peaceful Christian protesters holding in their hands Bibles, rosaries, crucifixes, and statues of the Virgin Mary.

Taking advantage of his ecclesiastic position within the Catholic Church, the prelate highlighted the antinomy between the truth and the systemic lie propagated by the ruling party at that time and categorized Joseph Kabila and his allies as “the mediocre” and compelled them to “clear out”. This declaration infused the urgency and necessity of
leadership change in the minds of Congolese people. “How can we trust leaders who are incapable of protecting the population, of guaranteeing peace, justice, and the love of the people? How can we trust leaders who flout the religious freedom of the people, religious freedom which is the foundation of all freedoms as Pope Benedict XVI said: ‘religious freedom is the path to peace’, interrogated Cardinal Monsengwo. In addressing those metaphysical questions related to the 31 December 2017 event, the Catholic prelate strived to incline his audience to criticize existing institutions, structures and rules of the political game and to seek change within the system (McClendon & Riedl, 2019, p. 250).

The discursive argumentation used in this allocution aims to stimulate the Pathos—the emotion of the audience (Fairclough, 2013; Flowerdew & Richardson, 2017; Gee, 2014; Gee & Handford, 2012). Here are the three emotive cues raised by the Cardinal political rhetoric through his speech of 2 January 2018 from the archbishopric of Kinshasa. First, it stirred up the mistrust of listeners toward the governing authorities. Feelings of marginalization appeared on surface and regenerated a climate of disconnection between political elites and the population. Second, it points to the believers’ rights of religious freedom. For this reason, Cardinal Monsengwo referred to Pope Benedict XVI’s consideration of religious freedom as a path to peace to remind the government about their responsibility to regulate ecclesiastical affairs within the State according to the concordat agreement signed between the Vatican and the DRC. The Cardinal added “religious freedom is an essential element of the rule of law” (Benedict VXI, 2011). Third, the prelate called for a new Congo based on values and not on the anti-values such as “the influx of resources, excessive enrichment, and the stinging in power by unconstitutional methods causing enormous damage to democracy” (ibidem).
Incontestably, Cardinal Monsengwo deployed the three-fold discursive framework (logos-ethos-pathos) in his 2 January 2018 speech as evidenced by rhetoricians to denounce the state violence and to mobilize his fellow Congolese citizens on a national scale for social change.

The article posted on the website of Radio France Internationale-Africa section (Radio France International, 2018) affirmed that the public criticism of the Catholic Church through the voice of Cardinal Monsengwo paved the way for other Congolese religious institutions to abandon their apolitical stand and join the contestation against the regime. It was the Protestant Church’s turn to defy the Congolese authorities on their management of the country. This happened on Tuesday, 16th of January at the Cathedrale du Centenaire Protestant in Kinshasa during the mass organized by the PPRD, the former presidential party, to commemorate the 17th death anniversary of Laurent-Desire Kabila, father of the former head of state. The key-speaker of the day, Reverend Pastor Francois-David Bonyeku Ekofo entitled his sermon as “Never Betray the Congo” to coincide with the last wish of Laurent-Desiré Kabila, the DRC’s third president.79 The Protestant Clergyman started his nationwide broadcasted sermon using the metaphor of “the relay race in Athletics” as rhetorical imaginary. His speech raised a critical reflection in the minds of his listeners about the legacy to be passed on to the future generations. With a severe tone, the pastor challenged:

79 Reverend Ekofo is an ordained a minister in the Community of Disciples of Christ, one of the member denominations within the ECC. He received Masters’ degree in Theology at the Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Indiana USA then earned a PhD in New Testament at the University of Strasbourg in France, where his dissertation was on “the Humanity of Jesus in the synoptic tradition, later published as a monograph. He returned to Congo in the early 1990s, after more than a decade outside the country. He became a professor of New Testament at the Protestant University in Congo (UPC) and served as a pastor in various congregations in the ECC. He ultimately became dean of the Faculty of Theology at the Protestant University.
We have the obligation in front of God and history, to bequeath to our children and grandchildren, first and foremost a united country…we must not pass on a divided territory to our children because we ourselves have received a unified territory. Brethren and sisters, don’t give up a millimeter of our country to anyone…we must secondly bequeath to our children a rich country, God himself does not understand why Congolese are poor, what did He not give us to still be among the world poorest?…we must bequeath to our children a country with food self-sufficiency…We have to bequeath to our children a country where the State really exists, because I have the impression that the state doesn’t really exist…we must pass on to our children a country where everyone is equal before the law…we have to bequeath to our children a country where people move freely in relation to infrastructure…I would like to address our neighbors a bit. God gave you your land. Don’t envy ours…Work at home instead of envying the Democratic Republic of Congo and have strategies to take advantage of it. Above all, do not take an inch of the land, because the Congo will not always be weak as it is now. It will rise up one day.\(^8\)

Such a significant shift of *Eglise du Christ au Congo* (ECC/National platform of all Protestant denominations in the DRC) by aligning themselves with Catholic bishops of CENCO in their protestation against the regime was not a fortuitous event. There are two major elements to be considered. First, this unexpected and challenging sermon of Pastor Ekofo in front of a crowded audience comprised of Kabila’s family, his government officials and political allies was conveyed four months after a leadership change at the head of ECC. Second, it is important to highlight that the first speech-program of Reverend Dr. André Bokundoa during his installation as President of ECC in August 2017 presaged both a rupture with his predecessor’s strong ties with Kabila’s administration and a renewed commitment for the struggle for a lawful and democratic state in the Congo.

Similarly to the main findings of this research project, many observers of Church-State relations in this African state confirmed the sermon of Reverend F-D. Ekofo marked

\(^8\) Sermon of Reverend Ekofo, 16\(^{th}\) of January 2018, Cathedrale du Centenaire Protestant, Kinshasa, DRC.
a new era in contemporary Protestant Politics in the DRC (Clavairoly, 2018; Kabongo-Mbaya, 2019; Mabiala, 2018; N'Kwim, 2018). As discussed in the previous Chapter, the ECC’s leadership has been in complicity with authoritarian regimes of Mobutu (through Reverend Jean Ifoto Bokeleale—1970-1997) and of the Kabilas (through Reverend Dr. Pierre Marini-Bodho—1997-2017). Except a brief opposition at the end of Mobutu’s rule (1996-1997) and the active involvement during the national consultation in early 2000s, my Protestant informants viewed the ECC’s leadership alignment with dictators to be in antipode with Protestant ethics (fieldnotes, December 2018). They have in mind the public contestation of Luther and the 16th century Reformers in face of Papal and imperial absolutism, and the civic engagement of Protestant missionaries and Simon Kimbangu against a pro-Catholic authoritarian colonial politics in Belgian Congo. For many decades, the ECC as a corporate institution needed an ‘aggiornamento’ in order to play its prophetic and participatory role in the political realm (Kabongo-Mbaya, 2019; Mulongo, 2017; N’Kwim, 2018). In his critical discourse, Reverend Dr. Ekofo axed on seven crucial issues that either undermine or can enhance the development of the DRC: 1) the unity of the country, 2) alleviation of poverty, 3) food self-sufficiency with regards to the land fertility; 4) the failure of state; 5) the promotion of the rule of law; 6) lack of infrastructures and 7) the potential threat of balkanization. Above all, the Pastor fearlessly criticized Kabila’s government for its undemocratic and unconstitutional will to cling on power. While evaluating the audience’s reaction, the Baptist pastor Viviane Kini-Nzita as a member of ECC asserted, “Kabila’s supporters thought Protestants would back them in opposition to Cardinal Monsengwo and Catholic bishops who organized protests against their regime
two weeks ago." They did not expect such a challenging message from ECC whose former president Reverend Marini-Bodho who stepped down four months before this event, used to be Kabila’s counterforce against the Catholic Church. Pastor Ekofo used the rhetoric of “relay race in athletics” calling the incumbent president Kabila to hand the baton of state leadership over to someone else for a political change. The pastor used this sports’ metaphor to possibly make the concept of leadership change understandable for a wide range of people. It went in the same line with Cardinal Monsengwo’s appeal for “the mediocre to clear out”. In a political context where the Church became the only public voice beyond the State, both clergymen of CENCO and ECC used the pulpits as political vessels for two specific goals. First, to constrain Joseph Kabila not to run again as a presidential candidate and second, to articulate a peremptory request to his government to organize elections in 2018 according to the St-Sylvester Agreement. In sum, the speeches of Cardinal Monsengwo of CENCO and Protestant pastor F.D. Ekofo of ECC, respectively conveyed on the 2nd and 16th of January served as tipping points of a larger mobilization emceed by social networks for societal change on national scale and shaped political participation of Christian citizens, particularly the youth in the subsequent months.

4.4. Christian Youth between Protest, Social Media Use, and Martyrdom

Like many other African nations, most of the DRC’s population is under the age of twenty-five (UNDP, 2019). The youth-led uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and beyond sparkled a third wave of protests that also blew over the sub-Saharan Africa (Honwana,

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81 Interview with Reverend Viviane Kini-Nzita, 18 March 2019, Kinshasa, DRC.
2015; Mittermaier, 2015; Mueller, 2018). On this point, Deborah Durham denotes that youth have been very active in the political realms in Africa, through their involvement in freedom or independence struggles, in mobilization and campaigns against the authoritarian regimes (Durham, 2000). They also aligned with political opposition parties in many countries such as the DRC. In their empirical research based in Pakistan where religion and politics mingle, Saud and his co-authors explore “the idea of youth as concept of social changer” (Saud et al., 2020, p. 2). Similarly, Christian youth, Catholic and Protestant, played a significant role in the DRC’s transition to democracy. The following lines show how the sermons of Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo and Reverend Dr. F-D. Ekofo and social networks have shaped the youth political activism throughout the DRC and particularly in the Capital-city of Kinshasa. As Sean L. Yom (Yom, 2005) proves the significant role of youth as a civil activist in the democratic societies, it is clear that investigating the “unconventional political participation” of youth in the DRC is relevant. In precise terms, this section strives to focus on the youth’s involvement in protests organized by the Catholic Church since the end of Joseph Kabila’s second constitutional mandate.

During my fieldwork journey in Kinshasa before the 30 December 2018 elections, I stayed at the Catholic guest house that coincidentally served as a hiding place for the coordinating team of CLC. In January 2018, Kabila’s government issued an arrest warrant against five of the eight members of the Committee. This fortuitous opportunity of residing at the same place allowed me to conduct semi-structured interviews with them, sometimes around breakfast, lunch, or dinner. With the support of the Catholic Bishops of CENCO, the CLC organized three major protest marches, precisely on Sundays of 31st
of December 2017, 21st of January and 25th of February 2018. Based on their evaluation of those protest demonstrations, professors Isidore N’daywel-è-Nziem and Thierry N’landu-Mayamba, co-coordinators of the CLC, gave significant credit to the larger youth participation. In reflecting on the effects of religion in Congolese politics, Reverend Dr. Robert N’Kwim bi-Bikam argued that the speeches of Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo and Protestant pastor Francois-David Ekofo boosted the zeal of the Christian citizens in general and the youth in particular to stand up and fight for political change.82 The rhetorical appeals formulated by the two religious figures urging “the mediocre to clear out” and “to hand the helm over to someone else” reenergized the political mobilization and civic engagement of Christian citizens at the national scale. Professor N’daywel added: “It is crucial to underline that the protests of January 21st and February 25th attracted the media, locally and internationally, because two young Catholics, a candidate nun and a civil society activist, were brutally shot dead by the police inside their parish compounds”.83 CENCO documented that the fifty-six protesters were killed by the Kabila’s troops due to their public contestation for the implementation of the St Sylvester Accord. Nevertheless, the cases of Therese Dechade Kapangala and Rossy Mukendi deserve more attention for researchers of religion and politics with regards to their premonitory declarations before their assassination. For many observers, the two young Catholics have died as “martyrs” of this pre-electoral contestation and democratization process. At that level, alongside Amira Mittermaier (Mittermaier, 2015, p. 588), it is worth examining

82 Interview with Dr. Robert N’kwim, 12 October 2018, Kinshasa, DRC.

83 Interview with Professor Isidore N’daywel, 18 October 2018, Kinshasa, DRC
about who can be called as a martyr, how and when death can become a mode of political engagement or an act of resistance.

In her outstanding work on how Catholic activists responded to political violence in El Salvador during the 1970s and 1980s, Anna L. Peterson (Peterson, 1996) provides the narratives of martyrdom that are relevant to be re-examined in terms of this section. The author refers to the leadership of Archbishop Romero and the Catholic Church’s civic engagement against the military regime’s human rights abuses and in support of far-reaching political, social, and economic transformation. The brutal repression of the ruling regime at that time resulted in the assassination of the prelate Oscar Romero and some eight hundred Salvadorans. The Catholic Church was associated with high-profile critiques of the authoritarian government and alignment with opposition groups. Progressive Catholics in El Salvador regarded religion as a basis for resistance to political violence, using the image of Christ as the model of suffering and dying. In other terms, the readiness to die for social justice and martyrdom became the logical result of speaking the truth in face of oppressing regimes. Peterson (1996) states that, based on the views of her respondents, the persecution of followers remains inherent to Christian faith and true believers cannot escape martyrdom (Peterson, 1996, p. 126). Her book highlights the importance of theological belief, the martyrdom narrative, the religious rationality in political mobilization, and the empirical outcomes of the social role of religion and ethics. It is striking to denote similar traits between the San Salvadoran case with the narratives of resistance of Christian civil activists in the DRC at the end of Kabila’s repressive regime.
The murder of the aspiring Catholic nun by the National Congolese Police is fully evidenced by her maternal uncle, Father Joseph Musubao-Karuhayi’s biographical book (Musubao-Karuhayi, 2019) and the Amnesty International report on Human Rights violation in the DRC (Amnesty International, 2020). Born on August 28, 1993, in Kisangani, the 23-old year Therese Kapangala was aspiring to become a nun with the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bergam. On Sunday 21st of January 2018, Therese Dechade Kapangala went to the Parish of Saint Francois de Sales to participate in mass as usual. Interviewed by Amnesty International, Father Musubao-Karuhayi reported that the mass began at 6.30am and at the end of the service around 8.30am, the representatives of the CLC reminded the mass attendees about taking precautions related to the peaceful march. Father Musubao-Karuhayi gives more details about the protest and circumstances that led to the death of Therese Kapangala:

the watchword was to march around the streets of the neighborhood where the parish is located, then return to the courtyard, say a final prayer and disperse. Around 9:00am, the crowd came out of the parish courtyard, with acolytes and myself in front. We were carrying twigs as sign of peace, walking peacefully, singing Christian hymns and praying. We had only marched about 50 meters from the gate, on the street called Kumoriko when the police started shouting tear gas at us. We fled into the parish enclosure. We tried to march two more times, and each time the police threw toxic gases at us. While some of us were inside the church and others in the courtyard, with the gate closed, I suddenly heard a burst of bullets. In the confusion, I heard young people calling me saying my niece Therese had been shot. I couldn't believe my ears. I ran up and saw Therese lying in front of the side door of the church (Amnesty International, 2020, p. 36; Musubao-Karuhayi, 2019).

On that Sunday, all the Catholic parishes in the city of Kinshasa and in the provinces of the DRC followed the CLC’s guidelines related to the peaceful march as described by Father Musubao-Karuhayi. In relation of the death of Therese Kapangala, Professor N'daywel-ë-Nziem clarifies:
While inside the parish courtyard, Christian protesters thought to be themselves safe from military threat after the closure of the entrance gate. Unfortunately, a policeman with a gun climbed at the top of their anti-riot vehicle and started shooting with real bullets on the unarmed people. Feeling endangered and defenseless, they began to flee in all directions in the courtyard, each seeking to take shelter from the rain of bullets from the CNP. Meantime, Therese was busy wiping, with margarine, the eyes of a little girl whose face was covered with tear gas. It was at that moment when a targeted bullet hit Therese Kapangala, piercing her heart and exiting through her left arm. She fell on the spot and died. (From interview with professor N’daywel-ë-Nziem, 2018, Kinshasa).

In the preface of the book dedicated to the aspiring nun, bishop Sebastien-Joseph Muyengo Mulombe declares:

Therese is not a political martyr, but she gave her life to protect a little girl, at the same time as she demonstrated for the cause of her Church, she did what she deeply lived in her heart. She did not give her life against politicians, but against unfair situations and for justice and for her Church (Musubao-Karuhayi, 2019, p.6).

Before discussing the characteristics of Christian martyrdom with reference to the Congolese young believers who fought and died for political change, let's talk about the civic engagement and death circumstances of Rossy Mukendi-Tshimanga. The CLC with the support of the Catholic Church organized another protest march on Sunday 25th of February 2018 with the same objective of urging the Kabila’s administration to fully apply the St Sylvester Accord. It is significant to underline here that youth-led pro-democracy movements aligned with the laymen of the CLC and the Catholic Church in public contestation against the ruling government. Among those precited civil society movements by young activists, LUCHA (an acronym of the French *Lutte pour Changement*—fight for change in English) and FILIMBI (meaning ‘whistle’ in Swahili) are the most prominent organizations which have been instrumental in mobilizing Congolese citizens to pressure Joseph Kabila to step down and usher in a period of democratic transition. LUCHA was created on 1 May 2012 in Goma, Eastern Congo as reaction of young people shocked, indignant and revolted by the situation of general chaos in the
DRC at that time. FILIMBI was launched under the impulsion of young civil activists of LUCHA on 15 March 2015 in Kinshasa during a pro-democracy youth workshop in the DRC with a coalition of 14 international and 220 Congolese rights organizations to initiate a platform to encourage Congolese youth to peacefully and responsibly perform their civic duties (Human Right Watch, 2019). LUCHA, FILIMBI and other similar citizen movements in the DRC were inspired by youth demonstrations across Africa against dictatorship in countries in North Africa, more precisely the impact of civic groups like *Y’en a Marre* \(^{84}\) (Fed Up) in Senegal and *Le Balai Citoyen* \(^{85}\) (The Citizen’s broom) in Burkina Faso. Due to their alignment with the CLC and Catholic Church, members of FILIMBI and LUCHA have repeatedly been targeted by Congolese authorities by means of arrests, detention and judicial harassment since President Joseph Kabila’s announcement to postpone the presidential elections.

Rossy Mukendi-Tshimanga was a Catholic believer and founder of the citizen movement called “*Mouvement Citoyen Collectif 2016*”. Based in Kinshasa, *Collectif 2016* was created to promote human rights, in particular the rights to freedom of expression and association, through awareness raising and peaceful demonstrations. It gathers young activists who were determined to ensure the step-down of Joseph Kabila with regards to the constitutional end of his second presidential mandate in November 2016.

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\(^{84}\) *Y’en a Marre (Fed Up)* is a group of young people founded by rappers and journalists in Senegal in 2011 to protest against poor governance and to mobilize young people to vote during elections. (T. Cissokho in Multitudes 2011/3, Number 46, pages 26-34).

\(^{85}\) *Le Balai Citoyen (The Citizen’s Broom)* is a youth political grassroots movement in Burkina Faso that organizes protests and rallies against poor governance and in support of citizen movements that resulted in the stepdown of President Blaise Kompaoré in 2014. (CIIP, 27 March 2018. Also https://www.ritimo.org/Au-Burkina-Faso-Le-Balai-citoyen )
The march of Sunday 25th February 2018 was the third call by the Catholic lay leaders for nationwide protests. “The prominent pro-democracy activist Rossy Mukendi Tshimanga became the target of the Congolese security forces and was shot dead by a policeman while trying to protect churchgoers inside the courtyard of Saint Benoit Catholic parish of Lemba, in Kinshasa” testified Thierry N’Landu-Mayamba, one of the CLC’s co-coordinator. 86 The images recorded by his fellow activists that showed him battling with pain before dying were aired on social media and raised a wave of anger among the Congolese population locally and in the diaspora. Hours after Sunday’s march protest, a picture of Rossy Mukendi-Tshimanga began to circulate with a placard in his hand with a mention “Le Peuple gagne toujours” (The People always triumph). His targeted murder by the police led to the emergence of a range of platforms and avenues of resistance from the more traditional structure of the Catholic Church to popular youth movements requesting the resignation of Joseph Kabila.

For the purposes of our analysis, few questions remain relevant to be asked: What do the civic engagement and tragic death of Therese Dechade Kapangala and Rossy Mukendi-Tshimanga teach us in terms of dialectical link between Christian martyrdom and politics? How do claims and discourses of martyrdom provide impetus to political movements?

In an age of suicide bombers and paranoid political rhetoric, the twelve authors of Witness of Body: The Past, Present, and Future of Christian Martyrdom (Budde & Scott, 2011) who explore the place of Christian martyrs in the Church through all ages and into the future, help to better understand this concept. “Christian martyrdom is not as a quick

86 Interview with Professor Thierry N’Landu Mayamba, 25 October 2018, Kinshasa, DRC.
ticket to heaven or a cheap political ploy, not as something mystically distant from everyday life but rather, as the firm and faithful witness of Christ’s Church in a hostile world” (Buddle & Scott, 2011). Etymologically, the word “Martyr” comes from the Greek “martus” meaning “witness” and “within the Catholic tradition…the holy innocents are regarded as ‘martyrs’…in their death they bear witness to the new social reality that, in one sense, is yet be fully realized” (Katongole, 2018, p. 244).

Alongside others, Paul Middleton’s work (2006) serves well the scholarship on the study of Christian martyrdom with detailed investigation of Jewish martyrs and their influence on the spread of Christianity. In *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (Moss, 2010), Candida R. Moss enriches the reflection by exploring the status of early Christian martyrs and several narratives related to Jesus’ followers, victims of the political repression in the first century and afterwards. Later, the making of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire by Constantine the Great decreased the persecution of Christians. The emphasis on unity in belief, expressed in creeds, also reduced the arguments between Churches as Rome turned from polytheism (freedom to worship many gods) to monotheism (the worship of One God). Critical studies on martyrdom are mostly prolific and limited to the early centuries of Christianity or to pre-Constantinian era. During the 16th century Reformation and subsequent periods, it became difficult to consider martyrdom as a “common treasure of the Church” when Christians started to kill each other based on confessional, doctrinal and ontological divergences. How does contemporary scholarship approach this subject?

Scholars put in evidence two different approaches to modern Christian martyrologies which are linguistic and functional (Choi, 2012; Cormack, 2002; Droge &
The linguistic approach builds on the etymological groundings of the concept “Martyr” from Greek and refers to it as a person whose death is directly caused by one’s Christian witness/identity or confession of one’s Christian faith. But the functional perspective, as popularized by Jan Willem van Henten and Friedrich Avemarie, insists on the volitive aspect of martyrdom. This approach considers as martyr, “a person who in an extremely hostile situation prefers a violent death to compliance with a demand of the (usually pagan) authorities (van Henten & J.W. Friedrich, 2002, p. 3). In taking account of both approaches, Sangho Choi proposes an alternative option called Interpretive Semantics that “looks for the meaning of the death responding the question ‘what does that death mean to this society or community in that particular context?’ In other words, it is a matter of discourse about how a death-event is memorized, interpreted, and presented to the people” (Choi, 2012, p. 10).

Drawing from Choi’s integrated paradigm, it is possible to see how my interviewees narrated and interpreted the death of Therese Dechade Kapangala and Rossy Mukendi Tshimanga with regards to their respective fight for social justice and political change during the Kabila’s administration. Based on the Christian martyrology’s literature and the collected narratives about our two cases, there are three assumptions to be considered. The first points to their sacrificial love and abnegation for others. Likewise, “Martyrdom is about giving one’s life for a cause, a better state of affairs, and simultaneously it can be about one’s fate in the afterlife” (Mittermaier, 2015, p. 588). Both, Kapangala and Mukendi-Tshimanga were shot dead inside the courtyards of their

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87 I interviewed and conversed with the CLC’s committee members who coordinated the three protest marches during which Therese Kapangala and Rossy Mukendi Tshimanga were shot dead.
parishes, St, Francois de Sales in the municipality of Kintambo and St. Benoit in Lemba both located in the Capital-city of Kinshasa. Therese Dechade Kapangala was helping a little girl in trouble when a bullet pierced her heart and exited to her left shoulder (Musubao-Karuhayi, 2019, p. 17). On Sunday, 25th February 2018, a gunman from the Congolese Security forces targeted RMT while he was closing the parish entrance gate to keep all Churchgoers and Christian protesters safe from the police threats. Interviewed by Amnesty International, one of his friends and fellow activists discloses, “I turned my back to the gate, I told Rossy, ‘let’s close the gate’…I heard a shot, I bent down. I thought I was injured by the bullet. A young man from Ngaba came to touch me on the shoulder. I turned, I saw Rossy lying down and screaming” (Amnesty International, 2020, p. 38).

The second commonality of their Christian martyrdom pivots on their premonitory declarations. According to Father Joseph Musubao-Karuhayi, on Saturday 20 January 2018 (one day before her murder), Therese, who was waiting to join the convent of the Holy Family Sisters of Bergam in July 2018, saddened her close friend with these words, “Camille, would you be able to still look at me when my physical beauty would soon fade?”. After being shot, the police intentionally kept her body in bad conditions for almost two weeks. At the funeral ceremony held on 9th February at St. Francois de Sales, it was heartbreaking and impossible, humanly speaking, for her family, friends, and fellow parishioners to look her face in total putrefaction (as she predicted). Related to RMT, professor Isidore N’daywel-é-Nziem, one of the leaders of the CLC denotes that few hours after his death, picture of Rossy went viral in social media, locally and among the Congolese diaspora. Most importantly, RMT will ever be remembered by his last words posed on his personal facebook open page few days before his assassination, “We will
color the soil red with our blood so that our children do not live as slaves tomorrow...when death comes, I will leave proud to have defended an ideal” (Sarr, 2018). The blood of Rossy Mukendi-Tshimanga as a human right defender and civil society activist, has been shed for the establishment of democracy and the rule of law in the DRC.

The third and last aspect points to their common hope in a brighter future for the DRC. The CLC’s committee alongside many of my interviewees affirm that Therese Dechade Kapangala and Rossy Mukendi Tshimanga have been influenced by the patriotic and prophetic messages of Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo and of Reverend Pastor Francois-David Ekofo conveyed at the beginning of the year 2018. For professor Thierry N’landu Mayamba, the participation of Congolese Christian youth in the protest marches called by the CLC has mostly been motivated by the rhetoric appeals from both clergymen urging Kabila and his allies to “clear out” and “hand the leadership baton” to another generation. The bloodshed of young Christian protesters on Sundays 31st December 2017, 21st January and 25th February 2018 motivated the determination of many other youth-led pro-democracy movements alongside the CLC for a full implementation of the St. Sylvester Accord co-signed by Kabila’s political allies and the opposition. As outcomes of local and international pressure, on August 8, 2018, Joseph Kabila renounced his intention to run for a third and unconstitutional presidential term and publicly chose a dauphin to be candidate for his party to the December 2018 elections.

The next section specifically examines the position of Catholic Bishops of CENCO and the Protestant Church/ECC leadership during the elections and afterwards.


