

# Mobutu's Totalitarian Political System

## An Afrocentric Analysis

Peta Ikambana



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*To my parents, Celestin-Adrien and Germaine  
To my brothers and sisters,  
especially to my brother Peta “Jeampy” Ikomba  
To my sons and friends, Jean-Louis and Jean-Jose*

*To all my friends from all over the world, especially Mutombo  
Nkulu and Ruth, Charles Currie, Pilar Garcia, Chantal Wetshi,  
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# Contents

List of Tables & Figures	ix
Preface	xi
<i>Chapter One</i>	
Introduction	1
<i>Chapter Two</i>	
Concepts of Political Governance in Traditional Africa	13
<i>Chapter Three</i>	
The Momentum of Democracy in Zaire: Sovereign National Conference	29
<i>Chapter Four</i>	
State Crime in Mobutu's Political System	53
<i>Chapter Five</i>	
The African-centered Rationale for the Necessity of Zaire Democracy	63
<i>Chapter Six</i>	
Concluding Remarks	81
<i>Appendix A</i>	
Chronology of Major Events: 6 <sup>th</sup> Century to Mobutu's Second Coup d'état, November 24, 1965	95



*Appendix B*

Election Criteria of the Political Elite in Traditional Senegal 101

*Appendix C*

Theoretical Approaches to State Crimes 107

Notes 111

Bibliography 119

Index 123

# List of Tables & Figures

## **TABLES**

Table 3.1.	Exportations of Some National Agricultural Products (in Tons)	33
Table 3.2.	Exportations of Some National Mineral Products	33

## **FIGURES**

Figure 1.	Representation of the Theory of the Loss of Legitimacy	7
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# Preface

In 1965, Mobutu Sese Seko came to power in Belgian Congo, renamed *Zaire* to show it was no longer a colony. He began thirty-two years of an increasingly damaging political system that lacked African-centered vision and thus failed to promote the well-being of the nation's people. This book details the shortcomings and misdeeds of Mobutu's system and proposes participatory democracy as the best political alternative for what is now the *Democratic Republic of Congo* to rise from the ashes of Mobutu's totalitarianism.

Critical analysis of the political actions of Mobutu in the 90s, especially of the National Sovereign Conference, reveals his deliberate attempts to obstruct Zaireans' path to democracy. His efforts to preserve the country's totalitarian status quo thwarted—in effect, rejected—the African principle of Ma'at, the goal of a search to restore balance and achieve understanding, harmony, and peace.

In May 1997, Laurent Kabila ousted Mobutu (who died that year in exile) and formed a government. Though he renamed the country the Democratic Republic of Congo, he ruled autocratically and, in January 2001, was assassinated by one of his own bodyguards. Nevertheless, the cabinet sought to continue a rule by decree and in February—the following month—they appointed his son, Joseph, as the new President.

President Joseph Kabila has proposed holding elections before the end of 2005 (elections were finally held on July 30, 2006 and a run off between President Kabila and Vice-President Bemba is expected by the end of October 2006), and seems to have begun the transformation of the re-named Democratic Republic of Congo into a country once again in search of Ma'at. This author feels strongly that only a participatory democracy by consensus will be appropriately responsive to the needs of the African people of the Democratic Republic of Congo.



## Chapter One

# Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly known as Zaire, is the third largest country of the African continent. Initiated by the Berlin Conference of 1885, its borders were established arbitrarily during the period 1885 to 1894. The history of the country dates from the 6<sup>th</sup> century a.d., when in approximately 500 a.d. Woot, the Nyani, established the Kingdom of Kuba. A succession of Western European incursions followed until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Belgium's King Leopold II established the area as a personal fiefdom. Finally, almost a century later, on June 30, 1960, the Congo achieved independence from Belgium.

Immediately after becoming independent, the country was plunged into five years of civil war. On November 24, 1965, Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu WazaBanga led a military coup that overthrew the Congo's first elected government. He put in place an authoritarian presidential regime that was overwhelmingly supported by Western countries, including Belgium, the United States, and France, for strategic and economic reasons. Between 1970 and 1980 Mobutu ruled the country as a dictator, strongly supported by an ideological machine orchestrated by the one-party state. In the early 1970s the country experienced a brief period of economic stability, thanks to its countless mineral resources, including diamonds, uranium, gold, and copper.

President Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu WazaBanga ruled the Republic of Zaire from November, 1965 until May 17, 1997. He was overthrown May 17, 1997, by a long-time political opponent, Laurent Desire Kabila, who immediately declared himself president. Political scientists who have studied political systems have classified Mobutu's system as a dictatorship. Following thirty-two years with Mobutu as head of state, Zaire, not surprisingly, was internationally known as one of the poorest countries in the world.

People do not tolerate constant political chaos without an immediate revolutionary goal, and a nation cannot survive ongoing political and economic instability without perceived benefit. Lack of rule of law and constant political instability have never led a nation to a democratic system; on the contrary, these two factors can only lead a nation to its destruction.

In 1990 after thirty-two years of single-party rule, Mobutu was forced to accept the idea of a multiparty system as a result of international turmoil generated by the fall of the communist bloc and an increase in internal opposition. On April 24, 1990, the former Republic of Zaire (renamed Democratic Republic of Congo) engaged in a political process aimed at democratizing its institutions. This process was perceived as fundamentally and urgently necessary in light of the failures and misdeeds of the political system of the Second Republic inaugurated by Mobutu's coup d'état in 1965. Mobutu's system led the country to chaos, its institutions to failure, and its leaders into discredit and made the majority of its citizens the butt of indescribable social and economic ridicule. To repair these failures and redirect their national life, the majority of Zairian citizens requested and obtained from Mobutu's system the organization of a national forum, the National Sovereign Conference (NSC), meant to develop the framework for a new national social and political structure that would ultimately lead the country into the Third Republic and democracy. However, the process was never completed because President Mobutu decided to disregard all decisions made by this sovereign forum. He deliberately impeded the outcome of the reform process.

## **MOBUTU: AN AFRICAN POLITICAL PHENOMENON**

Western political literature and analyses view political systems as ranging from democracies to monarchies to totalitarian dictatorships. From this perspective, Mobutu's system has been classified as a military dictatorship. However, a close Afrocentric look at the elements of this regime reveals that it is a totalitarian system. Mobutu was an African political phenomenon whose regime contributed to the dehumanization of the Zairian people through state crime and the obstruction of democracy.

## **DEMOCRACY IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT**

An African-centered approach to democracy not only enhances its chance of success, but also emphasizes its relevance to the well-being of the African people of Zaire.

In light of the above-mentioned theoretical and operational difficulty, a conceptual clarification of the macro and micro factors relevant to the

present study seems necessary. The following definitions are simply operational and should not, therefore, bear any preconceived universal value.

*A democracy*—from the Greek *democracia* (*demos* = people; *cracia* = government)—is a political system that allows governance of the people by the people. It is characterized by the participation of citizens in the decision-making process and guarantees individual freedoms, respect for minority groups by the majority, and the protection of the rights of minority groups. Most importantly, a democracy allows the citizens of a nation to freely elect government officials who might best serve their interests. An Africa-centered democracy is a political system that allows governance of the people of Africa by the people of Africa, putting their interests and well-being at the center of decisions affecting their lives.

Obstruction of the democratic process occurs when any facts or actions are aimed at impeding the normal occurrence of different stages that lead to the creation of a political system of government for the people by the people. Thus, any facts or actions that impede the normal occurrence of the different stages leading to the creation of a system that puts the interests and well-being of the African people at the center of the decision-making process constitutes obstruction of an Africa-centered democratic process.

*The National Sovereign Conference (NSC)*—The NSC was an extra-constitutional forum organized by the central government to serve as a national consultation arena in order to establish the foundations of Africa-centered democratic institutions in Zaire. The forum was intended to be a gathering of all Zairian social classes, public institutions, central government, civilian society, religious groups, and political party representatives.

The failure of the NSC is an example of the obstruction of the democratic process. It resulted from a lack of application of the major objectives agreed upon by all participants of the extra-constitutional forum and a lack of promoting the interests and well-being of the African people of Zaire.

*Totalitarianism*—Totalitarianism is a philosophical, political, and/or ideological doctrine that confines the totality of national life within a monolithic power style and vision of the world. African totalitarianism is defined as any political system that does not promote the interests and well-being of the African people.

John Friedrich in his 1965 treatise established the following characteristics of a totalitarian system:

- An exclusive ideology;
- A one-party system in charge of the ideology and usually led by a powerful dictator;



- Well-developed and well-equipped secret police to track down opponents and assure the execution of the leader's orders and the application of the ideology; and
- Monopolized control of the mass media, operational arms and all social, cultural, political, and economic organizations.

Mobutu's regime tended toward totalitarianism in that its leaders were observed acting according to methods appropriate to a system that confines the totality of national life within a monolithic power style and vision of the world and fails to promote the interests and well-being of the African people of Zaire.

## ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE NSC

The major achievements of the forum were aimed at promoting the interests and well-being of the African people of Zaire and were unanimously adopted by all NSC participants. These achievements included:

- A re-examination of the national historical successes and challenges since the independence from Belgium;
- a thorough re-examination of all public institutions;
- an elaboration of a new national constitution;
- an elaboration of new structures and institutions; and
- the establishment of a transitional government, parliament, judiciary body, election commission, and college of governors in charge of leading the country to democracy.

The citizens of Zaire became aware of the issues affecting them, the quality of their lives, their interests, and well-being and recognized violations of their fundamental rights and the mishandling of national wealth by government leaders.

### Failures and Misdeeds of the Political System

In 1982 Dahl wrote that a political system is any persistent model of human relations that to a significant extent involves power, leadership, or authority. He went on to state that a political system is a set of interdependent roles and/or interactions that allow the legitimate allocation of resources in a society. Failures and misdeeds of political systems will include the incapacities and pernicious results of a structured set of activities related to the conquest, exercise, and conservation of power in a given society. In Mobutu's system, these failures and misdeeds included actions that did not promote the interest and well-being of the African people of Zaire.

## STATE CRIME

Authors such as Barak (1991), Tunnell (1993), and Kauzlarich (1995) have made it clear that a crime can be perpetrated by the state just as well as by an individual citizen. They have defined a state crime as harm illegally or legally organized and inflicted upon people by their own government or the government of others. These harms are acts committed by the state that, although not defined as criminal, result in significantly harmful social consequences. Harmful acts include illegal or socially injurious omissions or commissions by an individual or group of individuals in an institution of legitimate governance that are executed for the consummation of the operational goals of that institution of governance. In this context, in an earlier 1992 work on the sociology of criminology, Kauzlarich defined Domestic-Domestic Government Crime (DDGC) as criminal acts that occur within the state's geographic jurisdiction in violation of the criminal or regulatory code of that state.

## POLITICAL THEORIES AND THE CASE OF ZAIRE IN THE 90s

There are three logical and analytically distinct phases that allow comprehension of a transitional political process as well as the alternative developments these phases may generate:

1. An authoritarian regime, after its appearance and consolidation, develops certain tendencies and characteristics that allow it to reach a certain level of equilibrium.
2. A level of equilibrium can be stable or unstable, according to the degree of institutionalization reached by the regime.
3. Once the regime's capacity to face internal and system challenges decreases, there is generally a state of unstable equilibrium. This may degenerate into a situation of crises that could ultimately be the precursors of the transformation of the regime.<sup>1</sup>

Two models of transition are likely to occur: a discontinued or a continued transition. A discontinued transition may lead a regime to two possible developments: (a) resolution of its crises through different political actions, including compromises or the use of overwhelming military force or (b) the beginning of the regime's fall. In a continued transition, an authoritarian regime tends to build a series of political coalitions that are generally short-term and contradictory, revealing both the regime's natural conservatory instinct and its lack of commitment

toward change. Generally, an authoritarian regime confronted with such dilemmas will tend to introduce gradual but very slow changes until it has completed its transformation. The status quo model theory augments the descriptive model by showing that an authoritarian system usually tends to resist change. Nevertheless, when confronted with an inevitable evolutionary imperative, an authoritarian system would more likely concede some of its characteristics as it tries to maintain the status quo.<sup>2</sup>

To some authors, the principal causes of transformation from an authoritarian system to a democracy are essentially internal and external crises. Internal causes are those relative to the system's positive or negative response to its internal survival, including its organizational demands (e.g., gradual loss of power of the system's ideology, internal fights for political positions, and the like). External crises often are outcomes of the needs of the global society, including:

- Growing and diversified social demands related to the quality of life and the appearance of new social actors who increase the likelihood of new social and political demands;
- Gradual loss of support for the political system due to the organizational power of the new social actors and new methods of political demands;
- Incompatibility between social demands and the ideology of the political system, as well as the system's loss of moral values, inefficiency, and corruption of its bureaucracy;
- Beginning of an economic crisis capable of profoundly affecting the system's capacity to control and ensure the economic benefits of its main actors;
- Creation of alternate political projects capable of mobilizing and gaining popular support with the potential to redefine political coalitions; and
- External pressures or interventions.

Several of the authors<sup>3</sup> offer an explanatory theory, *Theory of the Loss of Legitimacy*. This fundamental theory allows us to analyze the transition process from totalitarianism to democracy in two phases:

1. Any political regime must be legitimate, have popular support, or, at least, must be accepted in order to survive.
2. When the regime loses its legitimacy, it must regain it to avoid the inevitable self-destruction process (see Figure 1).

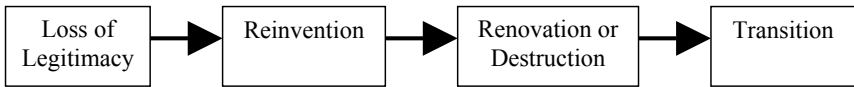


Figure 1. Representation of the Theory of the Loss of Legitimacy

Another major theorist, Robert Dahl, distinguishes two major stages that explain democratic changes: (a) liberalization and (b) inclusion. Liberalization is the stage at which a totalitarian political system comes to acknowledge the growing power of the opposition. Inclusion is the stage at which a growing popular demand for rights to participate, control, and eventually oppose government behaviors appears. Five criteria underscore the evaluation of an effective democratic process:

1. *Effective participation*, defined as the degree to which citizens are given appropriate and equal opportunities to express their views about decisions affecting them.
2. *Enlightened understanding*, defined as the degree to which citizens are given appropriate and equal opportunities to know and approve/disapprove of political leaders' decisions that may affect citizens' interests.
3. *Equity of vote*, the degree to which each citizen's vote is given equal chance to be counted.
4. *Control over government plan of action*, the degree to which government decisions reflect the sovereign will of the citizens.
5. *Inclusion*, the degree to which citizens are included in the decision-making process.

Other political theories include those of Giovanni Sartori and Juan J. Linz,<sup>4</sup> who see democratic processes as products of political actors who choose certain strategies leading to changes, including political systems. In a 1981 article, *Las democracias*, appearing in *Manual de Ciencia Política*, Morlino distinguishes liberalization from democratization. *Liberalization* refers to a horizontal process by which political and civil rights are “offered” or “given” to the people by the governing elite in such a way that still allows the elite to maintain control over the society. Usually the governing elite use this strategy to overcome a crisis without any real intention of allowing a full democratization of society. Democratization refers to a process that recognizes complete expression of political and civil rights and the acceptance of special interests organizations, including unions. Real democratization is complete when major democratic structures are in place, including:

1. Realization and consolidation of democratic compromise by all political and civilian actors involved;
2. Respect for the legal system by the governing elite and its allies;
3. Neutralization of the military forces;
4. Guarantee of the rights of economic groups; and
5. Participation of political parties and unions.

### *The Obstruction of Democracy as a State Crime*

The second part of this study is related to the analysis of state crime as a form of obstruction of democracy in Mobutu's political system. Recently scholars in criminology have been taking the lead to openly denounce a social and political plague that is as old as Earth itself, but which has been covered for a long time under the mantle of political taboo. Many scholars, including the corroborative team of M.B.Clinard and P.C.Yeager, pointed out that state crime is a sticky issue because of the agents and organizations involved. In the past, scholars who studied the phenomenon presented the state as a victim and not a perpetrator of crime. Unquestionably a state can be victimized by crimes such as felonies and misdemeanors that violate the political order or the legitimate attributes of a state, including government, political parties, and the political and civil rights of citizens.<sup>5</sup> B.L.Ingraham described twelve specific categories of what could be considered crimes against body politic or state: (a) acts of betrayal to an enemy; (b) attempts or conspiracies against government leaders; (c) certain economic crimes; (d) sexual crimes against relatives of government officials; (e) crimes of speech; (f) religious crimes; (g) rebellion or resistance to authorities in the performance of official duties; (h) attempts by political leaders against the liberties of people; (i) membership in or organization of illegal societies; (j) usurpation of official function and authority by unauthorized people; (k) coverage of treasonable plots and conspiracies; (l) miscellaneous offenses.

A close reading of the twelve categories reveals that the state is presented as a victim in ten categories, but only in two of them does it appear as a possible offender. Only the good intentions of the state as protector of society were considered; its harmful behaviors were largely ignored.

Recent waves of scholars have addressed the issue of state crime. Criminologists like Barak,<sup>6</sup> Kauzalarich,<sup>7</sup> and Tunnell,<sup>8</sup> have reanimated the debate on state criminality by advancing the hypothesis that the state is often the perpetrator rather than the victim of crime. These authors propose that state crime typically involves illegal and harmful behavior committed by state or government agents during the exercise of their official functions and that these harmful behaviors remain largely unpunished.

State criminal acts may be implicit or explicit, by commission or omission, physical or non-physical.<sup>9</sup> State criminal acts are *mala per se* and *mala prohibita*. Most of the cases of Mobutu's political system will be analyzed based on this definition. In fact, Zairian state crime is more likely explained by Mobutu's political system's maintaining control over every aspect of national life and, therefore, assuring the continuity of the system.

The destruction of Zaire's political and economic systems began with the influence of the King of Belgium on Congo's national life. King Leopold's exploitation of Congolese wealth has been well-documented in *King Leopold's Ghost* by Adam Hochschild (1999). This book gives an unprecedented account of all the actors involved in bringing to the general public the knowledge of King Leopold II's misdeeds in the Congo. Leopold II is portrayed as Congo's first dictator. In fact, the methods used by King Leopold II to plunder Congo's wealth are similar to those Mobutu used to pauperize his own people. It is remarkable that both King Leopold II's and Mobutu's systems brought this central African country the same result: A 'disaster' of a rich country. According to Hochschild, King Leopold II carried out a brutal plundering of the Congo, slashing the country's population by as much as ten million, while presenting himself as a great European humanitarian. The book remains a historical testimony to a European Machiavellian plan. The reading of this horrible and heartless plundering of the Congolese nation puts in perspective the real historical misbehavior of African leaders like Mobutu, who should have done better than colonial rulers did in their handling of African destiny. The author gathered tangible information and data proving the scandalous exploitation and destruction of a whole nation by the King of Belgium. This European ruler had manipulated the other European leaders with the ultimate intention of gaining ownership over the rich territory then known as Congo. In the century during which Europe deliberately and unilaterally decided to tear up the African continent at will, the King of Belgium realized that his only historical chance to wealth, honor, and power resided in joining forces with his European peers in the conquest of the 'uncivilized' world and its people. Hochschild exposed the systematic plundering of the Congolese territory and its inhabitants through the selfish will of an obsessed king trying to become as rich as possible to the detriment of the inalienable rights of the Congolese people. For eighty years, the King of Belgium had transformed a whole nation into his private property. When, in 1905, Leopold II realized the resolve of the Congolese people, the country was unilaterally declared a Belgian territory, going from a private property to a national one. When the Congo finally attained its sovereign independence in 1960, Belgium had achieved its economic and social prosperity at the expense of the freedom and human dignity of the Congolese people.

The relevance of this book is inestimable. First, it contains rich documentation (including photographic evidence) of the misdeeds of the King of Belgium. Second, it contains evidence of the dehumanization of the African people of Congo at the hands of the leader of a 'civilized' country. Third, the book establishes an undeniable truth about the West's rape of African wealth. Finally, from an Afrocentric standpoint, Leopold II's political system does not come close to promoting the well-being of the African people of Congo.

### *Lumumba*

*L'assassinat de Lumumba* by Ludo De Witte puts the nail in the coffin regarding the role of the Western World in the political and physical elimination of the Congolese leader. Overwhelmingly elected as Chief of Government in the first election ever held in the Congo after its independence, Lumumba was not allowed to govern by European powers who saw their control over that rich country evaporate as a result of Lumumba's vision and leadership. The book retraces the conspiracy that culminated in the assassination of the Congolese leader. Most revealing, this book (which was originally a doctoral thesis) shows both the global responsibility of the European and American governments, as well as that of individuals, including specific names of people who carried on the physical elimination of the Congolese leader. However, if the Western World was highly satisfied with Lumumba's death because it supposedly eliminated the danger of Communist hegemony in the region, the Congolese people still wonder what the future of their nation would have looked like if Lumumba had implemented his vision of a unified nation. Economic and political self-determination were some of Lumumba's ideals for an African-centered leadership. Forty-two years after his death, three dictators have brought the country and its more than 50 million citizens to the brink of disaster. *L'assassinat de Lumumba* is relevant for one key reason: President Mobutu is one of the main actors involved in the assassination of Lumumba. The book brings new light to an understanding of Mobutu's totalitarian political system created by eliminating his opponents and silencing the people.

Another work, *The Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz*, by Michela Wrong is an unprecedented account of the misdeeds of Mobutu's political system that led millions of people to live in poverty and lack of human dignity. Michela Wrong establishes a comparison between Mobutu's system and that of his colonial predecessor King Leopold II of Belgium. This book is an excellent reference because it traces the rise and fall of Mobutu, whom Wrong fairly refers to as the stereotype of an African despot. Of interest is the account of Mobutu's failures and misdeeds, including the pauperization of the Zairian/

Congolese citizens through the plundering of the country's copper and diamond resources. This was perpetrated under a totalitarian political system that bought out the opposition and dominated its citizens with a combination of brutality and charm. The Afrocentric paradigm helps us to easily determine the non-Africa-centered finality of such a regime because of its lack of promotion of the well-being of the African people of Zaire/Congo.

Madeleine Kalb's *The Congo Cables* offers an interesting account of Congolese political history, including the dramatic events before and after Congo's independence. It also gives us significant insight into the two main political events that changed the destiny of the country: (a) Patrice Lumumba's assassination and (b) Mobutu's takeover as the new, self-proclaimed leader of Congo/Zaire. This book is significant because it offers details that are relevant to the understanding of the elements of Mobutu's totalitarian system.

*Dignity for Africa* by Sese Seko is an account of the political system by Mobutu himself, as discussed in a conversation with journalist Jean-Louis Remillieux. The book offers Mobutu's own version of the system he created, his entry into politics, his account of the reasons for the creation of a 'strong' state, his version of democracy, his philosophy of authenticity, the colonial legacy, Patrice Lumumba, human rights, poverty, and more.

### *The African-centered Paradigm*

Afrocentricity, the African-centered paradigm, is the theory best suited to provide insight into the African phenomenon. This theory aims to uncover reality through a system of inquiry that places the phenomenon within the appropriate context. The African-centered paradigm will be used to investigate Mobutu's political system failures and misdeeds in order to place them in the context of their relevance to the African people of Zaire. Ultimately, the paradigm will be used to determine whether Mobutu's political behaviors and his state crimes were utilized in the best interests of Zairian well-being and human dignity.

