

## **The Democratic Republic Of Congo Post-Electoral Ethnic And Tribal Violence Resurgence As A National Cohesion Crisis**

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### **Abstract**

Sixty years after its independence, the Democratic Republic of Congo is still a nation in a total decay, in spite of its new leaders' struggle to reheat in a positive way the consolidation of the National Identity. The present article analysis the Post-Electoral and Ethnic and Tribal violence that accompanied the publication of the 2018's elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The article proposes to uproot the ethnical and tribal tendencies in Congolese behaviours, thanks to education and the respect of the legal texts. Post-Electoral violence or any violence is an expression of a subtle form of human rights devaluation. This is to mean, it impels direct persecution or threat of peace of other members of the society. The methodological approach is both historical and sociological. The historical approach helps to scrutinize the roots of violence in the previous years of the living in the society. While the sociological approach appears as the mirror of the society. Human being are part of the society in which direct and indirect contact with the family members, friends and people living in a given area. The two approaches build upon the whole person and pose the problem of the establishment of a new relation, or the readjustment of the old one. The article answer to the double question 'What is the causes of post-electoral violence in 2018's elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo and what is the remedy?' The article also proposes a national cohesion as solution because to enhance the Congolese collective unconscious which carries negative stereotypes of other Congolese only because they belong to different ethnic or tribal group.

**Key Words:** Ethnic, tribal, election, cohesion and violence

## Introduction

This article entitled “The Democratic Republic of Congo Post-Electoral Ethnic and Tribal Violence Resurgence as a National Cohesion Crisis” focusses on a cycle of violence following the post-electoral crisis in 2018. Ethnic and tribal cleavages appear as the factors justifying the tribal and ethnic violence attacks suffered by people from Kasai province after the 2018’s presidential elections. The cycle of violence attests that the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) human values devaluation. The Congolese people in 1918 were in search of a great change from their social calamity but they did not know the contour of the change. For most of voters, the next president (after Joseph Kabila Kabange) should restore serenity in the country and moralize the public administration, politicians and political parties. But no one could really expect a true change since all the political indicators predicted a massive cheat. The present essay was written after the publication of the Presidential elections of 2018’s in DRC and is a contribution to the analysis and understanding of post-electoral violence in DRC.

The field of post-electoral violence in politics is still new. Schedler encounters only few studies on the subject. He mentions Hickman’s article entitled “Explaining Post-election violence in Kenya and Zimbabwe” in which he analyses only the post-elections violence of 2007 in Kenya and 2008 in Zimbabwe. Hickman notes that there are very few literatures which treats this kind of violence [1]. Alouche and Zadi Zadi depicts also Fisher’s article entitled “Electoral conflict and violence: Strategy for study and prevention” In this article, he cites Sisk who defines the post-electoral violence as acts or threats, intimidation or physical damages committed to affect the electoral process [2]. But Strauss and Taylor write that post-electoral violence is a physical violence or intimidation directly linked to an electoral conflict or likely to happen or to the announced electoral result [3].

The post-electoral violence is a phenomena that can embody any country, even old democracies.

Alouche and Zadi Zadi gives the example of the attack of the American Capitola on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021 by Donald Trump’s sympathisers [4]. The last is Nourris who notes that in the African continent, 50% of elections are held in a violent environment [5].

The Democratic Republic of Congo is a sub-Saharan African country where post-electoral violence has been noted. Methodologically, the article is a sociological and historical overview of political and security issues. The above description awakes the question “What are the main causes of the post-electoral ethnic and tribal conflict resurgence? The answer to this question will help us to attend these goals: To review the electoral political context of the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2018. To analyse the source of post-electoral conflicts and the main causes of intolerance during and after electoral cycle in DRC. It also proposes social reforms to free the society from unjust forms of elections and chauvinistic attitudes between people living in the same country.

The main message of this article is to build a society in which all members have equal rights and equal opportunities so that all the citizens live peacefully and free from discrimination, humiliation and moral decay. The present article will help Congolese leaders to identify the causes of post-electoral conflicts and the ways to come to the emergence of DRC as a true Nation.

The approach in the lightning of the subject is socio-historical. The underlying assumption behind the sociological-historical approach is that there is a meaningful relationship between history and society. For the purpose of this article, apart from the introduction and the conclusion, the article is divided into three main points. The first entitled the Democratic Republic of Congo Historical Background recalls the tumultuous political history of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The second entitled Democratic Republic of the Congo 2018’s Elections provides the violent context of the 2018’s elections. The last entitled Elections handling depicts the reception of the 2018’s elections and its consequences in the Congolese society.