88 Rossy Mukendi-Tshimanga posted those words on his personal facebook page few days before his assassination by Kabila’s police and security forces.
89 Interview with Professor Thierry Nlandu Mayamba, 16 November 2018, Kinshasa, DRC.
Since the beginning of 2018 with multiple attempts of Joseph Kabila to cling on to power by delaying elections, both CENCO and ECC as ecclesiastical structures aligned to reclaim the implementation of St. Sylvester Accord as co-signed by Kabila’s political allies and the opposition. The speeches of Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo and Reverend Francois-David Ekofo evidenced this common political engagement against the Kabila’s administration. Another example of collaboration between Catholic and Protestant leaders related to the Ecumenical Forum on Peace and Reconciliation convened from 7th to 11th November 2018 in Kinshasa (N.B: their first collaboration for the country’s peacebuilding goals traces back to the National Consultation held in the Cathedrale du Centenaire Protestant in 2000 as largely discussed in Chapter 3). The two religious institutions discussed on irenic and reconciliatory ways to hold credible elections in the DRC. Political parties, civil society organizations and the CENI experts attended this consultation and were exhorted to work together for transparent, free, and peaceful elections.

The pre-electoral period was essentially marked by the split of the opposition into two main fractions few weeks before the launching of the presidential electoral campaign. What happened? As a participant observer in Kinshasa, I followed on many occasions the public debate regarding the political dissensions among supporters of different opponents to the regime of Kabila and his ruling unified coalition Front Commun pour le Congo (FCC; Common Front for the Congo). The seven principal opposition leaders at that time (Jean Pierre Bemba, Martin Fayulu, Vital Kamerhe, Moise Katumbi, Adolphe Muzito, Mbusa Nyamisi and Felix Tshisekedi) created a political platform named “LAMUKA”—meaning “Wake Up” in both Lingala and Swahili. Those political figures
gathered in Geneva, Switzerland on 9-11 November 2018 to select by consensus the person who would run as the opposition platform’s common candidate against Kabila’s dauphin in the subsequent elections. However, the choice of Martin Fayulu caused discord and disagreement within the group because Felix Tshisekedi was predicted to be the favorite nominee based on the opinion polls. Compelled by their respective political bases UDPS (Union pour la Democratie et le Progres Social) and UNC (Union pour la Nation Congolaise), Felix Tshisekedi and Vital Kamerhe withdrew their signatures from the Geneva’s agreement previously signed by the seven leaders a day before. After a week of negotiation, the two latter opposition actors signed another joint accord in Nairobi, Kenya creating an alternative electoral coalition “Cap pour le Changement” (CACH) with Felix Tshisekedi as the nominee candidate for the 2018 elections. With regards to what happened in Geneva and Nairobi, Felix Tshisekedi of CACH and Martin Fayulu of LAMUKA separately represented the opposition to confront Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, the handpicked runner of the outgoing President Joseph Kabila.

Initially scheduled on 23 December 2018 by the CENI, the presidential and legislative elections were held a week later, and the results came up on 10th of January 2019. Nevertheless, the CENCO declared having deployed 40,000 observers to polling stations who had access to vote counts. In their article published on January 4th, 2019 (six days before the official proclamation of the results by the CENI), the New York Times anticipatingly divulgates the information, “The Catholic Church, one of the few trusted institutions in Congo, has determined that a leading opposition candidate won this week’s elections.”

It is important to remind that the Catholic Church was on collision course with

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90 The New York Times’ article published on 4th of January 2019. Most of the Western media unfortunately relied on the estimated and unproven results of the CENCO which represents the country’s Catholic
the Congolese government and Father Donatien Nshole as Executive Secretary of CENCO urged the electoral commission to “publish in all responsibility the results of the election in respect of truth and justice” (CENCO, 2019). Many Congolese and other observers had interpreted Father Nshole’s words as a clear indication that Mr. Fayulu had won the election (de Freytas-Tamura, 2019). For Reverend pastor Eugene Massa of ECC, “Catholic bishops didn’t know the name of the winner, but it was probably their strategy of pressure toward the government and the CENI not to rig the elections in favor of Mr. Shadary, the former Congolese interior minister and ally of Kabila”.91

The DRC’s clergy adopted discordant reactions to the proclamation of the former opposition leader Felix Tshisekedi as the winner by the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) on 10 January 2019. Unlike the Protestant Church/ECC whose leader, Reverend Dr. André Bokundoa, prayed for the newly elected President Tshisekedi on the sworn-in ceremony, some Catholic bishops such as the current Cardinal and Archbishop of Kinshasa, Fridolin Besungu Ambongo contested the results of the elections as published by the CENI. During his interview on the channel of TV5 monde (TV5 monde, 2019), the Cardinal Ambongo publicly announced that Mr. Fayulu was the winner of the 2018 elections by relying on the data from the Church’s 40,000 observers which was

bishops. The President of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), Corneille Naanga confronted the CENCO and disclosed to have accredited far less people from the Catholic Church than the number of 40,000 as confirmed by Father Donatien Nshole, the General Secretary and spokesman of CENCO. This reality fueled the post-electoral controversy and shed doubt on the credibility of the CENCO which declared that the result of presidential election as published by the CENI didn’t correspond with the data collected by their observers. For some of my informants, the CENCO and some Catholic bishops tried to use their societal notoriety and legitimacy by taking side and helping Martin Fayulu to be elected as president for the benefit of Western donors and multinational corporations in detriment of Felix Tshisekedi even thought, those two political actors ran as candidates of the opposition against Kabila’s dauphin Emmanuel Ramazani Shadari.

91 Interview with Reverend Eugene Massa, 8 March 2019, Kinshasa, DRC.
contested by the CENI. Olivier Kamitatu also disclosed that the LAMUKA political coalition provided 40,000 smartphones to the CENCO to facilitate observation and electoral data collection. This position of the CENCO in favor of Mr. Martin Fayulu as one of the two opposition representatives who ran against the Kabila’s ruling party raised interrogations about the sacerdotal neutrality of the Catholic bishops. Reported in the article of Financial Times published on 15 January 2019, Gilbert Kankonde Nkashama a spokesman of Mr. Felix Tshisekedi argued about the impossibility of Mr. Fayulu winning the election and also questioned the independence of the Catholic Church in this electoral process (Wilson et al., 2019). Some of my interlocutors reproached Catholic bishops for being instrumentalized by LAMUKA electoral coalition with the financial support of some countries of the European Union and some multinational corporations to impose “a person of their choice” as president of the DRC (from my fieldnotes, January-February 2019, Kinshasa). This victory of Tshisekedi, proclaimed by the CENI and endorsed by the constitutional court, also split the Catholic National Episcopate. The bishops of the ecclesiastical province of Kananga (one of six archdioceses of CENCO, where Felix Tshisekedi ethnically comes from) disapproved the official decision of their hierarchy that contested the results of the CENI. On Sunday 27 January 2019, this group of Catholic prelates declared:

We bless God for the newly elected President of our country Son Excellence Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo…his elevation constitutes a step in the fulfilment of the dream of democracy and social progress for the Congolese people…in this new Congo, the Church will no longer be distraint or partisan…led by the Holy Spirit, she must remain a mother full of solicitude for all her children above all, the poor and the most vulnerable (Sarr, 2019).

On the side of politicians, many voices questioned the position of CENCO in the country’s post-electoral crisis. Interviewed by a Radio Vatican journalist, President Felix Tshisekedi underlined that the misunderstanding that arose from the declarations of the
Congolese bishops during his election stemmed of a “political manipulation” (Radio Vatican, 2019). He also added: “Where there are politicians, you can never get rid of this kind of behavior” (ibidem). Despite what President Tshisekedi calls “Instrumentalization of the Church by politicians for political agenda”, the DRC’s head of state recognizes the role played by the Catholic Church in the political and social landscape of the DRC. He mentions that shepherds of the Catholic Church in the DRC, from Cardinal Joseph Malula to the present day, have opposed the evils of authoritarian regimes. The Catholic Church has walked alongside Congolese people and has been active for their interests. At this point, the mission of the Catholic Church is therefore to be congratulated. Based on this conversation in Vatican-city in January 2020, President Tshisekedi still perceives the Church as an important partner and ally of the state for the country’s post-conflict reconstruction and he wishes to strengthen Catholic Church-State relations. Religious institutions in the DRC must play a significant role in poverty alleviation, in the fight against systemic corruption and for the change of mentalities. It is therefore unnecessary to consider the Catholic Church as an adversary. “This is also a signal that I would like to send to my fellow-citizens,” insisted the President Tshisekedi (Vatican News Afrique, 2020). There is an ongoing call for the Church (both Catholic and Protestant) in the post-conflict DRC to be a palaver tree at the center of the communal village in promoting African ethics of communicating, remembering, and reconciling.

4.6. Conclusion

Building on McClendon & Riedl’s framework, this Chapter explored the intersection between the content of religious messages, the use of social media platforms and the political participation of Christian citizens. Empirically and contextually, it draws of a
discursive analysis of the political rhetoric of Congolese Catholic and Protestant leaders as hybrid governance actors in the contemporary DRC. Between January 2015 and December 2018, this African state experienced a turbulent socio-political crisis due to President Joseph Kabila’s multiple attempts to cling on power beyond his second constitutional mandate. Many reports from Human Rights-oriented organizations like Amnesty International have evidenced brutal and systematic crackdown on opposition leaders and protesters who opposed the ruling government. It is crucial to highlight that the ways people circulated testimonies, images, and videos of murdered protestors through social media played a significant role to catch both national and international attention. It was in such an environment that Catholic Church’s National Episcopal Conference, CENCO and a part of the Protestant Church’s leadership emerged, through their speeches, as public critical voices against the ‘personalist authoritarian regime’ of President Joseph Kabila. With regards to space and time, this enquiry was conducted from 2018 to 2020 in the metropolitan city of Kinshasa where CENCO and ECC are headquartered.

The political discourses of two emblematic clergymen, a Catholic Cardinal, and a Protestant Pastor, have served as a case study. We analyzed their argumentative structure—logos, ethos, pathos—as developed by scholars like Ruth Amossy (R. Amossy, 2009), Patrick Charaudeau (Charaudeau, 2005) and James K. Gee (Gee, 2014). In this analysis, the Chapter endeavored to illustrate how their religious sermons have impacted political discussions and the participation of Christian citizens nationwide in the

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92 According to the 2020 Amnesty International Report on the DRC, by the end of December 2018, at least 320 people were shot dead, and 3,500 persons had been injured because their participation in protests for the establishment of democracy and the rule of law.
subsequent months. The first area of investigation relates to the appropriation and application of the political rhetoric of religious elites by the country’s youth. The rhetorical appeals such as “it is time for the mediocre to clear out” and “to hand over the baton to someone else” respectively articulated by Cardinal Monsengwo and Reverend pastor Ekofo, boosted protestation nationwide against the Kabila’s administration. Many youth-led pro-democracy citizen movements like LUCHA, Filimbi, ECCHA, Collectif 2016, Les Congolais Debout etc. participated in protest marches organized by the Catholic laymen of CLC with the support of the Catholic Bishops of CENCO. At that level, this study supports this hypothesis, “in addressing deep metaphysical questions, sermons can influence listeners’ inclination to criticize existing institutions, structures, and rules of the game” (McClendon & Riedl, 2019, p. 250). Those protest demonstrations—banned by the Kabila’s government, ended in bloodshed throughout the country. A particular emphasis is made on the martyrdom of two Catholics Therese Dechade Kapangala, an aspiring nun of 24 years old and the civil society activist Rossy Mukendi Tshimanga, both brutally shot dead in the courtyards of their parishes. The images of their deaths were posted and sent viral through social media disseminating the State violence to the local and international audience. Young Christian protesters utilized digital platforms as venues of, what George Karekwaivanane and Admire Mare (Dwyer & Molony, 2019, p. 57) called, “insurgent citizenship” to engage in contentious Politics in the DRC. As testifies Jonas Tshiombela, one of the CLC’s leaders, “In fact, the fight for which Rossy Mukendi and other martyrs of democracy shed their blood is not a fight against individuals, but against the system. As long as the system persists, the struggle of Rossy Mukendi and the other martyrs will continue until the advent of a truly democratic state in the heart of Africa ” (CLC, 2019).
The rest of inquiry pointed to the ambivalent position of the DRC’s clergy leaders, Catholic and Protestant in the post-electoral crisis and the post-Kabila DRC. Two assumptions are highlighted. First, the “political function of Churches”, as denoted by Jean Francois Bayart (J. F. Bayart, 1973) often replaces political institutions in certain of their functions. When a civil society is repressed by a predatory state, a vacuum occurs in the political system. Since Churches remain “zones of freedom” and in some cases are more or less a “state within a state”. They tend to take up the political functions of the official entities. This leads to direct confrontation with the state (ibidem). Second, in the case of the DRC’s post-electoral crisis, the “sacerdotal neutrality” of the CENCO as institution has been questioned because of their biased public backing of Mr. Martin Fayulu (without displaying evidence of electoral fraud) in detriment of Mr. Felix Tshisekedi when both, alongside the Catholic Church, previously confronted a common political adversary: Joseph Kabila. The election of Felix Tshisekedi split the CENCO in many fractions based on ethnical and ideological allegiances. Unlike the viewpoint of their hierarchy, bishops from Kasai and South Kivu regions, where Felix Tshisekedi and his wife are respectively native, publicized their support to the elected President and endorsed the election outcomes. Additionally, Catholic bishops are currently categorized, by some informants, as politically pro-LAMUKA coalition and their resurgent rhetoric in the post-Kabila DRC is perceived as a way of undermining Tshisekedi’s peace-rebuilding policies in the Eastern Congo. Voices are raising locally and in Congolese diaspora calling the Church in the DRC to play the role of “a palaver tree” which promotes open communication, anamnesis, and social reconciliation (Bujo, 2001; Scheid, 2011). In sum, this Chapter supports the argument that, in a highly religious country like the DRC with
strong trust in Clergy and distrust in politicians, exposure to religious sermons, largely diffused by social networks, can regulate political participation by providing metaphysical instruction that impact how the recipient Christian audience responds to political opportunities such as protests, electoral voting and partisan positioning.
Chapter 5: Religious Institutions and Public Services in the DRC: Unfolding the Hybridity of CENCO and ECC as State co-partners.

My greatest weakness or regret after ruling over the DRC would be my failure, alongside my administration, to transform the Congolese at the human capital level.

Joseph Kabila, 26 January 2018, Kinshasa, DRC.

The main social priorities of my mandate are defined as follows: First, make effective the gratuity of primary education at public scale...Second, promote a better match between education and employment, through an ambitious strategy of technical and professional training, designed and implemented in partnership with the private sector, third, to advance the work of universal health coverage...Lastly, the digitization of the economy that will allow the country to make rapid progress in the fight against corruption and various economic crimes

Felix Antoine Tshisekedi, 28 September 2019, New York, USA.

5.1. Introduction

This Chapter appraises how and why CENCO and ECC have interacted with the State in the DRC in the domain of public services’ delivery with a specific emphasis on the sectors of education and health assistance in the past recent years. On 24 January 2018 during a Q & A session broadcasted by the national television Radio Television Nationale du Congo (RTNC), one of the guest journalists asked the incumbent President Joseph Kabila about his biggest regret after presiding over the DRC for 17 years. The first statement above disclosed his personal acknowledgement of not having been able to change what Thomas Holbrook and James C. Garand call the “Homo Economicus”—productive capacity of the Congolese during his presidential rule (Holbrook & Garand, 1996). By reminder, J. Kabila came to power in January 2001 after the assassination of his father Laurent Desiré Kabila who overthrew the Mobutu’s regime in May 1997 with the military support of Rwandan, Burundian and Ugandan armies. In his response to the
journalist’s question, J. Kabila recognized the incapacity of his administration to transform the Zairian/Congolese mentality and behavior that was shaped during the rule of Mobutu. Taking account of this vacuum, the current president Felix A. Tshisekedi delivered a speech (second quotation above) at the 74th General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) in New York, USA, where he displayed the four main priorities of his presidential mandate focusing on the domains that put human capital at the center: education, health assistance, employment, and justice. In 2018 when his research was launched, the DRC was indexed by the UNDP as a “failed state” (UNDP, 2018; Messner et al., 2018).

In the context of this State failure or incapacity, informal non-state actors and institutions like Faith-based Organizations (FBOs) have been actively involved in the provision of basic services to the country’s citizens (De Herdt & Titeca, 2019; Lindström, 2019; Seay, 2013a).

With empirical groundings, the Chapter argues that CENCO and ECC have provided public services in a ‘hybrid governance’ paradigm while investing in the human capital alongside or in replacement of the DRC’s State actors. It also underlines the relevance of this ‘negotiated statehood’ for the social reconstruction of the DRC in the past recent years and afterwards. The Chapter supports the ‘Weberian’ central argument that Religion constitutes a “force for political change” and can be a “developmental driver”

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93 The Fund for Peace (FFF) provides some indicators to describe a “failed/fragile/weak state”. The following attributes are often used to categorize it:

- Loss of control over the entire or a part of its national territory.
- Erosion of legitimate authority to make collective decisions due to lack of national cohesiveness.
- Inability to provide basic public services to its population like education, healthcare, employment etc…
- Inability to interact peacefully and diplomatically with other states as full member of the international community.

Other facts are added to these common characteristics such as widespread corruption and criminality, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees, and sharp economic decline.
in a Christian-majority nation like the DRC through its FBOs (P Gifford, 2015, p. 12; Weber, 1905). For this purpose, it analyzes four main issues. Firstly, it theoretically discusses the hybridity of governance between Religious Institutions (RI) and the State. It places the discussion within the recent and growing literature in International Development Studies (IDS) that debates the role of FBOs as “informal political institutions” in development and state-building. Secondly, it explores the educational system in the DRC and looks at how Religious Institutions have participated in this sector across successive regimes in the DRC. Thirdly, it points to the field of health assistance starting by investigating the themes of suffering, illness, and death in the African Congolese worldview. This section also evaluates how this distinctive standpoint regulated the beliefs and behaviors of local Christians regarding the outbreak of viruses like Ebola and Covid-19 in the DRC, particularly in the city of Kinshasa. Practically, it examines the role the Congolese Christian community played in response to health challenges that ravaged the country. Fourthly, it displays about the nexus between this hybridity of governance and the post-2016 changes in CENCO and ECC’s attitudes and public action, and to what extent they can both participate as key actors in the transformation of *l’Homme Congolais* and as potential engineers of the country’s social reconstruction alongside the State.

5.2. R.I. and State in a ‘hybrid governance’ paradigm

Over recent decades, many books and articles have been published by African scholars exploring the public role of Religion in dealing with current social, economic and political challenges in their continent (Bediako, 2004; Dedji, 2003; Ijatuyi-Morphi, 2014; Kä-Mana, 2002, 2004; Katongole, 2011; Mugambi, 1995; Wariboko, 2012). Concurrently,
major international institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and European donor organizations have noticed the decline of the secular framework and are now giving more attention to religion as potent agent of development in Africa (Ellis & Haar, 2004; Marshall & Keough, 2004; Schminke, 1998). Publications on the social and political aspects of religion in development processes are increasingly emerging from several perspectives either in the western or African circles. Public theologians, political theorists and social scientists have seriously started to incorporate Religion in their development thinking and policies (Berger, 1999; Bompani & Frahm-Arp, 2010; Clarke & Jennings, 2008; K. Marshall et al., 2007; Marshall & Keough, 2004; Rakodi, 2013). Most of these documents highlight the role of religion in the public sphere specifically in the domains of politics and development.

Blair (Blair, 2013), Lyne (Lyne, 2008) and Kyamusugulwa (Kyamusugulwa, 2015a, 2015b; 2014) narrow the discussion by exploring an under-researched subject related to the role of customary chiefs, religious leaders, or local leadership in supporting or hindering development policies and processes. Several researches have increasingly been deployed in the recent years exploring the public role of FBOs and faith leaders as legitimate and key actors in the quest for developmental and political transformation (Bompani & Valoise, 2017; Ellis & Haar, 2007; P Gifford, 2015; Rakodi, 2013). They have produced more nuanced approaches, including a new body of evidence that views religion as a resource and a capital base from which change agents and social engineers can draw models, values, and alternative visions of hope for development (Carbonnier, 2013; Tomalin, 2015). This literature explores how faith communities and FBOs can provide social and spiritual infrastructure upon which societal goals are advanced. For
example, recent publications dealing with issues of Religion and International Development and/or Affairs have provided new evidence on the role of faith-inspired organizations in the provision of health (Olivier & Wodon, 2014; Seay, 2013), education (Wodon, 2014) and justice (Lindstrom, 2019; Verweijen, 2015) services in Africa. While the market share and reach to the poor of those organizations is not as large as often believed, the evidence points to often higher satisfaction of the users of services than for other providers. Apart from the role of FBOs, there has also been a focus in the literature on faith leaders and their potentially catalytic role in interventions ranging from conflict mitigation to post-war reconstruction in ‘weak/fragile’ countries such as the DRC.

The DRC is ranked as one of the richest African nations in terms of natural resources and also hosts Christians who make up over 95% of the country’s population. Despite its natural wealth and regular flows of aid funds from donors to the state, informal structures/organizations arose to provide services when the state failed or withdrew to do so. This reality finds echoes in Migdal and Schlichte’s paradigm that distinguishes the image of the state, on one side and the state as represented in a heterogeneous set of practices on the other (Schlichte & Joel Migdal, 2005). The constructed gap between the two regulates the “space of the game” within which state officials negotiate the daily governance of public services. Such a paradigm implies that non-state actors often occupy this space either by replacing or complementing the state as service provider. According to Camilla Lindstrom who studied the interlinkages between non-state donors and the State in the DRC, the term “hybrid governance” refers to these new organizational arrangements that incorporate local institutions and popular organizations in order to fill gaps in state capacity (Lindstrom, 2019, p. 1; Meagher et al., 2014). The following
sections display how this kind of ‘hybridity’ of governance allows FBOs like CENCO and ECC to co-produce public services in the education and health sectors, and the relevance of such regulatory arrangements in human capital investment for the country’s social reconstruction.


5.3.1. Catholic & Protestant missions, pioneers of Education in the DRC.

The first article of the DRC’s constitution puts in evidence the secularity of the State. However, the government continues to rely on religious organizations to provide public services such as education. The Ministry of Education attests that approximately 72 percent of primary school students and 65 percent of secondary school students attended government-funded schools administered by Religious Institutions (US Department of State, 2021, pp. 5–6). This reality stems from Catholic and Protestant missions that had the monopoly of education in the pre-independent Congo (Boyle, 1992; Kabongo-Mbaya, 1992; Markowite, 1973; Ndaywel-è-Nziem, 1998). Shortly after arriving in the Congo in 1878, the Protestant missions started to establish schools for the natives. The propagation and appropriation of Christian faith required the abilities of reading and writing. It was also a necessity to translate the Bible into vernacular languages and to teach the tenets of Christian faith in some organized fashion. “Catholics, recognizing that schools would become a major vehicle for conversion—any African child who attended a mission school was bound to undergo intensive proselytization—also created schools” (Markowitz, 1970, p. 238). As previously denoted, Catholic missionaries were privileged and highly funded by the Leopoldian regime on the multinational concessions that put

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94 The DRC’s constitution approved by Referendum in 2004 and promulgated in 2006.
Protestants at a significant competitive disadvantage. In his article that examines the Jesuit-Protestant relations in the Belgian colonial epoch, Toussaint Kafarhire Murhula denotes that "Protestant missionaries felt discriminated against on many fronts, not least when it came to the ownership of land: whereas Jesuits ended up with 37,208 hectares of land by 1913 because of the 1906 concordat, the Protestants had only 209 hectares. The government also subsidized Catholic schools, which were nurseries for state agents and church converts" (Kafarhire-Murhula, 2018, p. 209).

Despite this competition for Congolese souls, both Catholic and Protestant missions built many schools throughout the country by allowing locals to get education. Consequently, most of the political elites who fought for independence of African countries were trained in schools managed by Christian missionaries. Some western and African scholars argue that Christianity has been closely linked to the rise of African nationalism (Berman, 1974; Erlank, 2009; Masondo, 2018; W.E. Phipps, 1972; Sanneh, 1984). While evaluating the legacy of Lamin Sanneh in the World Christianity’s literature, Wanjiru M. Gitau stresses,

Far from destroying indigenous cultures, missionary work catalyzed the preservation and stimulation of these cultures. Missionaries helped to preserve languages that were threatened by rising lingua-francas. Their grammars, dictionaries, primers, readers, and systematic compilations of proverbs, stories, and customs also furnished the scientific community with documentation for modern study of cultures. In turn, as converts came to have alternative readings of the translated scriptures, particularly of the Old Testament, and to discover the alignment of the Old Testament world with the local cultural customs, communities all over Africa used the gains of mission to offset or fight back against colonial domination; in this, mission work itself had the impact of equipping the nationalists themselves with a language of resistance (Gitau, 2020).

While reading Gitau’s attributes to Lamin Sanneh, two take-aways can be underlined. First, in contrast to scholars who emphasized on the ‘complicit’ association of Christianity with Colonialism, Sanneh celebrates the logic of the translatable nature of the Bible
in local vernacular languages as a key that spread Christianity in the global South, in Africa particularly over the last 200 years (L. Sanneh, 1984; 2009). Second, the Gambian scholar stresses on collateral effects of Christianity with the rise of African nationalism during the colonial era. Many African pro-independence activists such as Kwame N’Krumah, Patrice-Emery Lumumba, Julius Nyerere etc. were trained at mission schools. This reality also concurred to the identity formation of converts who were enabled to read and found by themselves a large of commonalities between the Old Testament accounts and African customs. As illustration, readers of the translated scriptures could relate the fate of Hebrews as aliens, under the pharaonic yoke as narrated in the book of Exodus, with the political status of African people during the colonial times. The sacred book, particularly the Old Testament proffered political and rhetorical references for African liberation theologians and politicians. Even the Apartheid abolitionist and leader of African National Congress (ANC), Nelson Mandela celebrated this contribution at the Eight General Assembly of World Conference of Churches (WCC) in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1998. Mandela confirms, “My generation id the product of missionary education. Without that I would not be here today, I will never have sufficient words to thank the missionaries for what they did for us” (P Gifford, 2015, p. 85). Indeed, schools built by Western missions became crucial catalysts and bases that initiated the development and burgeoning of religious liberty, mass education, large printing of literacy, major colonial reforms, and the codification of legal protection rights for the colonized.

Edward Berman denotes, “Missionaries, as agents of European Churches constructed schools because education was deemed indispensable to the main purpose of the Christian denominations—the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Missionaries
recognized that the school was, in the words of one commentator, “the nursery of the Infant Church” (Berman, 1974, p. 527). Dr. Robert N’Kwim Bibi-Bikam asserts that the two emblematic pioneers of the Congolese independence, Joseph Kasa-Vubu and Patrice-Emery Lumumba respectively attended mission-related schools from where they nurtured their ideas of political resistance. Those two statemen also represented the two major religious educational legacies in the DRC. Educated by Roman Catholic missionaries as an aspiring priest, Kasa-Vubu later became a lay teacher. In 1942, he officially decided to enter the civil service and occupied the rank of chief clerk, the highest position open to Congolese in the Belgian colonial administration. Before becoming the first president of the independent Congo in 1960, Kasa-Vubu held important offices in Congolese cultural societies and alumni associations that were actually political organizations operating in defiance of Belgian authorities (Britannica, 2021). Patrice-Emery Lumumba, instead, attended a Protestant mission school and became active in the club of the évolués (Western-educated Africans). He became closer to the circles of AMIPRO (Association des Amis des Missions Protestantes—Association of Friends of Protestant Missions) (Kabongo-Mbaya, 1992, p. 100,101,366). Lumumba gained notoriety when he began to write essays and poems for local journals. His Protestantism was evidenced in his reactionary promptitude, rhetorical tone and political activism. He became the Congo’s first prime minister in 1960. In sum, Kasa-Vubu and Lumumba can be sampled as statemen whose political identity was shaped by their religious education at colonial mission-related schools.