In *The Afrocentric Idea*, M.K. Asante views Afrocentricity as the placement of Africa in the center of African experiences, using cultural values and viewpoints to analyze the reality in which it is submerged. Since Afrocentricity "means, literally, placing African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior,"<sup>10</sup> viewing Mobutu's political misdeeds and failures from this theoretical perspective is important. Asante suggests three perspectives from which Afrocentricity as a theory can be analytically applied:

1. Human relations,
2. Individuals' relations to the supernatural, and



3. Individuals' relations to their own being.

This study proposes to apply the African-centered theory with the following objectives:

1. To analyze the political phenomenon of Zaire of the 1990s in the light of its relevance to the African people of Zaire, and
2. To analyze and understand the political behavior of an African leader toward his own people.

Mobutu's philosophy of authenticity will be discussed as a missed opportunity for an African-centered way of governance.

## Chapter Two

# Concepts of Political Governance in Traditional Africa

Cheik Anta Diop described the characteristics of a good African leader as “ . . . entirely dedicated to others, nothing for yourself, everything for others, a heart filled with goodness and generosity, a soul steeped in nobility, a spirit always serene simplicity personified.”<sup>1</sup> Diop’s words resonate from traditional Africa of centuries ago when the art of social organization (i.e., politics) was intended solely to achieve the well-being of the citizens.

### **THE LEGACY OF THE TRADITIONAL AFRICAN WAY OF GOVERNING**

The legendary African, Nelson Mandela, described former indigenous political institutions:

Then our people lived peacefully, under the democratic rule of their kings. . . . Then the country was ours, in our name and right. . . . All men were free and equal and this was the foundation of government. The council of elders was so completely democratic that all members of the tribe could participate in its deliberation. Chief and subject, warrior and medicine man, all took part and endeavoured to influence its decision.<sup>2</sup>

Traditionally, indigenous political leaders had formal mandates to promote social development and integration. They structured work, delegated political power and authority, and established formal rules of life in society. This African-centered approach to authority promoted social harmony and a high level of obedience to established authority. Authority’s

acknowledged principal role was to promote the well-being of all society. In a continent dominated by military dictatorships and one-man authoritarian regimes, a look at African traditional political institutions could demystify the alibi often used by African despotic leaders: African social structures justify dictatorships.<sup>3</sup>

For centuries most African societies have enjoyed a tradition of participatory democracy.<sup>4</sup> The organizational structure of traditional societies was based on kinship and ancestry. The primary mission of political power was the survival of the group as an economic, spiritual, political, and military unit. The nature of each ethnic group dictated the system of government.

One clear feature of traditional African political institutions was the lack of a written constitution. Instead, customs and traditions determined governmental procedures.<sup>5</sup> There were two distinct types of traditional political organizations:

1. Stateless societies. Tribal groupings were led by chiefs or chiefdoms. The chief and his attendants were in charge of administrative and judiciary institutions. Some tribes were without chiefs, yet governed themselves peacefully.
2. Kingdoms and empires. This second category was composed of conquered tribes.

These were further distinguished by differing forms of imperial rule. The first and most common allowed a certain autonomy and local independence to the vassal states—the Asante and Zande empires of the 19<sup>th</sup> century illustrate this type of political subculture. The second type of imperial rule required conquered tribes or vassal states to assimilate in an allegedly superior foreign culture—among these vassal states were the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries' Mandinka, Fulani, Hausa, and most (if not all) of the Islamic empires of West Africa.

Other elements that entered into consideration of traditional African political organizations included, lineage, age, maturity, relation to ancestors, and wealth. Lineage, the foundation of most political organizations, was the most powerful and effective force for unity and stability in early Africa. Differing criteria determined lineage. However, of age, maturity, and relation to ancestors, age seemed to be the favorite criterion in most political structures, as it represented wisdom according to African tradition. Of course, exceptions to this principle existed.

Access to power in traditional Africa was not always a democratic or consensual matter.<sup>6</sup> For example, in the People's Republic of Benin, members

of the royal family were favored and most likely to have access to power. In Rwanda and Burundi, the selection of the reigning caste depended mostly on the king himself who had the freedom to ennoble his subjects; in traditional Senegal the designation of the new damel was made by the Council of the Crown. The Council had the authority to elect or designate the new king after the death of a reigning monarch and made the decision based on the blood connection of candidates to the royal family. In theory, the Council of the Crown made the choice objectively after long and laborious discussions and careful examination of all candidates to determine their appropriateness. In general, the damel had to be chosen from among the three categories of princes: (a) Diambor, chief of the nobles; (b) Boumi, viceroy; and (c) Bedienne. (See Appendix B for election criteria of the political elite in traditional Senegal.)

The leadership and structure of indigenous African societies were composed of four principal units: a chief (central authority), the inner or privy council (advisors to the chiefs), the council of elders (made of representatives from all lineages), and the village assembly of commoners or the meeting.<sup>7</sup> However, stateless societies had only two of these four units, including the council of elders and the village assembly. One remarkable feature of stateless societies is the absence of a central authority. Instead, leaders and headmen played this role. In addition, no society member was allowed to hold office. The voice and opinion of the members of the society were heard through their group representatives. During the decision-making process, these representatives were free to support the leader of their choice. When conflicts occurred, the favorite resolution technique was to reach a compromise, as opposed to judgment or sanctions. More than anything else, it was kinship that governed the system of law and order.<sup>8</sup>

In order for stateless societies to preserve their freedom, they disregarded any autocratic system of government such as the recognition of a chief or a central authority. Law and order were achieved through other means. For example, extended family organizations made maintaining justice, cultural values, and territorial integrity possible so that kinship was always a key cohesive element. Among the most prominent African societies to adopt kinship as an institution were the hunting and pastoral peoples, including the Pygmies (Zaire), the Bushmen (South Africa), and the Fulani (Nigeria). To avoid a centralized government and the dominance of chiefs some societies (the Nuer of Sudan, the Tiv and Igbo of Nigeria, and the Bedouin Arabs of North Africa) used the adoption of a system of checks and balances in which two or more power centers (e.g., judicial, legislative, and military) were balanced against each other.<sup>9</sup>

## THE FOUR UNITS OF GOVERNMENT IN TRADITIONAL AFRICA<sup>10</sup>

### *A Chief*

The chief was generally a male and acted as the political, social, judicial, and religious head of the tribe. He was the central figure. As the political figure, the chief was the administrator and leader of the tribe, responsible for maintaining good order, handling all public affairs, and being the commander-in-chief and ultimate authority for anything related to the welfare and well-being of the tribe. The chief was the ultimate voice in any judicial matter, and presided over the Chief's Court, equivalent to the final court of appeal in stateless societies. (If there was a king above the chief, then the king was the ultimate judicial authority.) As the religious leader, the chief represented the direct link between the group and ancestral guardian spirits believed to guard the tribe against enemies, natural dangers, and any destructive spirits. The chief was given all necessary material wealth; he received tributes, court fines, and market tolls. The wealth of a chief did not at any time belong to him or his family but rather was used only to assist needy members of the tribe, to treat visitors with respect and dignity according to African tradition, and to supply food and drink to those who were at the service of the chief and the tribe, including members of the council and army members on duty. The chief or *mfumu*, *mokonzi*, (Western Zaire) received tribute or *malambu* from all members of the tribe through his *milopwe* or subchiefs, who were traditionally in charge of the lineages. All the wealth received by the chief constituted the tribe's treasure, and he could not use it recklessly for his own ends.<sup>11</sup>

The chief could simply be a chief, a king or, sometimes, a headman. However, in traditional African societies when the king was the central authority figure, the chief was immediately under him. In the case in which more than one chief was subordinate to the king, there was a head chief. The others were simply chiefs and sub-chiefs; the leader of a village was called a headman.

### *Inner or Privy Council*

A small group of advisors, the inner or privy council, assisted the chief to govern. Even though there were no criteria for becoming a council member, the council was generally comprised of the chief's relatives, personal friends, and influential members of the village.

The role of the inner council served as a first step for legislation. Thus, for any decisions related to the administration of the tribe, the chief would first address his council to discuss the issues. He would consider

the opinion of his advisors, before finally taking the issue to all his people. Meetings were held in private, at the chief's residence or in some secluded spot after dusk to avoid any publicity or interruption. In theory, the chief was not obliged to follow the council's advice, but he could not easily ignore their advice because of potential negative implications, including the withdrawal of support and/or the call for the chief's destitution. The inner council apparently played a large role in preventing despotism by keeping the chief in touch with the reality of the tribe as well as by keeping a check on his behavior. Consequently, if the chief's ruling on an issue was found detrimental, the people would reproach the inner council for failing to act responsibly.

### *The Council of Elders*

The decision-making process was not limited to the inner council and advisors. In fact, the chief, after consulting with the inner council and his advisors, would also consider taking the issue to the council of elders for further consultation. The council of elders was a much wider and more formal body comprised of all the hereditary headmen of the wards or lineages. It was considered a wider body because the elders represented the commoners. The village council represented the fountainhead of common life, and its determination found expression in the popular opinion.

Though the council was primarily comprised of elders, the chief had the discretion to appoint a few young, competent, intelligent men. For decisions of certain social magnitude, the chief consulted with all the members of the council of elders. Such decisions included additional tributes, market tolls, proposed new laws, declarations of war, and serious interpersonal disputes or conflicts. More specifically, the role of the council of elders was to advise and assist the chief in the administration of the tribe and also to prevent the chief from abusing his power.

The council of elders voiced its dissatisfaction, criticized the chief, and kept him under necessary control. Depending on the nature and complexity of the issue, decisions were usually resolved by acclamation. First, the chief would inform the council of elders of the issue in question. Those wishing to debate the issue would be free to do so before a decision was adopted by acclamation. For complex issues, the chief would not acknowledge a final decision until a debate was conducted and the council reached a unanimous decision. In general, the rest of the tribe easily accepted decisions made unanimously because council members were influential members of their communities.

During the debate, the role of the chief was to lead, not to influence. He was generally silent as he prepared to assemble all views presented by

the council members, do an assessment, and lead the team to reach a consensus. At no time was the chief to impose his decisions on the council, since this was contrary to the purpose of the debates. In short, the chief's role was not to rule, but to assess the council of elders' opinions.

The relationship between the chief and the council of elders was prevalent in most African societies. More than anything else, unanimity was the cornerstone of indigenous African political systems. Debate was a fundamental element of traditional African political systems. It brought the unanimity essential to the survival of the society.

The role of unanimity was particularly remarkable in the case of a head of lineage who was irrevocably opposed to a unanimous decision by the council of elders. The opposition could have resulted in a decision for him and his lineage to leave the village and settle elsewhere. To avoid the disruption this would cause, the chief and his entire political organization usually favored a unity of purpose over the majority opinion, but, importantly, the chief did not impose unity on his people or use coercive power to achieve it. Instead, the chief and his council used their political skills to persuade and win the opinion of dissidents by privately lobbying for their support during visits to their homes.

### *The Village Assembly*

When agreement over an issue, even after lobbying efforts, was impossible, the chief had to call a village assembly. The issue was then submitted to a public debate to get a final binding opinion from the people. During the assembly meeting, the chief would thoroughly explain the purpose of the consultation and present the facts for discussion. To avoid influencing the debate, he would not announce his council's decision. After explaining the purpose of the meeting and presented the facts, the chief would open the debate to his advisors, then to the elders. Finally, the meeting was opened to arguments or questions from the public. If two individuals stood up at the same time, priority was given to the older.

Some authors have argued that the Bantu assembly had to ratify all new laws before they were enforced. One advantage of this practice was that the adopted laws were well-known to the people, even in the absence of written records. During the debate, people were allowed to express their views freely and fully. They were occasionally interrupted by a comment or question. All speakers were expected to stand bareheaded and face the chief as a sign of respect; they were expected to express their opinions freely.

When all speakers had concluded their remarks, advisors and headmen would sum up and express their opinions after which the chief would announce his decision. If consensus had been reached, the majority decision

would be adopted. The chief approached the assembly meeting with an open mind and a willingness to accept the vox populi. If the final decision was not congruent with either the chief's or his supporters' views, he had to accept public opinion graciously. Anything else would have been materially costly to the chief. Of course, in theory, the chief had the power to override the wishes of his people, but in practice he rarely did so. Their cooperation was essential to the successful governance of the tribe. As the repository of the ancestral spirits, the chief could not use dictatorship as a way of governing, else he would have offended the ancestors and have been a source of shame to his own lineage. A chief who became a despot would lose the respect of the people, who would then refuse to pay tributes. Additionally, if a chief persisted in despotism, his advisors and the council of elders could abandon him; the entire tribe could refuse to cooperate or, if necessary, leave the village, abandoning the despot to his own destiny with no power and no relevance. Should this happen, the chief would be devoid of any power or means to stop his people. For this reason and as an ultimate check on power tribe members retained the right to destitute their chief at any time. When it became evident that the tribe was discontented and unlikely to tolerate oppression much longer, the fathers of the tribe would hold a great *pitso* (gathering or meeting) and, in the presence of the tribe, denounce the chief for his wrong-doings and announce that some other member of the royal household had been elected in his stead.

In summary, the decision-making process in traditional African political institutions had all the features of a democracy rather than a dictatorship or totalitarian regime. The chief was anything but a dictatorial figure, and his governing role was not autocratic. Above all, he acted as the central figure for social justice and peace.

### *Role of Women in Ancient Egypt and Political Rights During the Reign of Queen Hatshepsut*

Cheick Anta Diop, the most recognizable scientific authority in the study of Ancient Egypt, has established that in all Africa matriarchy was most manifest and lasting in Egypt. The role of women in Ancient Egypt—as personified by Isis, the goddess of fertility and the great and bountiful mother-goddess whose influence and love ruled everywhere among the living and the dead—was one of the most influential. During the entire history of the Egyptian pharaohs, women enjoyed complete freedom and assumed all rights, including political rights. Because they were the most stable members of the nomadic society in which men were often mobile, women were a pivotal force in Egyptian society. The case of Queen Hatshepsut illustrates the prominent role of women in the political life of Ancient Egypt.



Hatshepsout is known as the first queen in the history of humanity. At the time she was queen, blood ties to the royal family determined the right to the throne. Only direct descent from the royal family could result in inheritance of the throne. As pointed out by Diop, "It is the greater or lesser nobility of the mother which supports the right to the throne to the exclusion of the father. . . ." <sup>12</sup> In traditional Africa access to political power was limited to very privileged and select people, instead of the democratic rule of officials freely elected by a majority of the citizens of a nation. In the Egyptian tradition, the woman was the most powerful element of the political power and the one to possess a great deal of political rights. Once in power, the mother figure continued to be very prominent as an influence or guardian of younger kings. This was particularly the case in the Hatshepsout dynasty: "Maspero affirms that, in the eyes of the Egyptian nation, Hatshepsout was the legitimate heiress of the ancient dynasties. . . . The mother Hatshepsout continued to rule . . . , while keeping this household of power. . . . [Hatshepsout] assured the uterine continuity of the dynasty." <sup>13</sup>

In short, woman was at the center of power in Egypt's Hatshepsout dynasty. She exercised unlimited political rights and controlled access to political power. She exercised military power and opened the kingdom to economic relationships with foreign countries, as described here:

. . . Hatshepsout proved her almost masculine energy, in organizing the first expedition to the coast of Somaliland in the land of Punt, from whence she brought back, among other riches, varieties of plants she was later to adapt to Egypt. She developed trade and had built for her the sumptuous tomb of Deir-el-Bahari. <sup>14</sup>

Exercising political power, women were as Machiavellian as any other politician, using intrigue and violence to save their throne. So-called Amazons, or women warriors, also exercised military and political power, as described below:

To the West of Lybia at the edge of the earth, lived a people governed by women. The latter remained virgins until their military service had been completed; then they approached the men, became magistrates and fulfilled all other public duties. Men were kept apart from these functions and from the army. <sup>15</sup>

Diop does not think that Amazons existed everywhere throughout the world. He rejects the idea of their existence in Dahomey or South

Africa. However, he agrees with the idea that certain kings, such as Ghezo of Dahomey (1818–1859), created companies of female cavalry to help him fight against the Yoruba; although he made it clear that they were not Amazons because he could not conceive the idea of an African female hating a male. The African warrior woman could not be an Amazon because “Hatred of men is foreign to them and they possess the consciousness of being ‘soldiers’ struggling only for the liberation of their country.”<sup>16</sup>

In conclusion, the role of women in the traditional African political system is demonstrated in these two cases considered by Diop. Their role and influence, as well as their style are remarkable. They are at the center of government and proved to possess the skills needed to fulfill their duties as governors.

### *Necessity of a State*

The State was an organization that emerged as a consequence of a lifestyle heavily dominated by an agricultural, sedentary mode of production.

The obligation to break the too-narrow isolating limits of the primitive family, that is the clan; the necessity of having a strong central power transcending the individual and co-ordinating the work, administrative and cultural unification, all this was implicit in the material conditions of existence. Thus the primitive clans soon merged, became no more than administrative divisions (the *nomes*). The state appeared with its apparatus of government perfected to the smallest details, without our being able to trace, except through legend, the anterior existence of a period of nomadic life. And this is valid for Egypt, Ethiopian and the remainder of Black Africa.<sup>17</sup>

Accordingly, the need for the individual to lean on the collective for his/her survival led to the need for a stronger, organized political body called the state. The sense of patriotism was particularly high because it expressed not a feeling of burden or obligation, but the *raison d'être* of the group. People loved their nation and obeyed their governors because they understood the importance of the organization. They did not belong to a state that was arbitrarily created without their will. On the contrary, people were deeply committed to the nation because their welfare as a group depended on it. The need for collectivism and patriotism was at the core of the creation of the state.<sup>18</sup>

Institutions and authority figures were respected and obeyed not for their power, but for what they represented for the group or collective. In *Civilization or Barbarism*, C.A. Diop pointed out four major reasons that justify the creation of a state: (a) survival of the collective, (b) resistance to the enemy, (c) domination of one class over another, and (d) genocide. These four reasons correspond to four forms of states.

*African type of state*

The African type of state is based on collective survival. As pointed out earlier, the value placed on the group's interest is the core of this type of state:

. . . this type of state . . . is founded on a collectivism basis, which was accepted and defended by all the citizens of the nation as the only way of survival for the collective . . . a confederation of tribes molds itself into a nation and creates a state, to the degree that it organizes itself to take up a challenge presented by nature, . . . to overcome an obstacle, the elimination of which necessitates a collective effort that exceeds the means of a small group.<sup>19</sup>

*State Born Out of Resistance*

This type of state is needed for security reasons. Military leaders in it take the initiative to organize the defense of the nation against an external enemy; consequently, they seize political power to the detriment of civilians. According to Diop, this type of state fails to represent the interests of the nation and rapidly becomes a source of abuse: "The existence of a military aristocracy at the top of the society makes abuses and social and political perversions more frequent. . . ."<sup>20</sup>

*Domination of One Class Over Another*

The third type of state is a legal instrument of domination of one class over another, often a consequence of a battle between a class of citizen landowners and external newcomers to whom the rights of citizenship were denied.

*Genocide*

The fourth form of the state is founded on genocide and represented by a " . . . minority of conquerors who subordinate to its law the conquered or proletarian majority by means of coercive state institutions conceived toward this end."<sup>21</sup>

**THE ROLE OF THE KING IN TRADITIONAL AFRICA**

The role of governor or king depended on the type of political organization he/she represented. In general, the kings, queens, or governors had the skills necessary to preserve, defend, and promote the interest of the collectivity. They were the defenders of the nation against external enemies and protectors of the survival of its people.<sup>22</sup> In any case, a king was never above the will of the people he represented. In some cases being a

king was the least exciting job on earth. This was true in some regions in particular:

If the royal function had obvious advantages, it was also regulated by a ritual so exacting that at times, everything considered, the king's fate was not enviable at all. In fact, the act of physically putting the king to death after he had reigned for a certain number of years (eight, in general), depending upon the region, was not an exceptional event: it persisted, here and there, throughout time and space, in precolonial Black Africa.<sup>23</sup>

The kings of Mali were exceptionally skilled hunters expected to live their lives and guide their people according to their ancestors' traditions because kings were only the depositories of ancestral oaths.<sup>24</sup> Kings were loved by all the people for their commitment to the well-being of their people, as well as for their fearless courage in protecting them against enemies.

The role of any king of Mali was to rule over the kingdom inherited from his ancestors and to pass on the realm—intact, if not increased—to his descendants. Their principal role was as keepers of people's ancestors' traditions, not the self-fulfillment of personal or family ambitions. In fact, all the people of the kingdom were heirs to the ancestors' legacy. At enthronement each king received a gift of a *griot* (a combination of a mentor and tutor)<sup>25</sup> from his predecessor. The griot's role was one of the most influential in the king of Mali's inner circle. The griots were indispensable guides, helping kings protect the weak against the strong and the innocent against the wicked, rendering justice for all. As depositories of the ancestors' traditions, the kings followed the word of God in rendering justice. Good kings were powerful kings who governed their people with justice.

In addition to the griots, the governing body assisting the king was composed of the council of elders (like most traditional African political systems), the queen mother, and the assembly of dignitaries. The queen mother could be very influential when choosing the future king from among the king's children.

In the Asante kingdom, the candidate for king was given specific instruction at the enthronement ceremony. To this day this tradition is practiced. When Molefi Kete Asante was enthroned as the Asante king, a linguist read the following advice:

We do not wish that he should disclose the origin [ethnicity] of any person.

We do not wish that he should curse us.

We do not wish him to be greedy.

We do not wish that he should refuse to listen to advice.

We do not wish that he should call people "fools ."

We do not wish that he should act without advice.

We wish that he would always have time for his advisers.

We do not want personal violence.<sup>26</sup>

In contrast to what many have come to believe, traditional African political systems chose their governors in a very structured manner. Rules and requirements were very strict for king candidates; failure to comply with the will of the people was reason for immediate disqualification. Once appointed, if the king failed to provide the people with quality services, his reign was terminated.

In most indigenous systems the people brought sanctions against a ruler who did not heed advice or govern according to their will. The Dagomba Na or Asante Obene could find himself isolated by his subjects as a consequence of misrule. They would shun him, withdraw their services, or rebel.<sup>27</sup>

Self-serving kings or governors were contrary to traditional African political systems. Those who abused their power were sanctioned and asked to leave to benefit the welfare of the community and were refused access to the community treasury. People were well informed of their political rights; no despotism was tolerated.

#### *Philosophy of Authenticity or the Extortion of African Tradition*

Former President Mobutu of Zaire introduced the concept of authenticity a couple of years after seizing power through a military coup d'état in 1965. Authenticity was an African-centered policy statement that aimed to reclaim the dignity of the African people of Zaire by proclaiming them responsible for their own destiny. Zairian people had to reclaim their African identity from years of colonization and European influence. Thus authenticity was a cultural policy that aimed to make each Zairian citizen aware of his own identity. To accept this position meant that there was something not African in the way Zairian people lived their lives or conceived their world-view. Mobutu's policy of authenticity assumed that the Zairian people should rebuild their own culture and erase the scars left by decades of colonial rule. In Mobutu's view, European rule completely destroyed the dignity of the African people of Zaire by imposing assimilation and alienation. Authenticity was a

cultural renaissance, a return to the wisdom of the African ancestors that would have allowed the Zairian people to rediscover themselves without foreign influence.

Authenticity allowed the Zairian people to regain their ancestral pride and cultural heritage. The most significant examples of cultural reconquest were seen in most areas of the Zairian way of life (returning to African names; renaming of the streets, cities, towns, and even of the country). During colonial rule, every citizen of Zaire was supposed to be baptized and received a *Christian* name as a consequence of being *born again* in the European Catholic tradition. Each newly baptized person was then renamed, usually after a saint of the Catholic Church. Christian names were taken as the first name, and the last name still belonged to the person's family.<sup>28</sup> Under the policy of authenticity, Zairians went back to bearing names that had a cultural meaning or message rooted in African tradition.