### **1. The Democratic Republic of Congo Historical Background**

The Democratic Republic of Congo is called shortly DRC, Congo or RD Congo. It is a country of Central Africa and its capital city is Kinshasa. It is the third inhabited country in Africa after Nigeria and Ethiopia. Its former name was Zaïre and it is surrounded by The Congo River writes. It is largely covered by the Equatorial forest in its northern part. While its eastern side is aligned in the big African rift characterized by big mountains and big lakes even active volcanos [6].

The southern and centre are dominated by savannahs and plateaus rich in different mines. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is bordered by Cabinda enclave (Angola). At the South-West, the Republic of Congo, the Republic of Central Africa in the North, the South Sudan in the North-east. Uganda in the East-north-east, Rwanda and Burundi in eastern, Tanzania in the Eastern-south-east, Zambia in South-south-east and Angola in the South-west. The Republic Democratic of Congo is inhabited by a mosaic of 450 ethnics or tribes and comprises four linguistic zones: Ciluba is spoken in the centre of the country, Lingala in the capital Kinshasa and northern part, Kikongo in the South-east and Kiswahili in all the Eastern part.

Since its political independence in 1960, the DRC has never uprooted its tumultuous history to build an emancipatory politic organization. The land was a private territory of the Belgian King Leopold the Second from 1885 until the beginning of 1908, then a Belgian colony since 1908. Apart from the civilization mission, colonization was accompanied by violent treatment of autochthons people. These violent treatments lead to many revolts against the colonial leadership. After independence in 1960, the country fell in different ethnic and tribal wars. Mobutu's long reign (1965-1997) has never ameliorated the mass socio-economic conditions. It is Mobutu who changed the name of the country in 1970 by calling it Zaire. Mobutu also faced many violent attacks, Mulele's rebellion in Kwilu province (Kikongo language area), Kalonji in South Kasai (Ciluba language area), Tshombe in Katanga province (Kiswahili language area) and Sumialo in Kivu (Kiswahili language area). The 1980's war and Six days war in Shaba province (now Katanga).

At the political level, Mobutu's reign was characterized by selfishness of national authorities and military brutality. Mzee Laurent Kabila who took power in 1997 faced also armed attacks during his short reign (1997-2001). It is the same with the 18 years of Joseph Kabila's power which has been a mere copy of Mobutu's regime [7].

The Congolese political environment approached chaos in December 2018 with the publication of the presidential elections results. The Democratic Republic of Congo socio-political context on the sunset of 2018's elections was a counterpart of its state characterized by economic shutdown, ethnics' struggles, insecurity, the lack of national cohesion, Ebola epidemic on its Eastern and Western parts and a wide human values devaluation.

To the preceding list, mention should be of the cultural pluralism rivalry (language areas) which has been set out by hybrid politicians forgetting that ethnic and tribal affiliation and religious identification have the great capacity to generate intense emotional commitments or violence [8].

## **2. Democratic Republic of Congo 2018's Elections**

The third round of elections of the third Republic in DRC has revealed the clash of DRC as a State lacking a national cohesion or identity. The State as the common energy that embodies all the mechanisms of the collectivity appeared feeble in front of individual interests and politicians cupidity. The State appeared unable to reconcile diverted opinions. This is also due to the fact that the common Congolese views the State as belonging firstly to those who are governing it. In 2018, DRC had more than 400 political parties. This shows that the Congolese are systemically divided and nothing good can emerge from a divided people.

Free and fair elections could reinforce democracy and create a new governance in DRC. But electoral fraud was presumed by every lips, bloody violence, police and military intimidations were daily encountered [9]. The main objective of many Congolese while going to elections was that Kabila must go (Kabila dégage in French). This is the reason why the December 2018's presidential elections have received a maximum interest by all Congolese [10].

This maximum interest was also due to an intense cultural affinities mobilization to agree with Kohn who asserts that "cultural affinities often provide the most efficacious framework for collective mobilization to secure access to power..." [11] The late president Mobutu declared before the United Nations on 4 October 1973: "Between a brother and a friend, the choice is clear." He then showed the blind role of ethnicity known in DRC as tribal influence where elections are often, a social phenomenon than a rational choice of future leaders.