95 Interview with Professor Robert Bibi Bikam N’Kwim, 12 October 2018, Kinshasa DRC.
The education sector continued to evolve under the control of religious networks, principally the Catholic church after the country’s independence in 1960. Until the early 1970s, Congo was classified as among the African countries that benefited from the best school and university infrastructure with supervision of faith-based actors and institutions (Kisangani, 2012; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002; Young & Turner, 1985). In her analytic narrative of state building and decline cycles in Congo/Zaire, Gabi Hesselbeen traces this prosperous moment within the period that goes between 1966 and 1974 (Hesselbein, 2007, pp. 25–28). Unfortunately, this school provision was interrupted with President Mobutu’s politics of authenticity in 1974. His authoritarian regime nationalized all schools, even foreign-owned businesses were confiscated by Zairian citizens and the situation became to decline (Kabongo-Mbaya, 1992; Kiteti-Boya, 2010; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002; Young & Turner, 1985). It resulted that “without the assent of the religious networks, particularly their financial support and personnel, the entire education system, in the context of the wider economic crisis, came close to collapse. The government sought to convince the Catholic Church to cooperate in a state-regulated education sector. This resulted in 1977, in the signing of convention between the state and the churches for the management of national schools” (Titeca et al., 2013, p. 120).

The 1977 convention continues to serve as a functional framework of this ‘negotiated arrangement’ between the state and religious networks until now. It stipulates that Churches are assigned to manage these convention-based schools and the state, in principle, keeps the organizational power and financial funding. Based on the statistics provided by the Ministère de l’Enseignement Primaire, Sécondaire et Professionnel—MEPS (Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Professional Education), convention-based
schools (managed by religious networks in the DRC) attract three-quarters of all students. Among these, the Catholic church schools provide education to about 50% of all of them (CENCO, 2020). Consequently, religious institutions in occurrence the CENCO and ECC have been and continue to co-work with the State in the sector of education across the country in the line with the deal signed in 1977. However, both CENCO and ECC have also initiated the creation of ‘faith-affiliated universities’ in the recent decades that deserve attention for our study in view of their contribution to identity formation and country’s reconstruction.

5.3.2. Christian Higher Education between Identity formation and Nation-rebuilding

There is a large recognition among scholars from various disciplines that education and identity formation (both individual and communal) are linked (Davidson, 1996; Kaplan & Flum, 2009; McCaslin, 2009). Likewise, Avi Kaplan and Hanoch Flum assess that identity formation interrelates with modes of knowledge construction and accessibility to different types of knowledge. For those scholars, academic learning cannot be divorced from students’ development of values, goals, social roles, and worldviews (Kaplan & Flum, 2012). Ronald David Glass, on one side, thinks that “identity formation occurs within the dynamics of bio-psycho-social development and is impacted by a variety of both intimate and impersonal institutions, ranging from the family to religion, the media, and the state” (Glass, 2011, p. 15). Drawing from school reformers such as Horace Mann and John Dewey in the US, and Paulo Freire in Brazil, Michael S. Katz denotes that public education remains a unique institution that brings together a wide range of young people in a shared experience of learning and participation with mechanisms for fostering changes in values, attitudes and behaviors (Katz et al., 2008). In other terms, knowledge
production goes hand in hand with identity formation. Educational settings play a constructive role in the formation of a country’s intellectuals and elite. Likewise, our study is interested in looking at three things. First, the societal and moral consequences of the nationalization of universities previously founded and administrated by religious networks like Catholics and Protestants. The old universities such as Lovanium Catholic University and University of Kisangani (built by Protestant missionaries) respectively founded in 1954 and 1963, were combined with the National University of Zaire (UNAZA) by the State in 1971. The economic chaos that resulted from these moves caused the government to quickly rescind its plans and the result of this upheaval was disastrous for the educational system. The withdrawal of religion from Universities’ settings as imposed by Mobutu totalitarian regime resulted to a moral decline and meantime impacted the quality of public education in the following decades.

Second, in the late 1980s at the brink of the ‘third wave of democratization’, religious networks, specifically the Catholic Church and the Protestant Church decided to create their autonomous institutes and universities (that function independently from the state’s control in terms of administration and funding) to fill a vacuum created by the weakness of the state. It is important to highlight here that both the Université Catholique du Congo (UCC—Catholic University in Congo) and the Université Protestante au Congo (UPC—Protestant University in Congo) initially started as schools of theology. Several

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96 Founded in 1957, UCC started as Catholic Faculty of Theology of Kinshasa (FTCK). In 1987, with the decision of CENCO, CFTK was renamed Catholic Faculties of Kinshasa with additional schools. During the plenary assembly of July 2009, CFTK were officially proclaimed Catholic University of Congo (UCC) whose statutes were already approved in 2003 and the rules of Procedure in 2008. For more details: [https://www.bachelorstudies.com/universities/Democratic-Republic-of-Congo/L'Université Catholique-Du-Congo/](https://www.bachelorstudies.com/universities/Democratic-Republic-of-Congo/L'Université Catholique-Du-Congo/). Founded in 1959, UPC also started as Protestant Faculty of Theology (FTP). In 1989, with the decision of ECC national synod, FTP turned into Protestant University in Congo (UPC). For more details: [https://www.educationcongo.org/congo-protestant-university](https://www.educationcongo.org/congo-protestant-university)
decades later, CENCO and ECC as administrators enlarged those existing schools to other academic disciplines (such the Humanities, Law, Economics, Medicine etc.) to meet the criteria of being registered as universities according to the government’s laws.

Third, another particularity of the DRC’s religious networks’ contribution in the sector of education relates to the institutionalization of University’s chaplaincy. Catholic and Protestant chaplains are officially selected and appointed by the CENCO and ECC but renumerated by the State. They are assigned to work alongside faculty staffs and enrolled students at both affiliated and public universities and colleges. Organizationally speaking, ECC has established a national network of all Protestant chaplains locally known as *Aumonerie Universitaire Protestante de la RDC* (AUPC—Protestant Universities’ Chaplaincy of DRC). The article 4 of the AUPC’s bylaws clearly indicates that one of its objectives is to participate in knowledge production of the country’s intellectual elite in conformity of Christian ethics (AUPC, July 2018). Particularity of AUPC is that Protestant chaplains and their families are commissioned to settle alongside university staffs and students, and on the other hand to plant “*Paroisses Universitaires*”—University Parishes on Campuses across the country on behalf of the ECC.97 As denoted earlier, religious institutions have been instrumental in building schools and universities across the country since the colonial era. The country’s first university, anciently named Lovanium Catholic University, then University of Lovanium and today known as Université de Kinshasa (UNIKIN) was founded in 1954 by the Catholic church. In 1963, Protestants followed that path by establishing another University in Kisangani (UNIKIS) at the northwestern part of the country (UPC, 2009). Even though UNIKIN and UNIKIS have

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97 Interview with Archbishop Dr. Mpereboye Mpere, National Coordinator of AUPC, 16 October 2018, Kinshasa, DRC.
become the state properties, Catholic and Protestant chaplains are assigned to mentor their co-religionary faculty staffs and enrolled students at the precited universities. Today, CENCO and ECC own and manage a large number of universities and professional institutes in the DRC but the most influential are UCC and UPC both located in Kinshasa. What is the role of Catholic and Protestant chaplains in the knowledge production, identity formation, and the country’s reconstruction?

Many voices are raising in African and African diasporic circles re-evaluating the societal impact of education on the intelligentsia with regards to socioeconomic and political struggles and issues that characterize the continent despite the tremendous wealth in terms of natural and human resources. Likewise, Clapperson Chakanetsa Mavhunga reacts, 

African research university must foster within its students and faculty a culture of inclusive, multi-optic problematizing and problem-solving, that is, one that deploys multiple skills sets and sees issues from many angles. To accomplish this, we must invest in programmes that synergize and synthesize the science and engineering curricula with the humanities, arts and social sciences in order to generate opportunities, solve problems and create physical and intellectual infrastructures for that purpose (Mavhunga, 2017, p. 29).

In his in-depth diagnosis of the higher education sector in Africa, Mavhunga advocates for a problem-solving curriculum for students to address current problems and future challenges in the continent. This African scholar emphasizes on material and cognitive infrastructures of knowledge production but neglected to discuss about the ethical dimension of students’ identity formation. While pointing to the issues facing Africa today, scholars like Tokunboh Ayedemo, Gottfield Osei-Mensah, and Tite Tienou, at the same time, refocus the debate by considering “the lack of a godly leadership as the cradle of Africa’s problems” (Adeyemo, 2007; Osei-Mensah, 1989). The leadership deficit has plagued Africa and deepened the continent’s political and socio-economic crisis.
Combining Mavhunga’s appeal for education reforms with Ayedemo, Osei-Mensah and Tienou’s claims pushes us to assert that Africa’s problems are firstly ethical rather than structural. Morality-driven leadership and citizenry strategically matters for Africa’s holistic transformation (Mbata-Mangu, 2017; Mukwege, 2017; Ngoma-Binda, 2019). This statement finds a similar consideration in late Dr. Tokumboh Ayedemo’s Africa’s Enigma and Leadership Solutions. “Leadership is the measure of any nation, institution or organization. If the people in leadership are intellectually and morally bankrupt and moribund, chances are that the nation, institution or organization will be unprogressive and backward. But where there is dynamic, visionary, altruistic and integral leadership, you will find that followers are forward-looking, engaging, committed and generally optimistic” (Adeyemo, 2007, pp. 53–56). As stated, the moral regeneration of intellectuals and elites constitutes an important tenet of a country’s social reconstruction. Ethics and knowledge production need to be the foci of education.

Reverend Father Leonard Santedi-Kinpuku explains the reasons that motivated Catholic bishops of CENCO to create the faculty of Political Science within UCC in 2007 as follows,

UCC is called upon to train experts in Political Science in order to encourage and support the desire of the people towards the establishment of good political governance. Students trained in this science are called to harmonize academic and professional maturation with training in moral and religious principles and initiation into the social doctrine of the Church because, precisely at UCC we believe to a society that is built on the basis of spiritual and ethical values, as the basis of all development, therefore, for us, politics must be accompanied by ethics, as they say, science without conscience is only the ruin of soul, the same, politics without ethics is only deception, vain demagogy and in the end is nothing but ruin for society.98

98 Interview with the UCC’s rector Father Leonard Santedi-Kinpuku, 22 October 2018, Kinshasa
Similarly, this Congolese religious actor and academic also considers the ethical
deficiency in political arena as the principal cause of state decline or failure in the DRC.
At that level, university chaplaincy can serve as a catalyst for moral regeneration within
 campuses among educators live and, where students are in-training for their future
professional careers (Frankel & WE Hewitt, 1994; O'Doherty, 1969; Stendahl, 1963;
Taves, 1963). However, the collaboration between religious networks and the State in the
education sector experiences some praxeological difficulties.

5.3.3. Challenges and Tensions between R.I. and the State in the educational sector

In their article “Governance with Empty Pockets: Education sector in the DRC”,
Tom de Herdt and Kristof Titeca explore the tensional trajectory between religious
networks and the State in terms of ‘regulatory arrangements’ related to education (De
Herdt & Titeca, 2016). Based on their on-field quantitative data collection, both scholars
indicate how the DRC’s state has indeed retreated from being an active provider of
education. Public finance for primary education and education in general fell dramatically
over a number of decades, from more than US $ 150 per pupil in 1982 to around US$ 10
per pupil in 2006. There was also a significant decrease in the number of teachers in
primary and secondary schools on the state’s payroll by with 25 per cent and their salaries
being cut by more than half. The crisis reached its paramount in 1992 and 1993 when
Congolese teachers went on a major strike because of the state’s incapacity to pay their
salaries. As a remedy to the two-year long strike known as the two ‘white years’ (années
blanches—in French), the Catholic church and the association of students’ parents jointly
decided to take care of the teachers’ salaries due to the state failure.
Both parties agreed to allow schools to ask students’ parents to pay ‘teacher bonus fees’ locally called (*frais de motivation*—*motivation fee*) to supplement teachers’ salaries (Titeca et al., 2013). It is important to note here that more than 80 % of all public schools are managed by religious networks but financed, in principle, by the state. This regulatory framework, that was seen to be temporary measure, has later become an institutionalized practice until the DRC 2004 constitution officially declared that ‘education in primary public schools is free and compulsory’ (Article 46). Despite this constitutional declaration, the gratuity of primary education only became a reality under President Felix Tshisekedi’s administration as displayed in his speech of 24 September 2019 at the UN General Assembly (see the second quotation at the beginning of this Chapter).

Unfortunately, clashes between religious networks, more vividly the Catholic church, and Tshisekedi’s new administration have been recently evidenced regarding the implementation of primary education gratuity. In this matter, the CENCO through its Secretary General, Father Donatien Nsholé denotes,

> The management of free basic education suffers from a leadership deficit within the education sector, characterized by short-term actions, lack of vision, planning and budgeting in the time. Several instructions from the Ministry and General Secretariat aimed at the effects and not at the substantive problems and in some cases, they had the consequences of opening unfavorable breaches in the good management and consolidation of free education (CENCO, 2021).

This is what emerged from an inventory made by the National Episcopal Conference of Congo (CENCO), of the application of free basic education in Catholic-affiliated schools in the DRC. A statement on this subject was made public on Wednesday 13 January 2021 by Father Donatien Nshole, Secretary General of CENCO. Although, free primary education is constitutional provision in the DRC, but its implementation
actually faces some holdbacks in Catholic circles. With 18,638 schools on a national scale, the Catholic church oversees 5,572,611 students and 253,844 teachers. CENCO notifies that among those teachers, 40,851 (16.1%) work without being paid by the state. The Catholic church is currently accused by public opinion to be in a defiance to the free education project as initiated by the DRC head of State, Felix Tshisekedi. Reacting to this situation, CENCO expressed its determination to support the process of free basic education that goes in line with the church social doctrine in its preferential option for the poor. CENCO’s Secretary General concludes, “our wish is that the new government, that the Congolese people impatiently awaits, urgently address this issue because under current conditions, free education risks turning into a bomb that will compromise the future of our children and will further destroy our country, the DRC” (CENCO, 2021; Agenzia Fides, 2021).

On the other side, Tshisekedi’s administration relies on international donors and partners to make the gratuity of primary school effective across the country. The World Bank (WB) re-affirms its engagement to support free primary education and maternal and child health improvements in the DRC (World Bank, 2021; Show 2021). In June 2020, the WB’s board of Executive Directors approved to allocate USD one Billion dollars from the International Development Association to build human capital in the DRC. Of this amount, USD 800 million Emergency Equity and System strengthening in Education Project (EESSE) to be implemented over a period of four years (2020-2024). Recently, the vice-president of the WB for East and Austral Africa, M. Hafez Ghanem renewed his financial institution’s commitment to work alongside the DRC’s state in the education and health sectors. Through a videoconference with President Tshisekedi, this WB officer also
promises to accompany institutional reforms as initiated by the DRC’s Head of state. At that level, it is curious to ask why the CENCO is still complaining about the lack of salaries' payment for teachers at Catholic-affiliated schools. The first payment of 100 million USD was foreseen in favor of the primary, secondary, and technical ministry. However, this disbursement was not made after the General Inspectorate of Finance (IGF) revelations of breaches, in particular cases of fraud and embezzlement of public funds (IGF, 2021; Show 2012; World Bank, 2021). This situation of corruption, fraud and money embezzlement requires a moral regeneration of the State. It is recognized that religion can play a key role in providing moral frameworks and shaping social ethics and identities. The next section discusses the “hybrid governance” between RI and the State in the health sector, and how religious communities, particularly in Kinshasa, dealt with Ebola and Covid-19 outbreaks.

5.4. Faith-Health Nexus within R.I.-State “hybrid governance” paradigm

Similar to the education system, the health sector in the DRC has also benefited from a “negotiated arrangement” or “hybrid governance” between the state and religious networks, particularly the Catholic church and Protestant Churches (De Herdt & Titeca, 2019; Gibson-Fall, 2019; Lindstrom, 2019; Seay, 2013b). Foreign non-state donors have played a significant role in this sector like in other spheres of human development. They started to engage in the DRC on a large scale after the Sun City peace-agreement in 2002 that resulted in a power-sharing between the Congolese government and belligerents, and in peaceful transition to the held elections of 2006. As an illustration of international donors’ investment, in 2016 the DRC was beneficiary of an aid estimated to over USD 2.1 billion in Official Development Assistance (ODA) in relation to the
government’s budget for that year, which was around $ 4.53 billion (Lindstrom, 2019; DRC MoB, 2015). Despite this large amount of funds and the DRC being seen as a role model for community health care in sub-Saharan Africa at the early 1970s, Lindstrom remarks, “today, the health system is in a sad state with, for example, one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world and recurrent outbreaks of epidemics…the health sector has virtually disappeared from the Congolese state budget. Government spending on health is extremely low” (Lindstrom, 2019; USAID, 2018).

In such context, some development scholars advocate for “hybrid governance” as a practical response to state failure or withdrawal and encourage donors to collaborate with a range of local active non-state actors for public services’ provision (Boege et al., 2009; Sardan, 2011). Meantime, others raise criticism about this regulatory framework for reasons related to state legitimacy or authority, transparency, and accountability (Hillhorst et al. 2010; Mcloughlin, 2015; Meagher, 2012; OECD, 2010). The latter group is driven by a state-centric discourse and views service delivery in state building and reconstruction practices as a tool for reinforcing the legitimacy and authority of formal institutions. For the development scholar Jeremy Allouche, the disjunction between service-provision and the objectives of state-building explains why donors have failed to consider non-state service providers as potential partners in post-conflict reconstruction and state-building (Allouche, 2014; Lindström, 2019). In other terms, a European and Weberian conception of the state as a legal personality and an ordering institutionalized power does not work or adapt well in most contemporary post-conflict environments where formal and informal institutions are public service co-providers.  

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99 In *Economy and Society* (Weber, 1978), Max Weber identified the following characteristics of a state: 1) the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory; 2) centralization
The DRC’s case is illustrative in terms of regulatory governance where non-state actors have played and continue to play a significant role in statecraft and reconstruction. Religious networks such as the Catholic Church and Protestant Churches have actively engaged in health assistance delivery ever since the colonial era (Seay, 2013a). Based on the estimations, both FBOs own and supervise 50% of the health facilities and co-manage with the state despite its “empty pockets”, around 40 % of the health zones (Baer, 2007; De Herdt & Titeca, 2019). “That FBOs play a major role in providing health care at the community level is quite frequent in Africa. However, what makes the situation in the DRC differ from other countries is that, in addition to providing direct services, the FBOs are in principle co-managing health zones together with the state” highlights Camilla Lindstrom (Lindstrom, 2019, p. 78). As expressed in his speech at the UN General Assembly, the DRC’s President Felix Tshisekedi has inserted the health sector as one of his four priorities alongside education, employment, and justice. Collaboration between the state and religious networks in view of their health-related infrastructures becomes mandatory and will facilitate an effective investment in the human capital for the nation’s reconstruction. As proven, such investment in human resources increases their efficiency to actively participate in the collective flourishing (Sidibé, 2016; Tomalin, 2012). In addition to organizational/material factors, people’s worldviews about suffering and health also need to be considered because they regulate beliefs, incentives, and behaviors in response to health challenges.

of the material and the means to rule; 3) distribution of the powers of command among various organs (a rational constitution; 4) an administrative and legal order that claims binging authority over all within its jurisdiction; 5) subjection of this order to change through legislation, 6) organized enforcement and realization of this order ( an administrative staff); and 7) regulation of the competition for political office according to established rules.
5.4.1. Suffering and Health in the African Congolese Worldview

As previously noted, Religion is no longer “blind-spotted” but increasingly becoming an important issue to development theoreticians, donors, and practitioners. Religion as a force of change and developmental catalyst also shapes social identities and moral frameworks. Using a deductive model of reasoning, it appears worthy to engage with the themes of suffering, illness and death in the African religious cosmology and evaluates how this distinctive standpoint has regulated the beliefs and behaviors of local faith communities and institutions while coping with diseases and epidemics. Certainly, the DRC is known according to its high mortality rate. Statistical reports count several millions of Congolese people who died, especially in the Eastern regions due to civil wars and humanitarian crisis (Katongole, 2018; Stearns, 2011). It is recorded as the world’s deadliest tragedy since the World War II. Using qualitative methods, this study sought to analyze how religious and cultural views have influenced people’s perceptions and reactions to Ebola and Covid-19 outbreaks in the DRC, particularly in the city of Kinshasa.

Clifford Geertz defines religion as “1) a system of symbols which acts 2) to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by 3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and, 4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that 5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic” (Geertz & Darnton, 1973, p. 90). The definition of this anthropologist of cultures clarifies the interrelationship between people’s worldview and their behaviors. The above assertion is strongly evidenced in Africa where religion permeates every facet of life. Undoubtedly, Africans are ontologically religious. John Mbiti points out that:
It is believed in many African societies that their morals were given to them by God from the very beginning. This provides an unchallenged authority for the morals. It is also believed or thought that some of the departed and the spirits watch over people to make sure that they observe the moral laws and are punished when they break them deliberately or knowingly (Mbiti, 1975, p. 174).

Indeed, Religion in Africa remains the fuse of the private and public realms, placing a strong emphasis on moral and social order in families, clans, lineages, and intra-ethnic interactions. As such, it pervades the daily affairs and conduct of African societies. Most traditional African societies employ two classes of the morals: those pertaining to individual conduct at the family level. Jacob K. Olupona stresses, “African cosmologies portray the universe as fluid, active, and impressionable, with agents from each realm constantly interacting with one another. This integrated worldview leads many practitioners of African religions to speak about the visible in tandem with invisible” (Olupona, 2014, p. 4). Africans believe that the supernatural domain of deities, ancestors, and spirits have strong influence on events and people. Benefits such as physical health, longevity, vitality, or agricultural fertility are the visible outcomes of the invisible world. God, in the African worldview, “is completely good and there is no evil in him, evil is associated with other deities, spirits and witches or sorcerers” (Kunhiyop, 2008, p. 17). In the opposite, life’s adversities like death, lighting strikes, drought, sickness, miscarriages, suffering and all other human misery are the direct work of these malevolent spirits, with whom some human beings may be in league. Evil is conceived as a force that threatens communal and individual wellbeing. With this worldview, it is necessary to understand how African faith communities and institutions interpret epidemics.

Human lives have been decimated by multiple outbreaks of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) that consecutively ravaged the DRC since its discovery in 1976. The Belgian
epidemiologist Peter Piot, while working in a lab at the institute for Tropical Medicine in Antwerp, Belgium, received blood samples of a Belgian Catholic nun and nurse who was suspected of having yellow fever and died on 30 September 1976 in Kinshasa after being transferred from the Yambuku Mission Hospital (YMH). Those samples were claimed to be originally sent by a Congolese microbiologist, Dr. Jean-Jacques Muyembe-Tamfum, who examined those sickened with a mysterious disease in then Zaire, later discovered to be Ebola. In fact, its first outbreak occurred in the DRC (formerly Zaire) in a village near the Ebola River, which gave the virus its name. The two medical doctors, Muyembe and Piot are internationally recognized as co-discoverers that virus.\textsuperscript{100} After the previous outbreaks in Kikwit areas in 1995 and Mbandaka regions in 2017, Ebola raged again in the North Kivu and Ituri provinces located in the North-Eastern part of the DRC since 1\textsuperscript{st} of August 2018. Its spread in this war-torn region of the country has killed more than 2,200 persons by making it the 2\textsuperscript{nd} deadliest Ebola epidemic in history (Gibson-Fall, 2019). Humanitarian agencies like International Rescue Committee (IRC) has been responding to the Ebola outbreak in the Congo working in more than 70 health facilities owned and managed by religious institutions and leading on infection prevention and monitoring.\textsuperscript{101}

The death of a well-known pastor contaminated by Ebola in Butembo-city, North Kivu, Eastern Congo in July 2019 was the tipping point that informed and mobilized the Christian community about this deadly virus. Catholic and Protestant churches in the

\textsuperscript{100} In 2012, Piot published a memoir entitled No Time to Lose which chronicles his professional work, including the discovery of the Ebolavirus and also mentions J.J. Muyembe in passing rather than as a co-discoverer (Piot & Marshal, 2013). Muyembe was part of the team at the Yambuku Catholic Mission Hospital that investigated the first Ebola outbreak. He is currently the General Director of Institut National des Recherches Biomédicales (INRB)—the DRC National Institute for Biomedical Research. The President Felix Tshisekedi also appointed him in March 2020 to lead the medical task force in charge of national response to COVID-19 pandemic.

\textsuperscript{101} [http://www.rescue.org/topic/ebola](http://www.rescue.org/topic/ebola) accessed on 15 September 2019
region required all their leaders and adherents to be vaccinated. Jean Baptiste Kamba, one of the pastors of Eglise Arche de l’Alliance in Goma, explained, “our church building has three main entrances where we placed people with temperature checking machines. We also set many spots for our members to watch their hands at the gates and inside the church compound” (Kowene, 2019). Faith-based leaders in North Kivu and the surrounding areas became drivers of change by encouraging their communities to help Ebola victims and enable survivors to be fully recovered and reintegrated into society through holistic assistance. “God asks for us to have faith, to pray to the Lord for the eradication of this sickness in the city of Goma and in the entire region of North Kivu. God also wants us to use our intelligence. What does it mean? We have to respect all conduct codes as required by medical agents in order to avoid contamination” recommended pastor Bakungu (Kowene, 2019). Effectively, the involvement of local religious leaders decreased the community’s resistance and violence against health facilities and expatriate or state aid workers. They also allowed a larger communal acceptance of the vaccine. Practically, health assistance has served as bridge to peace.