Mobutu Sese Seko stated that a name must have meaning. For example, the names of parents and grandparents should remind Zairians of the exploits of a clan, the history of a tribe, and the character or personality of an ancestor whom they wish to honor. The name should place its bearer in the line of succession of the tribe the ancestor represents.<sup>29</sup>

By renaming the streets, cities, and towns, the policy of cultural reconquest reclaimed the dignity of the Zairian people who had been forced to name their streets and cities after European princes, kings, queens, or colonials. For example, the capital of the country was named Leopoldville after the King of Belgium who was the *sole owner* of the country from 1887 until 1906. After the adoption of the policy, all Zairian large cities were renamed after Zairian names (e.g., Coquilatville became Kisangani, Banningville became Bandundu, Jadotville became Mbandaki, Elizabethville became Lubumbashi, and the like). Even physical appearance (e.g., clothing) became a way of realizing the value of Zairian cultural heritage and rejecting the values imposed by Europeans on colonized Africans. Authenticity was, in essence, a very African-centered concept, as it primarily placed the interest of the African people of Zaire at the center of all aspects of their national life.

Authenticity was the rediscovery by the Zairian people of their role as subjects of their own history as well as their unique place and contribution to the history of the world. It filled the gap between the past and the present. Authenticity allowed the African people of Zaire to borrow from the best of their ancestors in order to envision the present as a harmonious continuity from tradition to modernity. In short, authenticity allowed the African people of Zaire to be themselves.

*Subjectivity: The African-centered Perspective*

The African-centered approach to subjectivity has deep philosophical roots. The self as subject (subjectivity) is the essence of being human. To be a subject is to be master of one's own destiny, free from any external environment that may alienate the self as a unique member of the universe. Only the subjective self can dominate its environment and at the same time open the individual to the universe. Subjectivity confers consciousness and freedom of choice and allows a person to function in the realm of rationality.

People who are the subjects of their own history have the capacity to overcome universal determinism. They give their uniqueness meaning in relation to their world. Only a subject can recognize that he/she is unique and, consequently, that his/her contribution to the world also makes the world unique. The African-centered approach states that African people should be considered subjective participants in world history and not merely objects. Thus Afrocentricity gives the African people a unique place in the world from which they can understand and analyze any given reality to make it their own. Traditional African political institutions were based on the premise that all members of the tribe were subjects of their own governmental institutions. To be a subject means to live according to principles and values that shape the choices one makes. The person lives in a society according to a determined set of values. In his/her actions, the person is guided by values that internally call upon his condition as a conscious being. These values are then reflected in his personal and social actions, which aim at doing what is morally correct.

**VALUES AND THE CONSCIOUS BEING**

German philosopher Max Scheler proposed that values incite the human being to do what is good.<sup>30</sup> Only a conscious being operates according to values. An object or a thing cannot make choices; choices are made for them. The idea of value associated with a concrete human subject elevates the latter to a transcendental level, which can confer to consciousness a degree of choice proper only to a human subject. Consciousness allows the human subject to make an objective choice among a plurality of preferences. Thus, a value is an internal support that enables a human being to use his/her subjectivity and detach him/herself from a myriad of solitudes offered by his/her environment.

Values influence the human being only because he is himself a value. In fact, a given society is a set of concrete individual persons, and each individual's choice of values makes a society a better one. In Scheler's view, the human being or subject is the *raison d'être* of all values. He classifies

all values according to their relevance to the human subject: values of the person; own values; values of others; values of actions, functions, reaction, and mental values; values of behavior and success; values of intentional vision; values of state; fundamental values; values of form and relation; individual and collective values; values per se; consecutive values; and the like. A human subject has to make constant choices of values to (a) realize self, and (b) realize self in relation to others, objects, institutions; and (c) realize self as social being. Therefore, human values are above any other values, and any social relation must take into account this inviolable principle. The human subject must be valued for who he integrally is.

A human being is a unit of values, a subject of his own destiny, and a subject of universal history. However, being a value per se does not imply that the subject is not open to others. In fact, each person is, at the same time, a singular person as well as a social person. He/she belongs to the greater world and to his/her particular world, which coexist in the person and are interrelated. In his/her relation to others, the individual is a bearer of values that must be respected and taken into account.

From an African-centered approach, subjectivity is what confers to the person an original metaphysic situation, providing a unique existence and position in the world. That unique situation makes the African people's contribution to the world as unique as themselves. Possibly Mobutu's authenticity was not formally envisioned as an African-centered concept, but analysis reveals it to be African-centered in its essence. However, authenticity did not fulfill its African-centered purpose because of its political use by Mobutu. Instead, Mobutu used this important African-centered concept to solidify a political system that did not, in the end, promote the well-being of the African people of Zaire.





## Chapter Three

# The Momentum of Democracy in Zaire: Sovereign National Conference

### FROM THE FAILURES AND OFFENSES OF THE ZAIRIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM TO THE RISE OF POPULAR CONSCIOUSNESS

Sociologists have pointed out that any political power must be rooted in and justified by popular legitimacy. There are three principles of social obedience: an individual obeys leaders who are (1) established by social custom, (2) validated by reason, and (3) elevated by enthusiasm above any other. These correspond to three types of legitimacy: (a) traditional, (b) charismatic, and (c) legal (modern political leaders and their political systems rely on the assumption that a written constitution is the legal source of any exercise of political power).

### THE SECOND REPUBLIC

The product of a military coup d'etat, Zaire's Second Republic regime tried to establish its legitimacy by brandishing the flag of a search for national unity. Misguided by political, economic, and social achievements during the regime's first five years, Zaire's leaders governed with the illusion of achieved legitimacy.<sup>1</sup> As a totalitarian regime, its arbitrary decisions and deceptions did not last long enough to be noticed; gradual instability resulted in multidimensional national crises manifested by a lack of political circumspection. This cleared the way for a rise of popular consciousness.

Zaire's First Republic had sprung from Belgian colonialism in June 1960. A lack of educated people resulted in inexperienced leaders who were unable to master the subtleties of political power and to manage the country's economy. With the help of Belgian administrators, these leaders did their best to lead the country until a general crisis became a motive for an army mutiny. Several attempted secessions spread across the country. Unfortunately, Zaire's first and only elected government did not resist this wave of political instability; and the military coup d'état of November 24, 1965, sealed the end of the first attempt at democratic government. In November 1965, a hybrid political system was established, totalitarian in its political methods, capitalistic in its economic vision.

The roots of failures of the Second Republic could be traced back to the system's seizing of power. Mobutu's military coup d'état that installed the republic was at the cost of the first and only democratic experience of the young nation. Due to a political deadlock encountered by the administration of the nation's first president, Joseph Kasavubu, General Joseph Mobutu decided to intervene militarily and thereby officially entered the national political arena. He unconstitutionally dismissed the legal president on November 24, 1965.

Immediately after, Mobutu proclaimed himself President of Congo, formally planting the seeds of the totalitarian regime.<sup>2</sup> He justified his military action in the name of national order and security in a country wounded and divided by a civil war between regional factions. Mobutu promised to lead the country for five years, suspended the national constitution, and dismissed the democratically elected national assembly. Leaning on his military inner circle, he gradually eliminated the political elite, banned all political parties, abolished the right to strike, and eliminated any political character of the nation's provinces, which became only administrative entities under the president's authority. In short, Mobutu created a nation state. To this end, he created the so-called *Corps de Volontaires de la République* [Republic's Volunteer Corps], which he transformed a year later into his *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (M.P.R.) [Popular Movement for the Revolution]. This organization quickly became the strongest pillar of Mobutu's political system.

In 1967, the 26-year-old President proclaimed the birth of the Second Republic and the beginning of his totalitarian political system. The system was centered, in cult-like fashion, in Mobutu's personality and the unilateral character of the political structure established by his system. Characterized by a culture of exhibitionism and deception, the cult-like views of the president eventually led to a paralysis of people's freedoms and a growing tendency toward political unanimity.

Management of national public life came strictly under constitutional control. Legal, cultural, and economic affairs of individuals and groups were entirely dominated by the state's political machine. Tyranny relegates the people to blind obedience and mental enslavement; it causes the spirit to abdicate and accommodate itself to injustice and mediocrity. Essentially, the Second Republic's totalitarian regime substituted the rule of law with an empire of personal power. Another, a totalitarian system, replaced the constitution of the First Republic, Zaire's first and only democratic regime. It imposed a one-party system to which every citizen belonged. The system appeared as a hybrid; Mobutu drew his political strategies and methods for the political control from the communist system, while preferring capitalism for his economic policies. The one-party system organized national political life and each citizen's individual and social existence, taking charge of citizens' lives from birth to death. The obligatory character of Mobutu's party was symbolized by a famous party slogan that said (in Lingala)<sup>3</sup>: "Olinga olinga te zali nakati ya M.P.R." [Like it or not, you are a member of M.P.R, the country's single party].

A one-party state meant the negation of any political participation by citizens and was a polarization of the expression of the power and the rights of discourse. Creativity in this system was limited to the expression of unconditional love and devotion to the supreme guide, the single party, and the nation's leader. This political strategy allowed the regime to reach a certain degree of national unity and stability until challenged by popular awareness of its failures and offenses. Despite a lack of legitimacy, the system stabilized and consolidated itself using totalitarian means to reach a certain level of equilibrium regardless of failures and offenses through misuse of power.

In 1990, Zairian Catholic bishops sent a memorandum to Chief of State Mobutu stating that the main reason for the country's paralysis and institutional crisis was the system and its hybrid nature. They reminded Mobutu that, while his system used the tools of liberalism to achieve economic wealth for a minority group through private property, his political action was guided by totalitarian strategies. From liberalism and totalitarianism the system inherited its economic weaknesses and simultaneously learned to exercise absolute power.

Failures and Offenses of the System under Mobutu's Regime

### *Failure of the Financial System*

During Mobutu's Second Republic, the national bank, state-led institutions, and the national treasury department were placed under the exclusive control of political injunctions. The national treasury department was at the

service of the national party, which used the national bank as the source of its revenues. Individuals in charge of the bank and the treasury were political appointees who had no control over the revenues. Mismanagement was a principal characteristic of the country's financial institutions, so the national budget failed. Characterized by underestimated and underreported revenues, it was unequally distributed and constantly submitted to illegal accesses and arbitrary withdrawals. This comes as no surprise in a country where the only legal obligation was to the president's imperatives.<sup>4</sup>

### *Economic Failures*

When the Republic of Congo became independent in 1960, its economic picture was promising.<sup>5</sup> The *Produit Interieur Brut Commercialise* (P.I.B.C.) [Gross Domestic Product] projected an annual growth rate of 6% per year for over 40 years. Even though industrialization was carried out through the expression and development of the country's marginal economy into that of a central economy, the Republic of Congo was at the time of independence one of the most industrialized African countries with a vast range of industries, including: minerals, food and agriculture, textiles, cement, chemicals, and the most important industries of all of Black Africa—construction and electrical materials.

The economy was prosperous, and the results were spectacular. The country's food supply was self-sufficient, and many products were being exported (e.g., coffee, rubber, palm oil, cotton, and the like), contributing 40% of the state budget. The water and road transportation systems, inherited from the colonial era, were the largest in Africa and had the most sophisticated technological infrastructure. With an economy largely based on the mineral industry, modern agriculture, and an excellent transportation system, the country's economy appeared prosperous.

During the years of secessionist movements, 1960 through 1966, economic activity registered a loss visible in the annual growth rate of the gross national gross (6% at the time of independence and 4% during the recession). Nevertheless, the national economy resisted the financial and monetary devaluation, mainly thanks to the health of the agricultural and mineral sectors and the intervention of the European industrial sector.

At the onset of the Second Republic, the country's economy appeared to be solid; the military coup d'état had established peace and territorial integrity. The rebuilding of state institutions, monetary stabilization, and, most importantly, the rebound in copper production, created a more favorable climate for economic growth.

The new regime slowly started investing in sectors necessary to boost the national economy. However, future mismanagement of national

resources revealed a hidden side of the new political system. Most of these investments resulted in bad policies and/or fiscal mismanagement over the long term, resulting in an obstruction to industry, an increase in debt, and the deterioration of the national economy.

The policy of nationalization, or *Zairianization* of national enterprises, dictated by the Mobutu regime in 1973, as well as the radicalization of the same policy in December 1974, further deepened the crisis of the young economy. In fact, these two policies—Zairianization, which allowed the regime to take over any enterprise run by a non-national, and radicalization, which allowed the regime to take control over all units of production and distribution—had more negative impact than expected. They resulted in the obstruction of the industrial sector and the beginning of the fall of the country's economy.

As a result, the country's long-term economy became entrapped by significant debt, a negative underground economy, an imbalance between currency production and national wealth production and, finally, a complete deterioration of national wealth production. The national bank illustrated this dramatic turnover of the national economy by comparing the decrease in production of certain key agricultural and mineral products (see Tables 3.4 and 3.5).<sup>6</sup>

**Table 3.1.** Exportations of Some National Agricultural Products (in Tons)

Products	Year			
	1954	1974	1980	1991
Palm Oil	185.000	62.433	10.007	2.714
Palmist Oil	60.000	33.983	18.737	1.969
Robusta Coffee	46.267	68.658	67.717	74.671
Arabica Coffee	10.300	9.046	6.406	14.818
Rubber	40.152	26.617	19.472	5.512
Cotton Fiber	52.800	1.622	0.000	0.000

**Table 3.2.** Exportations of Some National Mineral Products

Products	Year			
	1959	1974	1980	1991
Copper (in tons)	282.320	499.699	459.392	299.782
Electric Zinc	53.438	68.716	43.848	23.318
Cobalt (in tons)	6.501	17.545	14.482	7.953
Fine Gold (in kilo)	10.957	4.064	1.271	7.286
Industrial Diamonds	16.004	12.991	8.001	8.895

The fall of productivity in key areas has significant negative effects. Because the regime neither had nor implemented a sound, external economic policy, there were serious regressive results.

- Internally, small producers and lower income individuals suffered the most intense effects of the economy's fall. Coffee, palm oil, cotton, and rubber had been the principal income sources for peasants, providing them with a little economic stability. A significant cut in production of these products meant a substantial loss of financial resources for the peasants, small producers, and the lower income class in general.
- Loss of health insurance for many, decreases in nutrition, and decreases in educational possibilities for children of parents without income, made for significant delays in the economic development of certain regions of the country.
- Lack of an industrial policy was the principal factor for the decline in mineral production. A failure to upgrade the industrial infrastructure generated a further decrease in mineral production.

In 1960 the Zairian economy was one of the most prosperous in Africa; gross domestic product grew by an average of 7.5% annually from 1949 to 1958. The average annual income was \$680, the industrialization rate was 41%, and there were relatively high infrastructure standards in the health and social welfare sectors. Despite those prosperous days, the mismanagement of the Second Republic led to a decrease in the average annual income to \$100, one of Africa's lowest, and reduced national industrial productivity to its lowest level since 1974.

### *Education System Failures*

The Second Republic's political system also failed. More than 50,000 students were registered in 37 colleges and 3 state universities. Each university enrolled at least 8,000 students. Certain sources reported that since 1986, 100,000 students had obtained their high school diplomas, but insufficient college and university placement availability meant that at least 50,000 Zairian high school students became jobless for lack of professional skills to qualify for jobs. Those who entered the colleges and universities were faced with unbearable conditions, including lack of space in dormitories, auditoriums, and laboratories. Overcrowding in some colleges (up to fourfold the intended capacity) made logistic planning impossible. Often an auditorium intended to seat 200 students would receive 1000 or more, a desk built for two would be shared at any one time by four, and many attended classes by

listening—standing in the hallways outside open classroom doors and windows. The lack of research equipment in laboratories was so serious that conducting experiments became impossible.

Those who were able to complete their college courses and earn a degree graduated into a society in crisis. They could not expect to find government-sponsored employment placement services and felt as victimized as the society they joined—were basically abandoned by their government. The result was an increased number of unemployed Zairians. In the private sector, 250 post-secondary educational institutions were established during Mobutu's reign. Of those, only five were accredited, and only two were licensed by the state as valid educational institutions. Of the existing 2,500 schools at the primary and secondary levels, almost 500 were without required minimum sanitary conditions, and none of them had a gymnasium or a sports field. Of the 950 public schools in the nation's capital, 355 had an insufficient number of desks, requiring young elementary school students to sit on the floor.

Financial, economic, and educational policy failures seemed to be the overall hallmark of Mobutu's political system and reduced the country from a position of optimal development to total chaos. The result was a progressive breach in people's trust of government and its leaders.

### *The Rise of Public Consciousness*

The worldwide broadcast of the spectacular fall of Eastern European totalitarian regimes in the early 1990s (instigated by the Russian political theory of perestroika) had a snowball effect on African totalitarian regimes. African people suddenly realized they had the opportunity to be liberated from oppressing regimes. Many compared this phenomenon to a second wave of African independence led by the sons of the African people themselves. The rise of popular consciousness was evident in ongoing social turmoil and in an apparent breach of trust between the citizens of Zaire and their political leaders.<sup>7</sup>

Historically the Zairian people have been quick to criticize any form of exploitation. The first rise of a national consciousness occurred against the backdrop of the inhumane colonial system. In 1955, Belgian Professor Van Bilsen suggested a progressive decolonization strategy known as the *Bilsen Plan*. The plan suggested a delay of national independence from Belgium for a further 30 years because, according to the Belgian professor, the people of Zaire were immature and not well prepared for self-government.

The reaction of the Zairian people was immediate. The public's rising consciousness was set by the so-called group of African consciousness, led by Joseph Ileo and Joseph-Albert Malula. These two leaders were then joined by other Congolese leaders such as Joseph Kasavubu of the Abako



party (Alliance des Bakongo) and Patrice Emery Lumumba of the Mouvement National Congolais, (MNC) [National Congolese Movement]. They rejected the Bilsen Plan and demanded immediate political rights and fundamental civil rights for the Congolese people. This rise of the public consciousness culminated with the January 4, 1959, riots specifically aimed at sending a political message to the colonial power and denouncing its misdeeds and failures. The riots led to national independence five months later.

## **THE PEOPLE'S AWARENESS OF THE ABUSES AND MISDEEDS OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM**

The Zairian people felt the abuses and misdeeds of the political system in their daily lives as they became increasingly unable to meet their basic needs. With independence from colonial rule, the rise of a national government led by native Congolese leaders prompted great expectations for equal rights, sharing in the national wealth, fundamental political rights, benefiting from the wealth of a rich country, and building a prosperous, modern country. Unfortunately, the political regime of the Second Republic was rooted in the will of a totalitarian leader and his one-party system rather than in the sovereign will of the people; thus the Zairian people were denied access to the nation's wealth.

The Second Republic of Zaire was not a time of social justice. If the 'raison d'être' of a government is the promotion of its people's well-being, then the roles of government leaders must lead the people toward that goal. Political authority draws respect from successful progress promoting the citizens' well being.

### *Select Illustrations of the Rise of Public Consciousness*

As pointed out earlier, the precipitating factors for the rise of the public consciousness were the abuses and offenses of Zaire's Second Republic as well as the fall of Eastern Europe's totalitarian regimes. Because Zairians' quality of life continued to decline and because Eastern European totalitarian leaders were falling, Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko initiated a national referendum to assess the public's opinion of his management of their country. The overwhelming response was total rejection of his political system and denunciation of its abuses and offenses. The people demanded a new model of society capable of assuring them of a chance to regain their lost freedom. During the referendum, the people clearly expressed their rejection of the Second Republic's totalitarian system. As requested by the president, thousands of written memos were sent to his office from throughout the country, each one expressing the profound misery in which the Zairian

people were submerged. These memos came from all social classes, churches, administrations, and unions and expressed a desire for immediate change of the political system and its institutions. All the memos requested the organization and establishment of new, responsible, autonomous, public institutions. Some requested the freezing or reimbursement of national wealth illegally invested overseas by dignitaries of the second republic. Still others simply requested the resignation of the president as head of state.

L'Union pour la Democratie et le Progres Social (UDPS) was the first national opposition political party and one of the leading organizations in this rise of public consciousness. Founded in 1980, UDPS was the only national opposition party daring to publicly denounce, both nationally and internationally, the abuses and offenses of Mobutu's political system. The expression of rejection of the system escalated in the early 1990s with student riots on the campuses of colleges and universities in Kinshasa, Kisangani, Bukavu, and Lubumbashi. Further, with the sudden liberalization of the media resulting from Mobutu's speech of April 24, 1990, the Zairian people rediscovered freedom of expression and began publicly denouncing the Second Republic.

### *Analysis of Facts*

Mobutu's totalitarian system had registered a few successes that may have allowed it to reach a certain degree legitimacy, *de facto* and *de jure*. During the period 1965 through 1970, his regime played a positive role in securing some political stability. Thanks to Mobutu's regime and single-party political system, Zaire did regain its territorial integrity.

From an economic standpoint, Zaire enjoyed some prosperity until the adoption of the policies of Zairianization and radicalization. Political stability along with a few radical economic policies (many of which were liberal) gave Mobutu's regime a positive economic start often fueled by a high global demand for copper. The adoption of a new national currency in 1967 offered the opportunity to balance the budget, revamp national production, slow down inflation, increase salaries, and attract more foreign investors.

Mobutu's political successes might have led to the conclusion that even an illegitimate regime could generate positive results. However, most analyses of the country's condition after 1974 reveal that his use of power led Zaire into chaos. A role of political leadership is to determine which social demands to address and which policies will secure the well being of the whole society. The political system creates either social harmony or accentuates social antagonisms and coordinates the interaction and integration of different sub-systems. Unquestionably, then, the abuses, offenses, and failures that characterized the management of the country were the

sole responsibility of Zaire's Second Republic. Its totalitarian system was characterized by unchecked decision-makers, a lack of a balance of power, and total reliance on a leader's—Mobutu's—will. The Second Republic produced failures and offenses that resulted in social instability and a systemic crisis. The rise of the public's consciousness and the transformation of the political system were inevitable.

*The Rise of Awareness of the Achievements of the National Sovereign Conference*

**Breach of Social Pact and New Socio-Political Environment**

The decrease of popular support for Mobutu's regime and political system due to abuses, failures, and offenses, seems the most likely explanation for the Zairian people's clamor for a new social plan.<sup>8</sup> In 1990 the global environment was characterized by profound socio-political changes. The Russian revolution initiated by Michael Gorbachev led to the spectacular fall of totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe. In Africa the emulation instinct was irresistible. Bloody social movements and riots against totalitarian regimes spread throughout the continent. In Zaire oppressed people seized the opportunity to raise their voices to denounce the atrocities of a totalitarian system that had excluded them from economic and technological developments enjoyed by countries throughout the world for over 30 years. After the bloody massacre of students on the campus of Lubumbashi National University and several union and public administrators' strikes, President Mobutu was convinced of the necessity to listen to the people of Zaire through national referenda. The will of the people, as written in thousand of memos and sent to the President, was clear. They rejected Mobutu's political system and his entire regime. There was a clear breach of the social pact between the regime and the people. The Zairian case ran contrary to established theoretical frameworks propounded by such notables as 13<sup>th</sup> century theologian Saint Thomas Aquinas and 18<sup>th</sup> century French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau.<sup>9</sup> Zairians did not feel legally bound by a political system that did not fulfill their legitimate expectations. The president was no longer the single representation of national political life. It was a moment of profound doubt for the African people of Zaire. Memos sent to the president's office revealed people's requirements:

1. The denunciation of the offenses of the regime's one-party structure and a demand for its replacement by a multiparty political system.
2. The denunciation of the abuses committed by the participants in the Second Republic's political system.
3. The rejection of the political constitution of the Second Republic.

4. The rejection of the institutions of M.P.R., the state party.
5. The rejection of the economic, financial, cultural, and diplomatic policies of Mobutu's regime.