The DRC in turmoil of 2018's elections recorded many popular protests linked to its socio-political situation. There has been a strong demand of a political overture since the Saint Sylvester Agreement (2017) held by the Congolese Roman Catholic Bishops. It found many difficulties to be entirely applied. We still remember the famous declaration of the former Cardinal Monsengo as "Que les mediocres dégagent." To mean, "The mediocres should live." Monsengo's declaration encouraged people in the big cities where people, especially young economic migrants were numerous to strengthen the struggle. Here and there, a keen

observer has pinpointed ethnic and tribal violence attacks which have led to the death of many people. The several reported presidential and parliamentary elections opened a way to candidates to conquer the political place that has been brutally controlled by Kabila's regime. But when the results were published, some people in some provinces struggled vainly to contest the results as presented by The Independent Electoral Commission (IENC) or CENI.

Among the masses (especially the youth). The Police recorded several confrontations with a heavy results in Human Rights abuses. From 1998-2018, The International Rescue Committee (IRC) reported 3, 5 thousands deaths while independent sources reported 183 thousands deaths. I do not want to open all the polemic controversies on the numbers.

Although the total amount of wounded and killings is still controversial between the Congolese Civil Society (CCS) and the former Administration of the former president Joseph Kabila. The former Minister in Charge of Media and the Government's Speaker Lambert Mende Omalanga has always denied the number of deaths given by the CCS. That is not our concern in this essay as the controversial between the statistics is difficult to reconcile. Because during the hot moment of confrontations, the network coverage and the peripheral Medias such as Radio France Internationale (RFI) and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) were accused of colonial stereotypes. They were simply stopped in order to avoid a nation-wide protest (the two radios are widely followed and constitute a great source of information in all the Congolese country side). Social Network (SN) is today a great tool of a popular changes all-over the world. The example of the Arab Spring is still fresh in every memory.

Since the independence of DRC in 1960, there is a growing breakdown between the leaders and the masses due to many missed appointments of the different leaders who governed the country. Many Congolese, especially the Elite thought independence and democracy would bring, social, political and economic development in the country which is claimed to be the scandal mineral wealthy in Africa. But even the administrations that have replaced Mobutu who held the country from 1965 to 1997 did not consistently improve the social situation of the masses. Instead the gap between the new riches (most of the time politicians) and the masses has been greatly deepen. The security forces, the police and the army appeared to accompany the new power in terror.

The ethnic and tribal situation (mainly language areas) followed the same line. Since the conflicts between people of Kasai origin speaking Ciluba language (who were brutally chased in Katanga province in 1993-1994) were organized by some Katangese sealed politicians (speaking Swahili language) and tolerated by Mobutu to weaken the political struggle and arising power of the late opponent Etienne Tshisekedi Wa Mulamba, father of the actual president Antoine Félix Tshisekedi (2018 until today). The situation seemed to improve a bit, but the hatred situation that has been sought was always in latency.

The spreading of political parties in DRC attested openly ethnic or tribal belonging and the lack of a national cohesion. The law regulating political parties forbidding tribal, ethnic and regional practices (language areas) in constituting the political parties came very late. Many political parties in DRC have ethnic or regional belonging. Members showed more interest to a given political party only because the founder is from his native province. Harold defines Ethnicity as a collective recognition of affinity to which social and emotional meanings are attached. A given category of ethnic consciousness is founded upon a set of cultural traits, integrated into a collective representation of the group. A shared speech code is a widespread (though not universal) marker of ethnos. So are shared rituals of daily life, shrines and belief systems. Ethnos links itself to the past through legends of common ancestry, and to the future through a conviction of shared interests [12].

This may be explained by the fact that, there is a great gap between the notion of the State and Nation. Many authors attest that the State is a complex concept which cannot be comprehended via by its several definitions. In the words of Rupert Emerson cited by Crowford and Turner: The State must be understood in terms of its essential, irreducible attributes, its behavioural regularities, and its relationships with both the Civil Society over which it exercises rule and the international environment which conditions its existence... Since the emotionally powerful concept of Nation became married to the State in the nineteenth century, this warm, vibrant, living notion has invested the State with a moral personality absent from the more arid and juridical concept of State. Nation is asserted to constitute the citizenry as a community with which men most intensely and most unconditionally identify themselves even to extensity and most unconditionally identify themselves, even, to the extent of being prepared to lay down their lives for it [13].