This concept of Health as Bridge of Peace (HBP) emerged in the 1980s and was adopted but subsequently abandoned by the World Health Organization (WHO). For F. Gibson-Fall, the HBP framework was never formally abandoned but slowly made a disappearance from WHO practice and publications (Gibson-Fall, 2019). Promoters of this concept believe that health interventions might assist in stability and reconciliation. They have provided some evidence to prove the effectiveness of this model in

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102 Fawzia Gibson-Fall, as a Senior Research Associate with the Conflict and Health Research Group at King’s College London, has been a Teaching Fellow at the Centre for Global Health and Health Partnerships and at the Royal Society of Medicine. Gibson-Fall is currently researching the role of African militaries in global health for a PhD at Queen Mary University London.
humanitarian cease-fire in Afghanistan and other conflict-affected nations in the world (WHO, 2020). The DRC’s case is complex and needs considerable analysis. Civil unrest and disease contamination have coincided in this war-torn region. Local and international media reported issues of violence against health facilities and medical workers, including cultural and political challenges that nurture the local community resistance to health services providers. As reminder, the ongoing conflict in the Eastern Congo is fueled by politics, ethnicity, land ownership and economics (Büscher, 2018; Mclean, 2017). More than 70 armed groups have occupied some of the mining areas in the provinces of North Kivu and Ituri where Ebola ravaged. In addition, Ebola has disturbed local customs like family dynamics and funeral ceremonies.

Regarding the effects of Ebola transmission in the cities of Butembo and Beni, Dr. Kighoma also deplored the cultural unawareness of governmental and expatriate health agents who worked in this region. The bodies of dead persons were buried in secret places without the approval of their families. Relatives of those who have died of Ebola would have preferred to bury them either in family lands or in a cemetery of their choice. “This situation led to the ransacking of some treatment centres where contaminated dead bodies were taken from the morgues for funeral ceremonies”.

Unfortunately, Protesters who touched the confiscated bodies became themselves contaminated. Reacting to this crisis, religious leaders and traditional chiefs emerged as mediating between health workers and local populations. They intervened as peacemakers and reconciling actors, reduced the community’s resistance, and avoided the Ebola contamination to spiral out of control. Local faith-based leaders actively collaborated with medical workers and

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103 Based on my conversation with Dr. Kighoma on 22 May 2020.
policymakers to tackle challenges related to the disease outbreak, security issues and community violence. Catholic and Protestant leaders are influential actors and local populations trust and obey them with docility. Religious actors are well-placed to intervene and provide safe environments to health workers (governmental or expatriate) and work alongside state policymakers to promote peace and security at the bottom-up level by helping to reconcile communities. In times of conflict, health centres have served as havens of peace and a common ground for belligerents seeking medical care. This “hybrid governance” in the health sector resulted in improving the delivery of public health services and in promoting post-conflict reconciliation. That evidence gives theoretical credit to humanitarian scholars and practitioners who consider that health service can serve as a peace-building bridge in warring zones.

In relation to Covid-19, the DRC’s government also sought the participation of religious networks in its mobilization to tackle the pandemic. The first case of COVID-19 in DRC was detected on 10 March 2020 in Kinshasa in a Congolese citizen returning from France. Nine days later, President Felix Tshisekedi addressed the nation on national television by imposing some restrictions such as the closure of church buildings, schools, and places of entertainment, but permitting open-air gatherings of up to twenty persons.

On 24 April 2020, after consulting a delegation of religious leaders, President Felix Tshisekedi appointed Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo as head of Fond National de Solidarité contre la Covid 19 (FNSCC—the National Solidarity Fund against Covid-19 (FNSCC). (Council of Cardinals Reflects on Life of the Church in Midst of Pandemic - Vatican News, 2020). Initially, FNSCC comprised of 12 members comprising of leaders and representatives of religious institutions in the country. By placing faith-based actors in the
management of the FNSCC, President Tshisekedi expected “that the 80 million Congolese will find satisfaction in the management of those who are supposed to preach by example…a question of guaranteeing transparency in management, traceability of assistance, and control of all donations” (Vatican News, 2020). Few days after accepting the President’s offer, the Catholic prelate held back and declined the role. Instead, Reverend Dominique Mukanya-wa-Banza, who has overseen the ECC’s Humanitarian assistance department since 2008, took that position with the approval of Reverend Dr. André Bokundoa, National President of the ECC and Legal Representative who himself presented the candidacy to the Head of State Felix Tshisekedi. According to his peers and co-religionaries at ECC, Reverend Dominique Mukanya will, without a doubt, restore broken confidence after years of corruption and mismanagement of funds intended for the State. They describe him as a man of integrity, intelligent and wise, in addition to an irreproachable morality and experience for having been regularly at the bedside of the victims of various pandemics and epidemics that ravaged in the DRC, but also victims of numerous floods and landslides due to torrential rains (Radio Okapi, 2020).

Using data collected from a remote Q/A questionnaire conducted from August to October 2020, our interest was to examine how religion and religious institutions shaped people’s perceptions about, and reactions to coronavirus pandemic in the 11 million inhabitant city of Kinshasa. The inquiry axed on three objectives. First, the description of the atmosphere during the first post-confinement church service in the capital-city of Kinshasa (for most churches it took place on Sunday 16 August 2020 as officially decreed for

104 My acknowledgements to Neunet Matondo and Francis David Mena who helped me to collect data on the field. This qualitative inquiry targeted Catholic and Protestant churches in the city of Kinshasa. Some informants requested to remain anonymous.
by the President of the DRC). Second, an analysis of interpersonal relationships between faith-based leaders and their communities during the five months of confinement. Third, the collection of information on how those who were infected and/or affected by Covid 19 survived and have access to health care from the State during this ordeal. Drawing from interviews conducted on nine different churches that belong to three Christian denominations (Catholic, Protestant and revivalist—locally called *Eglises de Reveil*), three observations have been made with regards to the religion-health debate and the “hybrid governance” between religious institutions and state in the health sector.

The first observation is that churchgoers on Sunday 16 August 2020 in Kinshasa (after the easing of restrictions by the government) have unanimously exhibited their gratitude for having been kept alive in contrast to the global collateral damage of Covid-19, particularly in the most developed nations of the world. While trying to make sense of the pandemic, faith communities in Kinshasa considered the pandemic as the Creator’s deliberated purpose to save the planetary ecosystem. Such a viewpoint finds echo in the Congolese Anglican priest Yossa Way’s interviews in the city of Bunia, in Ituri Province, Eastern Congo. “Some Christians interpreted the pandemic as a driver for God’s creation to return to its original state. They noted how the environment improved with a reduction of vehicles and aviation. Drawing on theme of judgment, some commented that the pandemic hardly struck those countries which were the worst polluters” (Wild-Wood et al., 2021, p. 72).

The second notice points to the impact of cultural perceptions about themes such as suffering and diseases on the cosmic level and public role of religious leaders. In the African worldview, the community is blessed with good health, plenty harvests, peace,
fertility etc as results of harmonious bonds with the invisible. Life’s tragedies like Ebola, HIVs or Covid-19 that provoke massive death are perceived as negative consequences of relational disruption between both worlds. African religion is communal and requires religious leaders to be mediators with the responsibility to ensure good relationships between the visible and invisible worlds. In this situation, religious leaders are mandated to appease the inter-world tension through prayers, sacrifices, and offerings whenever vertical harmony is endangered. In sum, the outbreak and spread of Covid-19 have facilitated a significant turning toward faith, with people turning to prayer, confession and conversion viewed in African cosmology as moral ways to keep harmonious bonds between the Creator and His creation.

Third, like many African countries where religion permeates every facet of life, our findings confirm the assertion that faith-based leaders and institutions could serve as hybrid governance actors in the health sector. During the five months of confinement, religious networks served as relay points between the government and their adherents. Media outfits such as WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube were instrumental tools used by religious platforms both for religious objectives and for updated communication about the pandemic.

5.5. Conclusion: “We want them to complement, not to compete with the State”

CENCO and ECC as Religious Institutions have been actively involved in the delivery of public services in the DRC for many years. This Chapter examined the complexities, challenges, and potentialities of a functional interlinkage between those two religious networks and the State particularly in the sectors of education and health, and not thoroughly in the justice arena. This study built on the emerging concept of “hybrid
“governance” in the IDS’ literature looking at how informal actors with autonomous property rights transferred part of these rights to the State without losing them. Firstly, it investigated the ways CENCO and ECC co-provided services to fill in the gaps of the state capacity or withdrawal from its role of investing in human development (HD). According to Carole Rakodi, HD incorporates,

both economic growth and the creation of an enabling environment for people to live long, healthy, and creative lives. It involves wide distribution of benefits of economic growth: access to assets, livelihoods and services, and physical and economic security. Improvements to well-being imply not just increased material resources and incomes, but also realization of rights, access to opportunities, and capacity to make the most of them (Rakodi, 2013, p. 18).

The DRC’s case is very illustrative in terms of Religious Institutions’ investment in the realm of human development of citizens because the Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches own and manage the larger number of schools and health infrastructures across the country. Indeed, religious leaders as informal non-state actors remain very influential and benefit from the concepts of legitimacy, trust, and authority among the populations. Secondly, our inquiry displayed that, religious institutions could serve as helpful partners of the State in the domains of moral regeneration and identity formation in tackling the State predation due to corruption, fraud, and money embezzlement. The central argument of this Chapter is that Religion constitutes a driver of political change and can be a developmental catalyst in a Christian-majority country like the DRC where Religion permeates every facet of life and where religious figures are more influential than state actors.

In agreement with scholars who consider the concept of “hybrid governance” as a developmental alternative in “weak states”, I assert that religious platforms and the State
in the DRC are called to participate as complementary actors rather than antagonists (Allouche, 2014; Boege et al., 2009; Huylbroeck et al., 2009; Lindstrom, 2019; Sardan, 2011). In this way, both partners become co-providers of public services that Congolese people need the most and co-engineers of human development for social reconstruction as envisioned in the speech of President Felix Tshisekedi at the UN 74th General Assembly.
PART IV


Africa is severely wounded by the roughness of ugly struggles and conflicts in political, social, economic, and religious spheres. They have inflicted deep wounds from ruthless blows on the body, the mind, and the soul, which affect the whole of society. This is an alarming face of African history, from ancient to contemporary conflicts. Africa has been wailing and weeping for peace here, everywhere, now, and then.


The political and security environment in the Democratic Republic of Congo remains volatile. I take note of President Tshisekedi’s efforts to form a new governing majority, geared towards advancing the key reforms required for placing the country firmly on the path to lasting peace, stability, and sustainable development.

Antonio Gutteriez, UN General Secretary, 30 March 2021.

6.1. Introduction

This Chapter discusses how and why theology has influenced the shift recently observed in the CENCO and ECC’s political participation, and on the other hand in social reconstruction debates, processes, practices, and prospects. With regards to its post-conflict environment (PCE), the DRC has been seeking peace, stability and state rebuilding for many decades as evidenced by the two quotations above from the African theologian John Samuel Mbiti and the current UN Secretary General Antonio Gutteriez. The Chapter stemmed from my fieldwork follow-up and observation conducted in Kinshasa, DRC both in 2019 and early 2020. Those periods chronologically referred to the post-Kabila era and two major themes emerged and were discussed with the participants of this study. The first theme related to the role of Theology in religious
ecumenism and political participation in dialogue with Moltmann’s Social Trinitarianism (ST) regarding its ethical and practical relevance for the Church and society. The second was about the impact of identity recovery in Social Reconstruction (SR) processes, practices, and prospects. Objectively, SR points to a) peaceful co-existence and unity within a population using non-violent ways to settle disputes, b) addressing past abuses through reconciliation, c) identifying social problems that need to be tackled such as racism, poverty, unemployment, crime, political corruption etc. with the goal of creating better, more democratic, and just societies (Garcia, n.d.; Russell, 2004; Social Reconstruction | United States Institute of Peace, 2021).

This Chapter argues that theology, as “a particular kind of reflexive action, aimed at the understanding who God is, how he works in the world, how people ought to relate to God and what they can expect from him” (N. Haynes, 2019, p. 4), has shaped the political participation of religious leaders/actors and their involvement in the DRC’s social reconstruction as well. In other terms, individual and collective activities of social actors, driven by religious ideas and ideals, help to foster a societal environment that benefits of the regulation of justice for all, the national cohesion, and state rebuilding in a highly Christian nation like the DRC. The Chapter also engages a dialectical and critical conversation about the political Theology of identity reconstruction transmitted by prophet Simon Kimbangu, regarded alongside Cardinal Malula and Reverend pastor Jean-Iffoto Bokeleale as “Fathers of the Congolese Christianities” (J. L. Allen, 2017; Dreyfus, 1962; Kenny & Wenger, 2020; Loba-Mkole, 2017). This re-constructivist endeavor seeks to achieve three goals. First, to analyze the contemporary legacies and relevance of Kimbangu’s thoughts and actions. Second, to discuss the contribution of his political
hermeneutics to the debates regarding the public role of Religion and its impact on national identify reconstruction. In this Chapter, “identity reconstruction” is viewed as a transformative process in which a group of people’s old self-perception is gradually relinquished, and a new sense of self-worth emerges (Deegan, 2001; Peetz & Wilson, 2008). Third, to articulate a new ethos of religious participation in social reconstruction processes and practices drawing from the interlinkage between Social Trinitarianism (ST) and Social Reconstruction (SR) and by interrogating the theological arguments and prospects of my informants in terms of SR.

6.2. Theological Hermeneutics and Underpinnings of Religious Political Participation.

6.2.1. The Trinity as Model for Christian Ecumenicism and Political Participation.

As previously attested in the introduction of this study, the current collective participation of religious leaders and institutions as hybrid governance actors in the DRC’s political sphere is different than in the 1990s and earlier periods. This particularity points to their intentionality of binding their ties through mutual consultation and common actions in the public arena. At the end of January 2020, I travelled back to Kinshasa, DRC to observe people’s reactions and on the other hand to follow up my informants’ arguments related to the first anniversary of the country’s first peaceful transfer of power accomplished by the outgoing President Joseph Kabila and his successor Felix Antoine Tshisekedi on 24 January 2019. At that specific day, the world also witnessed the swearing-in of the fifth president in front of a large crowd composed of UDPS’ militants, diplomats, representatives of diverse governments, and the Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, being the only head of State present in that ceremony. In 2020, during my journey a year later, I noticed that nothing official was planned by the new local authorities
to commemorate this historic power handover. However, the President Tshisekedi and his government recommended the Congolese population to spend that memorable day in meditation and prayers.

The Christian community in the city of Kinshasa reacted differently to this call from the President Tshisekedi and his administration. There were two official prayer meetings with two different memos. At one side, Pentecostals of CADC (Communauté des Assemblées de Dieu au Congo/Community of Assemblies of God in Congo) and revivalist churches locally called “les Eglises de Reveil” held a two-day prayer meeting (on 23 and 24 January 2020). It was hosted by the Coordination pour le Changement des Mentalités (CCM)/Coordination for the Change of Mentalities, an institution created and affiliated to the DRC’s President office.105 This event gathered local pastors and intercessors, and guests from other African countries like Ghana, Zambia, Angola, and Ivory Coast. Archbishop Nicholas Duncan-William sojourned in the DRC’s capital-city and performed as the keynote speaker of that conference held at the Pullman Hotel of Kinshasa. By reminder, this Ghanaian clergyman poured anointed oil on the head of Felix Tshisekedi as a presidential candidate at that time during his visit in Accra before the DRC’s 30 December 2018 elections. Archbishop Duncan-William prophesied in front of his

105 The coordination of change of mentalities (CCM) is a specialized service of the Presidency of the Republic set up by ordinance n° 19/067 of July 25, 2019. The objectives of this structure are in particular to ensure prevention, awareness and fight against all kinds of anti-values. Through a new awareness-raising pedagogy, the CCM brings together associations and NGOs to carry out actions of mobilization on new citizenship and promote the achievements of model citizens within society. CCM is made up of two bodies:
- The coordination
- The Technical Commission
Its members were appointed by presidential decree, on 08 August 2019, they were:
- Pastor Jacques Kangudia Mutambayi, Coordinator
- Mr. Justin Benda Sana, Deputy Coordinator in charge of administrative and financial matters
- Mr. Jacques Kambala Tshilombo, Deputy Coordinator in charge of Technical and Operational Affairs.
congregation, Action Chapel International (ACI) that Felix Tshisekedi, by God’s will, would become the President of the DRC.⁹⁶ According to Pastor Jacques Kangudia, the coordinator of CCM and the event host, the presence and attendance of Archbishop Duncan-William at the prayer encounter in Kinshasa had two meanings. Firstly, to express gratitude to God as Master of times and circumstances for fulfilling the prophecy over Felix Tshisekedi who became the DRC’s head of state. Secondly, being inspired by the books of Second Chronicle and Daniel this churchman came to call for the unity of all Congolese religious leaders and institutions, by putting in place a consultative clerical network to intercede in favor of State/political authorities.⁹⁷

On another side, the Catholic and Protestant Clergy, under the leadership of Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo and Reverend Dr. André Bokundoa, organized a full week of reflection and intercessory prayer in favor of the nation (from January 18 to 25). Those activities were launched at the Cathedrale du Centenaire Protestant and were closed at the Cathedrale Notre Dame du Congo, the city’s largest Catholic Church building located in downtown Kinshasa. Catholics, Protestants and the Salvation Army Community adherents gathered during this week to reflect on and pray for the Christian unity firstly and secondly for the country’s peace, reconciliation, and reconstruction.⁹⁸ On Saturday January 25th, I took a taxi from the Catholic guest house where I resided and headed towards the Cathedrale Notre Dame du Congo to attend the closing ecumenical prayer

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⁹⁶ Action Chapel International archive 4th October 2018. Archbishop Duncan-William anointed Felix Tshisekedi’s head with oil as consecration ritual three months before the DRC’s 2018 elections.

⁹⁷ Semi-structured interview with Reverend Pastor Jacques Kangudia, 24 January 2020, Kinshasa, DRC.

⁹⁸ Communauté de l’Armée du Salut (CAS)/Salvation Army Community used to be part of the ECC but now evolves independently from this Protestant umbrella.
meeting and the keynote preacher of the day was Reverend Dr. Robert bibi-bikam N’kwim as the official envoy of the ECC’s president. Backwards, my conversation with him referred to theological ideas, ideals and incentives that impacted political hermeneutics and actions of religious actors in the DRC. When asked about the doctrinal and epistemological motive of Christian ecumenical action in the DRC’s public sphere, Dr. N’kwim as professor of theology at UPC discloses,

Catholics, Protestants, and other Christian denominations have been inspired and challenged by the doctrine of Trinity. It is both interesting and compelling to grasp the mystery of how the three persons in God work in harmony and unity for common purposes. This doctrine entails all Congolese Christians to seek cohesion, collaboration, and mutual empowerment. For example, religious leaders of all Christian affiliations gather at the beginning of every year to pray in favor of our nation…under the leadership of Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo and Reverend Dr. Andre Bokundoa, CENCO and ECC as the two major Religious Institutions are increasingly binding their ties in terms of mutual consultation and joint decision-making in relation to the country’s Politics. We should refer to the trinitarian nature of God’s creatures and stewards in this nation, the Democratic Republic of Congo.¹⁰⁹

My interlocutor highlighted the growing close relationship between the current leaders of those two larger Religious Institutions.¹¹⁰ In the past, added my interviewee, there have been some relational disruption between Catholic and Protestant leadership in their distinctive position toward successive authoritarian regimes that ruled the country.¹¹¹ As evidenced in Chapter three and in Chapter four, ECC and the Kimbanguist Church rallied with President Mobutu in the opposite of the Catholic Church until the death of Cardinal J-A. Malula. The latter’s successor, Cardinal Etsou normalized the relationship of Catholic Church with Mobutu due to his ethnic affinity with the dictator while Reverend

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Professor N’kwim, 12 October 2018, Kinshasa DRC.

¹¹⁰ Reverend Dr. André Bo-likabé Bokundoa was elected as President and Legal Representative of ECC’ in August 2017 and Fridolin Besungu Ambongo was elevated as Cardinal and head of the archbishopric of Kinshasa in October 2019.

¹¹¹ Interview with Dr. Nkwim after the ecumenical mass of 24 January 2020, Kinshasa, DRC.
Pierre Marini-Bodho as leader of ECC publicly and briefly challenged his authoritarian rule. This leader of ECC developed, in his turn, a good relationship with the Kabilas who did not get along with the Catholic Church under leadership of Cardinals Etsou and Monsengwo. Regardless this history of un-harmonious relationships between CENCO and ECC leaders often instrumentalized by the DRC’s heads of state, Cardinal Ambongo and Reverend Dr. Bokundoa inaugurated a new era of cohesion and collaboration between the Catholic and the Protestant Church. What kind of theology supports and motivate the ecumenical political action between CENCO and ECC? This question leads to theological hermeneutics that inspired and/or influence the unity and the common participation of the Catholic and Protestant clergy in the country’s politics and social reconstruction.

Despite his openness for an interconfessional coalescence with Catholics, Dr. Mushila Nyamankank preferred to discuss on what he called “Ecumenism from within” by relating the ECC’s motto of “Unity in Diversity” as promulgated by Jean-Ifoto Bokeleale to the doctrine of the Trinity. This Congolese Emeritus Professor of theology comments,

It is important not underestimate the impact of three theologico-historical facts on Jean Bokeleale’s ecumenical project of ‘unity in diversity’ for all Protestant denominations in Zaire/DRC: first, the doctrine of the Trinity that displays the Christian God as triune God, second the influence of German reformers in 16th century such as Luther and others alongside several thinkers of the German revolution in the early 1900s like Max Weber who developed what we call today ‘Protestant Ethics of Capitalism’, and third, those who emerged after the atrocities of the WV II that devastated Germany in particular and Christianized Europe in general. In this category, few names come in my mind like Konrad Adenauer, Jürgen Habermas, Jürgen Moltmann, the Catholic theologians Karl Rahner or Johann Baptist Metz etc who questioned the notion of God and the reconstructive potential of Christianity in their war-torn context. Briefly, I just want to underline that Jean Bokeleale as an offspring of Protestantism himself and later as prominent Protestant leader, has been influenced by what I have just mentioned while he was imagining ECC as a religious
institution that would network all Congolese Protestants from diverse denominations on a national scale.  

Two key points can be underlined from Drs. Mushila and N’Kwim’s expressive arguments. First, they both perceive, either the ecumenical unity with Catholics or “Ecumenism from within” of ECC as the unified confederation of all Protestant congregations, as an imitation of the likeness and resemblance of Godhead being the diversity of ‘three personas co-existing in unity’. In precise words, theology as *Fides Quaerens Intellectum* (Faith seeking Understanding) inherently shapes believers’ ethics or behaviors within the Church where they serve, and in the society where they live (Lovin & Joshua Mauldin, 2017). For J. Derrick Lemons, considering theology as faith seeking understanding offers social scientists “an opportunity to learn from an emic perspective about religious beliefs that change over time and space” (Lemons, 2018, p. 4). At that level, all participants of this study, both Protestants and Catholics unanimously believe in the concept of Trinity “not as three divinities but as a triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and we need to refer to it in our efforts of promoting unity in diversity as God’s creatures and stewards in this country, the Democratic Republic of Congo”. This statement of Reverend Eugene Massa whose church is affiliated to ECC, goes in line with his co-religionaries N’Kwim and Mushila and finds echoes in the social analogy of the Trinity as developed by Jürgen Moltmann reclaiming, “God as community of Father, Son and Spirit, whose unity is constituted by mutual indwelling and reciprocal interpenetration” (Moltmann, 1993, p. viii). Drawing on the *Cappadonian* notion of “mutual co-inherence”

112 Interview with late Emeritus Professor Mushila Nyamankank, 18 March 2019, Kinshasa, DRC.

113 Interview with Reverend Eugene Massa, 8 March 2019, Kinshasa, DRC.
of the three divine persons, the German scholar provides one of the boldest attempts that perceives the Trinity in its ethics and practical significance both for the Church and society. Moltmann reconstructs his trinitarian hermeneutics in terms of relationships, communities and transitions (Kärkkäinen, 2007, p. 114; Moltmann & Kohl, 1981, pp. 174–175; T. Peters, 1993, p. 203). This notion portrays the eternal and mutual indwelling of the three divine subjects and their communal life through exchange of energies. Kärkkäinen asserts that “one of Moltmann’s major contribution to contemporary trinitarian Theology is the way he utilizes Trinity as a critical theological-social-political-criterion...human societies including the church, should reflect the principle of egalitarianism and mutual ‘indwelling’ evident in the Trinity” (Kärkkäinen, 2007, p. 113). Moltmann proposes the trinitarian or perichoretic life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as a social paradigm with relational harmony, freedom, and equality of persons as dialectical components of a democratic society. In the same way, M. Douglas Meeks introduces the Trinity as “the inexhaustible life that the three persons share in common, for one another, and in one another. There can be no simple notion of self-possession because God is a community in which persons find their distinct identities in mutual relationships of self-giving...God ‘has’ God’s self precisely in giving God’s self away” (Meeks, 1989, p. 111). However, Kathryn Tanner and Lewis Ayers reject this approach stating that, since the Triune God and human beings are analogically different, the application of the divine perichoretic relationality to human relationships seems unstraightforward (Ayers, 2010, pp. 130–145; Leithart, 2015, pp. 148–153; Tanner, 2001, pp. 378–382). In relation to these objections, it is crucial to differentiate the ontological (be-ing), relational (be-longing) and functional (be-having) features of the trinitarian
perichoresis with particular reference to the biblical narratives of creation and redemption. By carrying God’s image, human beings in the Church and the society are created to be free and reflect the divine community on earth as *Imago Trinitatis*. Congolese theologians such as Mushila, N’kwim and Massa endorse Moltmann’s trinitarian perichoretic concept as a divine model for human imagination, imitation, and innovation with political and developmental purposes because “the human community as a whole in all its facts shall and can correspond to the divine life of the Triune God” (Moltmann, 1993, pp. 99–100).

Summarily, this discussion states that perichoretic relationality within the Triune God serves as ideal model of the unity and relationality of Christian communities, particularly between Catholics, Protestants and Salvation Army adherents in the DRC.

Second, religious actors in their current pursuit to participate in the DRC’s rebuilding attested to have been learning from post-World War II German Protestant Christian thinkers and figures because they raised up as moral authorities whose writings contributed to the reconstruction of the contemporary Germany. As stated in its methodological section, this study focused on Congolese religious leaders who are both theologians and actively engaged in the country’s political sphere. Based on data collected through interviews and participant observation, religious concepts such as the Trinity and Incarnation were mainly and respectively referred by the informants and participants firstly to illustrate the need and urgency for faith-based cohesion and secondly to justify their civic engagement (fieldwork notes, 2019; 2020). Such reflexive endeavor finds resonance in what the authors of *Political Theologies in Orthodox Christianity: Common Challenges and Divergent Positions* indicate, “it refers to the ways theologians conceive of the relationship of the Church and the Church’s mission to bring
about salvation in relation to the political sphere as a system of power and institutions. The task of the theologian is to argue from biblical, dogmatic, and ethical sources of revelation” (Stöckl et al., 2018, pp. 1–2). In a very illustrative manner, Congolese theologians such as Nyamankank Mushila, Robert N'kwim Bibi-Bikam, Esther N'landu and Eugene Massa as Protestant thinkers in view of their affiliation to ECC and Abbot Georges Kalenga, 2nd Assistant Secretary of CENCO, on the Catholic other side, all suggested to look at German scholars and idealists, both Catholics and Protestants, who implied trinitarian theologies to influence the Christian political participation in the reconstruction of the post-World War II Germany and Europe. As echoed in Professor Mushila’s previous statement, Jürgen Moltmann’s work on social trinitarianism raised considerable attention with regards to the collective religious political participation in the contemporary DRC. Why Jürgen Moltmann and not others?