### *The National Sovereign Conference (NSC) and the New Socio-Political Environment*

The rejection of the Second Republic's political system called for a social plan capable of creating a new Zairian society. The NSC was a historical national forum demanded by the majority of the Zairian people to discuss the country's past and create a path for its future. Zairians who petitioned for a National Sovereign Conference included citizens who expressed their concerns to the president through memos (civilians, politicians, religious groups, labor unions, peasants, and students); all citizens of Zaire who had experienced the political, economic, cultural, and social failures and offenses of Mobutu's political system; and all those who requested a radical change in the political system. The bishops of the country had previously expressed a need for a national forum such as the NSC and finally stated in a memorandum addressed to President Mobutu that the national crisis could not be resolved through a new national constitution alone. They confirmed that the crisis was multidimensional, that all public institutions had lost any credibility and legitimacy. In addition, the bishops affirmed that these institutions were responsible for the level of misery felt by the people of Zaire and for the rejection of the country by the international community.

The NSC was conceived as an extra-constitutional forum aimed at providing a space for national debate. Among the achievements of the NSC were:

1. A revision of the national history;
2. a thorough evaluation of all national institutions;
3. the elaboration of a new social plan consigned both in the transitional act and the draft of the constitution of a third republic;
4. the creation of new political, economic, and socio-cultural policies;
5. the definition of new political, economic, and socio-cultural orientations;
6. the definition of new political structures and institutions as well as the profile of the new Zairian leaders; and
7. the establishment of a new transitional government in charge of leading the country toward a third republic. The new transitional institutions were recognized and accepted by President Mobutu

(who remained Chief of State during the transition), the High Council of the Republic (HCR), the Supreme Court, the High Commission of Elections, and the Provincial Council.

The Transitional Act established the legal foundation of the transition period, which was aimed at leading the country toward a democratic society. The Act comprised ten principles. Three of the most significant were as follows:

1. The Chief of State would not lead the transition, but would remain the symbol of national unity.
2. Political power would be equally shared by the actors of all political parties.
3. The current President would be guaranteed a two-year mandate until the end of the transition. In addition, the Transitional Act denied the President the power to appoint or dismiss the Chief of Government and its members. This prerogative was given to the High Council of the Republic, which became the new parliament during the transition.

The Transition Act was seen as a balanced document capable of assuring a peaceful transition toward democracy. The draft of the constitution of the Third Republic envisioned a parliamentary regime within a federalist type of state. The federal state was based on national unity fostered by a central federal power while allowing constitutional autonomy of federal entities and free cooperation among them in their management.

The NSC also established new political structures and institutions of a democratic society to replace the old totalitarian models. The new structure comprised a head of state as president, a transitional government, and a High Council of the Republic (HCR), or parliament. The chief of state remained the same during the transition, while a political opponent to the president would be democratically elected by the HCR as prime minister and chief of government.

## INCIDENCE OF POPULAR CONSCIOUSNESS ON NSC RESOLUTIONS

### *Internal and External Crises: Principal Instigators of Regime Changes<sup>10</sup>*

The different factors analyzed above have established the correlation or the incidence of popular consciousness on the attainments of the NSC. The memos to the office of the President of Zaire represented a clear indication of Zairians' rejection of the regime and its political system; they called for

a change of structure, institutions, and the establishment of a constitution. Once the regime lost popular support, new political visions, democratic in their intentions, were able to mobilize the masses. Newly created opposition parties found that their ideas were eagerly accepted; and the international environment led by France, Belgium, and the United States became a major supporter of the Zairian people's aspirations for freedom and democracy. All citizens demanded political reform of the regime they had once blindly supported in the war against communism.

A political system is a central regulator of the overall society whose demands are multidimensional and are formulated by the persons or groups that are directly affected or by political actors motivated by political and social changes. The actors of the political system will generally process all the demands, select those that are more conducive to the survival of the system, and respond to demands in order of their relevance to the system. Zaire's Second Republic was overwhelmed by social and political demands and unable to organize itself to address them adequately. As a result, activists for change were compelled to position themselves so that the regime could not afford to ignore them.

There are generally three types of political decisions:

1. Strategic decisions for the overall society (driven by objectives of collective actions and values of social regulation).
2. Tactical decisions (to achieve certain objectives and preserve non-negotiable values).
3. Pragmatic decisions (procedural decisions for collective action).

The people compelled the political system of the Second Republic to bring about change through social regulation. Their demand for a new socio-political environment demonstrated a desire to exercise more control over their political institutions and its self-appointed representatives and a desire to have a democratic system based on the principles of popular representation and legality. In short, the African people of Zaire wanted to turn their backs on totalitarianism forever, and the Second Republic's system tried to maintain control, as evidenced by their obstruction of the resolutions of the National Sovereign Conference.

## **THE SECOND REPUBLIC POLITICAL SYSTEM'S TENDENCY TO RETURN TO TOTALITARIANISM**

O'Donnell et al.'s descriptive model warns us that, once initiated, the degeneration process of an authoritarian regime can involve two transitional

modes toward democracy: (a) continued transition and (b) discontinued transition. In a discontinued transition, an authoritarian regime has two possible outcomes. First, the regime may try to regain control through different transaction forms or through a massive deployment of coercive force. Second, if the regime fails to do so, it initiates its fall.<sup>11</sup> Alternatively, the regime can opt for a continued transition, an ambiguous phase during which the old system gives up certain characteristics of the old institutional order without acquiring the characteristics of the new system.

### *Key accomplishments or resolutions of the National Sovereign Conference*

1. The elaboration of a new social plan that included a Transition Act and a draft of the Third Republic's Constitution. The Transition Act was designed to serve as the legal platform of the country during the transition toward democracy. This new legal reference was the result of the public's outcry that the Second Republic's constitution was no longer valid. The people came to the conclusion that the totalitarian political system that had brought the country to chaos was legally justified only by the old constitution. With the rejection of the old constitution, the country needed a temporary legal platform that responded to the principle of state continuity. The essence of the Transition Act was to lay out a few transitional principles aimed at establishing a harmonious collaboration between the different, newly created, institutions. These included the presidency of the Republic of Zaire with Mobutu remaining as the President during a two-year transition period; the High Council of the Republic, which replaced the one-party parliament; and an elected, independent, government led by a prime minister from the Second Republic's opposition party (previously not officially recognized). The Transition Act stated that the institutions would function under a parliamentary democratic model. It initiated for Zairians a long learning process about the democratic principles of separation of powers and mutual control among state institutions. In addition, the Transition Act foresaw a federal, parliamentary state. Federalism was a response to the aspirations of the African people of Zaire for more autonomy within each province while strengthening their overall unity. The parliamentary system was chosen by the majority as a strong alternative to the centralization of power that characterized the Second Republic. National symbols, including the flag, national anthem, national motto, and heraldic arms, were subjected to debate and changed because they were viewed as symbols of Mobutu's totalitarian system. Instead, the majority of participants voted for a return to the symbols of the First Republic, as consecrated by the first national constitution of 1964. These had been illegally dismissed and replaced after Mobutu's military coup d'état of November 24, 1965.

2. New political structures and institutions were established. Twenty-three committees set out to conduct a thorough analysis of each aspect of Zairian national life. Eventually they adopted a legal platform as well as fundamental principles aimed at establishing the type of state; political system; human rights and fundamental freedoms; economic, social, and cultural reforms; functional aspects of different judicial branches; public administration and homeland structure; national education; scientific research and technology; culture, sports, and entertainment; youth employment and social security; art and sanitary policies; industry, trade, finances, banks, credit, currency, and the national treasury; strategic sectors, such as water, energy, forests and lands, hydrocarbons, minerals, agricultural development, and the conservation of nature; population statistics, identification, and documentation; and the like.

3. A transitional government was installed, and democratic elections were held. The transitional government was placed under the leadership of a Chief of Government, or Prime Minister, who was democratically elected by an overwhelming majority of 71% of the votes of participants in the NSC. The choices made by the Conference's representatives were widely approved by the entire nation. The choice of Mr. Etienne Tshisekedi Wa Mulumba as Prime Minister was seen as a symbol of the resolve of the African people of Zaire to work under democratic rule for the well being of all the people.

Mr. Tshisekedi was seen as a national symbol of resistance against Mobutu's totalitarian system. A former senator, Mr. Tshisekedi was dismissed from his seat in 1980 after he and twelve other senators wrote an open letter to President Mobutu denouncing the failures of his regime and political system. Reacting to the letter, the totalitarian government put the senator under house arrest for over ten years. While under arrest, Mr. Tshisekedi founded a political party known as *l'Union pour la Democratie et le Progress Social*, (UDPS) [Union for Democracy and Social Progress]. The UDPS became the largest political party in Zaire.

Mr. Tshisekedi's popularity was undeniable and approached that of Patrice Emery Lumumba, the legendary first-elected Chief of Government assassinated in 1961. Like Lumumba, Tshisekedi became a symbol of national hope.

The transitional government's main task was to tackle all the objectives established by the NSC to help make a peaceful transition to democracy. The government was expected to demonstrate an open-door policy toward all political groups and national organizations. An agenda established a set of orientations, recommendations, and short-term decisions to revive the national economy and social environment, reestablish public



morale, and lead the country toward democracy. The NSC re-appointed Mobutu as interim transitional president for a two-year period, after which the first national democratic elections would be held. Before he was appointed as interim president in 1990, Mobutu had ruled the country for over twenty-eight years in a totalitarian regime.

The High Council of the Republic replaced the single-party parliament. This Council was made of select members of the NSC under the leadership of Catholic Bishop, Mgr. Laurent Monsengwo, who was also the President of the NSC. The choice of this political figure was seen by certain political analysts (Burdeau, 1970) as the popular aspiration for hope and a symbol of a power exercised by the people and for the people.<sup>12</sup> Compared to the political leaders of the former regime, who were seen as corrupt, the bishop was synonymous with honesty, integrity, transparency, fairness, and credibility. It is important to clarify that the choice of the bishop did not constitute a desire for a theocratic state. Instead, analysts understand the choice as a political strategy aimed at effectively and productively controlling the scope and exercise of national power. (A survey of eight African nations that had organized national conferences revealed that five of them [Benin, Gabon, Congo, Togo, and Zaire] selected Catholic bishops to lead the process.)

4. The analysis of the memos sent to the office of the president confirmed a universal rejection of the regime and the political system of the Second Republic. Reacting to these memos, the president of Zaire created executive order 91-070, which authorized the creation of a *constitutional* conference whose role was limited to writing a draft of a new constitution and establishing an electoral calendar. However, the president's decision was unanimously rejected by the majority of the African people of Zaire who, through nationwide strikes, forced the establishment of a *national* conference with sovereign authority to make decisions on behalf of the people. These decisions would then be applicable to all citizens without exception, including the president of the republic. Facing both national and international pressure, President Mobutu signed executive order number 91-097, which established a non-sovereign national conference.

During the first session of the national conference, August 7, 1991, all 2,760 delegates immediately requested a motion to make the national forum a sovereign and immune assembly. The members argued that the sovereign nature of the conference was inevitable given that its members represented the nation's entire constituency, including political parties, profit and not-for-profit professional associations (i.e., civil society), public institutions and administrations, armies, judges, homeland officials, unions, traditional chiefs, etc. After some brief resistance from the regime, President Mobutu

signed executive orders 91-020 and 91-021 giving immunity to all members of the NSC and recognizing the forum as a sovereign assembly.

### *The NSC Confronts Constitutional Threats*

During the conference several challenges interfered with its effectiveness:

First, the outgoing government appointed by President Mobutu attempted to intimidate certain influential members of the NSC. Others were physically assaulted when denouncing the failures and offenses of the Second Republic. Moreover, the same government suspended the budget allocated to the NSC, especially for the housing of delegates, prompting their sudden return to their respective provinces before the end of the conference.

Second, the old government, led by Prime Minister Nguz-a-Karli Bond, suspended the conference on January 19, 1992, alleging a financial shortage. However, a strong popular opposition went to the streets nationwide denouncing the regime's maneuvers. On January 16, 1992, Catholics organized a historical march throughout the nation's capital of Kinshasa to protest the government's decision. Unfortunately, the totalitarian regime brutally repressed the marchers, killing large numbers of peaceful citizens. In addition to the NSC delegates, several national and international voices (e.g., France, Belgium, the US) denounced the illegal nature of the government's decision and expressed their solidarity with the African people of Zaire, demanding a prompt reopening of the conference. The president decided to allow the resumption of the conference on April 6, 1992. During the conference, the review and analysis of the country's history during the era of the Second Republic proved to be highly tense. Among the delegates, two diametrically opposed camps emerged. On one side was the majority, who wanted radical and integral changes to the political system and its governmental methods. On the other side was the minority, predominantly comprised of the regime's elite, who also wanted change, but insisted that the current president remain as leader and sole chief executive. With the majority leaning towards a radical change of the political system, the NSC clearly became a prelude to a transition toward a democratic society. There was much debate when several reports directly pointed out President Mobutu's personal responsibility for the failures of his political system and regime. Some of his close collaborators and friends (including members of his party and highly-ranked officers of the army) left the conference alleging a lack of respect toward Mobutu. Nevertheless, they remained theoretically committed to respecting the recommendations of the conference and the country's will to establish a democratic society.

Mobutu's totalitarian instincts quickly surfaced. Four months after adoption of the Transition Act, it was unilaterally violated by President Mobutu,

who, citing “incompatibility with his personality,” dismissed the elected Prime Minister. Mobutu’s personal guard then illegally prevented members of the legal government from fulfilling their duties. In place of the legal government, Mobutu appointed another government whose structure followed the old constitution. The NSC rejected these moves and established a new parliament. Not surprisingly, this new, legally appointed parliament was dismissed by President Mobutu and replaced by the former single-party assembly. In April 1994, President Mobutu enacted a new Constitutional Act that ignored all sovereign decisions made by the NSC and violated the Supreme Court’s ruling of January 8, 1993, that recognized the Transition Act enacted by the NSC as the nation’s sole legal foundation and the High Council of the Republic as the sole parliamentary body during the transition.

Mobutu’s resistance inaugurated a period of legal and political confusion. Political opposition was reduced to its pre-NSC state, that is, illegal in the eyes of the totalitarian system. The regime renewed the use of its most effective weapon—conscious corruption of political opponents using favoritism and financial disbursements to destabilize the political opposition. In fact, Mobutu appointed two prominent political “radical” opposition party members prime ministers during the transition. The two accepted his offer, ignoring their commitment to the resolutions of the NSC.

The armed forces were used to terrorize civilian populations and intimidate political opponents.<sup>13</sup> The latter resulted in the infamous hostage crisis: from February 24, 1993, to February 26, 1993, members of the High Council of the Republic, which was the transitional parliament elected by the NSC, were held hostage by elements of Mobutu’s special guard unit. Meanwhile, Mobutu organized a summit with members of political parties close to him, at the end of which a new government was appointed. From that moment, the country was ruled by two opposing governments: the NSC-elected government, and a government appointed illegally by Mobutu. Finally, in January 1994, Mobutu declared the merging of the High Council of the Republic with his old parliament.

### *Tendency of Return to Totalitarianism: Possible Explanations*

The tendency to return to totalitarianism should be understood here as the inclination of members of Mobutu’s regime to use political methods to control the totality of national life. Mobutu had all the necessary elements to implement a totalitarian political system:

1. A globalizing ideology;
2. a single party in charge of the ideology, typically under the control of one dictator;

3. a developed secret police; and
4. monopolized control of mass media, weapons, and all social and economic organizations.

During and after the NSC, the African people of Zaire gained political maturity and made any totalitarian tendency seem unlikely. Doors were opened to new political parties, and the single-party government appeared to be an anachronism. Despite this, the old regime maintained a strong hold on the armed forces, mass media, operational weapons, and economic and financial institutions. This allowed the old regime a certain persuasive power as well as the hope of regaining control over the space lost during the NSC. The personal power of Mobutu combined with the political strategy of the NSC to consolidate a successful return to totalitarianism

### *Personal Power of the President of Zaire*

Personal power is a phenomenon in which the only foundation of an institution is the personality of a chief who attributes the legitimacy of his power to himself. Personal power is also the power of a statesman who, regardless of his legitimacy, is capable of demonstrating greater charisma than any other authority in the country. Personal power is characterized by the concentration and personification of power in the hands of one individual.

Individualization of power allows the person to substitute himself for the primary sovereign (i.e., the people). Generally, the individual initiates his ascent through a coup d'état, which often negates his legitimacy in the eyes of the populace. Nevertheless, the individual is acknowledged to provide legitimacy and *raison d'être* to institutions and their administrators. Moreover, given that there will always be a Busiris (a loyal, legal advisor) for any dictator, the exercise of personal power is easily justified through the fabrication of a legal framework.<sup>14</sup>

Mobutu's rule had all the classic characteristics of totalitarian power: it was concentrated, arbitrary, and very personal. Having justified his rise to power as necessary to free the country from total chaos, Mobutu touted the flag of national unity in order to maintain his authoritarian and centralized regime. He legitimized his own regime through a constitutional revision that provided the means to shape all political institutions of the Second Republic according to his totalitarian vision. The revised constitution consecrated the single party as the country's political system. According to this vision, the party was the state and the sole source of legitimacy.

The constitution did not identify any forms of control over the three branches of government. In fact, all of them depended on the personal power of the president. All national political institutions were branches

of the party, and their leaders were appointed by the president, who was simultaneously the president and founder of the party as well as the president of the republic. The result was a socio-political environment rigidly built around the personal power of the president, who was, incidentally, named in adoration by his loyal collaborators “Father of the nation,” “Savior,” “Supreme Guide,” and more.

His awareness of personal power led to an adamant resistance to the radical changes envisioned by the NSC. Undoubtedly, the rejection of his social plan for the Second Republic and the creation of a new one not conceived by him would have been perceived by Mobutu as a personal rejection. His political survival and totalitarian worldview were threatened by decisions of the High Council of the Republic. But these decisions were not enough; Mobutu's totalitarianism could be overcome only by precise and disciplined strategy.

### *Political Strategy of the NSC*

The decision makers in the NSC were politically unrealistic and did not take into account the tenacity of the pro-totalitarian status quo seekers. The NSC was clearly comprised of actors with differing strategic visions. The majority aspired to a radical change of Zaire's political system, while a powerful minority of loyalists saw political change as a loss of privilege. Unfortunately the NSC, the organization that represented the majority of Zairians, exhibited an astoundingly poor persuasive strategy against their political opponents. They mistakenly spent energy in violent, undignified, personal attacks against the Second Republic's leaders. The backlash was inevitable: Mobutu loyalists became less receptive to their opponents' arguments and especially to arguments for systemic change. The systematic destruction of the loyalists' ideological, institutional, and, perhaps, emotional foundations (E.g., the NSC opted to rename the country and replace its national emblems.) was deep, and it became evident to them that their survival depended on a difficult choice—unconditionally accept the new structure and betray the president or remain loyal to the president and strongly resist any political systemic changes that excluded them.

The loyalists perceived themselves as being forced to assist in the death of their own political system. The NSC representatives seemed unprepared to practice a strategy of change through consensus. The renaming of the country, its flag, its national anthem, its currency, and its national river could have been resolved through consensus and might have preserved the principle of stabilization. In short, the loyalists were being publicly humiliated and asked to pay psychological as well as political and economic costs. The return to the path toward a totalitarian political system seemed likely.

*Obstruction of Zaire's Democratic Process*

Juan Linz's Theory of Actors<sup>15</sup>

The chances of success or failure of a democratic process can be measured through an *initial agenda*—that is, an original program established by a new democracy that is aimed at surviving the inevitable resistance. Aspects of this agenda include:

- Proving the capacity of a democracy to confront resistance vis-à-vis its popular support,
- Avoiding the surrender of the democratic process to the centrifugal demands of political parties (mostly without a real electoral base), and
- Incorporating, when necessary, a substantial fraction of the personnel and partisans of the old regime into the new democratic system.

In the light of this initial agenda, we can affirm that there is a democratic failure when:

1. The government fails to manage the initial agenda,
2. the opposition takes advantage of the mismanagement and deepens the political crisis, and/or
3. the government proves itself incapable of resolving a solution while the opposition offers a viable alternative.

Zaire's democratic process did not ultimately fail. Instead, it met and successfully confronted an obstruction of the democratic process—that is, an obstruction that threatened to hinder the attainment of a political system of the people and by the people characterized by assuring the citizenry's participation in the country's administration, a guarantee of basic human rights, a respect of the law by minorities, and the choice to freely elect and control its governors.

*A Centric Vision of Power as a Principal Obstruction*

Mobutu's regime's centric vision of power was fueled by two obstructing factors: (a) lack of commitment to a democratic compromise and (b) lack of respect for the legal process.

President Mobutu's centric vision of power had precipitated his violation of the Transition Act—i.e., the legal framework of transition, including,

- the unilateral dismissal of the elected prime minister and his replacement by someone loyal to the old constitution of the Second Republic;
- a decision to reinstall the old parliament and reject the High Council of the Republic, a transitional institution;
- the adoption of a new Constitutional Act in lieu of the Transition Act;
- a ban on political rights, the monopolization of mass media, and the intimidation of political opponents by the military.

The unilateral decisions made by President Mobutu and his political and military loyalists restricted political and civil rights and transformed the NSC into an irrelevant body with its sovereignty meaningless. Mobutu had circumvented the Transitional Act by ignoring its legal framework. As President of Zaire, Mobutu acted under a totalitarian framework in which he, the “Sovereign Leader,” was omnipotent. Clearly, the president was the major obstacle to a democratic compromise between the NSC and the old regime.<sup>16</sup>

### *The Lack of Commitment to the Democratic Compromise and the Rule of Law*

The political uncertainty generated by the outcomes of the NSC did not fit Mobutu's political ambitions. Motivated by his personal power, Mobutu believed that he could maintain control of the situation by using his totalitarian tools. In fact, while still commanding the leaders of the army, he considered military imposition of his will a viable means of preserving his power. Therefore, the violations of the law and non-commitment to the democratic process seemed like politically cost-effective alternatives to the loss of power. On this matter the political opposition was weak from the outset. Like a skilled and rational politician, Mobutu planned to convince his allies to pursue this favorable alternative. (This could explain Mobutu's calmness and lucidity while making illegal decisions during the transition.) When Mobutu's allies left the NSC, they declared they did so as an act of loyalty to the president. It was the same with the higher ranking military dignitaries, who swore to remain loyal to Mobutu rather than the transitional government. Mobutu's strategy consisted of gaining popular opinion by scaring the political opposition. In fact, the African people of Zaire were very well aware of the level of violence and brutality Mobutu's regime was capable of; despite their numerical superiority, the African people of Zaire were powerless in the face of the brutal regime.

Mobutu and his allies may also have contemplated two other political advantages for the obstruction of the democratic process. First, the obstruction

of the democratic process could have allowed the president and his allies to gain time and regroup their political forces in view of a favorable political future that included the elections. This possibility was real given the intellectual and political ability of Mobutu's inner circle. Effectively, the president was able to convince certain political opponents to create political parties favorable to the president. He skillfully managed to attract a significant number of political opposition leaders with national influence. This support would give President Mobutu a certain national success during the elections—not by winning the presidency, but by becoming a powerful opposition to any elected government. In politics the search for a compromise is intended to prevent the opposite camp from gaining any advantage.

Second, in case equilibrium was not reached by the old regime, the strategy of obstructing the democratic process would simply have constituted a decisive step toward a return to totalitarianism.<sup>17</sup>

The transition to democracy appeared as an ideological defeat and a rejection of a totalitarian worldview for Mobutu's system. Democracy was the least attractive alternative. The only democratic process acceptable to Mobutu was one that guaranteed him a leadership role, and only a democratization process under his control would have convinced the military to accept the new legal and political order. Therefore, the democratization process as understood by President Mobutu was nothing but controlled liberalization. A politically uncertain future did not fit Mobutu's personal ambitions.