It is clear, in many Congolese conception of things, the idea of citizenship as a community is still not well assumed. In many Congolese conception the concept of the State and the Nation are still confusing because they are complex notions. This is the reason why, most of them have lost the warm living notion of their country. In fact, it is due to what Crowford and Turner (1985) describe as a State in a phase of progressive decline. It is characterized by the lack of State linkages with Civil Society, with its own diverse institutions of rule, and with its human aggregate.

Many Congolese view the two notions only into the context of the institution that helps to protect the people's ownership and are ready to abandon it once there is nothing to earn. This becomes more fragile since DRC appears most often as a State in a progressive decline and all expression of rationale seems to be a dreamlike to them. Therefore, the DRC has lost since the collapsing Mobutu regime, the fact that it is an emanation of Civil Society, which is a purely the human aggregate enclosed within the territorial boundaries of the State [14].

Back to ethnic violence that emerged at the sunset of the publication of the presidential elections of 30 December, 2018. It can be said that it reflects the political precariousness of tribal, ethnic and regional relations as natural boundaries in DRC. In spite of the popularity and long-time struggle (37 years) of the opposition of the political party Union for Democracy and Social Progress party (UDPS) (2020.). The older oppositional political party of DRC has always been underground and wrongly considered as a party belonging to people from Kasai province origin (Ciluba language area). These false rumours has been constructed by all the different regimes that have admistrated the DRC during the last 25 years. This explains the fact that two prime ministers from Kasai province (Sammy Badibanga and Bruno Tshibala) have been appointed between 2017 and 2018, but without stopping the nebula UDPS. Social conflicts were tightly prepared by politician by stressing the DRC cultural pluralism which is a latent sphere of social conflicts.

The tribal, ethnic and regional attacks against people from Kasai province which has lead even to killings especially in some provinces (Bas-Congo, Haut-Katanga and Kwilu) were due to the fact that they did not accept Felix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo (the son of the late charismatic political leader in DRC, Etienne Tshisekedi) as the winner of the 30 December, 2018 elections.



As the secular hatred situation has never been uprooted in the Kasai neighbouring provinces, this may explain the reason why most of the members of the Lamuka (wake up in Lingala, the language spoken by the army, the Police and inhabitants in Kinshasa capital city of DRC) electoral platform in Katanga province gave their support to the candidate Martin Fayulu Madidi (MAFA). But most of them missed that he was too radical to be accepted on power by the former regime. He promised in his pre-electoral campaign imprisonment to all the former leaders of Kabila's regime. The many human right abuses of the last regime was a source of uncertainty in case a candidate such MAFA could win the presidential elections.

The 30 December elections were entirely organized by DRC Public Revenue Department, questioning the Western capitalism coupled with paternalism, expressing at the same time the attachment on democracy, national patriotism and anti neo-imperialism represented by the controversial presence of United Nations troops in DRC. The candidate MAFA was accused of being sympathetic to a Western Understanding of events unfolding in DRC. This is the reason why, MAFA's criticism on elections was that there were no conditions that would guarantee the freeness and fairness of the 2018's elections and appealed for the International Community to take decisive acts to push for electoral reforms in the country. The actual reversal of Lamuka, members in Katanga province is suggestive of the instability of politicians in DRC, most of them are not attached to political ideal, but to their material interest.

In most of the provinces surrounding the Kasai province, (e. g. the formers Katanga and Bandundu) Congolese of Kasai origin are always considered as invaders. This is easy to understand because the two Kasai provinces (South and West) have been neglected for years in the development program of the country. For example, Miba (Minière de Bakwanga, in English Bakwanga Diamond Mining) which was considered as the lungs of the two provinces has been deliberately abandoned or in bank route. The Railway crossing the Eastern and Western Kasai provinces has been also neglected for years deepening the isolation of the two provinces. Masses of people especially young people between 20 to 30 years deserted their area to the neighbouring Katanga where Mining Companies were flourishing.

In fact, Katanga province has been equipped since colonisation, all the civilisation or human conditions can be found, such as tarred roads, power, and tap water and improved healthcare conditions. Apart from that, it is easy to create his own affair and be successful in Katanga

province than in Kasai [15]. Any elite who visited Kasai provinces during the last twenty years has to ask himself how people could afford such hard social and economic conditions. The hardness of life style in Kasai provinces has pushed many young men to emigration.