6.2.2. Why Jürgen Moltmann’s Social Trinitarianism (ST)?

In his book, *The Church as Polis*, Arne Rasmussen strives in responding to that question about the particularity and preeminence of Jürgen Moltmann’s political hermeneutics and theology. Rasmussen insists, “his work is more comprehensive, and wide ranging than the work of any other contemporary political theologian…Moltmann has developed a broad substantial theology. There are others who methodologically are more stringent, but nobody has made a comparable performance of political theology…primarily because he has performed political theology more extensively than others” (Rasmusson, 1995, pp. 15–16 see also Bauckham, 1995). Based on my informants’ theological hermeneutics related to the case of the DRC, there are three elements that display their choice and the rationale of Moltmann with regards to his
theological inputs, his socio-historical sitz in lebem and political hermeneutics. The first fact points to his personal existential and empirical background that resembles to the societal environment of the post-war DRC. As native of Germany and born in 1929, Moltmann has experienced the atrocities of the World War II and beyond. In Broad Place: An Autobiography, readers can find his own narratives related to his experience and pursuit of God as prisoner in midst of chaos and despair. In this view, Bauckham describes,

Moltmann himself finds the initial source of this theology in his first experience of the reality of God when he was a prisoner of war in the period 1945-48. This was an experience both of God as power of hope and God’s presence in suffering: two themes which were to form the two complementary sides of his theology in the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, his sense of involvement, during and after the war, in the collective suffering and guilt of the German nation, set him on the road to his later theological involvement with public and political issues (Bauckham, 1995, p. 1).

The second feature axes on his epistemology of hope based on dialectical interpretation of the cross and resurrection of Christ. The German scholar combines the two fundamental doctrines: death and life, absence of God and nearness of God, god-forsakeness and the glory of God, to articulate his political hermeneutics of the Gospel with a direction “towards a new future anticipated in hope, the praxis of loving solidarity with victims, the implementation of humanity’s created dignity and destiny in human rights (Bauckham, 1995, p. 117). This explains the crucial role of human rights in Moltmann’s political theology as Marxism played in the liberation theology of Latin America. His viewpoint about human rights relates Christian theology with secular political goals and activities and at the same time, allows the Christian community to join with others in a common pursuit for liberation from oppression and domination. “Church guidelines on political and social matters gain their universal significance only through reference to human rights. Through its relationship to human rights, the church becomes the church
for the world” (Bauckham, 1995, p. 116; Moltmann, 2009, p. 7; Rasmusson, 1995, pp. 12–13). In sum, Moltmann’s two themes of revolutionary hope in radical change and loving solidarity with victims of human oppression provide theoretical hermeneutics for the relevance of religious political participation in the contemporary DRC. The application of this framework secures the rights and dignity of the oppressed, the marginalized and the dominated as full members of human society. The third reason refers to his constructive and reconciliatory synergy of Western and Eastern theologies that shapes his socio-political analogy of the Trinity. At this level of reflection, let’s see how such framework has been historically and epistemologically developed before exploring its intersection with the Social Reconstruction theory and mechanisms.

As an early and leading contemporary proponent of the Social Trinitarianism, “Moltmann’s key concept is the perichoresis” (Kärkkäinen, 2007, p. 116). Moltmann intentionally refers to John Damascene and the patristic doctrine stating that Perichoresis links together in a brilliant way the three-ness and the unity, without reducing the three-ness and this concept grasps the circulatory character of the eternal divine life (Moltmann, 1993, p. 174). In the attempt of tracing its etymological and historical roots before and after its appropriation and utilization by the Greek Fathers and Church council, it is important to stress that meaning of Perichoresis significantly evolved from Anaxagoras to John Damascene,

The Eastern Church Fathers adopted both the term and the verb from Anaxagoras who identified this notion with rotation as cosmic differentiation, ordering, revolution, continuation, and extension. The concept περιχωρήσις points to the process of making room for another around oneself or extend one’s self round about. It is historically related to ‘the stoic idea of mixture, which illustrates a mutual interpenetration of two substances that preserves the identity and property of each intact (Harrison, 1991, p. 54; Lampe & Liddell, 1961, p. 1077).
The Eastern Church fathers took the term from its cosmological and mechanistic content to utilize it in a religious and trinitarian one. According to Catherine Mowry LaCugna, the term *Perichoresis* was originally used in a Christological context by Gregory of Nazianzus to stress the hypostatic (un-mixed) union of two natures in the Incarnated Logos. The Greek term was translated and adapted into Latin to match with western theologies of personhood. Two translations emerged, the first, *circumincessio* from *circum-incedere* means “to move around” and the second is *circuminsessio* from *circum-in-sedere*, “to sit around” (LaCugna, 1991, pp. 270–278; Yong, 2002, p. 23). Pseudo-Cyril employed for the first time the term *Perichoresis* in a trinitarian sense to the idea of co-inherence of the three divine persons in one another without any coalescence or commixture (Volf, 1998, pp. 208–209). He explained the words *ousia* (“essence” or “substance”) and *hypostaseis* (“persons”) and pleaded for the trinitarian perichoretic to be shaped from the term *hypostatis* that expresses the truth of one God and the mutual indwelling that presupposes their three-ness (Prestige, 2008, p. 297). Thereafter, John Damascene popularized the concept in Christian theological circles.

As grounded in the patristic concept of *Perichoresis*, Moltmann’s social trinitarianism constitutes an appropriate theoretical and empirical framework to analyze socio-political issues of the DRC as examined in previous chapters. It serves as a hermeneutical tool to ethnographically test the study hypothesis that stresses on political relevance of religious participation as the alternative for the state reconstruction regarding the country’s Christian demography. Three main assertions were considered in the data analysis. The first, ST provides a critical resource for protestation of power asymmetry
and authoritarianism with human society. It criticizes and challenges hierarchical/top-down/authoritarian structures to produce social change in the direction of equality, dignity, and appreciative shared identity. The doctrine of the Trinity has given a theological frame to religious leaders in their pursuit of dismantling dictatorial/totalitarian regimes that ruled the DRC. Second, it proffered epistemological hermeneutics for the projection of a more democratic and decentralized society that promotes inclusiveness, freedom, and equity of persons. ST equipped Church leaders and Theologians in the DRC with hermeneutical keys on how to be the Trinitarian God’s light. The ecclesial community has the task to change the society’s narrative by improving its current image of a plundered, corrupted, exploited, and conquered nation. Echoing Jean Marc Ela (Ela, 1988, p. 146) and Emmanuel Katongole (Katongole, 2011, pp. 108–112), the Church in the DRC is called to reinvent a new socio-economic and political script that might nurture the imagination and hope of the Congolese population living now in fear, passivity and extreme poverty. Third, ST offered an ethical and structural reference for the participation of local religious institutions in the DRC’s political sphere for the country’s social reconstruction.

6.3. Theological Incentives for Participation in Social Reconstruction.

6.3.1. Mechanisms, Processes and Approaches.

The United States Institute for Peace (USIP) defines this concept in these terms, Social reconstruction is a condition in which the population achieves a level of tolerance and peaceful co-existence; gains social cohesion through acceptance of a national identity that transcends individual, sectarian, and communal differences; has the mechanisms and will to resolve disputes nonviolently; has community institutions that bind society across divisions; and addresses the legacy of past abuses. For the social well-being of a society, social reconstruction includes twin approaches; directly addressing the legacy of violent conflict through inter-and intra-group reconciliation and indirectly building societal links by promoting reconciliation through community-based development and cooperative action (USIP, 2018).
By this definition, USIP puts in exergue four main indicators and two practical approaches related to Social Reconstruction (SR). The first indicator points to the level of tolerance and peaceful cohabitation achieved by a country’s population. It is worth denoting that intolerance, interference and mutual exclusion trigger relational disruption among people living within a territory. Folger and co-authors on their side define conflict as “the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals” (Folger et al., 2021, p. 5). In *Dynamics of Conflict Resolution*, Bernard Mayer enumerates perception, feeling and action as three dimensions of conflict (Mayer, 1999). With regards to this statement, any tension or conflict starts at the cognitive level before becoming emotional and axial. As illustration, the two previous civil wars (1996-2003) called the “Africa’s World War”, military rebellions (2006, 2012), and ongoing militia insurrections in the East of DRC trace their causes back to mutual mistrust among local inhabitants themselves and in-coming travelers and/or asylum seekers from neighboring countries (Autesserre, 2010; Diggs, 2012; Prunier, 2009; Stearns, 2011). The second indicator of Social Reconstruction relates to social cohesion cemented by a national identity that transcends individual, sectarian, and communal differences. Social Reconstruction requires identity formation and/or reconstruction in the aftermath of a split or state collapse, and post-war transition (Bereketeab, 2017). Richard Maclure and Myriam Denov who studied the Sierra Leonian post-war context, attest that education is widely regarded as essential for civic reconciliation (Maclure & Denov, 2009). As discussed in the previous Chapter, identity formation/reconstruction and knowledge production should be the foci of post-war educational reconstruction. Likewise, SRists view schools as tools to inculcate ideas and
ideals of collectiveness and equip the students with problem-solving mentalities and skills. Third, SR is measured when the population has mechanisms and the will to resolve conflicts nonviolently. At that level, it requires the country’s citizens to put in place some regulations and policies that can help mediators, victims and perpetuators identify the causes of disputes and amiably find solutions. Lastly, SR entails community institutions that bind societies across divisions and addresses the legacy of past abuses. How can the DRC’s case be evaluated with those SR’s mechanisms and processes?

Before the first peaceful transfer of power in 2019, the DRC has experienced political authoritarianism across the successive regimes that ruled the country (32 years of Mobutu and 22 years of the Kabilas). Human rights-based organizations like Amnesty International (AI), Human Rights Watch (HRW) and other international organizations have evidenced many cases of impunity and injustice in this conflict-ridden country. The state failure in the sector of justice has pushed populations to two trends. On one hand, they turned to customary/traditional chiefs particularly in rural contexts and to religious actors for handling disputes and judiciary challenges (Hoffmann et al., 2020; Lindstrom, 2019; J.Verweijen & Van Bockhaven, 2020). However, the role and the legitimacy of traditional leaders has diminished in some parts of the country, especially in the urban settings.

On the other hand, ‘popular justice’, that can be defined as “the exercise of justice by the people” (Delivré & Berger, 2014), is viewed as a justified alternative by victimized and at-risk populations in face of dysfunctional state institutions. Those defensive or coercive tendencies triggered the increasing phenomenon of “autoprise en charge” (self-defense) that inspired coping practices in the 1990s when the economy and public service delivery collapsed. In other terms, “where the state fails to live up to its basic tasks, the
popular usurpation of state functions is justified” (Verweijen, 2015, p. 343). Scholars who studied the judiciary systems in the DRC, particularly in the Eastern parts, provide evidence of tensions and disruptions between the government and the customary chiefs. In regards, Camille Lindstrom states,

This attitude of zero-sum seems to have permeated the relationship between the customary chiefs and the state for a long time, hindering effective collaboration between the two systems. Mobutu had already tried in the 1960s to undermine the authority of the customary chiefs. His plan was to build local courts all over the country and, once there was a local court in a territory, the customary chief would no longer be authorized to handle cases. However, the progress on establishing the formal courts, from the point of the government, has been rather disappointing (Lindstrom, 2019, p. 81-82).

This project of establishing many local courts throughout the large territory of the DRC was never fully implemented. In fact, the author confirms that, out of 180 courts that supposed to be established to cover the entire country in Mobutu’s era (almost 50 years ago), only around 50 are functional and running (Lindstrom, 2019; Tekilazaya et al., 2013). Despite the State's incapacity to provide judiciary services for all its citizens on a national scale, the government forbid the involvement of customary chiefs in the law of 2013 regarding the organization of the justice sector (DRC, 2013). Despite this, customary and religious authorities remain legitimate actors with ability to bring people together when conflicts arise. In response to this vacuum in the justice sector, the Catholic Church, and the Protestant Church, that jointly cover the majority of the DRC’s religious demography, have created internal organizations to deal with issues of injustice and conflicts. Those organizations are respectively called “Commission Justice et Paix/Commission Justice and Peace” (CJP) by CENCO and “Commission Justice, Paix et Sauvegarde de la Création (CJPSC)/Commission Justice, Peace and Creation Conservation” by ECC. By reminder, offices of Justice and Peace within Catholic
Episcopal conferences on a global scale were initiated by the Vatican II Council (1962-65) and are not pure and only Congolese enterprise. Their common objective is to investigate and analyze in a critical and in-depth manner the situations of injustice and violence in Congolese society and in the Church, by highlighting the main causes of these and their consequences on the entire society in order to awaken the people of God and their leaders to the awareness of their role and their responsibilities with a view of transforming the mental, socio-political and economic structures which oppress people (UNCA Coalition, 2021). Lining with President Tshisekedi’s vision to establish L’Etat de Droit—the rule of law in the DRC, CENCO and ECC as religious institutions (through those two commissions) seem to work more and more in the collaboration with the State in the sectors of justice, peacebuilding, and social cohesion with regards to their legitimacy and influence on populations across the country. The Chapter 4 of this study emphasized on how those organizations consulted each other and worked together under the auspices of CENCO and ECC leaders in terms of monitoring the electoral process in 2018. At the level, one important question emerges: what are the approaches of SR?

Based on the academic literature regarding SR, two approaches are generally considered. The first approach directly tackles the legacy of violent conflict “from below” through inter-and intra-group reconciliation. Multiple mechanisms are internationally used to implement this framework such as a) truth-telling, b) truth commissions, c) peace

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114 The Second Vatican Council had proposed the creation of a body of the universal Church whose role would be “to stimulate the Catholic Community to foster progress in needy regions and social justice on the international scene” (Gaudium et Spes, No. 90). It was in reply to this request that Pope Paul VI established the Pontifical Commission “Justitia et Pax” by a Motu Proprio dated 6 January 1967 (Catholicam Christi Ecclesiam). Two months later, in Populorum Progressio, Paul VI succinctly stated of the new body that “its name, which is also its program, is Justice and Peace” (No. 5)
commissions, d) retributive justice and e) dispute resolution, f) restorative justice, g) lustration, h) reparation, i) mass media, j) trauma, and k) memorialization. The second approach refers to building societal links through community-based development and cooperative action. The following sections will theologically engage those two SR approaches: Reconciliation and Participatory Development.

6.3.2. Theological Perspectives of Reconciliation and Religious Peacebuilding Praxes.

Many scholars in peace studies argue that religious organizations, viewed as social institutions and morally driven by their beliefs, are well-equipped to offer peacebuilding and social justice services (Abu-Nimer, 2013; Alfani, 2019; Omer, Appleby, & Little, 2015; Philpott, 2007; Sampson, 2007). This study borrows Alfani’s definition of Religious Peacebuilding as “the activities that religious actors participate in and put in place for the promotion of peace, as well as peaceful and just relationships” (Alfani, 2019, p. 16). After the collapse of the Berlin wall in the early 1990s that marked the beginning of what Samuel Huntington and Paul Gifford identify as “the third wave of democratization across Africa”, several religious figures emerged as catalysts of national reconciliation and promoters of political pluralism in some African states (Gifford, 1998; Huntington, 1997). As illustration, we can mention distinguished clergymen as such Isidore de Souza in Benin, Ernest Kombo in Congo/Brazzaville, Laurent Monsengwo in the DRC, and precisely the preeminent role of the Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu, “a peace prize winner, and South Africa’s most Anglican cleric”, in the reconciliation between his fellow-citizens in the post-Apartheid era (Chapman & Spong, 2003). Books, book Chapters and articles have been published that focused on the organizational statutes and outcomes of those national sovereign conferences in Francophone Africa and/or of Truth and
Reconciliation Commissions (TRC) held in South Africa, Sierra Leone, or Rwanda. However, this section is interested in looking at the theological incentives of religious participation in national reconciliation and cohesiveness with special regards to the DRC’s case.

As largely examined in Chapters three and four, religious actors of CENCO and ECC collectively participated in and facilitated the signature of peace agreements between political adversaries and/or military belligerents in the DRC. The first ecumenical and cross-confessional action on records traces back to the National Consultation held at the Cathedrale du Centenaire Protestant from 28 February to 11 Mars 2000. In his opening speech, Reverend Dr. Pierre Marini Bodho, President of ECC at that time declared,

As spiritual leaders of our people, called and set apart by God for the ministry of reconciliation, forgiveness, and love, we have found it useful to fulfil our responsibility by trying to bring together the political leaders, the living forces of civil society and national religious denominations to pave the way for inter-Congolese dialogue. We wish to prepare the hearts and souls of our people to accept that by going to the inter-Congolese dialogue, we avoid endless quarrels, useless controversies due to the defects which constrain and force us to the systematic and sometimes a priori refusal of the other, whatever it is. Rather, we want us to go and negotiate in good faith, for the salvation of our battered population in one or the other part of our national territory and in the best interests of the nation currently scorned, humiliated and plundered. (Proceedings of the National Consultation, 2000, p. 33).

This said, the discursive emphasis is intentionally made on the theological legitimacy and reconciliatory mandate of the Clergy in conflicted socio-political environments. Religious leaders who participated in this study are unanimously driven by an unshakeable conviction to be called and commissioned as God-sent mediators
whenever inter-relational disruptions and Human Rights’ violations occur in society.\textsuperscript{115}

During the tragic years of the Second Congo civil war (1998-2003), Leaders of all religious institutions accredited in the DRC under the impulsion of ECC paved roads for the convocation of the inter-Congolese dialogue.\textsuperscript{116} Congolese politicians from various allegiances, government, unarmed and armed political opposition brands, signed a peace accord in Sun-City near Pretoria in July 2002 with a framework for power sharing followed by the withdrawal of invading troops from the Congolese territory in December 2002. This peace agreement launched a new political era with concrete achievement such as the reunification of the country, power-sharing between former rebellion actors, the promulgation of a new constitution limiting the presidential term to 5 years with one re-election possibility, and the organization of provincial, legislative, senatorial, and presidential elections in 2006. In his unpublished doctoral thesis, Robert bibi-bikam N’kwim evaluates the social impact of the ECC from 1878 to 2002 and exhorts Protestant churches not to adopt a low profile but to be more sensitive to the victims of social injustice and poverty. For N’kwim, the Triune God calls the Church to His prophetic voice, His pastoral hands and His people’s advocate towards alienating and oppressive political structures.\textsuperscript{117} The second example, as explored with details in Chapter 3, refers to the civic engagement of the Catholic Bishops of CENCO related to the Saint-Sylvester

\textsuperscript{115} The scriptural reference of 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 was unanimously quoted by my informants to justify their engagement in post-conflict reconciliation at ecclesial and national levels.

\textsuperscript{116} The initiators of this national consultation were: Reverend Dr. Marini Bodho for ECC, Cardinal Etsou for CENCO, Reverend Father Kayaya for Orthodox Church, Reverend pastor Gregoire Mbuy Kana for the Kimbanguist Church, El Hadj Mudilo W.M. for the Islamic Community and Mgr. Onema Fama, the Vice-President of All Africa Conference of Churches.

\textsuperscript{117} Interview with Professor N’Kwim, 12 October 2018, Kinshasa, DRC.
transitional peace agreement signed on 31 December 2016. Once again, religious actors played a key-role of bringing Joseph Kabila’s government, and the opposition coalition, at that time led by Felix Tshisekedi, the current President, to sign a consensual political accord that paved the way for the 30 December 2018 elections and the country’s first peaceful, democratic transfer of power on 24 January 2019 carried out by Joseph Kabila and his fiercest opponent Felix Tshisekedi. With regards to the nonviolent outcomes of those elections, it is worth denoting that an ecumenical forum on Peace and Reconciliation was convened at the Protestant Centenary Cathedral from 7 to 11 November 2018, one month before elections, in Kinshasa initiated by CENCO and ECC. Those religious institutions, through CJP and CJPSC, provided opportunities to the attendance, composed of clergymen, scholars, and politicians, to reflect and discuss on irenic and reconciliatory ways to accompany the electoral process. Religious figures as hosts of this five-day conference exhorted political parties, civil society actors and agents of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) to work together for transparent, free, and peaceful elections, viewed at that time as requisite to bring longed-for stability to some 85 million Congolese (fieldwork notes, November 2018).

After the official recognition of Felix Tshisekedi by the Supreme court as the DRC’s head of the State in early 2019, reconciliation emerged again as one of the major topics in the public sphere. The 2018 elections’ outcomes unfortunately split the Congolese people into ideological, ethnic, and political fractions due to their affinities to presidential candidates, visibly between the supporters of Felix Tshisekedi and Martin Fayulu’s. The latter contested against the results of the elections without providing credible proofs to the judicial courts. The ‘sirens’ of division, tribalism-oriented hatred and intolerance have
struck the country. This reality required social reconciliation. During this post-electoral relational turmoil, the Vatican News’ editorialist Paul Samasumo confirmed that the elevation of Fridolin Ambongo Besungu as Cardinal on 5 October 2019, became an “unprecedented show of unity and solidarity among Congolese people” despite their confessional, political and ethnic differences (Vatican News, 2019). Being a participant observer, I attended the ceremony in St Peter’s Basilica in Vatican-city, Rome, Italy and noticed on one side, the presence of the DRC’s government officers led by President Felix Tshisekedi and the first Lady alongside important members of his administration. On other side, all the opposition leaders of LAMUKA such as Martin Fayulu, Jean-Pierre Bemba, Moise Katumbi and Adolphe Muzito. The President of ECC, Reverend Dr. André Bokundoa and leaders of other religious confessions also flew to Rome for this ceremony. Congolese guests visibly marked the audience waving the country’s flags outside and inside the Basilica. After this ceremony of elevation of Fridolin Ambongo to the rank of Cardinal by the Pope Francis, the DRC’s politicians, bishops, priests, the religious, diaspora community and laity converged at Rome’s Ergite hotel to celebrate the elected prelate. Two observations can be highlighted from this event held in Vatican-City, Rome with regards to the issue of national reconciliation. The first was the diversity of Congolese attendance at that gathering in Vatican-city, Rome. They represented the


119 The Newspaper Le Potentiel number 7716 of October 8, 2019, emphasized that it was the first time in the history of religions in the DRC as to see the leader of the Protestant community (ECC) attending the ‘creation’ of a Cardinal at the Vatican. For many observers, the trip of the Reverend Dr. André Bokundoa Bo-Likabe to the Basilica St. Peter, at the elevation of his Catholic counterpart has not been fortuitous. Beyond the symbolism of the unity of Congolese religious denominations, in depth of the diversities of approach, there is the aspect of the convergence of sight of the great social and lively forces of the nation for the improvement of the conditions of lives of the Congolese people.
government, opposition parties, the civil society, and diasporas. “For once, the occasion showed what could be archived if people of this great nation put aside their perennial differences to march as one people” (Vatican News, 2019). The second observation points to the Cardinal’s reconciliatory message while thanking his guests and fellow citizens who came from the DRC and other parts of the world,

There is no one in our country who can do what we do by putting everyone around a table... this is the role of the Church: to bring together, to create communion around values. Religion must help a community to move in the right direction and not to separate itself. There are all social layers together. I am very moved to see all of you, the opposition as the presidential majority. I am proud of you because you are my people (fieldnotes, Rome, October 2019).

In general, this section provides evidence about the moral authority and functional effectiveness of religious leaders and/or institutions in reconciliation and peacebuilding processes and practices with special focus on the DRC labelled as a post-conflict environment. As previously analyzed in line with USIP’s viewpoints, reconciliation on societal scale remains a pre-requisite for community-oriented development and cooperative action that constitutes the second strand of SR.

6.3.3. Participatory Development as Second Strand of Social Reconstruction

Scholars of IDS alternatively deploy many synonymous terms to illustrate the second objective of SR such as people-oriented development (POD), Community-Driven Development (CDD) or Participatory Development (PD). Purposely, this study uses the latter as concept of inquiry. The Encyclopedia of International Development provides a detailed definition of Participatory Development (PD):

Participatory development is a bottom-up, people-centered approach aimed at developing full potential of people at the grassroots level, especially the poor and marginal social group through their full participation in development efforts that directly affect their lives...the strategies of PD attempt to challenge social hierarchies to produce social
change in the direction of equality. They also aim to empower the poor, encourage the participation of women, take local politics, conflicts, and socio-cultural traditions into accounts, and enable the achievement of sustainable gains over time (Forsyth, 2005, p. 505,508).

According to the definition above, strategies of PD pursue multi-faceted and holistic goals while taking account of local politics, conflict resolution and socio-cultural traditions as ingredients of sustainable development. It appears to synergize the two approaches of SR: national reconciliation and community-based development. Historically speaking, the concept of (bottom-up) participation in societal flourishing traces back to a Tanzanian project in the early 1970s that “attempted to put the less powerful at the center of the knowledge, creative process that moves people and their daily lived experiences of struggle and survival from the margins of epistemology to the center” (Hall, 1992, pp. 15–16). After the political independence of the majority of African nations, international development theorists and practitioners began to opt for policies that would better fit to the African collectivist culture (Myers, 2011). For this reason, participatory methods were implemented in national projects as a social action with the goal to change the conditions of the dominated, exploited, poor and marginalized (Elliott, 1999, pp. v–vi; Hall, 1992, p. 15). Participatory Rural Appraisal (PLA) originally called Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) explicitly promises that local communities will be able to identity their coping mechanisms and their reasoning while strengthening their capacities and reducing their vulnerabilities (Jayakaran, 2003, p. 43). In light of this, Robert Chambers (Chambers, 1997, pp. 116–118) identifies and enumerates six promises of participation and its approaches: a) rapid and progressive learning by the community and the practitioners, b) offset of biases that keep communities marginalized, c) reliable and verifiable findings, d) local people controlling their own
destiny, e) self-critical awareness by the community, and f) personal responsibility and accountability by the community.

Objectively, Richard Bowd, Alpaslan Ozerdem and Derese Getachev Kassa consider “empowerment, respect, localization, enjoyment and inclusiveness” as the five key concepts of participation in agreement with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) (Özerdem & Bowd, 2010, p. 9; Rennie et al., 1996). Despite the benefits and potential of participation and its approaches, a set of criticisms has emerged at two levels: intra-structural and theoretical. The first concerns points to power structures and complexities of relations within local communities. Some authors denote that participation, and its methods could reinforce the distinctiveness between “elite” and “non-elite”, “facilitators” and “beneficiaries” of reconstruction projects (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Hickey & Mohan, 2013; Mansuri et al., 2013). Secondly, critics have argued on the limitations of participation in terms of theory, politics, and concepts. Some authors also mentioned its arrogance by pushing out other methods of investigation and in-depth ethnographic research techniques (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Patrick M. Kyamusugulwa & Hilhorst, 2015a). How can theology as perceived by my informants interpret this concept of participatory development? In other terms, how their theological hermeneutics interlink with the five key principles of participation as promoted by IISD?