## Chapter Four

# State Crime in Mobutu's Political System

This chapter presents an analysis of a selected number of state crimes perpetrated by Mobutu's totalitarian political system. Each of the nine significant political crimes fits the criminological definition of a state crime and serves to emphasize the totalitarian character of Mobutu's political system. As well, these nine crimes confirm the need for an African-centered approach to studying the Mobutu phenomenon.

Some criminologists have argued that state crime is a sticky issue because of the nature of the agents and organizations involved. They explained that, like the study of corporate crime, the study of state crime is problematic because it involves examining behaviors engaged in by agents and organizations that are socially and politically acceptable. That is to say, the state is rarely identified as being capable of criminality. Indeed, the state has always portrayed itself as a victim rather than an offender. This pattern becomes even more evident in the case of authoritarian or totalitarian political systems.

### **WHAT IS A STATE CRIME?**

In the past, scholars who worked on the phenomenon of state criminality presented the state as a victim and not a perpetrator of crime.<sup>1</sup> They considered the state a political body whose first and unique purpose is to protect society and its members from enemies. Therefore, harm to society is considered harm to the state. Crimes against the state, deemed "political crimes," are committed by both external and internal enemies; they are felonies and misdemeanors that violate the political order. Political crimes could be committed from outside the state (attacking the independence of the nation, the integrity of its territory, or the relations of the state to

another) or from within the state (attacking the form of government, the organization or functioning of political powers, or the political rights of citizens). State crime is here defined as a violation of the legitimate attributes of a state, which includes government, political power, and the political rights of citizens.

Mobutu's regime was capable of conserving power because of the very nature of the system, which eliminated any possibility of social opposition.<sup>2</sup> The assassination of Zaire's political opposition members and students was strong evidence of Mobutu's totalitarian system and characteristic of his 32-year destructive reign. Zaire's state crime is more likely to be explained by the desire of Mobutu's regime to maintain control over every aspect of Zaire's national life and, therefore, to guarantee the continuity of his regime. Assassinations and slaughters committed by his government benefited only his regime and his allies. Indeed, the price paid by the country was a painful 32-year journey that drove a prosperous nation into abject and dishonorable poverty. Under his system, corruption became the rule. He and all his government officials served his interests and collected taxes on just about everything. They extorted bribes from anyone who needed government service. None of the money was put into the treasury. Instead, it went into the personal accounts of Mobutu and his ruling class. Those who had the courage to denounce the totalitarian system fell at the hands of brutal armed forces; Mobutu's system exercised an overwhelming control over every single aspect of Zairian life.

There are seven principal steps, including participatory democracy, to controlling state crime.<sup>3</sup> The lack of participatory democracy is directly proportional to the lack of control over the government's actions. Each state has a number of powerful individuals and organizations capable of crimes against their own citizens and external adversaries, sometimes as part of their policies and other times as consequences of their political ambitions. Participatory democracy is the political system most likely to exercise efficient control over government and to decrease state criminality.

### ***Benchmark events in Mobutu's totalitarian regime (1965–1992)***

On November 25, 1965, Army General Joseph Mobutu seized power after a coup d'état which overthrew the first elected government in the aftermath of the country's independence. General Mobutu justified his military coup by claiming he wanted to restore peace and national unity. This was followed by open political conflict between President Joseph Kasavubu and Prime Minister Patrice Emery Lumumba. In 1967, Mobutu abolished the national Constitution and established a new *Loi Fondamentale*, which inaugurated the single-party system and made him the country's chief strongman. In

1973, the constitution was revised again to suit Mobutu's personal greed and ambitions. Slowly he took control of every aspect of Zairian life. He became the point of reference for its every aspect. He never kept his solemn promise to relinquish power to civilians after five years, and he began heading the country toward total anarchy.

He installed a totalitarian political system that systematically eliminated political opponents. A totalitarian system is a philosophical, political, or ideological system that controls the totality of the national life by exercising a monopoly of power and imposing a unique vision of the world. It is a system characterized by five key elements:<sup>4</sup>

1. An inclusive ideology;
2. a single party responsible for disseminating ideology to the masses;
3. a powerful leader who controls the application of the ideology;
4. a very organized secret police under the leader's control; and
5. the control of mass media, the military, and every single social, economic, and cultural-political organization.

## SELECTIVE CASES OF POLITICAL ASSASSINATIONS

All assassinations committed by Mobutu's regime were political. They were calculated acts by rational government agents intended to strengthen Mobutu's political system by eliminating any real or potential opposition to the system. The selected cases involve both individuals and group victims. During the first five years of Mobutu's regime, the main opposition to the regime came from university students and staff—that is, the intellectual elite capable of distinguishing between a democratic and a totalitarian system. Long oppressed under the colonial system, the intellectual elite welcomed the first elected government with enthusiasm, hoping that a government headed by a "native son" would lead the country toward freedom, prosperity, and, above all, dignity. On the contrary, Mobutu's system was as oppressive as the colonial rule.

The ten cases of political assassination described below have three characteristics in common: (a) they are politically motivated, (b) they violated the Zairian constitution, and (c) the corpses of the victims were never identified.

Slaughter and assassinations were common in Mobutu's regime. He committed these crimes in clear violation of the constitution and of universal human rights. What is more, these harmful and illegal acts took place with impunity within the state's geographical jurisdiction.

### *The Pentecost Hanging*

On June 2, 1966, Emmanuel Bamba (finance minister), Alexandre Mahamba (foreign minister), Evariste Kimba (former senator, foreign minister, and prime minister), and Jerome Anany (defense minister) were hanged in Kinshasa, capital of Zaire. They were found guilty of high treason by governmental decree 66-338 of May 30, 1966; their guilt was determined in a court martial led by five high-ranking military officers close to Mobutu's regime. Charges against them included: (a) planning to overthrow Mobutu's government and (b) attempting to assassinate President Mobutu and General Mulamba. Before the trial, the government spokesman announced on national television that the four politicians were likely to receive capital punishment and could face public hanging. In short, the sentence was known before the trial, which was public and lasted only an hour and a half. The jury, selected by the government, took five minutes to deliberate and decided on capital punishment by hanging. The government confirmed the jury's decision and the four politicians were publicly hanged three days later, on June 2, 1966. No legal defense was allowed. In addition, no single piece of evidence was offered that substantiated the charges against the defendants. The four were arrested while in a meeting with military officers who were close to the regime. The four politicians were taken to a military camp, where they were tortured; the military officers were not arrested. During a political speech on April 7, 1966, President Mobutu declared that respect for the chief was sacred, and, therefore, a strong warning was necessary to discourage any attempt to repeat the four politicians' errors.

The bodies were never returned to the families of the victims. This was an obvious violation of the law. According to the Zairian Penal Code (Section 194), even if it were demonstrated that the four politicians were planning a coup d'état, capital punishment should not have applied in this case. Therefore, the victims of the so-called Pentecost Hanging were assassinated in violation of the universal legal principle *nulla poena sine lege*.

### *Assassination of André Lubaya*

Mr. André Lubaya was a former governor, health minister, senator, and founder of U.D.A. political party. During an official visit to Luluabourg, Lubaya's native city, President Mobutu revealed the existence of a political plot against him and his regime, orchestrated, in his view, by some senators from Kasai. Mobutu's government started an investigation to identify the authors of the conspiracy. President Mobutu personally instructed his secret police to bring in Mr. Lubaya dead or alive (SNC, 1992). A reward of five hundred zaires was offered to any individual who satisfied Mobutu's desire.

On May 2, 1968, Senator Lubaya was arrested with some others and immediately transferred to a military camp, from which he never returned. The person who delivered Lubaya to the regime was rewarded with a cabinet position in Mobutu's government. President Mobutu with the help of his justice minister and his chief of security personally organized the arrest. Mr. Lubaya did not appear in any court and was executed without trial. His family never gave him a burial. His assassination was politically motivated because he belonged to the opposition to Mobutu's system. He was one of those who condemned Mobutu's 1965 coup d'état, and he refused to enroll in the single-party. Lubaya's execution was another step in the Mobutu regime's goal to systematically eliminate any opposition.

### *The Assassination of Pierre Mulele*

Pierre Mulele was a member and founder of the political party, *Parti Solidaire Africain* (PSA), former minister of education, and Zaire's ambassador to Egypt. He resigned as a Zairian official in 1962 to organize an armed insurrection. He flew to Congo-Brazzaville seeking political asylum. In October 1968, he was caught by Mobutu's secret security service and transferred to Kinshasa, where he was assassinated at camp Kokolo military prison after a very short trial by a military court. Mulele's transfer from Brazzaville to Kinshasa was negotiated by Zaire Foreign Minister Justin-Marie Bomboko with President Mobutu's approval. In fact, before the transfer Mobutu officially declared to the national media that he would not pardon Mulele for his participation in the insurrection and that the only fate Mulele deserved was severe punishment. One day after Mobutu's declaration, the national radio announced that Mulele was convicted by a court martial with no defense or no prosecution and was executed.

### *Slaughter of Students in June 1969*

More than fifty students were slaughtered by armed forces on June 4, 1969. The official list released by the government reported 13 deaths—Symphorien Muamba, Jean-Marie Mwamba, Albert Konde, Jean-Oscar Bayenekene, Mathias Mukundi, Raphael Kazadi, Martin Epembe, Irene Kakumbala, Alidor Kabulu, Jean-Marie Moyembe, Albert Baendafe, Marcel Lukongo, and Jean-Marie Bukamba. Many others were wounded, put in jail, and tortured. Students had organized a peaceful march on June 4, 1969, to protest the government's violation of the *Charter of Goma*, an agreement between the government and students to improve the quality of education and student life across the country. Armed forces confronted the students with deadly force. Their corpses were never released to their

families, and nobody knows where they are buried (NSC, 1992).<sup>5</sup> President Mobutu violated the agreement he personally signed, and it was proven that armed forces obeyed the orders of a military officer to open fire on the students. They accused students of attempting to threaten state security, and sentenced them with no right of appeal, and no defense. Most of the students were sentenced to 20 years in jail. Upon Mobutu's orders, they were released from jail on his birthday, October 14, 1969.

The use of force by the military was disproportionate. Some witnesses affirmed they saw Mika, Mobutu's security chief, among the armed forces (NSC, 1992). The Police Department could have properly and safely assured the security of the march without using excessive force against unarmed students. According to an official source (NSC, 1992), a few months prior to the march many students had refused to enroll in Mobutu's political party. They automatically became political targets and were labeled members of the opposition.

### *The Idiofa Slaughter*

In January, 1978, armed forces from Kinshasa were sent to the rural cities of Idiofa and Mulembe to brutally punish the population for trying to build a new political movement with ties to former rebel, Pierre Mulele. (That part of Zaire had been considered a red zone since the beginning of Mulele movement.) Several people were hanged after a short trial. The mother of former rebel Pierre Mulele was hacked to pieces, and both cities were erased from the national map as political entities (NSC, 1992). The so-called new political movement was in fact a religious movement with no political ambitions. It is true that some people among the members wanted to take advantage of their affiliation to keep the memory of Mulele alive, but they represented no public or political danger to the country. The government reacted solely in revenge for Pierre Mulele, who was originally from Idiofa. In a word, the totalitarian regime committed genocide—a crime against humanity—by slaughtering defenseless civilians.

### *The Assassination of the So-called Terrorists*

In February 1978, 91 people, soldiers and civilians, were accused of attempting urban terrorism and were arrested by officials of Mobutu's regime. They were charged with making terrorist threats and attempting to cause chaos in the capital city, Kinshasa, in order to force the resignation of President Mobutu. No evidence was presented to sustain the accusation; and on March 18, 1978, after a quick trial with no defense and no possibility of appeal, 78 out of 91 were convicted and sentenced to capital punishment.

Seventeen of them were executed. Ten days later, President Mobutu signed an executive order authorizing the confiscation of any property belonging to all the convicted, whether dead or alive (NSC, 1992). Among the victims were politicians of the opposition and high-ranking military officers opposed to the Mobutu regime. Hours after the victims were executed, President Mobutu declared on national television that the executions were a warning to those who were trying to oppose his regime. He added that their death was the only price imaginable in order to protect national peace and unity of the country.

### *Mobutu's Totalitarian System and the Fate of the Thirteen Opposition Leaders*

Thirteen Zairian senators wrote a letter in 1980 to President Mobutu in which they analyzed the country's general status. They concluded that the situation was worsening and the country was in a state of collapse. To address the problem they suggested a national forum, gathering representatives from every Zairian social class to discuss national issues, including freedom and democracy, as a necessary foundation for the nation's rebirth. However, before the letter even got to the president's office, his secret security agents became aware of it and found the letter in Senator Ngalula's home. He was arrested and jailed; the 12 other senators turned themselves in to the president's security services. They were arrested and put on trial before the Supreme Court on January 17, 1981. Convicted, they lost their political and civil rights for five years. However, under international pressure, the regime pardoned all the senators and authorized the creation of a political opposition party. The first Zairian opposition political party was created February 15, 1982. A month later the senators were rearrested and jailed. On July 1, 1982, they were sentenced to 15 years in prison and subsequently tortured. One of them, Makanda Mpinga, was executed.

### *The Kasavubu Bridge Massacre*

On January 17, 1988, the opposition party, UDPS (Union pour la Democratie et le Progres Social), gathered its members for a political meeting at the Kasavubu bridge in Kinshasa. Before the leader was able to give his address the members of his party were brutally scattered and beaten by armed forces who opened fire on them, killing and injuring several participants. Fifteen hundred people were arrested without trial and then freed. They were tortured inside the military camp (NSC, 1992). The opposition demonstrated later that the meeting was legal as a result of an agreement between President Mobutu and the opposition. (Since June 27, 1987, the UDPS had been



legally recognized as the only opposition party in Zaire, making it legal for the party to organize a public political gathering.)

The party leader had requested a written and official authorization from the mayor of Kinshasa days before the event. In response, the opposition leader was arrested after the meeting had been dispersed by Mobutu's forces, and he was declared mentally ill—a clear political maneuver to discredit him. Repression of public meeting was illegal according to section 18 of the Zairian Constitution.

### *Massacre of Civilians—December 1990*

On Monday, December 3, 1990, thousands of Kinshasa residents gathered on the streets for a march to protest against the deterioration of their quality of life. The government's reaction was to send its armed forces to punish the crowd, which in the government's view was threatening the regime. The military opened fire on defenseless civilians, causing hundreds of deaths and injuries. A list of reported deaths was released to the general public by human rights activists (NSC, 1992).

A demonstration for a better quality of life was seen by the government as a threat to the system. The 1990 Massacre emphasized the duality of Mobutu's crimes: the Zairian state caused grave social injury to its people by destroying the economy, and at the same time it committed a state crime by killing defenseless civilians. No charges were ever pressed against the government.

### *February and March 1992, Massacres*

On February 16, 1992, and March 1, 1992, the Christian population of Kinshasa organized historic marches to protest the government's dissolution of the NSC (the National Sovereign Council), the national forum organized to discuss the situation of the country and design the structure for a new nation. The shut-down came after Mobutu's totalitarian system became convinced that for more than thirty years they had plotted to bring down the repressive system. The Zairian people decided to stand up for their rights by organizing protest marches. As expected of a totalitarian regime, the government answered with a bloody and deadly repression of defenseless participants. The same occurred on March 1, 1992, when Christians tried to repeat the march. Thirty-six people were reported dead, among them children and elderly persons with Bibles in their hands. When asked by the NSC why armed forces were ordered to open fire on defenseless civilians, government officials answered they obeyed an order from a higher power, which translated as an order from President Mobutu. All branches of the Zairian armed forces were ordered to participate in the

repression, from the navy to the special presidential security unit. Neither Prime Minister Nguz-A-Karlibond and his cabinet nor President Mobutu ever condemned the massacre.

In total, twenty-seven cases of assassination, slaughter, and violation of human rights were brought against the Zairian government by the NSC. The cases above are a sample of some of the most relevant state crimes that occurred in Zaire from the inception of President Mobutu's reign. These are state crimes, illegal acts of omission or commission perpetrated by government officials in the course of their official functions. These cases demonstrate Mobutu's hidden agenda to terrorize Zairian citizens into submitting to his totalitarian system. It is a clear case of Domestic-Domestic Government Crime, because these crimes occurred within Zaire's geographical jurisdiction and were in violation of the existing national law.<sup>6</sup> The harm caused to Zairian society was immense. Mobutu and his allies used their public and official functions to commit crimes against Zairian citizens. Like those of other authoritarian political systems, including the Germany of Adolf Hitler, Uganda of Idi Amin, Haiti of Claude Duvalier, Spain of Francisco Franco, Cuba of Fidel Castro, and others, the leaders of systematic Zairian state terror were never prosecuted.

#### *Democracy as Way of Controlling State Crime in Zaire*

Most of the cases of assassination considered in this chapter were in violation of the Zairian constitution, of civil and penal law, and above all, of human rights. The perpetrators of these violations were never punished for the simple reason that they created the justifying illegal framework and controlled its application. A totalitarian system is characterized by a very strong and overwhelming concentration of the three traditional powers—executive, legislative, and judicial—in only one person, the dictator, who creates his own laws that help him protect himself against any outside control. The legislative body of a totalitarian system is made of individuals who possess only one ideal: loyalty to the leader. Consequently, the legislature's role is limited to the ratification of the leader's will, which generally becomes the law. The members of the judicial branch are exclusively appointed by the powerful leader and its role reduced to the interpretation of the constitution, generally built to fit the leader's political greed. There is no interpretation of the constitution contrary to the dictator's will. Napoleon Bonaparte of France, Adolf Hitler of Germany, Benito Mussolini of Italy, Bedel Bokassa of Central Africa, Idi Amin Dada of Uganda, Augusto Pinochet of Chile, Fidel Castro of Cuba, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Nicolae Ceausescu of Romania, and Claude Duvalier of Haiti are examples of authoritarian leaders and dictators who have presided over authoritarian

political systems. No control of the leader's actions means no control of his possible "criminogenic" excesses. This is what historically explained the policy of mass killing directed at some human groups such as the holocaust perpetrated by the Nazis during World World II, Saddam Hussein of Iraq's slaughter of Kurdian civilians, massacre of hundreds of thousands of Armenians by the Turkish government in 1915, massacre of millions of members of various Russian ethnic groups by the Stalin regime between 1922 and 1953, and the massacre of millions of Hutus by Tutsis in Rwanda in 1992.

Zaire's leader had ruled using the characteristics of a totalitarian state. Zaire's parliament consisted of loyalists to Mobutu's single party, and the judicial branch was prepared to interpret the law according to Mobutu's will as contained in the country's constitution, which was written according to his political vision. In a word, the lack of democracy was the core of the "criminogenic" nature of Mobutu's regime. State crime in Zaire was an outcome of a repressive political system that used crime as means to retain and extend power. The quality of participatory democracy in Zaire was directly proportional to the people's ability to control state criminality.<sup>7</sup> Participatory democracy that creates an environment intolerant of state crime should comprise the following elements:

1. Effective participation of citizens in fundamental decisions involving the national community. Representation and referenda are most likely to generate such an environment.
2. A choice of African-centered leaders who are committed to promoting the well-being of the African people of Zaire according to their own vision of the world, culture, and national aspiration.
3. Respect of a democratic compromise on behalf of all the stakeholders to respect the principles and rules of democracy.
4. Respect for legality—the core or foundation of any national structure. Nobody should consider himself above the law.
5. Neutrality of the military. The armed forces must understand that they are to abide by the rules of democracy.

The essence of democracy in Zaire should have resided in legality and constitutionality. Zaire should have become a horizontal society in which all citizens have an equal voice and do not rely on the arbitrary power of one person. The vertical model failed and allowed a totalitarian system to develop and ruin the country.

# An African-centered Rationale for the Necessity of Zaire Democracy

## THE QUEST FOR HUMANITY OR THE MEANING OF THE HISTORICAL STRUGGLE OF THE AFRICAN PEOPLE

### *Africans in the diaspora*

The quest for humanity has been the *raison d'être* of the African people's struggle since the experience of enslavement. This search is legitimate because, like anyone else, Africans aspire to full recognition as individuals invested with the universal rights and dignity of mankind.

Anyone of African descent interprets enslavement as a denial of basic humanity. Africans were raped, denigrated, and dehumanized as slaves. They have been divorced, alienated, and isolated from their roots, remolded to fit into certain forms and to fill specific roles. An African's multidimensional being was never acknowledged; only a process of dehumanization was given any value, and even then only as economic property for the whites. Africans would become broken men, so damaged they would never again be suitable members of a social unit.<sup>1</sup>

The dehumanization of the African people was a process that gradually transformed them into things, property with economic value. This gradual process was rationally justified by prominent Western philosophers who elaborated theories reducing African humanity to the level of *matière première*. Most prominent among these philosophers were Scottish philosopher David Hume and German philosopher Georg Hegel. Hegel denied any possibility of history to Africans. He argued that Africa is the land of childhood, which lies beyond the daylight of self-conscious history and is enveloped in the dark mantle of night. As for the Africans, Hegel had no problem affirming that the Negro portrayed a natural creature in a fully

*naive*, untamed state. Hegel did not conceive such beings to possess any level of humanity; he could not envision Africans as rational and historical beings.<sup>2</sup>

According to Cheick Anta Diop, a prominent African scientist who has dedicated his intellectual life to proving the anteriority of the African human in relation to the *homo sapiens* on other continents. He compares imperialistic projects to prehistoric hunters who first killed a being spiritually and culturally, then physically. With this sense of spiritual and cultural dilution, we can understand the dehumanization of black people.

Dehumanization is not a predestined fate; a person may choose to reject it. In this vein, the African people raised their consciousness from the valley of darkness to reclaim their destiny and initiate the struggle for the restoration of their dignity. A people's struggle begins from within as collective consciousness rises and becomes aware of individual or social development limitations imposed by history.

Consciousness is a transcendent process. It is dynamic, for it consists of moving from one location or perceived situation to another. The imperative duty to move things around, to proclaim to the world who a people are, to shape in their own terms their place and destiny in the world is the *raison d'être* of the African people's quest for humanity.<sup>3</sup> Within European mythology, blacks became 'inferiors,' and this occurred through the process of dehumanization. Richard Wright in his novel *Native Son*, demonstrated how the dehumanization of Americans of African descent during slavery has produced a new type of black in American society. The novel's protagonist is Bigger Thomas, who epitomizes the African in America after centuries of dehumanization through enslavement and segregation. Bigger Thomas is what the white society wanted an African to be in America—that is, an inferior being with no cultural references to lean on, no original worldview to interpret reality, and no personal identity but the one given to him. To Bigger Thomas “. . . a nigger is a nigger.” A consequence of that dehumanization is, according to Wright, the dilemma of being a native son of America but not being allowed to live as an American. The eminent educator and writer, W.E.B. DuBois, spoke of this double consciousness as a “. . . sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One feels this two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.” Toni Morrison presented the same thought as an analogy with the bottom of heaven. Unfortunately, that heaven was made possible by the blood and work of the African in America. Why then deny the African the right equally to enjoy the fruits of heaven like any other American? Wright's

Bigger Thomas says to himself, “Goddammit, look! We live here and they live there. We black and they white. They got things and we ain’t. They do things and we can’t. It’s just like living in jail. Half the time I feel like I’m on the outside of the world peeping in through a knot hole in the fence.”