Openly, there is not a visible tribal or ethnic public discourse throughout the country, but in practice there are segregated or stereotyped behaviours towards people from Kasai province. In DRC, many things are still subjected to tribal or ethnic considerations. This is true because all the legal texts on the political parties claimed to uproot tribalism and ethnic considerations in the foundation of political parties were elaborated very late. The best example is the law that has promulgated in 17 May, 2001 [16].

The possible resurgence of tribal considerations in DRC may be attributed to the fact that, the creation of the new provinces attributed social and cultural identities to the new structures [17]. With the new identities, each person and each social group can unconsciously rely on the new virtual frontiers. As a matter of fact, every frontier traces somehow the zones of solidarity and oppositions to cope with Epstein [18]. This is to mean, the DRC social structure is dominated by the multiplicity of ethnic/tribal groups. The political parties follow the same line.

### **3. Elections handling**

The elections handling is based on the Constitution and the Electoral Law. The last gives the electoral process which is under the organization of The National Independent Commission known in French as Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI). The first source of doubt was the voting machine, no one could believe or trust the result of the voting machines. Congolese from Kwilu province were convinced that the candidate Martin Fayulu Madidi from their province was the most representative of the positive change. But they forgot to look at his age as an opponent to the former regime.

The presidential race which has led to ethnic contestations with several deaths of Congolese from Kasai origin in Kwilu province and elsewhere in DRC to oppose the suitability of the results prevail over points of ideological conflict to a bloody moment of contestation. Martin Fayulu hailed from Kwilu province expressed displeasure at the publication of elections results by the mass protest. Their conviction confirmed the myth that was rooted in their collective unconscious that a candidate from Kasai province could not win presidential

elections. They thought that the best way to react was forcing Congolese from Kasai origin to return to what they called their homeland. Many leaders from Haut-Katanga, Kwilu or Kwango provinces thought that Lamuka electoral plate form was in favour of their candidate. But they ignored that it was only a conglomerate representation of frustrated opponents, each with his own view on the possible political situation in DRC. The union was that of frontage, but underground there was hostility and selfishness. Selfishness opens to antagonism and corruption which are two most important threats for clean governance and political integrity [19].

### **Conclusion**

The post-electoral violence is an outcome of antagonistic ethnic and tribal groups or criminal groups in relation with politicians. They always attack the minorities or ethnic or tribal groups depicted as migrants or belonging to another province in the same country. This type of violence is based on the allegation of electoral fraud or cheat. The subject we have dealt with is *The Democratic Republic of Congo post-electoral ethnic and tribal violence resurgence as a national crisis*. The interest for this topic is to show the weaknesses of our electoral system which most of the time generates ethnic or tribal violence. This short essay depicts the sad turning of ethnic or tribal attacks or intolerance in (DRC) after the 2018's election as a fruit of a casual of political education of the masses and the crisis of the concept of the State during the last 25 years. It also examines the violence coming from the public institutions which are supposed to protect the citizens as a democracy and governance crises.

The post-electoral violence depicted in the present article reveals that democracy is not yet operative. This has attracted the attention of the present article to look at the quality of democratic elections in DRC. It is clear that the post-electoral presidential elections were violent and this violence had ethnic/tribal motivations. The article has focussed on the post-electoral violence that surrounded the elections that helped the first civilized alternation in DRC. This is to mean that Joseph Kabila Kabange (JKK) handed power to his political opponent Felix Antoine Tshisekedi (FATSHI). This pushed the new president to share power in a kind of coalition known as Cap pour le Changement and Front Commun pour le Congo. Cape for Change is for the Presidential majority and Common Front for Congo for the former president. During two years, this way of sharing power has played a great role in regulating political conflicts and prepared a good environment for the 2023's elections.

To stop the ethnic and tribal violence after electoral cycle, the article proposes to give a consistent political education to create a national cohesion or patriotism. The political education should concern all the aspects; physical and spiritual. Election has to be reviewed and adapted to the context of Congolese environment. As an expression of democracy, it has to promote human dignity. To end with violence, the administration should adopt what is known as *la territorial des non-originaires*. That is to mean, the territory administration of non-native leaders, this implies to revise some articles of the actual Constitutions. The police should be trained to non-violent ways of containing the people's manifestations. The leading double question that accompanied ideas is that "What is the reason for the post-electoral violence and the factor contributing to post-electoral violence in The Democratic Republic of the Congo." Post-electoral violence is created by the poor performance of the commission organizing the elections, the nature of political parties, and the ethnic/tribal cleavage in the The Democratic Republic of Congo.

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