Likewise, Moltmann’s trinitarian praxis, previously highlighted by the participants of this study and participatory development as driven by social scientists jointly share three major commonalities relevant for the post-conflict reconstruction processes and practices. Firstly, the social doctrine of the Trinity, as developed by Moltmann and PD similarly provide means of protestation against all structures, systems, or forms of
absolutism. Moltmann’s conception of the Triune God as community of three free and equal divine persons converge with participatory approaches in development that promote ontological equality within the recipient local communities. The two concepts challenge social injustice and inequity. They mostly entail the mutual acceptance and acknowledgement of human rights and worth of others at equal footing. Secondly, the social analogy of the Trinity and PD proffer the projection of an ideal community where all parties live in harmony, unity, and mutual love. Thirdly like the social trinitarianism, PD similarly promote participation of all societal components in social reconstruction. This diagram shows the commonalities between both concepts:

**Figure 2: ST and SR Commonalities**

From the precedent conversational interlinkages between the notions of social trinitarianism (ST) and participatory development (PD) as second strand of social reconstruction (SR) alongside reconciliation, three assertions can be drawn from the concepts in play, 1) protestation for ontological equality, 2) projection for relational
interconnectivity, and 3) participation for functional mutuality. The following figure summarizes them:

**Figure 3: PST Paradigm**

![PST Paradigm Diagram]

However, SRists agree that identity recovery plays a primordial role in those restorative, projective and participatory processes. While reflecting on the legacy of Professor Jesse Mugambi’s reconstruction theology, Peter Mutuku Mumo argues that “the African scholars should reclaim the continent’s religio-cultural identity especially in the wake of globalization in order to reform and restore their societies” (Mumo, 2018, p. 15). Among the three major shapers of Christianity in the DRC, Simon Kimbangu developed a theology of identity reconstruction that deserves a re-examination for the purposes of our study that focuses on the Religion-Politics/Church-State nexus in the contemporary history of the DRC.

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120 This paradigm burgeoned and was initially interpreted in my previous dissertation. See Mabiala, S.N. *The Trinity and Community Development: Toward a Theology of Participatory Social Transformation (PST) in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. Fuller Seminary 2016. Unpublished ThM thesis.
6.4. Simon Kimbangu’s theology of Identity Reconstruction in the Religio-Political Narratives

The concept of “identity reconstruction “has attracted the attention of social scientists over the last decades (Guiso et al., 2006; Houkamau & Sibley, 2019; Houkamau, 2010; McAdams, 2011; Turner & Onorato, 1999). Meantime, many books, book Chapters, and articles have explored Kimbanguism as a religious phenomenon that non-violently resisted and challenged the Belgian colonial politics in the Congo in the early twentieth century (Asch, 1983; Balandier, 1953; Banda-Mwaka, 1971; Covington-Ward, 2016; Elikia-M’Bokolo & Sabakinu-Kivilu, 2014; MacGaffey, 1992; Sinda, 1972; Young, 1965). However, In Kimbanguism: The African Interpretation of the Bible, the Congolese sociologist and son of a Kimbanguist pastor, Aurelien Mokoko-Gampiot provides an original and insightful perspective that needs (re)consideration for scholars interested in the subject of identity reconstruction in the contemporary Africa and African diaspora. This author describes Kimbanguism as “an African-initiated Church born in the 1920s from the preaching and healing campaign conducted by Simon Kimbangu, a Congolese Baptist catechist, in reaction to the colonial situation in the Belgian Congo. Kimbanguism has cultivated a theology of Black liberation by offering a unique understanding of the Bible” (Mokoko-Gampiot, 2017, p. 1). According to statistic reports, the adherents of Kimbangu’s message currently compose the largest of African-initiated churches with seventeen million followers worldwide.121 By reminder, this inquiry does not deploy a

121 According to the statistics presented by Anne Melice (Méliçe, 2009, p. 61), the Kimbanguists reside mainly in the three countries of the expansion of Kimbanguism during the colonial era, namely Congo-Kinshasa, Congo-Brazzaville and Angola, but also in several African countries (Zambia, Ruanda, Burundi, Central African Republic, Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, Senegal, Ivory Coast), Europe (France, England, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Finland, Sweden, Ireland), the United States, Canada, Brazil and Australia.
theological evaluation or analysis of doctrinal ramifications that emerged within the Kimbanguist Church over time, for example, the controversial issue of Incarnation or Trinity etc., as thoroughly discussed by Mika Vähäkangas (Vähäkangas, 2019) or previously before him by the Belgian missiologist Marie-Louise Martin (Martin, 1976). Consequently, our study seeks to analyze the contemporary effects of Simon Kimbangu’s message and religious movement on the matter of national and racial identity reconstruction in contemporary post-colonial DRC, Africa, and diasporic Africa.

The French sociologist Georges Balandier informs,

One of the most characteristic phenomena of the socio-cultural changes which occurred, during the colonial period, at the level of many societies belonging to Christianized Black Africa, is the appearance of messianic movements giving birth to more or less ephemeral black churches. Reaction essentially religious in appearance, these movements quickly developed a political aspect, they are at the origin of nationalism (Balandier, 1953, p. 41).

The domination of the colonial State did not ever remain unchallenged by the colonized. Despite the unsuccessful violent resistance in the early colonial era, scholars of colonialism in Africa retain several examples of primary movements of resistance that later led to subtle expressions of everyday resistance (Covington-Ward, 2016; Gondola, 2013; MacGaffey, 1992; Ranger, 2008). For the local populations, religion became one of the ways to circumvent Western domination and to voice their frustrations with the colonial rule. “One example is the revivalist movement launched by Simon Kimbangu in lower Congo region in the early 1920s. Kimbangu’s movement played an important role in the history of modern Congo and illustrates the nature of African resistance, which in many cases took the form of ethnic allegiance” (Gondola, 2002, p. 94). In the January 2017 issue of the Journal of African Christian Biography, Jean Claude Loba-Mkole

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introduces Simon Kimbangu as one of three leading figures (alongside with modern leaders like the Catholic Cardinal A.-J. Malula and the Protestant pastor Jean Ifoto Bokeleale) who have shaped major forms of Christianity in the DRC (Loba-Mkole, 2017, p. 5). Kimbanguism remains the tipping point and the best known of messianic and nationalistic movements that have developed in the Belgian Congo (Anderson, 1998; Balandier, 1953). Faced with the repressiveness of the colonial power, and the disintegration of the traditional way of life, Kimbanguism sought to reinstate and revitalize African social life (Young & Turner, 1985, p. 6). Markowitz adds, “while the Christian missions had contributed to the rise of these movements, they were not generally in sympathy with them. They saw them as xenophobic, anti-white, revolutionary, nativistic and last, not least as a threat to their own evangelistic efforts. Yet the missions had contributed, if only indirectly, to their political character” (Markowitz, 1970, p. 141).

For a better comprehension of the historical and political context in which emerged Kimbanguism as a messianic movement, it is worthy to trace the life and works of Simon Kimbangu even though we explore and discuss on his political theology of identity reconstruction in subsequent sections. Born on 24 September 1889 in the city of Nkamba, near Thysville (now Mbanza-Ngungu) in lower Congo, Kimbangu’s mother was a fourth generation of Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita, considered as the first black woman to fight against European dominance and to expose racism and misogyny in the Catholic Church during the 17th century (Thornton, 1998). Kimpa Vita (Kimbangu’s direct ancestor) led the first indigenous movement in Sub-Saharan Africa. She fought all forms of slavery and taught people that black saints mingled with white saints in paradise. This noblewoman tried to “reconfigure Christianity within a Kongolesethos” (Gondola, 2013, p.94). In 1706,
she, unfortunately, met an unprecedented level of oppression and was burned at the stake for heresy by Capuchins at the age of twenty (Kilele, 2019; Thornton, 1983a). After the early death of his parents, Kimbangu was adopted by his maternal aunt Kinzembo. In his native language “Kikongo”, the word Kimbangu means “the One who reveals the hidden truth” (citation). Kimbangu’s childhood and adolescence were almost similar with his contemporaries. He grew up within the realm of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) and became a Christian as a young man. He was baptized as a Protestant Baptist along with his wife Marie Mwilu in July 1915 after thorough instruction by missionaries. He became a catechist at the BMS mission school in Ngombe Lutete where he gained a strong knowledge of the Bible. The barefoot African peasant and itinerant preacher Simon Kimbangu was regarded by his contemporary Protestant fellows as a decent, very intelligent and orderly man with a remarkable oratory talent who read his Bible and did his work conscientiously (Lobunda-Selemani S. J., 2015, p. 256). “Kimbangu received his first call to ‘tend Christ’s flock one night in 1918. He declined the call and sought refuge in Kinshasa the voice called him to minister the gospel. He returned to Nkamba and, on the morning of 6 April 1921, performed his first healing by laying on a critically ill woman in the name of Jesus Christ. A second miracle took the form of healing a child. Many more healings of sick and prophecies followed” (Gondola, 2013, p. 94). The biographers of Kimbangu attest that he had caused a young girl, who had died a few days earlier, to rise from the dead. Van Reybrouck reports, “here at last was someone with much more power than those white people with their injections against sleeping sickness that actually made you sicker than you were before. Redemption was nearing. From all over the region, people abandoned their fields and hurried to Nkamba” (Van Reybrouck & Garrett, 2014,
The rumors of those signs and wonders rapidly spread and transformed Kimbangu into a status of a healer and local prophet. Many people flowed to Nkamba, leaving jobs, carrying sick relatives for healing, and rapidly increasing the anxiety of Belgian colonial authorities. In the case of Kimbangu, adds Covington-Ward, “this Christian prophetic movement threatened the hegemony of Western missionaries and Belgian colonial administrators” (Covington-Ward, 2016, p. 3).

His public preaching and healing ministry lasted only six months (from 6 April to 3 October 1921). Doutreloux describes it in these terms:

From a moral perspective, it is important to state that Kimbangu clearly had higher values. From the beginning of his mission, all observers did recognize that he succeeded on the fight against polygamy, alcohol abuse and exotic dancing. He always preached the importance of inner liberation first as a prerequisite to other liberations (Doutreloux, 1965, p. 227).

Consequently, Kimbangu preeminently pointed his audience to inner/heart transformation by preaching Jesus Christ as the Savior and freer of captives of all races (Blacks, Whites or else) from spiritual bondage and using the Bible as a reference supporting the cause of racial liberation. Don Petro discloses the reaction of religious and political authorities in the time of Kimbangu, “Using their financial power, the police, the media and everything at their disposal, both Catholic and Protestant missionaries blamed all evils of the society on Kimbangu. They accused him being the cause of economic paralysis, general labor strikes, massive desertion, no payment of taxes and generalized unrest” (Petro V, 2011, p. 45). Chased by the colonial government, Kimbangu hid for three months while pursuing his apostolic circuits and spreading his faith in the villages where Belgian authorities rarely visited and where no one could also find or betray him. In September 1921, Kimbangu surrendered himself without violence—just like Jesus did at Gethsemane. On 3 October 1921, after an unjust trail, Kimbangu was sentenced to death.
and his associates to life imprisonment and hard labor. King Albert of Belgians turned his
death sentence into life-imprisonment, and he was taken to the other side of the country
at Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi) in Katanga province. There he remained behind bars
for 30 years until his death on 12 October 1951. Reacting to Kimbangu’s incarceration,
the Belgian author David van Reybrouck denotes, “Unusual punishment for someone
who, for a period of less than six months, had brought a little hope and comfort to a few
stricken villages. His term of imprisonment was one of the longest in all the colonial Africa,
even longer than that of Nelson Mandela. He spent most of that time in solitary
confinement. He had never committed an act of violence” (Van Reybrouck & Garrett,
2014, p. 151). What do the life and ministry of Kimbangu tell us today and what are effects
of Kimbanguism on the DRC’s contemporary Politics and national/racial identity
reconstruction?

At the ceremonial inauguration of Simon Kimbangu’s museum in Nkamba on 6
April 2021 coinciding with the 100th anniversary of his ministry, the keynote guest of the
event, the DRC’s President Felix A. Tshisekedi reminisced the audience,

The commemoration of the centenary of the acceptance by the prophet Simon Kimbangu
of the ministry received, as underlined previously, by our Creator must not only remind us
of the fight led by the martyrs of these African independences of which Papa Simon
Kimbangu is inexorably a part, to stand up against oppression and injustice, but also to
remind ourselves of the responsibility that falls on us, as their heirs, to work both
individually and collectively for the development of our continent and our country the DRC.
In fact, in addition to the commemoration of such a ministry, I would like here to celebrate
the memory of a compatriot who left the village of Nkamba endowed with exceptional
courage and endurance and whose internally local popularity turned into a global and
timeless influence placing for many believers in the DRC and Nkamba, in the center of the
world. This legacy, bequeathed to us by Papa Simon Kimbangu, recognized as a
messenger of Jesus Christ and a prophet of the liberation of black people, deserves to be
protected, preserved, and wisely managed for future generations (RTNC, 2021).

The double coincidence of Felix Tshisekedi being the DRC’s fifth Head of State
and the acting President of the African Union (AU) at the moment of this event is
perceived like the fulfilment of one of Kimbangu’s prophecies disclosing that “the ruler with a character symbolized as the lamb” has been predicted to organize the ceremonial festivities related to the centenary of his ministry (6 April 1921-6 April 2021) (see. Ndaywel-è-Nziem, 2018, p. 118). This presidential speech shows how religious leaders such as Simon Kimbangu are invoked as beacons of social reconstruction with a Congolese framework and as a link between politics and the people.

Simon Kimbangu fills the criterion of a true prophet who, in the times of crisis and dissensus among believers, the established clergy, and the official religion, offers people an understanding of the world that meets their needs, giving new meaning to the present and future life (Mokoko-Gampiot, 2017). For the purposes of arguing on the interplay between religion and politics in contemporary Africa, three key points are relevant in regards to the prophetic movement launched by Simon Kimbangu. The first is the ongoing quest from Africans in general, and Congolese in particular, for the inculturation of Christianity in indigenous ethos (localization). The contemporaries of Kimbangu did not rupture with Protestantism and their movement was neither a replica nor a return to pre-Christian and pre-colonial religious practices. They intentionally said no to the ancestral belief in witchcraft, idolatry, polygamy, insane dancing, alcoholism, etc. While being against cult objects, his followers sought and practiced healing in the name of Jesus Christ. They used religious symbolism and moods that traced back to traditional customs related to healing like trances, charms, and incantations. In this point, those assertions are in line with Mokoko-Gampiot and David van Reybrouck who argue that Kimbangu’s movement was “an African form for an imported faith” (Mokoko Gampiot, 2017, p. 27; Van Reybrouck & Garrett, 2014, p. 148).
Second, Kimbangu’s movement as an exclusively spiritual phenomenon, emerged itself as one example of an African peaceful resistance to Western imperialism. “This messianic movement, inspired by prophecies of independence and a reversal of the world order, blended Kongo traditional embodied gestures and ritual with mission-inspired Protestant Christianity, including hymns, social conduct and biblical interpretation” (Covington-Ward, 2016, p. 3). Kimbangu was not a politician nor a political rebel. He never organized anticolonial rallies nor did his teachings target Belgian colonialists. However, his prophecies focused on the holistic salvation of black people and the coming of a more egalitarian society between whites and blacks through Jesus Christ with his famous sayings “the whites shall be blacks and the blacks shall be whites” (Van Reybrouck & Garrett, 2014, p. 150). Professor Ngoma-Binda, as contributor in the edited book “Simon Kimbangu: le Prophete de la Liberation de l’Homme Noir” views Kimbangu’s metaphor as a requiring transformation of racial relationships, a transfiguration of reciprocal appreciation and an invitation to mutual recognition between both races and beyond (Ngoma-Binda, 2019, pp. 51–60). Additionally, Kimbangu’s theology of identity reconstruction refers to the consideration of Congo as the “new garden of Eden” and Nkamba the new Jerusalem with its temple as a sign of spiritual liberation for Black communities worldwide.\textsuperscript{122} This Kimbangu’s concept of Congo reverses the well-spread

\textsuperscript{122} The holy land of Nkamba is located in the southwestern part of the DRC. As the birthplace of Prophet Simon Kimbangu, this small town bears a very special name among the centers of Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa. It attracts millions of Christian pilgrims and tourists from all parts of the world. Nkamba is also considered by Kimbanguists as the “New Jerusalem” reassigned to the obedient black peoples worldwide. Nkamba, with the spring of its holy river, has become famous in view of multiple miracles still happening in this place. There are indeed signs and wonders of God like blind recovering sight, deaf people hearing and paralyzed being able to walk (Mokoko-Gampiot, 2017). There are three parallelisms to display between Mount Zion located in Jerusalem, Israel and the land of Nkamba: 1) Spatial parallelism in view of the geographical position of both places with reference to the vision of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 47:1-12), 2) Spiritual parallelism in consideration of the prayer of Solomon during the dedication of the Jerusalem’s temple (1 Kings 8:27-30) and of Simon Kimbangu’s asking God’s favor upon the land of Nkamba, and 3) Substantial
bad and negativist image of this African country sadly known because of its extreme poverty, corruption, authoritarian regimes, rape, civil wars and humanitarian crisis alongside its high rate of death counting several millions of Congolese people who have died, recorded as the world’s deadliest tragedy since World War II (Autesserre, 2010; Katongole, 2018; Stearns, 2011).

Third, Kimbangu represents the prototype of a religious leader who impacts the social realm without assuming any political role in a conventional way. His six-month healing and prophetic ministry in Nkamba in the lower Congo kindled a spiritual revival and cultural awareness that flashed across the countryside and beyond. Despite his imprisonment and the forced exile of many of his followers, 10 percent of the DRC population today adheres to his restorationist and Afro-centric message. Kimbangu sought for the localization and appropriation of Christianity as resistance to an oppressive political regime, and preached the liberating message of Jesus Christ, as the redeemer of African people.

With this perspective, Kimbanguist theology strives to offer Blacks in general and Congolese particularly a positive identity and the possibility to be reinstated by God in the status of Adam and Eve as firstborns and elders before their disinheritation because of sin. An additional pillar of his theology of identity reconstruction points to the consideration of the DRC as the new Garden of Eden and Nkamba, Kimbangu’s birthplace as the new Jerusalem for Blacks all over the world. “The pan-African message of identity parallelism between prophet Elisha’s grave in Israel and prophet Simon Kimbangu’s mausoleum in Nkamba. The biblical narrative of a dead man that came back to life after the mourners threw it where the bones laid in 2 Kings 13:21, coincides with miracles that happened and continue to occur in favor of sick pilgrims in their visit where prophet Simon Kimbangu’s bones are buried in Nkamba (Diangienda-Kutima, 1984; Mokoko-Gampiot, 2017).
reconstruction is rooted in an acute awareness of the common situation of domination and leads the Kimbanguists to identify their cause with that of all Black people, who, they believe, all expect their redemption from God” (Mokoko-Gampiot, 2017, p. 247). With regards to this assertion, Professor Isidore N’daywel-è-Nziem, in our conversation, explains, “Kimbangu’s analogy of Congo as Garden of Eden can serve as a strong stimulus in the psyche of Africans in general and Congolese particularly to address what some people call ‘Congo-pessimism’ or ‘Congo-defeatism’ and to be fully aware of all the tremendous wealth God has blessed our country with, in terms of human and natural resources, valuable ingredients for its future brighter reconstruction”.

Reverend Dr. Adrien Ngudiankama, the founder of Kongo Academy, on his side, describes Kimbangu as “a moral authority in the Congolese national memory and identity”. His fellow-citizen and scholar Aurelien Mokoko-Gampiot transcends national boundaries assessing, “Kimbangu holds a distinctive place in the collective psyche of the populations of the two Congos and Angola...he is mentioned in history schoolbooks as part of the history of Congolese resistance to European colonization” (Mokoko-Gampiot, 2017, p. 229).

Biographers of Simon Kimbangu confirm that one of his prophecies in 1921 disclosed that African Americans and other African-descended people would follow God’s plan and

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123 Interview with Professor Isidore N'daywel-è-Nziem, 24 November 2018, Kinshasa, DRC.

124 Reverend Dr. Adrien N. Ngudiankama is originally from the DRC. He is the founder of Kongo Academy, Inc. and the African Pastoral Care & Counseling Global Network. He has a Philosophy Masters in Systematic Theology from Kings’ College and a PhD in Health Education and Health Promotion from the Institute of Education, London University. He did his Postdoctoral research in medical anthropology at the University of Kansas and in sociology of health at Princeton University. His interests include missiology, religions, health, African refugees/migrants, and development in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa and the African Diaspora. Dr. Ngudiankama also serves as the North America liaison officer for the Tokoist Church (Angola) and ECC (DRC).

125 Dr. Ngundia, 24 May 2021, two-day virtual conference celebrating the 100th anniversary of Simon Kimbangu’s ministry.
return to Africa to help the continent benefit from their knowledge and resources (Mokoko-Gampiot, 2017, p. 247; Ndaywel-è-Nziem, 2018; Ngoma-Binda, 2019). With regards to its tremendous wealth in terms of human and natural resources, Kimbangu’s metaphor reinstates Congo, as the centre of Africa, into a positive imaginary and identity, and opens the country to foreign investments particularly from diasporic Africa and black communities across the world. In sum, Kimbangu’s religious movement has been identified as 1) an inculturation of Christianity in the Congolese indigenous ethos, 2) a non-violent resistance to colonialist absolutism while focusing on the holistic liberation in Christ and racial equality, and 3) a prototype of a religious transformational leadership without assuming an official role in formal political institutions. The theology of identity reconstruction as driven by Simon Kimbangu constitutes a fostering source and resource of protestation for ontological equality, projection for relational interconnectivity and participation for functional mutuality in line with the concepts of ST and SR (PD along with Reconciliation).

6.5. Conclusion

This Chapter argued that theology as *fides aquaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding) shapes Christian ecumenicism and religious political participation. It also confirmed that theology constitutes a core source of identity recovery in social reconstruction processes, practices, and prospects with specific regards to the DRC labelled both as a majority Christian nation and a post-conflict environment in pursuit of lasting peace, stability, and sustainable development for many decades. In other terms, the discussion verified how individual and collective activities driven by theological ideas and ideals enhanced and/or continue to foster peace, reconciliation, participatory
development, and identity reconstruction. For this purpose, it engaged a dialectical and constructive conversation with two concepts: on one hand, Social Trinitarianism as developed by the German scholar Jürgen Moltmann due to its practical and ethical relevance for the Church and society and on other hand, Social Reconstruction alongside its mechanisms and processes that coalesce reconciliation and participatory development. In plus, it drew from Simon Kimbangu’s theologico-political hermeneutics to analyze their contemporary effects on identity reconstruction among Blacks in general and Congolese particularly.

Three main assertions emerged from this conversational interlinkage. The first, ST and SR (R & PD) provide a critical resource for protestation of power asymmetry and authoritarianism with human society. Those concepts criticize and challenge hierarchical/top-down-totalitarian structures to produce social change in the direction of equality, dignity, and appreciative shared identity. They give Religious Institutions, communities, and actors tools of how to fight social injustice and inequality. They mostly entail the mutual acceptance and acknowledgement of human rights and worth of others at equal footing. The second assertion points to the projection of a more interconnected, democratic, and decentralized society that promote inclusiveness, mutuality, and equity. ST and SR constitute an epistemological frame that can enable religious figures to change the society’s narrative by improving its current self-image. Echoing African scholars like Jean Marc Ela, Emmanuel Katongole and Kä Mana, the Church in the DRC needs “to reinvent a new socio-economic and political script that will nurture the imagination and hope” of the Congolese people living in fear, passivity and extreme

As emphasized by the USIP, a country’s social reconstruction emerges through 1) the acceptance of a national identity that transcends individual, sectarian, and communal differences, 2) the will to resolve disputes with non-violent ways, and 3) the existence of community institutions that binds society across divisions and addresses the legacy of past abuses (Social Reconstruction | United States Institute of Peace, 2021). Consequently, this chapter referred to Prophet Simon Kimbangu, regarded as one of the major fathers of Christianity in the DRC alongside the Catholic Cardinal Joseph-Albert Malula and the Protestant pastor Jean Itofo Bokeleale. In turn, the main purpose of Kimbangu’s theology of identity reconstruction was to ignite “the shift from an oppressed status to a new status, understood as the primordial one because it will reinstate Black people in the position of seniority” (Mokoko-Gampiot, 2017, p. 212). By considering Adam and Eve, the first God’s creatures as having been blacks, the Kimbanguist theology builds on the status of firstborn and elder. Culturally speaking, as perceived in Congo, as in most of African societies and worldviews, the firstborn is granted the privilege of inheritance and become responsible and manager of the family affairs in favor of younger siblings (such whites and other races).

Based on what has been discussed in this Chapter, theological ideas (such as Social Trinitarianism) and ideals alongside social reconstruction mechanisms, processes, and approaches (Reconciliation and Participatory Development) provide ingredients for an anti-absolutist, egalitarian, and participatory model. The appropriation and implementation of such an ethos will expectedly enable Religious Institutions,
communities, and actors in the post-conflict DRC to live out and fulfil the dream of the fathers of its independence as expressed in the country’s national anthem “now for good, let us keep moving boldly ahead, in peace, oh! ardent people by hard work we shall build in peace, a country more beautiful than before”.
Chapter 7: General Conclusion

This interdisciplinary thesis sought to examine the nexus between Religion and Politics in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It investigated how and why the political participation of Religious Institutions as hybrid governance actors shifted from 2016 onwards, considering this year as an important watershed for political change in the country. It stated that the current religious commentary, strategies, and actions in the political sphere are different from earlier periods. This reality is demonstrated in the comparative exploration of both historical and contemporary interlinkages between religious networks and the State. This thesis argues that CENCO and ECC, two largest Religious Institutions in the country, have stepped up their public engagement in a number of ways and reasons. They have taken newly activist stances, used their influence in response to state violence, and participated in public service delivery.

In contrast to the modern Western Weberian concept of state fragility/failure with its emphasis on the deficiencies and shortcomings of governance, this research opted for Volker Boege’s viewpoint that “takes a more positive outlook by focusing on the strength and resilience of socio-political formations that are present on the ground, that work, and that provide public goods for people, and communities” (Boege et al., 2009, p. 13). Catholic bishops of CENCO emerged as mediators and peacemakers to preserve the social fabric and avoid political crisis throughout the country. This crisis was caused by Kabila’s unconstitutional maneuvers to cling to power, the stiff resistance from his political opponents and spontaneous outbursts of popular anger among the Congolese people. The prelates facilitated the signature of the peace agreement known as the Saint-Sylvester Accord in December 2016 (refer to the full document in Annexes). The two co-
signing parties agreed to extend Kabila’s second and last term for twelve months and postponed elections to the subsequent year (Cheik-Fita, 2018; N’daywel-ë-Nziem, 2019). However, Kabila and his government’s failure to respect and fully implement the clauses of that peace accord turned Catholic bishops of CENCO, later joined by their Protestant peers of ECC, into catalysts of national street protests that demanded that elections be held in 2018. The interface between Religion and politics shifted and continue to shape the DRC’s political landscape from 2016 onwards due to the cohesive and collective public engagement of the Catholic and Protestant Clergy and networks. As a Christian and Congolese researcher, I found those changes within the DRC’s socio-political scenario extremely fascinating and intellectually deserving investigation as, in Boege’s terms, they allow to highlight new socio-political formations that could bring positive change in my country. Overall, as this research brought to light, those changes within the Catholic and Protestant public action are trifold.