Before Diop, Fanon, Morrison, or DuBois reacted to the dehumanization of black people, Western philosophers presented rational arguments for slavery. Hegel and Kant provided solid metaphysical and anthropological arguments for white superiority. Hegel even denied that African people could have a history. Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* argued that rationalization did not belong to a people unable to perceive any reality beyond their emotions! Africans are less-than-human, uncivilized, and savages. Therefore, when the first African people were sold and landed in Jamestown in 1619, Europeans clearly believed that the African slave trade was morally and legally justified because they were dealing with *matière première*, definitely not human beings like themselves. Based on European scientific evidence, it was established that the so-called less-than-human savages were racially inferior to members of civilized society. Samuel Morton, a prominent Philadelphia physician, conducted scientific research in 1851 that concluded that the Negro race was inferior. Others argued that Negroes and whites were separate species and that Negroes were like children who needed direction, discipline, and the parent-like care of a master. These so-called scientific findings were echoed by the U.S. legal system. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney affirmed the findings when he declared that Negroes were far below Whites on the scale of created beings; thus he in effect made constitutional the racial ideology articulated by the scientific discourse and the opinion of proslavery interests. [Only a year after Chief Taney’s statement, the Louisiana code of 1852 confirmed the legal transformation of African people into property].<sup>4</sup> Throughout much of the U.S. Code on slavery, there was overwhelming evidence of complete ownership of African people’s lives by their “owners,” as in articles 1, 2, and 14 of Louisiana’s Slave Code:

Article 1: The condition of a slave being merely a passive one, his subordination to his master, and all who represent him, is not susceptible of any modification . . . in such a manner that he owes to his master, and to all his family, respect without bounds, and absolute obedience; and he is, consequently to execute all the orders he receives from him, his said master, or from them.

Article 2: As the person of a slave belongs to his master, no slave can possess anything on his own right, or dispose in any way of the produce of his industry, without the consent of his master.

Article 14: Slaves shall always be reputed and considered real estate, and shall be, as such, subject to be mortgaged, according to the rules prescribed by law; and they shall be seized and sold as real estate.

These texts speak for themselves. The level of dehumanization is evident in the code, which denied any human value to the African people. Consequently, the premise of dehumanization rendered the possibility of social cohabitation between whites and the African people in America problematic at best.

A social contract is only possible between two parties who recognize each other as an equal. A social contract between "human beings" (whites) and "property" (Africans) would have been inconceivable. Property is a thing without soul or spirit, and it does not have any value but the one fixed by the owner and the law. Lynching was an excellent example of the dehumanization of the African people. It demonstrated there was no limitation to the ownership concept. Masters could dispose of African people as they would dispose of a pen, toilet paper, or any other disposable item. The lynching of an African person in America was considered an act of community reconciliation, healing, or liberation. American abolitionist Frederick Douglass wrote that the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a heyday of Negro murder, and he added that contemporaries justified "lynching bees," as they called them, for every violation of the Southern rules of conduct regarding racial inferiority. "The lynching bee . . . became a social institution, a community gathering spontaneously mobilized to expiate a sin; and its perpetrator was considered beyond the pale of normal judicial process. When the accused was hung, castrated, shot, tortured, or burned 'in a business-like manner,' a neighborhood returned to its normal state assured that true justice had been done. Lynching acted as a community catharsis."

### *The Rationale for Racism in America*

The concept of the superiority of whiteness found in nineteenth century America acted as a principal rationale for the institutionalized dehumanization of the African people. In *There is a River*, author Vincent Harding captured the letter and spirit of the *raison d'être* of the African people's quest for humanity when he wrote:

. . . the river of black struggle held all these speaking, acting, and enlivening words, all these bold, challenging heroic lives, and it was always moving, rising in the midst of the slave community . . . Always, under the surface of slavery, the river of black struggle flowed with,

and was created by, a black community that moved actively in search of freedom, integrity, and home— a community that could not be dehumanized. (p. 74.)

The fights for dignity, freedom, civil rights, or political independence were all for the same struggle. Famous slave insurrectionist Nat Turner, pointed out that the promise of the promised land of freedom could not have been predicted by the masters. What they forgot is the self-evident truth that the destiny of a human being is to be fully human. “I shall arise and prepare myself, and slay my enemies with their own weapons” (p. 78).<sup>5</sup>

The necessity of the struggle for humanity is dictated by the horror, indignity, dehumanization, and denial of identity that the African people have endured in the world. Nat Turner did not stand up for his own freedom only. He stood up for the freedom of all black people from Nat Turner to Malcom X, Martin Luther King, Patrice Emery Lumumba, Nelson Mandela, Nkwame Nkrumah. Even in academic warriors such as Molefi Asante, Cheick Anta Diop, we see the same rage, the same message, using different styles, from different perspectives to different audiences, but one common message, the humanization of African people throughout the world. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., warned us that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor. On the contrary, it must be demanded by the oppressed. Nat Turner was speaking in the nineteenth century, and Dr. King in the twentieth. One wonders why the message remained the same. The answer is simple: the condition of the oppressed has remained the same. Prejudices, racism, and other forms of dehumanization have persisted across black history the world over.

### *The Case of the Tennis Stars*

Ishmael Reed’s *Konch Magazine* (September 21, 2000)—an electronic magazine—reported how the outstanding performance of tennis star Venus Williams was portrayed after a convincing victory over her white counterpart Martina Hingis:

. . . the often biased reporting of some tennis commentators on both television and in newspapers have created an atmosphere where the Williams sisters are subjected to such traditional racist mythology as the powerful black athlete who survives merely on raw talent and intimidation, never on strategic thought, finesse, or general intelligence. On the other hand, the same commentators have praises for the Williams sisters’ opponent, Martina Hingis, of European descent, with endless references to the superior intellectual abilities and analytical prowess of



Martina over that of the natural physical strength and intuitive power of Venus and Serena. (p. 11)

The following observations should be made: the Williams sisters are Americans of African descent, and Hingis is European; second, the Williams sisters and Hingis are athletes, are in the same field of competition, and require the same skills. Often, prowess of athletes of African descent is described as the outcome of "raw talent," while that of Europeans is a logical result of "superior intellectual abilities and analytical prowess." This type of rationale is not unlike that put forth by Kant, Hegel, and others. One can only conclude that the Williamses, though living in this century, are no better off than their counterpart racial brothers and sisters in the days of slavery. The struggle has changed names over its long journey, but the cause is still the same. Civil Rights Movement; Black Panthers; U.S. Organization; Million Men, Women, Family Marches; and NAACP all are names of the same struggle for more humanity. African people in America have not won the war yet, despite winning important and decisive battles. The road to complete victory is long and painful. The enemy is strong and skilled, so that more sophisticated skills on behalf of the African people in America are needed. The struggle in America has shown that the African Americans are developing the necessary skills to continue the quest for their true humanity. Dr. M.K. Asante of Temple University has described Afrocentricity as:

the most complete philosophical totalization of the African being at the center of his or her existence . . . Not only is it an individual or collective quest for authenticity, but it is above all the total use of method to effect psychological, political, social, cultural, and economic change. (p. 125)<sup>6</sup>

Asante's message seems to be that humanization is multidimensional. It requires a holistic approach that helps people reclaim all dimensions of a human identity. For example, in Asante's view recognizing African people in America as citizens was not enough; they must have equal access to the wealth of their country, education, health care, social security, and the like. An authentic Afrocentric paradigm should be aimed at the propagation of a "more humanistic vision of the world." His argument is pertinent in the sense that it conceptualizes the same idea of humanization as the leitmotiv of African people around the world. What is more, it underscores that humanity in the world must never belong to a hegemonic group. The real merit of the quest for humanity by the African people in America will

be that it enables the systematic destruction of major arguments for white supremacy.

A quest for humanity is a search for freedom, justice, dignity, and humaneness or, more simply, a search for a better and more humane world, a world of reciprocal recognition. The quest for humanity by the African people in America is the search for a world of universal justice. Consequently, the struggle of the African people in America is an African struggle, too.

The bottom line of our plight is that it is the fate we deserve . . . at least some of us think so . . . after the betrayals and assassinations of Patrice Lumumba, El Hajj Malik El Shabazz (AKA Malcom X), Dr. Martin Luther King, Walter Rodney, Maurice Bishop, Amilcar Cabral, Samora Machel, Thomas Sankara, Steve Biko, Chris Hani, Li'l Bobby Hutton, George and Jonathan Jackson, Fred Hampton, Ralph Featherstone, Frantz Fanon, Dedan Kamathi, Henri Dumas, Peter Tosh, the Attica Brothers, and many, many more . . . At the dawn of the new millennium, we seem like silent shadows imitating and regurgitating our master's voice . . . echoing the illusions which made us into sound bites and ideograms of powerlessness and self negation . . . We deny our reality.<sup>7</sup>

African people the world over must not deny their reality, for the price our ancestors and elders have paid to reclaim our humanity has been extremely high. To deny our reality will be to deny ourselves. Other people have denied our right to be ourselves, therefore African people cannot afford to repeat the same mistake. Because the price to pay for the never-ending quest for humanity is high, we suggest that education be one of the keys, if not the master key, to achieve such a goal. Education is a process by which a person is provided, formally or informally, with the elements he/she needs to critically interpret the reality in which he/she lives. Several thinkers, including Lynch, DuBois, Woodson, Asante, and others, have raised their voices to lay out the meaning of true education that will serve the interests of African people.

Only well informed and educated African people in America will escape being swallowed by new forms of dehumanization overwhelmingly present in today's America. As a continental African, I have developed a particular interest in observing how today's African Americans fight against new forms of dehumanization. I choose to illustrate my argument with the depiction of Africa by the Hollywood industry. In fact, from that Hollywood has constantly emerged an image of Africa as an eternally savage,

uncivilized jungle with naked human beings who cohabit with wild animals. Three observations cross my intellectual curiosity:

1. From an environmental standpoint, I am flattered to see filmmakers portray Africans as pacifically sharing the planet with nature. To some extent, I deeply wish them to continue with that myth, even if it is just a myth. During my entire life in Africa, in only one place could I see a living lion or giraffe: the zoo. Wild animals and human beings do not live together for the same reason they don't live together in America or in any other society. Only a racist could justify the opposite argument because only people who are not considered human could be imagined and portrayed as cohabitating with wild animals. This view is only a step from the Hegelian argument and its consequences for the historical dehumanization consequences suffered by blacks everywhere.
2. Americans of African descent who accept the idea of Africa and Africa's lack of civilization are no better than Hegel, Hume, Kant, or Hollywood. Their lack of critical thinking is contrary to the ideal of the African's struggle for humanity. I understand the young African American who asks me if I used to live with poisonous snakes in my room back in the continent. I refuse to identify intellectually with my educated American brother or sister who asks me if I used to drive a leopard before I drove a Honda in America. I will not accept the question even as a joke because jokes are usually derived from myths and are the socially accepted, civilized way to state certain unpleasant realities. What is true about the metaphor of the jungle could also be applied to other African misfortunes, including poverty, alimentation, health, politics, and others.
3. *America as savior of democracy in Africa*—During a class discussion about the role of America in African civil wars, a professor asked the class to discuss the rationale of American involvement in the African continent. One American of African descent argued that American involvement in Africa was made necessary by the lack of political maturity or readiness of African countries. Therefore, he added, as leaders of the free world and defenders of democracy in the world, Americans have the obligation or the “manifest destiny” to intervene in those countries without democracy and civilization. The argument has logic but cannot withstand an epistemological critique. What is democracy, and what is civilization? How does this argument escape the danger of racial

superiority? What is the scope of student-understanding of the American role in the proliferation of civil wars in Africa and the world? What is the true meaning of “manifest destiny,” and what gives America a universal mission to be the leader and defender of world democracy? Why not India, the largest democracy, and how can the rationale of my brother American of African descent be differentiated from Hegel’s? I am not sure that rational responses to these questions could have generated an objective discussion in the class! Often the art of rational argument is obstructed by subjective rhetoric and ad hominem arguments.

From an Afrocentric paradigm, the student should have asked him/herself if the argument in favor of American intervention in the world was based on his true understanding of the reality he was talking about. When in 1962 the United Nations, strongly backed by the United States government, intervened in the Congolese political crisis, two things happened. First, the U.S. government helped overthrow a legitimate government elected by the sovereign will of the Congolese people in an effort to establish democracy for the first time in a country occupied and destroyed by 85 years of King Leopold II’s despotism. What the U.S.-backed coup did was to destroy the foundation of a young democracy. Second, the U.S. government and its U.N. allies displayed a lack of consideration for the profound aspiration of the African people of the Congo. From an African-centered perspective, they disregarded the legitimate aspiration of the African people of Congo for human emancipation and a search for self well-being. The U.S. government and its allies’ actions were an excellent example of their preconception of the inability of blacks to think and organize for themselves. In other words, they acted with the same instinct for dehumanization that has always characterized the European vision of black people. The untutored objected with the ad hominem rhetoric that the U.S. government was just doing the correct thing as world leader and defender of democracy. However, what if he had known the true motives for such intervention? A true leader with a genuine vision for the humanization of his people was assassinated, better said “killed,” his death halting a democratic process that has never fully recovered. What the student did was to perpetrate, with a deplorable sense of innocence, an ideological rhetoric of imperialism. But what he terribly missed in his analysis was a critical understanding and interpretation of reality. He did not go beyond the robotization of mind in which he has been submerged as an American. He did not question reality from an African-centered perspective. He simply failed to deconstruct this new form of dehumanization, as Malcom X, DuBois, and other leaders warned us.

It is true that Africans in America are Americans first, as pointed out by authors like James Baldwin. However, it is equally true that we are all Africans trapped in the same struggle for humanity. Along with Malcolm X and Dr. King, we should reaffirm the relationship between the struggle on the African continent and the struggle among the Afro-Americans. The "to me a nigger is a nigger" stereotype must be stopped, not perpetuated. What is said about Africans in America is equally applicable to Africans on the continent. Having preconceived ideas about people will certainly not help the cause of humanization of the African people. We need to be more educated in that sense.

Education must help African Americans and all Africans to become a constructive force in the development of their race. According to Paulo Freire (1997), a good education must be a dialogue that leads to true humanization. If the recipient of an education does not understand what it takes to become more human, then his/her education has not served a purpose. Education is the master key for African people in America because as a society its members are robotized, reduced to a mere consumer role. This is a society whose members are denied self-definition; it becomes a serious matter of human survival. The danger of losing control of their identity and their reality is significant. When people lack a critical understanding of their reality, they cannot truly know their reality when it is grasped in fragmented parts.<sup>8</sup> To truly know it they would need to have a clear vision of the whole and its constituent parts. The Afro-American lies at the heart of Euro-America's conception of itself as a "race," as a culture, as a people, as a nation. We should be very careful never to confuse interaction with mutuality. Each group may have influenced the other, but the terms of trade were brutally asymmetric and amounted in most respects to outright social, economic, and cultural parasitism. The Afro-American came to be recognized as the human factor placed outside the democratic master plan, a human natural resource who was elected to undergo a process of institutional dehumanization so that white men could become more human.

Americans of African descent have the responsibility to detect new forms of dehumanization and avoid repeating mistakes of the past. Historical consciousness should guide interpretation of today's reality. Michael Jordan should not be worshiped as a superhuman while at the same time O.J. Simpson and Mike Tyson are just niggers like Bigger Thomas. They should all be recognized as fully human, with all it takes to be human, capable of great achievements and of horrific weaknesses. To consider the African in America only from the achievements of a Michael Jordan and a Tiger Woods as the stereotype for the Afro-American is not sufficient. If American society could see them as defenders of their people and the

society in general, they would become truly heroic. Presently Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods are excellent black achievers in a capitalist society. Their next step should be to embrace the cause of their people and become a social, cultural, and political factor in the development of the African American community and of any dehumanized community of color in the world. Michael Jordan would be an uncontested role model for all young black Americans who dream of becoming leaders in their community. He could promote an education that shapes needed values in youths and is a voice for those who are denied their rights and human dignity. I believe Jordan falls short in what he can achieve as a member of a dehumanized community when he limits himself to declaring that he is only an athlete and that his only job is to play basketball.

Tiger Woods would be a respected voice for both American and Thai youths. He, the Williams sisters, Michael Jordan, and other highly financially successful superstars of African descent endorse commercial items made in Thai factories by teenagers exploited as less-than-human. This is the wrong message; their endorsement is contrary to a commitment to promote human dignity—the teenagers' thirty-five-cents-an-hour salary does not allow a human being to live a decent life. Certainly this is a case of dehumanization. If a person of African descent is the beneficiary of this exploitation, then we face a new form of dehumanization, that of black people at the hands of their own.

What is said of Woods, Jordan, the Williamses, and other African American athletes applies to Mutombo Dikembe of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Hakim Olajuwan of Nigeria, El Duque Hernandez of Cuba, Poncho Renteria of Colombia, Lewis Lenon of the United Kingdom, and other athletes of color. They should become factors for development, promoters of the humanization of their people. When Venus Williams received a telephone call from the president of the United States to congratulate her on her victory at the U.S. Open, Venus asked the most powerful leader on earth if he could do something to lower the burden of her taxes. The president then invited the U.S. Open champion to a dinner at the White House. It could have been politically incorrect for Venus to add to her initial request lower taxes for millions of poor people, including African Americans. But imagine Venus at the dinner table with the president making the same tax-relief request for all poor people. I cannot predict what the president's response would have been, but I can certainly imagine that Venus Williams would have learned about policies that dehumanize people.

People who do not control the reality in which they live are controlled. Controlled people are not fully human. A logical deduction of this syllogism suggests that there is a direct correlation between education and

humanization, and vice versa, between miseducation and dehumanization. To be complete, the quest for humanity by the African people must embrace all dimensions of their lives in America, including, but not limited to, culture, psychology, spirituality, economics, social, religion, and more.

In agreement with Malcom X, DuBois, Asante, and others, I strongly argue that the cause of humanization of African Americans is also the cause of Africans on the continent and worldwide. Lumumba's assassination at the hands of his Congolese brothers had the blessing of European and American forces and was both a setback in the development of an African country and another form of dehumanization of black people. Dr. King made it clear that humanization will never be voluntarily given to African Americans and other Africans. The dehumanized people must demand it. Certainly the best way to full humanization is through education because it will help black people to acquire more universal training that enables them to apply general principles of knowledge to the particular circumstances of their condition.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Zairian Experience*

Patrice Emery Lumumba, the only democratically elected prime minister in the history of Zaire, expressed better than anyone else the necessity for an African-centered and democratic political system as the best way to humanize the African people, in general and the African people of Zaire in particular. Lumumba's speech on Independence Day became his political legacy to his country and the world.<sup>10</sup> President Kasavubu's speech praised the Belgian government and King Baldwin for their support of the Congolese people, and King Baldwin emphasized that independence was generously given to the Congolese people by his government. Instead, Prime Minister Patrice Emery Lumumba went into national history with a speech that put in perspective the African-centered and historical meaning of independence for the Congolese people. Here is the original French version of part of his speech:<sup>11</sup>

Nul Congolais digne de ce nom ne pourra jamais oublier que c'est par la lutte que l'indépendance a été conquise, une lutte de tous les jours, une lutte ardente et idéaliste, une lutte dans laquelle nous n'avons ménagé nos forces, ni nos privations, ni nos souffrances, ni notre sang . . . Nous avons connu les ironies, les insultes, les coups que nous devons subir matin, midi et soir, parceque nous étions des nègres. Qui oubliera qu'a un Noir on disait "tu," non certes comme à un ami, mais parce que le "vous" honorable était réservé aux seuls blancs? Nous avons connu que nos terres furent spoliées au nom de textes prétendent

légaux qui ne faisaient reconnaître que le droit du plus fort. Nous avons connu que la loi n'était jamais la même selon qu'il s'agissait d'un Blanc ou d'un Noir: accommodante pour les uns, cruelle et inhumaine pour les autres. Nous avons connu les souffrances atroces des relégués pour opinions politiques ou croyances religieuses; exilés dans leur propre patrie, leur sort était vraiment pire que la mort elle-même . . . Qui oubliera enfin les fusillades ou périrent tant de nos frères, les cachots où furent brutalement jetés ceux qui ne voulaient plus se soumettre au régime d'une justice d'oppression et d'exploitation. (p. 33)

Lumumba's speech was obviously referring to the legacy of Belgian colonialism in Congo. The destruction of Zaire's political and economic issues began with the appearance of the king of Belgium in the country's national life. In fact, it has now well been documented how King Leopold II exploited the Congolese territory for personal wealth.<sup>12</sup> Leopold II has been described as the Congo's first dictator who plundered the country's wealth. His methods were similar to those used by Mobutu to pauperize his own people. In fact, both King Leopold II's and Mobutu's systems had the same result: the decline of a rich central African country.

King Leopold II of Belgium brutally plundered the Congo, slashing the country's population by as much as ten million while presenting himself to the rest of the world as a great European humanitarian. The fact is that this European ruler was able to manipulate other European leaders with the ultimate intention of gaining sole ownership over the rich territory then known as Congo. In a century during which Europe deliberately and unilaterally divided the African continent, the King of Belgium, a country 80 times smaller than the Congo, realized that his only opportunity for personal wealth, honor, and power resided in joining forces with his European peers in the conquest of the "uncivilized" world and its people. King Leopold II systematically plundered the Congolese territory and its inhabitants, displaying the selfish will of an obsessed King to become as rich as possible, to the detriment of the very inalienable rights of human dignity of the Congolese people. For over 80 years, the King of Belgium transformed a whole nation into a private property. When in 1905 the Belgium government realized the resolve of the Congolese people for self determination, the country was unilaterally declared a Belgian territory, going from personal property to national property status. By the time Congo finally received its sovereign independence in 1960, Belgium had achieved its economic and social prosperity at the expense of the freedom and human dignity of the Congolese people. More than any other European colonial power, Belgium under King Leopold II extracted wealth through a cruel exploitation of its



colony. The king outsmarted his European competitors by pretending to set up an international society to supervise the Congo basin before taking it over as his private property. Hoschschild pointed out that Leopold II told his advisors that Belgium needed an empire, which he got by 1885. The Congolese territory and its raw materials, as well as its people, became the exploited objects of the Belgian king. Eventually the Belgian government became aware of the fact that the King's agents had been using forced labor to harvest rubber by punishing Congolese people who resisted paying the rubber-tax. By the time the Congo became a Belgian colony, Leopold II's personal fortune was enormous, while his rule destroyed thousands of villages and left an estimated three million people dead. Leopold II's years of terror created a long-lasting pattern of plunder.<sup>13</sup>

Lumumba's reference to colonialism was a just reminder of what freedom and self-determination meant to his people. His fight for a democratic system was rooted in a genuine African-centered need for humanization and the well being of the African people of Zaire.

The horrendous memory of Leopold II's totalitarian regime and dehumanization of the African people of Congo was unfortunately revived and matched by one of its own, Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu WazaBanga. In fact, Mobutu's 30+ years of African rule of the country matched Leopold II's level of dehumanization. The need for a democratic system had been established both historically and theoretically. The next step would be to propose an African-centered model of participatory democracy capable of promoting the well being of the African people of Zaire.