The first change points to the Catholic Church and Protestant denominations’ repositioning towards the State. By reminder, Catholic missions and missionaries worked hand in hand with the Belgian colonial State while their Protestant peers publicly exposed the atrocities and crimes committed on indigenous peoples in the pre-independent Congo. Political engagement of Religious Institutions in the country, either in opposition to or in collaboration with the State, is not a new phenomenon but it is rooted in historical relational dynamics between missionary Churches and the State (Markowitz, 1970, pp. 234-47; see. Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). The same reality is evidenced by Mika Vahakangas’ preface in Competing for Caesar: Religion and Politics in Postcolonial
Consequently, both the Catholic Church and Protestant denominations have shifted their distinctive approaches to all the authoritarian regimes that ruled the country over decades after independence. Referring to the inaugural speech of the current ECC President in office in August 2017, I agree with my informants that it is valuable to rediscover the concept of ‘protest’ in Protestant ontology. At that level, it is crucial for the Congolese Protestantism to re-appropriate its historical memory and redefine its values and ethics. Based on my informants’ viewpoints, being “Protestant” implies an individual adhesion to behavioral/ethical principles driven by inner-freedom, democracy, pluralism, and protestations against authoritarian regimes and figures (Bruce, 2007, pp. 15-19; de Jager & de Jager, 2019, pp. 225-46; Fukuyama, 2000, pp.11-17; Woodberry, 2012, pp.11-17).

Secondly, there are three things that surprised me during my empirical research related to this epochal change. The first surprise points to the emergence of Religious Institutions as non-state actors in “Durkheimian” and “Weberian” manner as a force for social cohesion and political transformation in the DRC. Ignited by religiously based expectations and motivations, Catholic and Protestant Clergy became the signposts of hope and a cradle of political creativity and activity (Bompani & Valois, 2017, p. 22; Sanneh, 2012, pp.2-3). Second, those two religious networks filled the gaps of the State’s incapacity to provide basic public services. They became major actors of, what Shahar Hameiri and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan describe as “the real governance” or “indirect rule” beyond the State (Hameiri, 2007, p. 122-49; Olivier de Sarden, 2008, p.2). Third, in

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126 Some of the contributors of this book presented their papers at the African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR) biennial conference that discussed on Revisiting Religion, Politics, and the State in Africa and African Diaspora. It took place in Lusaka, Zambia, August 1-4, 2018. Chammah J. Kaunda and Maria Hinfelaar the editors of that book and myself also attended the 8th AASR gathering.
contrast to what has been broadly mentioned in this thesis, I also underlined what political scientist Daniel Philpott (Philpott, 2007) called “the political ambivalence of Religion” perceived through the position of some clergymen in the post-electoral crisis. The sacerdotal neutrality of CENCO, and later, of ECC has been questioned because of the public backing of their current leaders, Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo and Reverend Dr. André Bokundoa to one presidential candidate and his political coalition. The election of Felix Tshisekedi split CENCO in many fractions based on ethnic and ideological affinities. Unlike the official position of their hierarchy, bishops from Kasai and South Kivu where Felix Tshisekedi and his wife Denise are respectively from, publicized their support to the elected President and endorsed the election outcomes. It evidenced how politics and ethnicity can spark divisions and/or promote partisanship even in religious circles. Voices are raising locally and in the Congolese diasporas calling the Church in the DRC to play her reconciliatory role as a ‘palaver tree at the middle of the societal village’.

Thirdly, this study argued that the Catholic-Protestant civic engagement in the DRC from 2016 onwards has been influenced and driven by theological ideas and ideals. This argument drew from my fieldwork follow-up and observation deployed in Kinshasa, DRC both in 2019 and 2020 lining up with what Matthew Engelke asserts “the main aspect of fieldwork is participant observation” (Engelke, 2019, p.13). Discussions with my informants, mostly theologians themselves, focused on two major themes: 1) the role of theology in the shifted religious ecumenism and political participation of Catholic-Protestant Clergy and laypersons since 2016, and 2) the impact of theology in Social Reconstruction processes, practices, and prospects. In the line of this, my informants on both sides (Catholic and Protestant theologians) have pointed to the doctrine of the Trinity
as an ethical model. They highlighted the prominent role of theology as \textit{fides aquaerens intellectum} (faith seeking understanding) in the shaping of people’s beliefs and behaviors in public arena. Theology, as confirmed by Paul Gifford, “can legitimize new aspirations, new forms of organizations, new relations and a new social order” (Gifford, 1998, p. 26).

The impact of trinitarian theologies on Christian public participation in the reconstruction of the post-World War II Germany and Europe has been discussed in the circles of Congolese theologians. For this reason, the particularity and the pre-eminence of Jürgen Moltmann’s political hermeneutics and theology have served as substantial food for thought and ecumenical action in the DRC for three reasons: 1) Moltmann’s personal existential trajectory as a native of Germany and born in 1929 who experienced the atrocities of WWII and beyond, and his empirical background with some similarities with the post-war environment of the DRC, 2) his epistemology “towards a new future anticipated in hope, the praxis of loving solidarity with victims, the implementation of humanity’s created dignity and destiny in human rights”, and 3) his social analogy of the Trinity that in a brilliant and unique way links the three-ness (hybridity) and the one-ness (unity), without reducing the three-ness and this concept grasps the circulatory character of the eternal divine life (Bauckham, 1995, p. 117; Moltmann, 1993, p. 174).

On the other hand, this study unfolded the commonalities between Social Trinitarianism (Inter-relationality and circulatory empowerment) with the two strands of Social Reconstruction (reconciliation and participatory development). It has been evidenced in this thesis that both frameworks promote an anti-absolutist, egalitarian and participatory model. As previously mentioned in Chapter 6, Simon Kimbangu’s reconstructive theology based on identity recovery also resurged in the religio-political
narratives since the election of the DRC’s fifth President, S.E. Felix Tshisekedi. The discussions with my informants on this topic have categorized Kimbangu’s religious movement as, 1) an inculturation of Christianity in the Congolese indigenous ethos, 2) a non-violent resistance to colonialist absolutism while focusing on the holistic liberation in Christ and racial equality, and 3) a prototype of a religious transformational leadership without assuming any official role in formal political institutions. With regards to the DRC’s tremendous wealth in terms of human and natural resources, Kimbangu’s metaphor of Congo as “new garden of Eden” reinstates the DRC, as the epicentre of Africa, into a positive imaginary and identity, opens the country to foreign investments, particularly from diasporic Black and Congolese communities across the world. His theology of identity reconstruction serves, both amongst the religious elite and in public sphere, as a cognitive and epistemological ignition to protest power asymmetry and authoritarianism within the community for national/racial equality, to protect an ideal democratic community for relational interconnectivity, and to make all societal components participate in the country’s social reconstruction.

7.1. Relevance and Originality of the study.

This study contributes to ongoing academic debates at least in three ways. First, it sheds light on the intersection between Religion and Politics in the context of the DRC drawing specifically from the works of African and Congolese scholars and authors. The inquiry brings an additional edifice to the resurfacing of Religion as an important but previously neglected theme in the social scientist scholarship (Baker, 2016, pp. 190-198; Berger, 1999, pp. 3-10; Bompani & Fram-Arp, 2010, pp. 240-51; Casanova, 2006, pp. 7-22, Fox, 2018, p.27; Haynes, 2013, pp.49-64; Marshall, 2010, pp. 35-42; Philpott, 2009,
In other terms, Religion is increasingly coming back from its long-time relegation “to the status of an epiphenomenon and consigned to the private realm” (Willis, 2013, p.276). Second, this study showcases how and why Catholic and Protestant religious leaders and laypersons teamed up together on a national scale and emerged as moral agents, peace-mediators, street protest catalysts, electoral monitors, public co-managers alongside the State, and ecumenical promoters of reconciliation for the welfare of the Congolese people in a specific historical time. Those two Religious Institutions specifically played a key role in the fall of Joseph Kabila and in the DRC’s first peaceful transfer of power since the country’s political independence from Belgium. The local and international community witnessed this event on 24th of January 2019 at the in-swearing ceremony of the fifth and current President Felix A. Tshisekedi.

In addition, this investigation also analyses theological ideas and ideals that shaped and influenced the Catholic-Protestant political communication, mobilization, and participation. Third and lastly, this study engages with the emerging conversation about hybrid governance (to be differentiated here with official government), which becomes a “buzzword” in Development Studies (Goodfellow, 2013, 2015). My work strives to provide a theoretical and empirical framework of this concept based on the DRC’s context of state fragility and/or instability by comparing colonial and post-colonial eras. Practically, CENCO and ECC as non-state actors have played, and continue to play a key role in the regulation of political order and in the co-provision of public services, particularly in the sectors of education and healthcare. In conclusion, this study is relevant for scholars and researchers interested in the public role of Religion and in the civic engagement of religious networks as hybrid governance actors in failed/weak/fragile states.
7.2. On-going challenges re-examined

In 2021, when I wrapped up this study, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was still facing multiple societal challenges despite the embryonic political change related to the country's first peaceful transfer of power that occurred two years earlier. The introductory Chapter unfolded the causes of the “Congolese crisis” and displayed three major paradoxes that continue to characterize this vast Central African country despite the higher percentage of Christians living in this nation (Ross et al., 2017, p 12). The first challenge is humanitarian. The DRC is labeled as a “Post-Conflict Environment” (PCE) that has suffered of two devastating wars (1996-1997 and 1998-2003) and multiple bloodshed military insurrections in Eastern and Kasai provinces (2006, 2012, 2016-2017). The country is still caught up in near-constant fighting, fueled by the presence of more than 130 armed groups that control over lucrative mining operations and other natural resources (The New Humanitarian, 2019). The DRC has endured war-related atrocities for a long time and continues to face humanitarian crisis due to violence particularly in the eastern provinces despite the presence of the UN's largest and most expensive contingent that has been in the DRC since 1999 (Billerbeck & Tansey, 2019; Center for Prevention Action, 2021). This study stated that, “the trouble with the Congo” resulted from multifaceted factors. Issues pointing to colonial exploitation, cold war policies and proxies, and greed of multinational corporations and of African neighboring countries that back local militia rebel groups, are highlighted as external causes.

The second challenge is ethical and moral. The DRC has faced and continues to endure societal problems that have subjected Congolese people to several ethically

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127 This concept is popularized by the French Political scientist Severine Auteresse. It has been used as the title of her book which analyses the local dynamics of conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
related issues such as corruption, widespread rape, massive human rights violations, and ethnicity-based violence. International Institutions, like Corruption Perceptions and Transparency International have recently indexed the DRC as one of the world most corrupted countries (Corruption Perceptions Index, 2019, see. Also, Transparency International, 2017). In view of those hindrances, Religious Institutions and actors view themselves and are also viewed by the community as moral catalysts for societal transformation. The third and last challenge is economical/developmental. The DRC is ranked as one of the wealthiest African nations in terms of natural resources—estimated to include $24 trillion of untapped raw materials but its population is paradoxically labelled as one of the world most impoverished people (UNDP, 2020). This study mentioned weak/poor governance caused by several decades of political authoritarianism, lack of democratic and people-oriented institutions, and the rule of kleptocratic governments and greedy leaders as internal causes of the “Congolese crisis”. In sum, the three mentioned challenges (humanitarian, ethical and developmental) deserve more attention of scholars and researchers interested in the Politics and Development of the DRC.

7.3. Research Prospects Redefined

After completing this research project, I realized that there are still important themes and areas for further investigations. This study only delimited its fieldwork and focus on Kinshasa due to the size of the country and to the difficulties in reaching certain zones for socio-political instability. Regarding the three challenges mentioned in the previous section, I personally think that additional studies covering other areas in the DRC are needed. At the humanitarian and security levels, it would be relevant to explore the
interlinkages between Religious Institutions as “public authorities from below” and the State in healing societal rifts, particularly in the war-affected regions. Such a research project will be in line with President Felix Tshisekedi’s project to create a *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (TRC) as a national platform and framework to investigate patterns of past abuses and human rights violations since 1996 and to render justice to the victims in a reconciliatory and transitional way.

At the ethical/moral level, two further academic inquiries are crucial. The first will open a dialogical nexus between Catholic-Protestant theologies to withdraw leadership and governance principles that might inspire political scientists and regulate religious political participation. The second inquiry will deeply examine the concept and role of religious leadership and mediation in African and Congolese traditional worldviews. The Congolese scholar Benezet Bujo provides a food for thought about the confidence that Africans place in religious and customary leaders. “It is probably that, following the traditional African way of thinking, the political leader will also be expected to be able to provide a link with the invisible and the mystical. It is well-known fact that our political leaders have failed to do that” (Bujo, 2006, p.10). In this perspective, religious figures and customary chiefs are expected to be legitimate mediators between the sacred/invisible and social/visible realms and they are highly respected and obeyed by their communities. At last, I envision to enlarge my research by exploring the extends in which the interplay between Religion and Politics might hinder or help community-driven development at a national level. It will question how and why all religious networks (Catholics, Protestants, Kimbanguists, Revivalist Churches, Orthodox Churches and including the minority Muslims) must collaborate (not to compete) with the State in poverty alleviation, and to
maximize public services provision by meeting the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In agreement with Father Leonard Santendi-Kinpu128 and the Congolese political scientist Philemon Muamba-Mumbunda, I conclude with hope in a brighter future for the DRC, at the centre of Africa, because Religious Institutions such as CENCO and ECC, possess many assets to successfully carry out this cohesive and transformative enterprise on a national scale (Muamba-Mumbunda, 2016, p. 446). In sum, this interdisciplinary work unfolded how (ways) and why(reasons) CENCO and ECC, that supervise Catholics and mainline Protestant denominations throughout the DRC (over 80 percent of Congolese population), have mobilized societal energies and fostered political change through their multiple networks, human resources, social infrastructures, and theological ideas and ideals.

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https://www.digitalcongo.net/article/5d10b9d42140660004b5d9e8/ Accessed on 24 June 2019

In-sworn ceremony and first address of President Felix Tshisekedi as the DRC’s head of State.

Joseph Kabila’s speech lashing out against the Catholic bishops of CENCO after Christian marches of protests on December 31, 2017, and January 21, 2018.

Mobutu’s reference to Devil for the unification of the country in the early years of its independence from Belgium

President Felix Tshisekedi’s address to the 74th session of General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, USA on September 26, 2019.

RTNC, https://youtu.be/TjDLTcAvJwM accessed on January 17, 2018

Sermon of Reverend Pastor Francois-David Ekofo challenging the Kabila's administration at the Cathedral of Protestant Centenary on January 16, 2018

Appendix 1: Saint Sylvester Peace Agreement “Accord of CENCO”
PREAMBULE

Nous, participants aux pourparlers de Kinshasa, au Centre interdioséian de la Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo (CENCO) et Représentants des Composantes de la Majorité présidentielle, de l'Opposition politique, de la Société civile signataires de l'Accord du 18 octobre 2016 de la Cité de l'Union Africaine, d'une part, et du Rassemblement, du Front pour le Respect de la Constitution et de la Société civile non signataires dit Accord, d'autre part ;

Considérant les divergences au sein de la classe politique ainsi que les risques majeurs de division de la Nation face à la crise politique née de l'impasse du processus électoral dont la régularité et la continuité ont été interrompues ;

Prenant conscience de la nécessité de la cohésion nationale pour rétablir la concorde intérieure fondée sur un entendement commun du respect de la Constitution, des lois de la République et des principes démocratiques généralement acceptés ;

Attendu que la crise politique actuelle a conduit les parties prenantes au dialogue national à signer l’Accord politique du 18 octobre 2016 pour l’organisation des élections apaisées, crédibles et transparentes en République Démocratique du Congo (RDC) ;

Attendu que cet Accord n’a pas connu la participation d’une partie des représentants des partis politiques de l’Opposition et de la Société civile ;

Attendu que le Rassemblement des Forces Politiques et Sociales Acquises au Changement (Rassemblement) a déposé à la CENCO le rapport de son conclave du 04 octobre 2016 et un mémo contenant ses positions et propositions en vue de la sortie de la crise actuelle ;

Attendu que le Front pour le Respect de la Constitution (FRC) a déposé son document incluant ses points de vue sur la sortie de la crise ;

Mus par la volonté de trouver une entente commune basée sur la recherche de plus d'inclusivité en vue du règlement des problèmes politiques causés par le retard dans l'organisation des élections ;

Attendu que cette recherche d'inclusivité doit se faire en harmonie avec la Constitution de la RDC, les résolutions pertinentes du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies, notamment la Résolution 2277, l’Accord-Cadre d’Addis Abeba ainsi que d'autres instruments juridiques nationaux et internationaux pertinents ;

Engagés à trouver des solutions durables à la situation politique de l’heure sous la médiation de la CENCO, notamment sous le leadership de son Président et de son Vice-Président ;

Prenant nos responsabilités devant Dieu, la Nation congolaise, l'Afrique et le Monde et guidés par le consensus comme mode de prise de décision ;

Conclurons et arrêtons, en ce jour, ce qui suit :

CHAPITRE I : DES CONCEPTS

Au sens du présent Accord, il faut entendre par :


1.2 Période préélectorale et électorale : la période de temps qui va de la signature du présent Accord jusqu'à l'installation effective des institutions issues des élections.

CHAPITRE II : DU RESPECT DE LA CONSTITUTION

Les différents principes fondamentaux posés par les parties prenantes dans leur entendement du respect de la Constitution peuvent essentiellement se résumer à ce qui suit :

II.1. Les parties prenantes s'engagent à respecter la Constitution du 18 février 2006 telle que modifiée en 2011 et les lois de la République, à organiser les élections présidentielle, législatives nationales et provinciales ainsi que les élections locales en conformité avec ladite Constitution. Nonobstant l'article 5 alinéa 1er qui dispose : « la souveraineté nationale appartient au peuple. Tout pouvoir émane du peuple qui l'exerce directement par voie de référendum ou d'élections et indirectement par ses représentants », elles s'engagent à n'entreprendre ni soutenir aucune initiative de révision et de changement de Constitution.
II.2. En rapport avec la préoccupation sur le troisième mandat pour le Président de la République, Monsieur Joseph KABILA, les parties prenantes ont été sensibilisées à la déclaration solennelle faite devant le Parlement réuni en Congrès en date du 15/11/2016 en ces termes : « A tous ceux qui semblent se préoccuper à longueur de journées de mon avenir politique, je tiens à dire, tout en les remerciant, que la RDC est une démocratie constitutionnelle. Toutes les questions pertinentes relatives au sort des institutions et de leurs animateurs sont réglées de manière satisfaisante par la Constitution ». Ainsi, ayant accompli deux mandats, il ne peut donc en brigue un troisième.

II.3. Les parties prenantes s'engagent solennellement à respecter les institutions et les lois de la République, l'État de droit, les Droits de l'Homme, les libertés fondamentales collectives et individuelles, la séparation des pouvoirs garantis par la Constitution et le droit d'existence des partis de l'opposition et d'exercer de leurs activités politiques.

II.4. Elles renouvellent leur engagement solennel à promouvoir l'indépendance du pouvoir judiciaire, la cohésion nationale, la paix civile et les valeurs démocratiques notamment l'alternance démocratique résultant des élections crédibles, libres, transparentes et apaisées, la solidarité nationale, la tolérance politique, le sens du compromis par le dialogue, l'égalité des droits et des chances, la bonne gouvernance et la redevabilité des dirigeants.


CHAPITRE III : DES INSTITUTIONS ET DE LEUR FONCTIONNEMENT PENDANT LA PERIODE PREELECTORALE ET ELECTORALE

III.1. Des principes de gouvernance

III.1.1. Dans le cadre de leurs prérogatives constitutionnelles et légales, les missions prioritaires des Institutions nationales et provinciales du pays consistent à :
- assurer la continuité de l'État ;
- organiser, dans le délai convenu, les élections présidentielle, législatives nationales et provinciales, sénatoriales ainsi que des gouverneurs et vice-gouverneurs des provinces.

III.1.2. La durée maximale pour la réalisation des opérations préélectorales et électorales conformément à la séquence convenue est de 12 mois à dater de la signature du présent Accord.

III.2. Des Institutions à mandat électif

III.2.1. Du Président de la République

Les parties prenantes s'engagent à respecter la Constitution du 18 février 2006 telle que révisée en 2011, notamment les dispositions ci-après :

- L'article 70 alinéa 1er qui dispose : « le Président de la République est élu au suffrage universel direct pour un mandat de cinq ans renouvelable une seule fois ». Il s’ensuit que tout président ayant épuisé le deuxième et dernier mandat ne peut plus en brigue un troisième.

- L'article 70 en son alinéa 2 dispose : « A la fin de son mandat, le Président de la République reste en fonction jusqu'à l'installation effective du nouveau Président élu ». Sous la réserve émise par le Front pour le Respect de la Constitution, il s'en suit que, bien qu'étant à la fin de son mandat, le Président de la République restera en fonction jusqu'à l'installation effective de son successeur élu.

III.2.2. De l'Assemblée nationale, du Sénat et des Assemblées provinciales

Etant donné, d'une part, que les mandats des députés provinciaux et des sénateurs ont expiré depuis 2012 et, d'autre part, que celui des députés nationaux prend fin en février 2017, les parties prenantes s'accordent en
application des articles 103 alinéa 2, 105 alinéa 2 et 197 alinéa 6 de la Constitution qui :

a) Les députés nationaux, les sénateurs et les députés provinciaux en exercice restent en fonction jusqu'à l'installation effective des nouvelles assemblées législatives et délibérantes correspondantes issues des prochaines élections à organiser conformément au calendrier convenu.

b) L'Assemblée nationale, le Sénat et les Assemblées provinciales auront, selon le cas et outre leurs attributions constitutionnelles classiques, comme agendas législatifs prioritaires le bloc législatif relatif aux élections et les mesures de décrispation politique.

c) Les gouverneurs et vice-gouverneurs élus restent en fonction conformément aux dispositions constitutionnelles.

III.3. Des Institutions à mandat non électif

III.3.1. En vue d'assurer l'équilibre institutionnel et de garantir à tous un traitement égal durant tout le processus électoral, les parties prenantes conviennent que pendant la période préélectorale et électorale, la gestion des affaires publiques est inclusive au niveau de l'exécutif national.

III.3.2. Le Premier Ministre exerce la plénitude des prérogatives lui dévolues par la Constitution en tant que Chef du gouvernement.

III.3.3. Le Gouvernement de la République est dirigé par le Premier Ministre présenté par l'Opposition politique non signataire de l'Accord du 18 octobre 2016/Rassemblement et nommé par le Président de la République conformément à l'article 78 de la Constitution.

III.3.4. Les modalités pratiques de la mise en œuvre des principes énoncés ci-dessus sont déterminées par un arrangement particulier conclu entre les parties prenantes et faisant partie intégrante du présent Accord.

III.3.5. Les parties prenantes conviennent d'assigner au Gouvernement de la République, à l'instar des Institutions à mandat électif, la mission prioritaire d'œuvrer pour l'organisation des élections crédibles, transparentes et apaisées dans le délai convenu au point III.1.2 ci-dessus.

CHAPITRE IV : DU PROCESSUS ELECTORAL

IV.1. Les parties prenantes s'accordent pour une refonte totale du fichier électoral et l'évaluation, au moins une fois tous les deux mois, de l'opération d'enrôlement des électeurs en cours.


IV.3. Les parties prenantes s'accordent que la CENI tiendra dûment informés l'Assemblée Nationale et le Conseil National de Suivi de l'Accord et du Processus Electoral ainsi que les autres parties prenantes au processus électoral du chronogramme qui prendra en compte les opérations préélectorales et électorales ci-après :

- Fin de la constitution du fichier électoral consolidé ;
- Adoption de la loi sur la répartition des sièges par circonscription électoraire et de la loi électorale ainsi que leur promulgation par le Chef de l'État ;
- Convocation des scrutins par la CENI ;
- Election en une seule séquence des élections présidentielle, législatives nationales et provinciales ;
- Prestation de serment et installation du nouveau Président de la République élu ;
- Élections sénatoriales, des gouverneurs et vice-gouverneurs des provinces.

Les élections locales, municipales et urbaines seront organisées en 2018.

Les parties prenantes demandent ainsi à la CENI et au Gouvernement de la République de prendre toutes les dispositions requises, à cet effet.

IV.4. Au sujet du financement des élections et sans porter préjudice aux articles 6 et 52 de la loi organique de la CENI, les parties prenantes :

- recommandent au Gouvernement :
  - de mobiliser les ressources internes et externes nécessaires pour le budget des élections et de respecter scrupuleusement le plan de
décisionnement convenu avec la CENI, conformément au plan de mise en œuvre opérationnel ;
- de constituer une provision trimestrielle au profit de la CENI conformément à son plan de décisionnement pour financer l'ensemble du processus électoral, en ce compris la sécurisation du processus ;
- de fournir la totalité des ressources nécessaires pour financer les élections ;
- d'explorer les voies et moyens de rationalisation du système électoral pour réduire les coûts excessifs des élections.

> encouragent la Communauté internationale à accompagner et à assister la CENI par les moyens logistiques, financiers et techniques pour une bonne réalisation des opérations électorales.

> exhortent le Parlement à exercer trimestriellement le contrôle sur l'utilisation des ressources budgétaires mises à la disposition de la CENI.

> exigent de diligenter un audit externe sur la gestion de la CENI.

> exigent de la CENI la transparence dans la passation des marchés et l'encouragent à produire un budget rationnel pour l'ensemble des opérations préélectorales, électorales et postélectorales conformément à l'option levée et assorti d'un plan de mise en œuvre opérationnel crédible et réaliste.

> invitent le Conseil National de Suivi de l'Accord et du Processus Electoral (CNSA) à s'acquitter convenablement de ses tâches et à réaliser des évaluations régulières avec la CENI et le Gouvernement du processus électoral.

IV.5. En vue d'assurer l'indépendance et l'impartialité de la CENI et de regagner la confiance de tous les compétiteurs électoraux, les parties prenantes conviennent que :

a) La CENI doit être redynamisée dans les plus brefs délais. A cet effet, les parties prenantes chargent le Conseil National de Suivi de l'Accord et du Processus Electoral de recomacter tous les ajustements et mesures à prendre tant en ce qui concerne les structures organiques que le fonctionnement de la CENI, d'une part, et les mécanismes appropriés à mettre en place en vue notamment de renforcer ses capacités et la transparence des opérations préélectorales et électorales, d'autre part ;

b) La Majorité présidentielle, l'Opposition politique et la Société civile dont sont issus les membres actuels de la CENI et qui le désirent, sont libres de procéder, dans le délai de 14 jours à dater de la signature du présent Accord, au remplacement de leurs délégués conformément à la loi en la matière. Les membres concernés déposent leurs démissions aussitôt que la demande leur est faite par leurs composantes d'origine.


IV.7. Concernant le dispositif de la sécurisation du processus électoral et suite à un diagnostic général et approfondi des principaux enjeux et défis de la sécurisation du processus, les parties préconisent les principales mesures suivantes :

1. Pour le Gouvernement :
   a) Mettre à jour le Décret N° 05/026 du 6 mai 2005 portant Plan opérationnel de sécurisation du processus électoral et doter le Comité de pilotage des moyens conséquents pour mieux remplir sa mission ;
   b) Veiller au caractère apolitique de l'administration publique, de la Police nationale et des services de sécurité.