## **PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY AS AN AFRICAN-CENTERED NECESSITY**

Former Russian leader Mikhael Gorbachev defended the necessity of democracy as a political system by affirming that in all human societies any individual has the desire to be an integral part of all decisions affecting the functioning of his global society. Therefore, any individual will prefer to live in a community where his/her opinion is solicited and taken into account. A society based on a collective contract and democracy is more likely to promote the individual's well being and provide a real sense of citizenship and patriotism.<sup>14</sup>

Alexis de Tocqueville warned us against a certain naïve perception of democracy. He pointed out that to be successful, democracy must be a progressive development of equality first to allow everyone to reach a full, shared well being beyond hereditary differences and inequalities of fortune. Participatory democracy is the opportunity for all citizens of a given society

to actively participate in the political life, promote individual independence, and encourage interest in the public cause. In other words, political participatory democracy stimulates the individual and social qualities of citizens. However, such participation can be guaranteed only in a democratic system, which by essence offers the citizens a wide range of rights, freedoms, and sufficient resources to allow an equal chance in the decision-making process.<sup>15</sup>

Participatory democracy is a political system in which members of the society consider themselves mutually equal, collectively sovereign, and possessing all capacities, resources, and necessary institutions for self-government. It is certain that democracy, like any other system, has its defects, but it is also certain that compared to other systems, democracy is more likely to promote individual and collective well-being than any other system.<sup>16</sup>

Given the failures and misdeeds of Mobutu's totalitarian system, we propose that Zaire's road to justice and well-being resides in an African-centered, participatory democracy based on consensus. This democratic model will more likely, in our view, respond well to a Zairian society divided by more than three decades of internal conflict as a consequence of Mobutu's totalitarian system, in addition to almost a century of Belgian de-humanization. Participatory democracy offers a viable alternative to majority democracy, mostly because it provides minorities with legitimate aspiration and chances to be an integral part of the decision-making process. In Zairian society, majority democracy (rather than participatory democracy) would eventually perpetuate a majority dictatorship controlled by a wealthy minority and would potentially be the source of more civil conflicts.

Participatory democracy for the Zairian society should include the following modalities:<sup>17</sup>

1. Participation of all at the executive level, thanks to large coalitions;
2. formal and informal separation of powers;
3. a balanced House of Representatives model assuring minority representation;
4. a multiparty political system;
5. a multidimensional political party system;
6. proportional representation or share of parliament seats based on the number of votes obtained in the polls;
7. decentralization and combined territorial and non-territorial federalism; and
8. a written constitution and minority veto right.

Participation by all members of society in the decision-making process is an African tradition reflected in many proverbs. According to the Yaka tradition of Zaire, a central government is like a river that cannot pretend to have enough water to satisfy the thirst of the whole village if it does not itself receive more water from small rivers. *Ndzadi kabaasila bana ba n-koko* [An ocean gets bigger with the water it receives from small rivers—Yaka proverb].

Directly or indirectly, an African-centered democracy should promote the participation of all societal levels in making decisions that affect the whole society. It is believed that one person cannot fully judge a matter affecting the whole of society.

*Luluungu lumosi lutwa ko matongo* [One single pepper cannot season a whole cooking pot of meat—Yaka proverb].

*Kiindzu ki meta kibaasila baatu khama* [It takes the saliva of hundred people to fill up a cup—Yaka proverb].

These three Yaka proverbs show an important dimension of the traditional African political system. Democracy as a concept or rationalized ideal may not be African, but the practices of self-government and self-determination are present in traditional Africa. The three proverbs underline the important role of consensus as a determining factor in the traditional African political process.

### *Political Decision-Making*

A political decision is a deliberate set of statements aimed at affecting the organization of a whole community. The more community members participate in the decision-making process, the more likely the decision will be effective and accepted by the majority of community members. Thus the ideal participatory democratic model for Africa in general, and Zaire in particular is one based on consensus and not on a simple majority as it is in most modern democratic systems. The success of Zairian democracy will be judged on the ability of its political actors to create procedures and institutions by consensus rather than a simple majority.

The consensus model is justified given the social and human fabric of the Zairian nation, made up of more than 250 different ethnic groups arbitrarily united within one territorial unit by European colonization on behalf of European interests rather than on African self-determination. After more than 80 years of King Leopold II and Belgium's control of the territory, the first and only elected national government that came after independence

understood the need to create a national consensus through territorial self-autonomy under a central government. Lumumba's government created laws, a constitution, political institutions, and political techniques capable of supporting a central government and providing a large degree of autonomy to local political units. Lumumba wanted a unified nation in a democratic state. Above all, his vision was to empower the Congolese people to reorganize their government in their best interests. His famous Independence Day speech confirmed this vision when he declared in front of the King of Belgium that his government was taking seriously the right of the Congolese people to possess independence.<sup>18</sup> He added that the end of colonialism did not mean the end of the struggle for self-determination. Lumumba made it clear that his government wanted a new way of life for the Congolese people, aimed at their well being and human dignity. This new way of life required a radical change of territorial ownership and laws. In a word, Lumumba intended to build a new African-centered nation using national consensus as a *modus vivendi* of political-decision making. This shift in the discourse constituted a demystification of Belgian hegemony. As pointed out by Molefi Asante, by “. . . defining not only the terms of discussion but also the grounds upon which the discussion will be waged, the established order concentrates power in its own hands.”<sup>19</sup>

In Lumumba's view, the new Congolese political discourse was obliged to relocate the center of priorities from European-centered to African-centered in order to respond to the real needs of the Congolese people. Using a Congolese perspective as opposed to the imposed Belgian perspective, Lumumba reevaluated the global history of the Congolese people and determined that the symbolic gesture of independence was not enough to satisfy the aspiration of his people for autonomy, freedom, dignity, and social prosperity. Therefore, any perspective to define the new objective of the Congolese society must be decided from a Congolese standpoint, taking into consideration their proper history and human aspirations. Lumumba simply redefined the new Congolese space by placing Congolese interests at the center of any negotiation with the Belgian government. He contradicted the speech of King of Belgium Baldwin II, who asserted that independence was a gift to a relatively immature people still in need of Belgian assistance. In fact, King Baldwin II went on to warn the Congolese people not to compromise their future with hasty reforms.<sup>20</sup> Instead, he “kindly” warned the Congolese people not to replace the institutions left by his country so long as the Congolese people were not sure of their capacity to do better than the Belgians. What is more, the Belgian King reminded the Congolese people that Belgians would come to their rescue whenever needed. Lumumba's African-centered reinterpretation of Congolese history reset the clock

according to his people's new vision of time, the time for self-determination and human dignity.

The Sovereign National Conference of Zaire in the 1990s was a movement that searched for justice and harmony, or *Ma'at*, for the Congolese people. It allowed them to re-evaluate their sense of unity through an understanding of the causes of social conflicts, the aspiration to peace, and, ultimately, the recreation of the original harmony and balance lost first to European colonialism and then to more than three decades of Mobutu's totalitarian system. This national forum confirmed the African traditional value of consensus as a privileged decision-making method.

## THE AFRICAN-CENTERED PARADIGM

We have analyzed an African phenomenon using the African-centered paradigm. We tried to demonstrate that Mobutu's political system, which was inaugurated in 1965 and lasted more than three decades, meets all characteristics of totalitarianism. The failures and misdeeds of Mobutu's system were evidence of the lack of an African-centered vision and did not put the interests of the African people of Congo at its center. Mobutu's political vision was not African-centered because he failed to promote the well being of the African people of Congo. His misdeeds and failures only equaled those of King Leopold II, who used the Congolese territory as personal property to gain personal profit at the expense of dehumanizing the Congolese people. Mobutu's totalitarian system has no precedent in African political tradition. His authenticity was perceived as an attempt to humanize his political program, but a thorough analysis reveals that this policy was a missed opportunity for an African-centered way of governance. Mobutu's political actions of the 1990s were a deliberate attempt to obstruct the momentum of democracy for the African people of Congo. Moreover, his obstruction was perceived as evidence of his attempt to detract from the search for harmony and peace by the Zairian people, a rejection of the African-centered truth that without *Ma'at* "there is no understanding, no harmony, and no possible restoration of balance."<sup>21</sup> Politically speaking, Mobutu's obstruction became an effort to conserve the status quo of his totalitarian system.

From an African-centered standpoint, participatory democracy becomes a necessity for the African people of Zaire in search of that national *Ma'at* or harmony. Participatory democracy based on consensus would be more responsive to the specific needs of the African people of Zaire because of the long history of injustice, lack of dignity, dehumanization, and a disregard for the will of the people under King Leopold II of Belgium and Zaire's own Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wazabanga.

## Chapter Six

# Concluding Remarks

Political totalitarian methods enabled Mobutu to retain power long after he stunned the whole of Zaire with the proclamation of a multiparty democratic system, on April 24, 1990. Nevertheless, events moved too quickly against him, and, 7 years later, he would be ousted from power May 17, 1997.

The beginning of Mobutu's demise seemed to coincide with his health problems when in August 1996 he underwent surgery for prostate cancer. The Zairian people learned from the foreign media that the usually strong man, always a picture of excellent health, was hospitalized in Switzerland. Only a few weeks later, the vice-governor of South Kivu province ordered some 300,000 Banyamulenge ethnic group residents of the province to leave the country, alleging they were not Zairian citizens and were there illegally. During the same period a new political group emerged, named l'Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaire (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire), widely known under its French acronym of AFDL. The AFDL comprised four political groups, including Parti de la Révolution Populaire ( PRP) led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, Conseil National de Résistance pour la Démocratie (CNRD) of André Kisase, Alliance Démocratique des Peuples (ADP) of Deogratias Bugera, and Mouvement Révolutionnaire du Zaire ( MRZ), led by Masasu Nindaga. Immediately after creation of the AFDL, Laurent-Désiré Kabila emerged as the Alliance leader with a consensus to lead an armed rebellion against Mobutu's regime and replace it with a new one.

### **ALLIANCE OF DEMOCRATIC FORCES FOR THE LIBERATION OF CONGO-ZAIRE (AFDL)**

The Alliance did not waste time in launching its military offensive.<sup>1</sup> In October 1996 the Zairian people woke up to the news that the city of Uvira

was captured by rebel forces comprising mostly the Banyamulenge. Prime Minister Kengo wa Dondo officially declared to the United Nations that the neighboring countries of Rwanda and Burundi were behind the rebellion. The United Nations and the Organization of African Unity immediately asked for a ceasefire and called for an international peace conference. Meanwhile, violent, armed combat was reported in Bukavu, capital of the South Kivu province. As a precursor to implementing the peace conference, the United Nations Security Council called for an emergency meeting to deal with the crisis in the Great Lakes Region.<sup>2</sup>

The Zairian government reshuffled the political leadership of the affected provinces, North and South Kivu, by appointing military commanders as governors. Unfortunately, the longtime unpaid military elements looted the city of Bukavu indicating dissatisfaction with the regime, and fighting began to spread throughout the eastern region of the country. Feeling the danger of generalized chaos, the international community slowly began to react with a few diplomatic initiatives including a visit by French authorities to President Mobutu at his hospital in Switzerland. At the same time the rebel leader, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, showed his willingness to accept a neutral international military intervention, but with the exclusion of France, which he accused of being too friendly to Mobutu. However, soon after, the entire city of Bukavu was occupied by rebel forces led by Kabila, who immediately called upon government forces to join his rebellion. Talking from another occupied city, Kabila made his objective clear to the world and the people of Zaire: he wanted to oust Mobutu and his regime.

Rebel forces were spreading throughout the city of Goma in North Kivu. The government-appointed Congress then ordered prime minister Kengo wa Dondo to cut all diplomatic ties with Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda (strongly suspected of aiding the rebels), while also ordering the government to deport all Rwandan immigrants from the national army and all other national institutions.

It became clear that government forces were not up to the task of defending the integrity of the national territory. In an obvious sign of government leadership's lack of unity, the chief of the joint army forces accused the government of responsibility for the lack of success of the national army, alleging lack of support from prime minister Kengo. In November 1996 the population of Kinshasa, capital of Zaire, reacted against Rwanda and Burundi<sup>3</sup> by looting both countries' embassies. Meanwhile, the second big city of North Kivu, Goma, fell to the Alliance forces. A day after the fall of Goma, Mobutu left his hospital in Switzerland for his private residence in France, at which time he met with the United Nations special envoy,

Raymond Chretien. As a result, the United Nations announced the creation of a multinational peace force for Zaire.

Meanwhile, regional leaders met in Nairobi to deal with the Zairian crisis. President Mobutu sought help from leaders of Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, and South Africa. This latter country immediately reacted by suspending its arms trade understanding with Rwanda.

Rwanda opposed the United Nations's decision to send a multinational peace force to Zaire. Meanwhile, the European Union decided to authorize military intervention in Zaire, while the United Nations Security Council requested its members to create a multinational peace force aimed at protecting and evacuating Rwandan refugees trapped in eastern Zaire.<sup>4</sup> By mid-November 1996 the United Nations Security Council authorized the deployment of a peacekeeping force in eastern Zaire with the goal to allow thousands of Rwandan refugees to return to their country, though many never made it back. Physically, politically, and militarily weakened, Mobutu decided to seek again an alliance with long time political rival Etienne Tshisekedi.<sup>5</sup> After a meeting in Nice, France, Tshisekedi returned and proclaimed himself prime minister of Zaire without any official government announcement. Meanwhile, other cities of the embattled country, including Beni and Bunia, fell under the Alliance forces. Having returned to Zaire, Mobutu, now struggling to hold onto power, appointed General Mahele as the new Chief of joint army forces.

## **THE EMERGENCE OF LAURENT-DÉSIRÉ KABILA**

After a meeting in Nairobi in December 1996, African leaders finally decided to recommend mediation between Mobutu and rebel leader Kabila. A day later, Mobutu returned to Kinshasa, where he faced public disenchantment with his prime minister, who was accused of being pro-Rwandan and ineffective in his response to the country's crisis. Feeling pressured, Mobutu strategically asked the opposition leaders to form a new government within forty-eight hours to begin their duties on December 22, 1996.

As expected, the opposition refused to obey Mobutu's orders; therefore, Mobutu reappointed prime minister Kengo, ignoring his deal with Tshisekedi, and General Likulia became minister of defense. However, 1996 would end with more military victories for the rebel army without any major resistance from government forces.

Laurent-Désiré Kabila and his Alliance-led rebel forces would declare victory in 1997. Without any significant military logistics and with an evident low morale, Mobutu's army showed little resistance to Kabila's Rwanda- and Uganda-backed forces. Mobutu early in 1997, still believing



in his superiority and hoping for help from allies like France, declined any negotiation offer from rebel leaders. Meanwhile, other big cities, including Kalemie, Kisangani, Bulimba, and Watsa, fell under rebel control.

In February 1997 the governments of Belgium and the United States initiated a diplomatic effort, hoping for a peaceful solution to the conflict. Later in the month, on February 21, 1997, rebel leader Kabila, boosted by his easy victories, gave Mobutu an ultimatum to seek negotiation. Mobutu would try to seek military help from old African allies such as Hassan II, King of Morocco, but with no success. Finally the United Nations Security Council approved a peace plan for Zaire, and South Africa agreed to meet with rebel leaders.

Still physically weak, Mobutu returned to France for more medical procedures. Mobutu Nzanga, acting as his father's spokesperson, announced his father's intention not to negotiate with rebel leaders. Regardless, President Mandela of South Africa pushed for negotiations between the belligerent parties. As well, Pope John Paul II joined other international leaders calling for the end of the war and a long lasting peace for the Great Lakes region. For his part, Kabila took advantage of his winning momentum to meet with the United States Under-secretary of State George Moose, as well as the United Nations special envoy to the Great Lakes region, Mohamed Shanoun.

On March 3, 1997, Kabila gave an ultimatum to Zairian high-ranked military officers to disclaim their loyalty to Mobutu and join Kabila and his Alliance forces. Surprisingly both Kabila and Mobutu accepted the United Nations peace plan, but Kabila refused to stop the war and headed toward Kisangani. Despite assurances by the prime minister that the city would never fall under rebel forces' control, Kisangani indeed did fall very soon after the prime minister's official statement. The Zairian congress finally decided to recommend the eviction of prime minister Kengo wa Dondo while he was on an official visit to Kenya. Meanwhile, Mobutu was admitted to a hospital in Monaco; Kabila increased his control of events and rejected the United Nations ceasefire. When Mobutu returned to Kinshasa he met with Thabu Mbeki, the South African vice president, and coincidentally accepted prime minister Kengo wa Dondo's resignation. Shortly afterward Kabila softened his position and agreed to meet with Mobutu at a location out of the country.

On March 26, 1997, in Lome, Togo, Mobutu, and Kabila finally met. Under an agreement Mobutu accepted a government of national unity that was supposed to include rebel leaders. Kabila refused any other political reconciliation, making it clear that he wanted a new government led by himself and his allies without any members of Mobutu's government. By

the end of March 1997, the list of Mobutu's political allies abandoning him grew to include prominent names such as Nguz Karlibond, who openly urged his party members to welcome rebel leaders.

In the beginning of April 1997, Mobutu reappointed opposition leader Tshisekedi as prime minister, who would then try to include rebel leaders, offering them key positions in the new government. However, rebel leaders declined the offer, more convinced than ever of their military and growing international support!

Only seven days after the appointment, Tshisekedi was fired by Mobutu and replaced by General Likulia. Fundamentally a totalitarian in political philosophy and methods, Mobutu did not see the need to share power with any political rivals. His substantial financial wealth allowed him to turn political opponents into puppets and opportunists; opponents to Mobutu were financially unable to oppose him for very long. With family members heavily dependant on them, these opponents were usually obliged to renounce their political ideals and easily accepted presidential appointments to maintain their financial security.

Tshisekedi's case was slightly different. His longtime status had given him not only national but international recognition, which some argue was not limited to moral support. Tshisekedi had significant national and international popularity, which Mobutu carefully used to his own political advantage. In fact, contrary to Mobutu's totalitarian practices, Tshisekedi's life was never put in danger, although he was several times jailed, expelled from Kinshasa, and the subject of other actions aimed at isolating him from the political spectrum. President Mobutu was a very good political strategist in this case, since he knew when to use Tshisekedi as an asset. Therefore, it appears that whenever Mobutu was in serious political trouble (such as facing the danger of a popular uprising), he would enter into a political alliance with his prime minister, thus providing himself with an air of paternal conciliation. When not needed, Tshisekedi was tolerated as little more than an inconvenience.

Mobutu's adept political strategy, easily shifting from the role of despot to that of paternal benefactor, was at its prime when confronting Kabila. Facing the battle of his political life, Mobutu intended to have Tshisekedi on his side with the hope of slowing down the rebellion, or at least sparing himself a political humiliation. Mobutu immediately realized that not only was he in a fight for political survival, but also for his physical safety. What he needed most was both a political and military ally to help him stop the unthinkable: a shameful exit from power. General Likulia was a skilled military commander. He was also a close political and personal ally. At a critical crossroads for Mobutu, the general's appointment as prime minister

seemed the best strategy. It was not a surprising, then, that Mobutu acted quickly to replace Tshisekedi, after only eight days in office.

Immediately after taking office, the new prime minister, General Likulia, declared a state of emergency and banned all political activities. Then April 10, 1997, Kabila gave Mobutu three days notice to negotiate directly the conditions for the transfer of power. At the same time, international external powers were openly discussing a post-Mobutu era, giving credence to developing worldwide opinion that the powerful man of Zaire had seen his last days as head of state.<sup>6</sup> In a word, Mobutu had lost all his allies, internally and internationally. The support of the international powers was long-gone since the end of the cold war and was accelerated by the troubling images to the world of the fall of Eastern Europe's dictators, including Romania's Nicholas Ceaucescu.

If Mobutu's regime was needed as a deterrent to any aspiring communist hegemony in the region, the end of the cold war signaled the end of the need for brutal regimes such as his. Although still powerful, thanks to the international help that created him, Mobutu received less and less military and financial assistance. To be sure, he became more and more irrelevant internationally; nevertheless, he remained powerful internally.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, Kabila easily occupied other very important cities, including Kolwezi, Thsikapa, and Lubumbashi. When he arrived in South Africa in mid-April 1997, Kabila was welcomed with all the honors reserved for heads of state. It is not surprising, then, that after that visit, Kabila's language became more and more defiant toward Mobutu and his regime, and refused any further negotiation except to discuss the mechanisms for the transfer of power. Should Mobutu refuse, Kabila threatened to march on Kinshasa and physically take Mobutu prisoner.

Last efforts by different embassies served to confirm the general consensus by the international community that Mobutu should make plans for an imminent departure. The United States ambassador to the United Nations, along with Bill Richardson, President Bill Clinton's special envoy, would travel to Kinshasa to meet with and ask Mobutu to resign and transfer power. In this regard, Ambassador Richardson managed to secure a meeting between Mobutu and Kabila on May 3, 1997, in Gabon. Despite the meeting, Kabila's forces continued their march on Kinshasa. Nevertheless, a new meeting was set up for May 19, 1997.

That last meeting never occurred because Mobutu unexpectedly left Kinshasa May 16, 1997, for his private residence in Gbadolite, his native town. A day later, rebel forces entered Kinshasa in triumph without any opposition from Mobutu's loyalist forces, who for 32 years had terrorized peaceful civilians and political opposition leaders. After 32 years, May

29, 1997, another regime took the reins of power when self-proclaimed president Laurent-Désiré Kabila, succeeding Kasa Vubu and Mobutu, was sworn in as the third president of the country, unilaterally renamed Democratic Republic of Congo.

### **A SYSTEMIC CHANGE OR ONLY A CHANGE OF PLAYERS?**

Was a new political system established? The answer is ambiguous: Mobutu came to power by military force after a coup d'état with the help of some international allies; Kabila declared himself president by self-proclamation after a military campaign, with the help of some international allies! The African people of Zaire have aspired to human dignity with social and economic prosperity and placed great and legitimate expectations of their leaders, first under the King of Belgium, Leopold II, followed by Kasa Vubu, and under Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Waza Banga. Kabila's justification for overthrowing Mobutu was that he did not do better than the King of Belgians and further pauperized the people of Zaire. Kabila, then, had no difficulty in concluding that Mobutu did not promote the well-being of the African people of Zaire. Unfortunately a preliminary analysis of Kabila's regime does not reveal a democracy, and the African people of Zaire may be witness once again to a great disillusionment. From the outset, the Kabila regime did not show political coherence; there was a lack of political vision, of leadership, of national unity, and a lack of political freedom, with festering corruption as endemic as it had been in previous years. In short, political amateurism marred any evidence of developing an institutional democratic process.

Kabila's cause was to "liberate" the country from a totalitarian system. But his own political vision was not to be seen. His style of governance was very self-centered with the risk of a return to a dictatorship or totalitarianism; the question persisted whether his personalized style could engender the beginning of the ever-sought-after democracy. To date, Kabila has not outlined any political idea that analysts would say brings clarity to his direction; his speeches seem to serve only one purpose, to remind the African people of Zaire that he has freed them from Mobutu. But what of the future of the country; if not a democracy, what will its political system be? There is an evident lack of leadership!

As new political leader, Kabila had the responsibility to outline a plan of action and reveal the type of leadership he would bring in order to lead the people of Zaire toward democracy and well-being. Unquestionably the African people of Zaire had a right to know how their new leader planned to address the misdeeds and failures of Mobutu's political system. Instead, Kabila's governing team demonstrated clear signs of inept political amateurism.

## PRESIDENT KABILA AND HIS NEW REGIME

Kabila chose to govern the country with a team loyal and close to him as a person, regardless of their qualifications for the tasks they had been asked to perform. Zaire was a country that had for over three decades been mismanaged in every single aspect of national life, including political, economic, education, health, science, social, cultural, financial, and more. A strong and capable team of proven technocrats would have been instrumental in order to begin the daunting task of national reconstruction. Instead, all key ministerial positions were given to Kabila's allies, reminding the African people of a Zaire not unlike that during Mobutu's era, one that served only one purpose, that of the president's political survival accompanied by bad governance and corruption.

Kabila's regime had also shown significant signs of corruption, another clear reminder of Mobutu's era. Kabila had political allies who were mentioned in international reports, including reports from the United Nations, as corrupt and engaged in plundering the national wealth. It is widely known in African popular culture that access to a political appointment, specifically in the government, is a key to economic and financial wealth and a big jump in someone's social status. In fact, political appointees in Africa in general, and Zaire in particular, are known to go from a life of economic uncertainty to a lavish style of the *nouveau riche*. This style often includes the unjustified, almost instant, ownership of several real estate properties, both in the country and overseas, and possession of luxury items such as exotic cars. By any normal standard the individual appointee's salary could not justify such a lifestyle. It is not surprising, then that corruption and bribery form a basic premise in popular political culture.