2. Pour la CENI :
   a) Renforcer la sensibilisation de la population sur le processus électoral et les enjeux électoraux avec les parties prenantes au processus électoral tant au niveau national, provincial que local ;
   b) Sensibiliser les Congolais de l'étranger sur le processus électoral ;
   c) Augmenter les effectifs des agents électoraux et les former en veillant à promouvoir la représentativité des femmes et des jeunes ;
   d) Doter les agents impliqués dans la sécurisation des élections des moyens adéquats et suffisants ;
   e) Augmenter le nombre des bureaux d'enrôlement et de vote et les rapprocher au maximum de la population de façon équitable ;
   f) Sécuriser la circulation des bulletins de vote et tout matériel électoral sensible ;
   g) Inciter et aider, dans la mesure du possible, les partis politiques et les candidats indépendants à bien former leurs témoins commis aux bureaux de vote ;
h) Veiller à ce que les primes des agents de la CENI leur soient versées à temps et leur faire signer un acte d’engagement ;

i) Impliquer l’autorité coutumière et les confessions religieuses dans les efforts de sensibilisation des communautés aux opérations d’enrôlement et de vote ;

j) Impliquer les ambassades et les responsables des communautés congolaises organisées dans les efforts de sensibilisation et les opérations d’identification, d’enrôlement et de vote ;

k) Prendre en compte les besoins spécifiques des groupes vulnérables, notamment les personnes à mobilité réduite, les non-voyants, les albinos, les personnes de troisième âge et les femmes enceintes, au moment de l’enrôlement et du vote en leur accordant une priorité d’accès ;

l) Permettre aux non-voyants de se faire accompagner d’un guide de confiance afin de les aider à voter pour les candidats de leur choix ;

m) Respecter la vérité des urnes en publant les résultats conformément au vote des électeurs.

3. Pour les partis politiques :

   a) Former les militants en matière électorale et les sensibiliser sur le civisme ;

   b)Signer et respecter le Code de bonne conduite ;

   c) S’engager à respecter les résultats des urnes et à faire preuve de la courtoisie électorale ;

   d) Veiller à la représentation effective des femmes et des jeunes sur les listes des candidats.

4. Pour l’Autorité coutumière et les confessions religieuses :

   a) Simplifier dans la sensibilisation de la population sur le processus électoral tout en veillant au caractère apolitique et impartial lié à leur statut ;

   b) Appuyer la CENI, le cas échéant, dans l’identification des personnes au moment de l’enrôlement ;

   c) Promouvoir la cohabitation intercommunautaire pacifique.

5. Pour la MONUSCO :

   a) Soutenir le Gouvernement dans le renforcement des capacités des éléments formés pour la sécurisation des élections ;

   b) Assister la CENI par les moyens logistiques et techniques pour le bon accomplissement des opérations électorales ;

   c) Veiller à la mise en œuvre des autres dispositions pertinentes de la Résolution 2277 du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies.

6. Pour le Conseil Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel et de la Communication (CSAC) :

   a) Assurer l’égalité d’accès aux médias publics à toutes les parties prenantes ;

   b) Garantir la liberté d’expression ;

   c) Veiller au respect, par les journalistes, y compris les correspondants de la presse étrangère œuvrant en République Démocratique du Congo, de la déontologie et de l’éthique de leur métier ;

   d) Appliquer la loi relative à la presse.

7. Pour la Société civile :

   a) Demeurer apolitique ;

   b) Soutenir le consensus pour les élections apaisées, crédibles et transparentes ;

   c) Promouvoir l’éducation à la paix et à la non-violence ;

   d) Préparer la population par la conscientisation et la sensibilisation aux enjeux électoraux ;

   e) Vulgariser les textes légaux et le code de bonne conduite ;

   f) Assurer l’observation des élections et en rendre compte avec impartialité ;

   g) Formuler des analyses objectives sur toutes les questions électorales.

IV.8. Concernant la sécurisation des personnes et des biens

IV.8.1. Constats

Les parties constatent que plusieurs menaces pèsent sur la sécurité des citoyens à travers le pays et sont à même d’affecter négativement leurs capacités d’exercer leurs droits électoraux. Ces menaces comprennent entre autres :

   a) la problématique des groupes armés locaux et étrangers ;

   b) la prolifération et la circulation incontrôlées des armes à feu ;

   c) la persistance de la criminalité et du grand banditisme urbain ;

   d) les agissements de certains éléments incontrôlés des forces de sécurité nationale ;

   e) la problématique des jeunes désœuvrés et délinquants ;

   f) les conflits liés aux limites des parcs et réserves naturelles entre l’Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN) et les populations riveraines ;

   g) la problématique des questions humanitaires, notamment la question de gestion des déplacés internes ;
IV.8.2. Recommandations

Pour remédier à ces problèmes et assurer la sécurité des citoyens, les parties encouragent la prise des mesures appropriées suivantes :

a) Neutraliser les groupes armés tant nationaux qu'étrangers qui sévissent en RDC ;
b) Récupérer les armes détenues par des personnes non-habilitées ;
c) Mettre en place des numéros verts et des centres d'alerte pour dénoncer l'insécurité pendant le processus électoral ;
d) Veiller à ce que les frontières du pays soient davantage sécurisées au moment des élections ;
e) Redynamiser et accélérer les programmes DDR ;
f) Recruter de nouveaux policiers pour renforcer les effectifs existants et assurer une bonne sécurisation des bureaux de vote ;
g) Assurer la présence effective de l'administration publique sur toute l'étendue du territoire national ;
h) Prendre les mesures idoines pour assurer la non politisation des agents de l'administration publique ;
i) Prendre les dispositions nécessaires pour la sécurisation des candidats durant toute la période du processus électoral ;
j) Identifier les déplacés internes et les retourner dans leurs lieux d'origine préalablement sécurisés ;
k) Créer des emplois pour les jeunes afin de les soustraire de l'enrôlement des groupes armés et de l'instrumentalisation par certains responsables politiques ;
l) Accorder une attention particulière aux filles, aux femmes victimes et aux enfants victimes des violences, y compris les violences sexuelles, et prendre les mesures préventives et punitives nécessaires à cet égard ;
m) Renforcer la collaboration entre la MONUSCO et les Forces de Sécurité nationale en vue d'assurer la sécurité et la protection des personnes ;
n) Déplacer les camps des réfugiés à plus de 150 kilomètres des frontières ;
o) Améliorer les conditions socioprofessionnelles du personnel des services de Sécurité et de Défense ;
p) Elaborer un plan spécial de sécurisation de l'Est et du Nord du pays particulièrement là où les populations sont victimes d'enlèvements et des tueries à répétitions ;
q) Identifier les étrangers en situation irrégulière se trouvant sur le sol congolais et prendre des mesures urgentes pour empêcher leur influence sur la sécurité des personnes et des biens, en général, et du processus électoral, en particulier.

IV.9. Les parties prenantes conviennent en outre de mettre en place une plate-forme d'alerte et de traitement des défis sécuritaires notamment en ce qui concerne les violations des Droits humains et des libertés fondamentales lors des campagnes électorales.
CHAPITRE V : DE LA DÉCRISPATION POLITIQUE

V.1. Les parties prenantes au présent Accord prennent acte de la mise sur pied effective d’une Commission de Hauts Magistrats pour un examen minuteux, au cas par cas, des dossiers des prisonniers politiques et d’opinion, des bénéficiaires de la dernière loi d’amnistie mais qui ne sont pas encore libérés, des exilés et réfugiés politiques repris dans la liste en annexe.

Les parties prenantes ont pris acte avec satisfaction que les cas de Messieurs Antipas MBUSA NYAMWISI, Roger LUMBALA, Floribert ANZUULUNI et Moïse MONI DELA ont déjà été traités par la susdite Commission, laquelle a déjà décidé de l’arrêt des poursuites pour les trois premiers et de la libération pour le dernier.

Les parties prenantes demandent à la Commission de Hauts Magistrats de prendre au bénéfice de Messieurs BAGAYAMUKWE et MBONEKUBE une mesure de libération pure et simple pour autant qu’ils soient déjà bénéficiaires d’une loi d’amnistie.

En ce qui concerne le cas de Monsieur Eugène DIOMI NDONGALA, les parties prenantes demandent à la CENCO de prendre des initiatives en vue d’une solution appropriée et satisfaisante.

Dans l’intérêt supérieur de la Nation, les parties prenantes, à l’exception de la Majorité présidentielle, chargent la CENCO de poursuivre ses bons offices auprès de toutes les autorités concernées pour le suivi et la résolution effective des cas emblématiques restants, à savoir : Messieurs Moïse KATUMBI CHAPWE et Jean-Claude MUYAMBO afin qu’ils recouvent leur liberté. Ainsi, les parties prenantes demandent à la Commission de Hauts Magistrats de se saisir de ces deux cas.

Aux cas emblématiques s’ajoutent les personnalités politiques poursuivies à la suite des manifestations du 19 septembre 2016 ainsi que les jeunes de LUCHA et FILIMBI arrêtés le jour de l’ouverture des travaux sous l’égide de la CENCO et tous ceux qui ont été arrêtés et/or poursuivis à travers le territoire national au cours des événements des 19 et 20 septembre et ceux des 19 et 20 décembre 2016.

Les parties prenantes conviennent de l’arrêt des poursuites judiciaires injustifiées dues aux tracasseries fiscales à l’encontre de certains membres de l’Opposition.

Les parties prenantes conviennent que le gouvernement de la République issu du présent Accord poursuivra sans délai les mesures de décrispation politique et entreprendra concomitamment les démarches auprès des États et Organisations Internationales concernés en vue d’obtenir la levée des sanctions prises à l’encontre de certains compatriotes.

V.2. Le Ministre ayant dans ses attributions les médias veillera à rétablir, dans les 15 jours qui suivent la signature du présent Accord, le signal des entreprises audiovisuelles fermées ou interdites par mesure conservatoire ou pour non-conformité à la loi.

V.3. Les parties prenantes s’accordent à garantir l’égalité d’accès aux médias publics à tous les courants politiques notamment par la fixation, en collaboration avec le CSAC, d’un temps d’antenne réglementaire et de l’instauration du droit de réplique au Gouvernement dans la grille des programmes de ces médias, conformément à l’article 14 de la loi portant statut de l’Opposition en République Démocratique du Congo.

V.4. Les parties prenantes demandent au Ministère ayant l’intérieur et la sécurité publique dans ses attributions de s’abstenir de se mêler de quelque manière que ce soit ou d’arbitrer les conflits internes des partis politiques qui relèvent des cours et tribunaux, d’une part, et d’instruire les autorités territoriales d’éviter toutes les entraves aux activités des organisations politiques (partis politiques et plateformes) dans leurs juridictions respectives, d’autre part.


V.8. Les parties prenantes s'engagent à poser tout autre geste nécessaire à la restauration de la confiance au sein de la Nation congолaise et entre elles, à conjuguer ensemble tous leurs efforts en vue du maintien de la paix et du renforcement de la concorde nationale ainsi qu'à bannir tout comportement et propos incompatibles avec la paix.

V.9. Concernant le dédoublement des partis politiques, les parties prenantes conviennent que les formations politiques qui en ont fait l'objet, soient rétablies dans leur situation d'avant ce dédoublement.

CHAPITRE VI : DU MÉCANISME DE SUVI DE L'ACCORD POLITIQUE ET DU PROCESSUS ÉLECTORAL

VI.1. Principe sur la nature de la Structure
Les parties prenantes conviennent, conformément à l'article 222 alinéa 3 de la Constitution, de mettre en place une Institution d'appui à la démocratie chargée du suivi de la mise en œuvre de l'accord conclu entre elles.

En attendant l'adoption en procédure d'urgence de la loi organique, cette Structure est mise sur pied et fonctionne sur la base du présent Accord.

VI.2. De la Structure chargée du suivi et de la mise en œuvre de l'Accord

VI.2.1. Dénomination
Les parties prenantes s'accordent pour appeler cette Structure d'appui à la démocratie « Conseil National de Suivi de l'Accord et du Processus Electoral (CNSA) ».

VI.2.2. Composition
Les parties prenantes s'accordent sur le nombre de 28 membres pour constituer le Conseil National de Suivi de l'Accord et du Processus Electoral, y compris la CENCO.

La structure comprend 28 membres issus des parties prenantes. Elle a deux organes : une plénière et un bureau. Ce dernier aura un Président, trois Vice-Présidents, un Rapporteur et un Questeur.

Le CNSA sera présidé par le Président du Conseil des Sages du Rassemblement.

VI.2.3. Attributions
Les parties prenantes s'accordent que le CNSA aura pour mission de veiller au respect de l'accord politique par tous les animateurs des Institutions et d'assurer le suivi ainsi que l'évaluation de sa mise en œuvre en vue de garantir l'organisation des élections crédibles, transparentes et apaisées.

A cet effet, il devra :

1. Assurer le suivi du chronogramme de mise en œuvre de l'Accord.
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2. Réaliser des évaluations régulières du processus électoral, au moins une fois tous les deux mois, avec la CENI et le Gouvernement;
3. Communiquer régulièrement sur l'état d'avancement de la mise en œuvre de l'Accord;
4. Formuler des recommandations respectivement au Parlement, au Gouvernement et à la CENI pour la bonne exécution de l'Accord;
5. Assurer le règlement d'éventuelles divergences nées de l'interprétation de l'Accord entre les parties prenantes et concilier leurs points de vue à cet égard;
6. Se concerter avec le Gouvernement et la CENI afin d'harmoniser les vues quant à la réussite du processus électoral;
7. Elaborer son Règlement Intérieur sous réserve de sa conformité à la Constitution;
8. Apprécier consensuellement le temps nécessaire pour le parachèvement desdites élections avec le Gouvernement et la CENI.

Une loi organique sera adoptée par le Parlement en vue d'institutionnaliser le Conseil National de Suivi de l'Accord et du Processus Electoral.

CHAPITRE VII : DES DISPOSITIONS FINALES

VII.1. DE LA FORME DE L'ACCORD

Les parties prenantes conviennent d'appeler ce compromis :

« Accord Politique global et Inclusif du Centre Interdiocésain de Kinshasa ».

VII.2. DE L'ENTREE EN VIGUEUR

Le présent Accord politique global et inclusif entre en vigueur à la date de sa signature par les parties prenantes.

Fait à Kinshasa, au Centre Interdiocésain, ce samedi 31 décembre 2016

POUR LA MEDIATION,

Le Vice-Président de la CENCO
Fridolin AMBONGO
Archevêque de Mbandaka

Le Président de la CENCO
Marcel UTEMBI TAPA
Archevêque de Kisangani

LES SIGNATAIRES.

I. PARTICIPANTS SIGNATAIRES DE L'ACCORD POLITIQUE
DU 18 OCTOBRE 2016

1. Majorité Présidentielle

01. Monsieur Alexis THAMBWE-MWAMBA
02. Monsieur Emmanuel RAMAZANI SHADARI
II. PARTICIPANTS NON SIGNATAIRES DE L’ACCORD POLITIQUE
DU 18 OCTOBRE 2016

1. Rassemblement des Forces Politiques et Sociales

- Monsieur Félix TSHISEKEDI TSHILOMBO
- Monsieur Valentin MUBAKE NOMBI
- Monsieur Christophe LUTUNDULA APALA
- Monsieur Gilbert KANKONDE NKASHAMA
- Monsieur Jean-Marc KABUND-A-KABUND
- Monsieur Joseph OLENGHANKOY MUKUNDJI
- Monsieur Martin FAYULU MADIDI

4. Société Civile

- Madame Marie-Madeleine KALALA NGOY MONGI
- Monseigneur Jean-Luc KUYE-NDONDO
- Madame Magguy KIALA BOLenga

2. Opposition Républicaine

- Monsieur Michel BONGONGO IKOLI NDOMBO

3. Opposition Politique

- Monsieur Vital KAMERHE
- Monsieur Florentin MOKONDA BONZA
- Monsieur Azarias RUBERWA MANYWA
- Monsieur Jean Lucien BUSSA
- Monsieur José MAKILA SUMANDA
- Monsieur Steve MBIKAYI MABULUKI
DECLARATION DE LA MAJORITE PRESIDENTIELLE

La Majorité Présidentielle, Peuple de la République Démocratique du Congo épri de paix et de justice ;

A tous, Personnalités indépendantes, Cadres et Militants des Partis politiques et Associations affiliés de la Majorité Présidentielle ;

A l’opinion tant nationale qu’internationale,

Informé :

- Qu’à l’occasion de la signature de l’Accord dit « de la Saint Sylvestre » conclu le 31 décembre 2016 entre les forces politiques de la Majorité Présidentielle, du Rassemblement et les forces vives de la Société civile, sous les bons offices des Evêques de la Conférence Episcopale du Congo, la CENCO, en sige, les Délégués dûment mandatés de notre famille politique y avaient apposé leur contresigne en le marquant d’une réserve expresse pour cause de non inclusivité ;

- Qu’œdém tempore, la Majorité Présidentielle, ayant mesuré la gravité de son engagement, avait, en termes non équivoques, devant toutes les forces vives en présence, lié la clause de réserve au fait que d’importants maillons des forces vives de notre nation en dialogue, ne s’étaient pas portés signataires dudit Accord ;

- Qu’il convient de noter qu’en tout état de cause, aussi bien en droit des gens, en particulier dans la Convention de Vienne de 1961 sur les relations diplomatiques qu’en droit interne, la clause de réserve qui est toujours de droit, garantit la sincérité des engagements ;
- Qu'à ce jour, à la faveur de notables avancées obtenues par la CENCO au prix de nombreuses concessions mutuelles, la Majorité Présidentielle dans son ensemble est heureuse de constater que toutes les Parties prenantes hésitantes ont finalement apposé leur signature au pied du document portant les termes de l'Accord ;

- Qu'au vu de tous ces acquis significatifs ayant vidé de sa substance la ratio legis de la réserve pour cause de non inclusivité;

La Majorité Présidentielle déclare :

- Qu'est levée à dater de ce jour, le vendredi 27 janvier 2017, la réserve assortie à l'engagement de notre famille politique lors de la signature de l'Accord du 31 décembre 2016 conclu entre les forces vives de notre pays ;

- Qu'en conséquence et sans délai, la présente déclaration tient lieu d'acte de levée de la réserve susindiquée ;

- Qu'elle salue la sagesse des Evêques de la CENCO d'avoir, en son temps, pris compte de cette réserve dont l'importance est démontrée par la suite des événements.

Fait à Kinshasa, le 27 janvier 2017

Aubin MINAKU NDJALANDJOKO

Secrétaire Général
Appendix 2: Declaration of CENCO at the end of Peace Mediation and Negotiation between Socio-Political Actors on 31 December 2016.

Excellency the Cardinal

Excellency Monsignor the Apostolic Nuncio

Your Excellencies the Archbishops and Bishops

Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen Ministers

Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen Ambassadors

Mr. Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations

Honorable President of the National Assembly

Honorable Members and Senators

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Since December 8, 2016, the political and social actors of the DRC have undertaken, under the aegis of the National Episcopal Conference of Congo (CENCO), direct negotiations with a goal to finding a peaceful solution to the socio-political crisis that is facing our country around the organization of peaceful, credible, and transparent elections. At the time when these negotiations come to an end, it is "just and good to give thanks" to God of love, Master of history, who manifested himself to us through his only Son, Jesus Christ, "Light of the world "(Jn 8, 12), Hope of the nations, Prince of peace. To him who brings us together in one people: power, honor, and glory for centuries after centuries. Amen (cf. Heb 13:21).

Allow me to address a deserved tribute to the Head of State, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila, who had the intuition to realize that the solution of the socio-political crisis in which our country is plunged, either found in a more inclusive framework and direct discussions between stakeholders and, to this end, encourages the mission of the good
offices of CENCO.

CENCO expresses its very respectful and fraternal gratitude to the Holy Father, Pope Francis, for his pastoral solicitude and his spiritual closeness manifested personally and through the Apostolic Nunciature to the DRC, by supporting the mission of good CENCO offices after political actors and leaders of civil society engaged in a process of patriotic synodality, to find a peaceful solution to the issues of the day.

My homage to all of you, dear political actors, and representatives of civil society, who participated in these meetings, assisted by your experts. You mobilized to deal with the various issues of discrepancies retained; you did it with seriousness, determination and sometimes with passion. Even when the debate was heated, you went above and beyond to land with constructive proposals.

Thanks to your patience and your tenacity, under the impetus of your respective moral authorities, today we are happy to reach an inclusive political compromise. It is your work! CENCO will only have offered support and a framework for direct exchanges. She did so with great patriotic love and a sense of service to the Congolese people.

Dear delegates,

You have shown good political will and responsible commitment to pull the country out of the crisis. You have shown to the people that you can give them hope! Be proud of it. Congolese people congratulate you and CENCO thanks you.

Our gratitude is also addressed to the entire international community, whose multifaceted support has contributed enormously to this happy outcome of the good offices mission of CENCO. We are still counting on his support in the process of implementing this political agreement. The media professionals also deserve our thanks. Their almost permanent presence at the Center Inter-diocesan in Kinshasa, during this period of negotiation, to cover events, sufficiently demonstrates their interest in duty and the right to information.

We thank all those who, from near or far, have assisted us technically, by prayer and by advice. May Our Father Celeste, source of all perfect gifts, fill them with his blessings.
Dear compatriots,

One thing is to have a political agreement; its implementation is another. In this regard, the CENCO invites all the stakeholders to the sense of responsibility to execute the resolutions of this Agreement in a patriotic spirit, by placing the superior interest of the Nation at the heart of their preoccupation. To ensure the effective and regular implementation of the Agreement, we rely heavily on the National Council for monitoring the Political Agreement, the chairmanship of which is entrusted to the "patriarch" Mr. Etienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba.

There is no need to reiterate this by committing to offer its good offices to bring political actors to this inclusive political agreement, the main objective of CENCO was the well-being of the Congolese people. Indeed, a comprehensive and inclusive political agreement was necessary for the stability and consolidation of democracy in our country.

It is worth mentioning that this Accord falls providentially at the end of 2016 and on the eve of a new year. it can be, and rightly so, welcomed as a Christmas and New Year's gift! We believe this is one of the best gifts we can offer the Congolese people at this precise time.

The Political Agreement for which CENCO has offered its good offices has the advantage of fixing the public opinion mainly on the following points:

1) The second and last mandate of the President of the Republic which ended on 12/19/2016 is not renewable. The Head of State will not seek a third.
2) However, the President remains in office until the installation of the new elected President.
3) The presidential, national, and provincial legislative elections will be held before the end of December 2017.
4) No attempt to revise the Constitution and its change will be made during the pre-electoral and electoral period.
5) The stakeholders agreed among others on the following major provisions:
   a) Throughout the pre-electoral and electoral period, the Prime Minister will come
from the opposition not signatory to the Political Agreement of October 18, 2016, more precisely from the Rally, and will exercise the power vested in him by the Constitution.

b) The establishment of the National Council for Monitoring the Agreement, composed of 28 members and headed by the President of the Council of Wise Men of the Assembly, assisted by three vice-presidents, a Rapporteur, and a Quaestor.

c) The "revitalization" of the CENI, in particular by strengthening the control of its technical and financial management.

6) Within the framework of measures of political relaxation, four people out of the seven so-called "emblematic" cases presented by the Rassemblement Coalition benefit from the cessation of legal proceedings against them; six people are proposed with the raised hand of the detention and eleven with the presidential pardon.

Excellency the Cardinal
Excellency Monsignor the Apostolic Nuncio
Your Excellencies the Archbishops and Bishops
Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen Ministers
Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen Ambassadors
Mr. Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations
Honorable President of the National Assembly
Honorable Members and Senators
Distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen,

In our humble opinion, this Political Agreement constitutes a precious stone for the
consolidation of democracy in our country. We therefore invite the Congolese people to restore confidence to all the political and social actors who have signed this political agreement and to ensure its strict application.

May God bless the Congolese people. May he bless the Democratic Republic of Congo! Happy and Fruitful New Year 2017 to all.

Thank you.

Kinshasa, December 31, 2016

+ Marcel UTEMBI TAPA
Archbishop of Kisangani
President of CENCO
Appendix 3: Joint Declaration of CENCO and ECC for transparent, credible, and peaceful elections in the DRC.

1. We, your spiritual Fathers of the Catholic and Protestant Church, in solidarity with you, the Congolese people who have been waiting impatiently since 2016 for the happy outcome of the electoral process, by virtue of our pastoral and prophetic mission, have decided to launch this urgent appeal to encourage you to stand firm to win the bet of free, transparent, credible, and peaceful elections in a few days.

2. We ask the CENI to make every effort to ensure that the date of December 30, 2018, is imperatively respected to end the year 2018 in all beauty and, to start the Year 2019 with the hope of better days. The various reactions recorded following the various postponements of the elections suggest that the Congolese people will not tolerate a further postponement of the elections.

3. The electoral process unfolds based on a crisis of confidence which risks having dangerous consequences for post-electoral peace. Therefore, we encourage the CENI to keep its promise to facilitate access to observers and witnesses in polling stations and in local results compilation centers (CLCR). Also, that it sticks to publish only the results resulting from the manual counting, received from the CLCRs and whose minutes will have to be posted in front of the various polling stations.

4. We are concerned about the political intolerance of all sides and the acts of violence which caused the loss of human life without counting many wounded during the electoral campaign. We offer our condolences to the affected families and strongly condemn any form of violence from wherever it comes, and we approve of the intolerance which risks leading us to deplorable violence during and after the election.

5. We ask the political leaders, in particular the candidates for President of the Republic, to launch an urgent and public appeal to their supporters by inviting them to non-violence. We also urge the candidates at different election levels to cultivate in them the democratic spirit of elegant acceptance of the results, and in the event of a legitimate challenge, to do so by legal means and not by incitement to violence.

6. We encourage the Congolese people to continue to work for peace and the unity of the Nation. Let him participate massively and actively in the ballot. Let him not listen to certain
political leaders who distill messages inciting violence, regionalism, and tribalism.

7. To guarantee transparency during and after the elections, we ask the Government to ensure the normal functioning of the internet and SMS, which today constitute important communication channels for the various stakeholders in the electoral process, in particular the political actors, observers, witnesses, and journalists ...

8. "If the Lord does not build the house, the builders toil in vain" (Ps 126). Strengthened by this conviction, we invite all stakeholders in the electoral process, particularly the candidates, to participate in the ecumenical services that we recommend to organize wherever possible, on Saturday, December 29, 2018. In Kinshasa, this ecumenical worship will take place at Notre Dame du Congo Cathedral at 11:00 am.

9. May God bless our country and allow us to consolidate our democracy through free, transparent, credible, and peaceful elections. To each and everyone. Happy New Year and Christmas Holidays.

Kinshasa, December 24, 2018

Reverend Dr. André BOKUNDOA
President of the ECC

His Exc. Bishop Marcel UTEMBI
Archbishop of Kisangani
President of CENCO