Mobutu's totalitarian political system did achieve a certain measure of success: the preservation of Zaire's territorial integrity, thus maintaining a degree of national unity for over three decades. Unfortunately former Zaire (today's Democratic Republic of Congo) is a very divided country. Under Kabila the concept of national territory degenerated to the extent that the country today comprises a set of regional territories, each with a warlord, its own government, de facto laws, and no connection to the central government or the other parts of the country.

Kabila lost control of Equateur to Jean-Pierre Bemba, supported by Uganda; Bukavu fell to the 'Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie' (RCD) led by Professor Wamba-Dia-Wamba and Ruberwa, supposedly with the support of the government of Rwanda.<sup>8</sup> Readers will recall that these two countries—Rwanda and Uganda—supported Kabila and his Alliance in their efforts to topple Mobutu. What would then justify their support to

other rebel groups? Unfulfilled political promises? History will soon tell, as the time draws near to evaluate Kabila's regime. This author's initial impression is that the impending disconnection between these allies will be a consequence of the very nature of that alliance, born out of political necessity with no connection at all to the interests of the well-being of the African people of Zaire. In fact, as we demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the leaders of Rwanda and Uganda were political opportunists who used Kabila and his Alliance to achieve a personal goal: political survival in their respective countries. Old friends Kagame and Museveni, respectively presidents of Rwanda and Uganda, teamed up in Zaire against one common political enemy, the Mobutu regime. For Kagame, the return of the Interhamwe refugees, accused of the 1994 genocide, from Zaire would have further destabilized his regime; and Mobutu was a close ally of former President Habyarimana, thus not Kagame's ally. It is not surprising, then, that Kagame perceived Mobutu's regime as a threat to his political survival, or, as it was put officially, the Interhamwe were a threat to Rwanda's national security, posing a serious risk for a repeat of the 1994 genocide that horrified the world. However, Museveni and Kagame became close allies. For Museveni, Kagame's survival was as important as his own survival. Further, in addition to political survival, Zaire's rich mineral wealth would be another interesting incentive for Museveni to support an armed rebellion to overthrow Mobutu.

In all likelihood Kabila did not fulfill his political promises to those who helped him and his Alliance achieve the political goal of overthrowing Mobutu. Moreover, though the evidence is of an anecdotal nature, it has been speculated that after Kabila seized power, he betrayed his Rwandan, Ugandan, and Burundian allies: contrary to his former allies' interests, he publicly ordered an anti-Rwandan campaign in Kinshasa, Kisangani, Lubumbashi, Kamina, and throughout the country. Worse, he may have secretly recruited, trained, and equipped Rwandan militias as well elements of Ugandan Allied Democratic Forces (the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda) and Burundian elements, all hostile to their respective governments.

## **KABILA AND THE REGIONALIZATION OF AN INTERNAL CONFLICT**

When Kabila did face an internal rebellion by the domestic-based RCD against his neophyte regime (only a year after his victory over Mobutu), it became clear he could no longer count on them. What is more, the RCD was largely supported by the same allies he betrayed, Rwanda and Uganda. Kabila then sought to regionalize the conflict by teaming up with new allies,

including Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia, who were willing to support Kabila in his fight against the RCD forces. This regionalization would make the conflict one of the most dangerous worldwide, pushing some observers to caution against the beginning of a potential World War III.

Some observers have underscored the role of Kabila himself as purposefully creating a lack of national unity. As evidence of this, they point to allegations that he fomented division among ethnic groups of the Kivu province and recruited young people—popularly known as Mai Mai—to fight against their own people, to be frontliners during deadly combat between the regional armies.

The last characteristic of Kabila's regime this author chose to mention is its intolerance of political opposition. Just as Mobutu's regime, Kabila's showed the same troubling signs of an anti-democratic system. In spite of the so-called global and inclusive agreement reached among all major political actors, there was hope for the birth of a new society by guaranteeing democratic practices, including the right to political opposition. Kabila soon disregarded the agreement and targeted any opposition to his regime. Unfortunately, his methods also included heavy-handed suppression of participants in any public demonstration against his regime. Between June 20 and July 1, 2005 forty participants in public rallies calling for the end of a fifteen years' long transition were shot to death by Joseph Kabila's<sup>9</sup> government forces; others were seriously wounded, while others were arrested.

## **THE AFRICAN PEOPLE OF THE CONGO FACE THEIR FUTURE: WHAT ARE THEIR CHOICES?**

The African people of the Congo had only briefly exercised their right as masters of their political destiny shortly after political independence from Belgium in 1960. At that time elections gave the young nation its first and only elected government, which brought to power Patrice Emery Lumumba as prime minister and chief of government. As we know, this experience was very brief, abruptly ending with the assassination of Lumumba. Since then the country experienced thirty-two years of dictatorship under Mobutu, and no more than two years later, under Laurent-Désiré Kabila, all signs pointed to a new accumulation of personal power; nothing indicated the development of an inclusive political system. From King Leopold II to Joseph Kabila, the African people of Congo could hold the ideal of a democratic society only as an unfulfilled dream.

The reality of the political landscape would subvert the dream of democratization. Four factors are likely to continue to delay that dream or at least compromise the likelihood of a good democratic experience:

territorial integrity and security, the choice of political actors, basic political education of the population, and the economic condition of the people.

## **TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY**

We have demonstrated that the integrity of the Congo's national territory consistently has been compromised by the invasion of foreign armies, including Rwanda and Uganda. The eastern side of the country is under the control of the Rwandan leadership. The northeastern part of the country is under the control of rebels supported by Uganda. The presence of these belligerent forces has served to fuel more divisions among the Congo's national ethnic groups, with the negative effect of polarizing not only the civil society, but also the political class. In fact, in a country where political leaders rely heavily on their ethnic group to attract constituents, it becomes even less probable for a candidate to compete in general nationwide elections and reach beyond his or her ethnic group.

The lack of territorial integrity makes it difficult to speak of a fair and credible electoral process. In fact, it appears to this author that a national census will be difficult to complete, resulting in the questionable credibility of a viable voter registration. In sum, because of lax physical security, candidates, including presidential candidates, will be unable to engage in a national campaign.

## **CHOICE OF POLITICAL ACTORS**

The choice of action (or the lack of) by political actors does not bode well for the success of credible elections. Mobutu's political activity followed the scheme of a well defined political system we call totalitarianism. Therefore, these decisions under his regime were predictably undemocratic. Kabila has not shown a clear indication of the kind of political system he wants to establish in the now renamed 'Democratic Republic of Congo.' In fact, his actions point toward a personalized power style, already denounced during Mobutu's system. This being the case, it is less likely that Kabila's political actions may lead the country to democracy. In addition, the political opposition is mainly represented by the same actor who dominated the national political scene. UDPS ( Union pour la Democratie et le Progrès Social) with its charismatic leader Etienne Tshisekedi Wa Mulumba may no longer have the same influence that they used to have, so that there is a perceived danger that the opposition will be unable to present a noteworthy political alternative. Despite long years of political opposition, the 'elder daughter of the Congolese opposition,' as UDPS is commonly known, has been unable



to offer a solid vision and plan of action. If they could not present a credible and alternative plan of action in more than twenty years, it is less than likely they will be able to do so under what may be another dictatorship. History will tell us very soon!

## **BASIC POLITICAL EDUCATION OF THE POPULATION**

The African people of Congo do not have a history of democratic experience, and no government or organization has attempted to educate the Congolese people about basic democratic processes. Under these conditions, one may wonder what the Congolese people could possibly understand by the terms election, casting a ballot, choosing a candidate, making a difference between action plans, and the like. Given this lack of basic political education, it is more likely that any voting process will largely go along the lines of ethnic affiliation, such that ethnicity would far outweigh vision or political action plans in an election. Political leaders as well are prone to ethnic representation rather than political/social vision. During Mobutu's era, a presidential election constituted a choice of one single color, green, which represented the regime's party. Trying to say 'no,' to the color green presented a very real danger because it simply meant an open opposition to Mobutu. No political party other than Mobutu's was allowed to run for office. Likewise, all candidates for national parliament were members of Mobutu's party and were not allowed to have an opinion other than that of the party. Understandably then, the citizens of the Congo will have to undergo a fairly lengthy process of political education in order to effectively determine the value of political candidates, especially regarding an assessment of a candidate's vision for an improvement of his or her constituents' quality of life. Still, to this day, ethnic representation is presented as a candidate's value on the ballot; the emphasis is on the word "ethnic" with the word "representation" as an added afterthought; it is this author's hope that in the not too distant future, voters will understand that they are choosing a representative for their rights and not just someone from their same ethnic group.

## **ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE**

Finally, the poor economic condition of the people makes them very vulnerable to political predators, including those from their own ethnic groups. Here again, vision or plans of action will likely mean less to people when presented as alternatives to gifts from political opportunists. In fact, it is not unusual in the African context to see political campaigns turn into joyful

parties where food and beverages are served to constituents. Within the context of the Congolese society, long impoverished by their own government, access to free food and beverage often speaks louder than any action plan.

Candidates in power at the time of elections tend to hugely be favored to win within this context because of their economic power. Being in power still equates with having direct access to national resources, not unlike conditions in Mobutu's totalitarian era. These resources include the central bank, which is often misused and confused with the president's personal account. In fact, the president could possibly still have access to large amounts of money with no accountability, even though we don't have actual facts to prove that unlike in Mobutu's case.

It goes without saying that during a political campaign, the incumbent's access to central bank money can be used to influence public opinion. Candidates without economic power—and they are in the majority in the Congo—rely on a combination of luck and ethnic identity.

## IN CONCLUSION

It is well known that older nations like France, Great Britain, or the United States of America did not become mature democracies in a year or even one or more decades. It took these countries centuries to achieve their current stage of democratic development. The road to a democratic society appears to be long and painful, but none would deny hope to the African people of Congo and a chance for the successful development of a democratic society likely to ensure the well-being of all!



## Appendix A

# Chronology of Major Events: 6<sup>th</sup> Century to Mobutu's Second Coup d'etat, November 24, 1965

### 6<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

- 500 A.D.                      Approximate date of the kingdom of Kuba, which was founded by Woot, the Nymi.
- 520 A.D.–845 A.D.      Foundation of the Mulopwe's Luba Empire.

### 13<sup>TH</sup>–15<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

- 1275                      Hypothetical founding date of the kingdom of Kongo by Nimi a Lukemie, Aka Ntinu Wene.
- 1482                      Diego Cao, a Portuguese sailor, discovers the mouth of the Congo River. Europeans considered this date to be the official beginning of contacts between the Kongo people and the Europeans.
- 1491                      Arrival of the first Catholic missionaries in the kingdom of Kongo. First evangelization of the country symbolized by the baptism of King Mani Kongo Nzingu Nkuwu.
- 1498                      First wave of enslaved Africans arrive in North America

### 16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

- Foundation of the Kingdom of Luba.
- Beginning of slave trade in Central and South Congo.

## 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

The Dutch arrive in the Kingdom of Kongo.

Arrival of Italian missionaries in the Kingdom of Kongo.

Beginning of the decline of the Kingdom of Kongo.

Rise of the Kingdoms of Kouba and Lunda.

## 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| 1815              | Foundation of the Kingdom of Mangbetu by Nabiembali.  |
| 1816              | The Englishman, Tuckey, remounts the Congo River and inaugurates the so-called scientific exploration period of Central and West Africa.                                  |
| 1869              | Msiri founds the Kingdom of Garengaze (South-West).   |
| 1874–1878         | The Congo is explored by Henri Morton Stanley.  |
| 1876, September   | The King of Belgium, Leopold II, organizes the Geographic International Conference aimed at opening Africa to civilization and abolishing the slave trade.                |
| 1878, October 30  | King Leopold II, in collaboration with Stanley, creates the first colonial centers (posts).   |
| 1880, August 8    | First school is created by Catholic missionaries in Boma, and twenty students are recruited.  |
| 1883              | The Congo becomes the International Association of the Congo (IAC) presided over by King Leopold II.  |
| 1884, November 15 | The IAC becomes the Independent State of Congo with Leopold II as its Personal Sovereign.<br>The first royal government is established in Boma, and then in Leopoldville. |
| 1885, February 26 | Leopold II is successful in gaining official international recognition of his State at the Berlin Conference.   |
| 1897              | Beginning of the so-called system of government crops, consisting of the enslavement of Congolese in cotton and cocoa fields for the personal wealth of the King.         |

20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

1903–1904	Leopold's mistreatment of native Congolese is denounced in Great Britain by the Congo Reform Association.
1904, July 24	Creation of an international committee to investigate the allegations against King Leopold II.
1906, February 27– March 2	The King Leopold II scandal reaches the Belgian Congress.
1906, December 13	The Independent State of Congo becomes a Belgian territory.
1908, August 20	The Congo is officially a Belgian colony.
1939–1945	The Belgian government compels the participation of Congolese citizens in WWII.
1950	Creation of the first Congolese political group: ABAKO
1954	Opening of the first university in the country as well as all of central Africa.
1955	Visit of King Baudoin I and announcement of the Bilsen Plan, a 30-year plan aimed at training the Congolese people to gradually take over the direction of their country.
1956	ABAKO and other Congolese groups reject the Bilsen Plan and request immediate independence for the Congolese people. Creation of the second Congolese university.
1958	First locally elected administration in Leopoldville, Elizabethville, and Jadotville.
1958, October	Patrice Emery Lumumba creates the Congolese National Movement, which represents the country at the Panafrikan Conference in Accra.
1959, January 11	ABAKO is banned as a political party.
1959, January 13	King Baudoin I of Belgium promises independence and general elections to the Congolese people.

- 1960, January 29 The Round Table Conference is held to discuss the political and economic future of the country.  
Independence day is scheduled for June 30, 1960.
- 1960, May 10–18 General elections are won by the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC), Lumumba's party. He is automatically elected Chief of the Congolese government. Lumumba becomes the first elected Prime Minister in the history of the country.
- 1960, June Joseph Kasavubu is appointed President.
- 1960, June 23 Lumumba is officially sworn in as Prime Minister.
- 1960, June 30 The Congo officially accedes to Independence.
- 1960, July 6–8 Lumumba's government decides to Africanize the army by appointing Congolese officers to lead it.
- 1960, July 9 Belgium is opposed to the Congolese government decision.
- 1960, July 11 Supported by the Belgian government, the Katanga province proclaims its independence from the rest of the country.
- 1960, July 12 Kasavubu and Lumumba seek United Nations (UN) intervention to end the Belgian aggression in the Congolese territory.
- 1960, July 14 The UN votes on a resolution to intervene, and asks the Belgium government to order its army to leave the Congolese territory.
- 1960, August 14–15 Relations between Lumumba and the UN General Secretary deteriorate due to open support by the UN Secretary to the Katangese auto-proclaimed government.
- 1960, August 21–22 The UN Security Council decides to rally behind the UN Secretary against Lumumba.
- 1960, August 26 Allen Dulles, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency in the United States, informs his Director in the Congo that Lumumba has become their number one priority and that he must be neutralized.
- 1960, September 5 President Kasavubu fires Lumumba as Prime Minister. The UN and the American government support President Kasavubu.

- 1960, September 7–8 The Congolese parliament rejects President Kasavubu's decision.
- 1960, September 14 President Kasavubu dismisses the parliament.  
Colonel Mobutu neutralizes the government in the first coup d'état.
- 1960, October 6 d'Aspremont Lynden, Belgian Minister of African Affairs, declares that Lumumba must be physically eliminated.
- 1960, October 10 Lumumba is arrested.
- 1960, December 2 The UN orders its troops in the Congo not to protect Lumumba.
- 1961, January 17 Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba and three of his government members are transferred to Katanga and executed.
- 1965, November 24 Mobutu executes his second coup d'état by neutralizing President Kasavubu and proclaiming himself President of Congo.





## Appendix B

# Election Criteria of the Political Elite in Traditional Senegal

**Table 1.** Dignitaries Chosen From the Class of the Princes of the Blood and the Kings' Sons and the Princesses

Dignitary	Election criteria
Diambour	Prince of the blood, in command of Diadj, Khamenane, Ngagne, and the different villages of Diander. Bedienne was chosen by the Damel from among the princes of the blood who had rights to the throne. He commanded the Mbande, Ndaldagou, Mbedienne, Selko.
Boumi Ngourane	Was chosen by the Damel from among the princes of the blood who had rights to the throne. He commanded Rete country, the Ngouyou, the Bakaya.
Beudj Ndenere	
Beur Get	In order to be appointed Beur Get one had to be the son of a Princess of the blood and a Diambour. He commanded a Part of the Get.
Diawerigne Ndjinguene	Was a prince of the blood with full rights to the throne, but who had lost all chances of being elected. He commanded Keur Mandoube Khary country, that of Coki Kaddle, Ndialba, Ndigne, Tiolane, Ndianga Mbakol, Keur Matar, Ndague, Keur Khali Ngone, Ndikne, Gueidj.

*(continued)*

**Table 1.** Dignitaries Chosen From the Class of the Princes of the Blood and the Kings' Sons and the Princesses (continued)

Thieme	Was directly appointed by the Damel and commanded Gandiole country.
Diawar	Commanded Guemboul. Begor Commanded the Belgor.
Gantakhe	Was chief of the Niayes around Mboro.
Thialaw Dembagnane	
Dialiguy	
Ndieenguenne	
Mbeudj Toube	Was named by the Damel. He commanded the Toube and the population of the country between Toube and Ker.
Barlaffe	The Gankale had to be the son of a damel or a Beur Guet;
Gankale	His mother could even be a prisoner. He commanded Ouarakh country.
Guemboul	Commanded Guemboul.
Fara Ndoute	Was chosen by the Damel from among the princes of the blood on either their mothers' or fathers' side, meaning that they had no right to the throne. He commanded the Serer country of the Ndoute.
Beudj Solo	
Berine	Notable of the country, commanded the Mberine.
Beur Eum Halle	
Beudj Nar	
Guone	
Dianeka	
Beur Khoupaye ( or Beur)	Was the chief of the Niayes of Gelkouye.
Diarno Dieng	
Lamane Maasar	
Bour Andale	Commanded the Andal.
Beur Ngaye	

*(continued)*

**Table 1.** Dignitaries Chosen From the Class of the Princes of the Blood and the Kings' Sons and the Princesses (continued)

Beurlape	
Fara Ggnolle	
Linguere (woman)	
Awa (woman)	
Die-Soughere (woman)	Princess of the blood (father and mother). Commanded the Niakhen, Amb, Soa, Ndiemel, and Mber (Poular country).
Die-Mekhe (woman)	
Die-Khandane (woman)	
Die-Khante (woman)	
Die-Sen (woman)	
Die-Botolo (woman)	
Die-Mboursino (woman)	

**Table 2.** Dignitaries Chosen From the Class of Free Men and Marabouts Casted and Noncasted Men

Dignitary	Election criteria
Diawerigne Mboul Ndiambour	The DiaoudineMboul was one of the greatest chiefs of cayor. He is the one who summoned the free men of the country in order to elect the Damel. He commanded the Sab, Robnane, and Diakoul countries; the Toubhe, Ndat, and Dembagniane lands; and the Ndioulki, Ndabbe, Medheye, Ndande, Ndande, Ndiakher, Ga NDiole, Khoupaye, Kabbe. He is the one who led free men to war.
Lamane Ndande	
Lamane Diamatil	Was appointed by the Damel, on the Diaoudine Mboul's recommendation. He commanded Diamatil country.
Baraloupe Ndiobe	Commanded the Ndiokk.
Batie Gateigne	
Lamane Palele	

*(continued)*

**Table 2.** Dignitaries Chosen From the Class of Free Men and Marabouts Casted and Noncasted Men (continued)

---

Diawarigne Mboul Mekhe	
Diarno Mbaouar	
Dieuleck	
Tibar	
Serigne Gueidj	
Serigne Diob	Commanded the Ndiob.
Serigne Kandji	
Serigne Merina	
Serigne Merina Yocoum Babu	Commanded Merina Yocoum Babu country (between the Guignene and the Guet) where the Babu Moors of Cayor dwelled. He had under his command Serigne Diouar, who lived in Merina Yocoum Babou and who replaced him.
Serigne Seck	
Serigne Nguidiane	Commanded the Guiguediane.
Serigne Mbolakhe	
Serigne Ndob	Commanded the Ndob.
Serigne Dambligouye	
Serigne Pire Goureye	
Serigne Walalane	Free Tiedo; commanded the Walalane country.
Serigne Vare	
Serigne Ngagnaka	Commanded Gagnakh country. He was independent from the Diaraf Ndiambour.
Serigne Ndiang	
Diarno Ndiasse	
Lamane Gale	
Lamane Gueye	
Lamane Votoffo	
Lamane Thiothiou	
Lamane Loyene	
Lamane Taby	

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Table 3. Dignitaries Chosen From the Class of the Crown's Prisoners

Dignitary	Election criteria
Diawerigne Mboul Gallo	There were two Diaoudine Mboul. The Diaoudine Mboul of the free men, and one of the prisoners. The latter led the "Diam Gallo" to war, after Fara Seuf. Within the Crown, he followed the orders of the free men's Diaoudine Mboul.
Fara Seuf	Was a "Diam Gallo." He was the commander-in-chief of the "Diam Gallo" of the whole country and, during wartime, had under his command the prisoners' Diaoudine Mboul. He had Djeraf Seuf directly under him.
Djaraff Bountou-Keur	Was directly appointed by the Damel. He commanded the countries of Tabbi, Nianedoul, Pire, Yandounane, Mbaba, Keur Ndiobo Binta, Sin or Damecane, Diari, Sirale, Diokoul.
Diawereigne Khatta	
Djaraff Thiaye	Was a "Diam Gallo" chosen by the Damel; he commanded the Keur Bi Ndao, Mbidjem, Tiaye.
Diawerigne Mekhe	
Djaraff Mdiambour	Was a "Diam Gallo." He resided at Geoul and commanded the Diambour with the exception of some small regions.
Fara Bir Keur	Was chosen by the Damel from among his own prisoners. He was his personal envoy, who carried his orders to all provinces and made sure they were carried out. He collected the taxes and was in charge of listening to the people who brought complaints to the sovereign.
Djaraff Get	"Diam Gallo," appointed by the Damel. Commanded the other part of the Get.
Djaraff Mbaouar	Commanded the Mbaouar and collected taxes for Diambor, who was a prince of the blood with rights to the throne.

*(continued)*

Table 3. Dignitaries Chosen From the Class of the Crown's Prisoners (continued)

Dieguedj	Was chosen by the Damel from among the "Diam Gallo." He commanded the Serer country of Dieguene, Mbao, Dee-y-Dak, Gorom, Bargny, Ber or Tielane, of Rap, Deni Biram Dao, Kounoune.
Fara Laobe	Was a "Diam Gallo" who was in command of all of the country's Laobe.
Fara Nderioune	
Fara Ndiafougne	
Fara Gnakhibe	
Djaraff Mekhe	Commanded the Niayes of Tiendi and of Touffagne.
Ndajaff Bour	
Diawerigne Nguigis	Was the Damel's cup bearer. He was a "Diam Gallo."
Diawerigne Khandane	Was directly appointed by the Damel, and commanded the Tialkhean, Ngueygueye, Keur Ndianga-Mbaye, Ndekou, the country of the Diombos.
Diawerigne Mbousine	
Diawerigne Soughere	
Diawerigne Kandie	
Diawerigne Ndiahene	
Djaraff Khandane	
Djaraff Soughere	
Djaraff Kautie	
Djaraff Mboursine	

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# Theoretical Approaches to State Crimes

Ingraham (1979) describes twelve specific categories of crimes against the political body or state: (a) acts of betrayal to an enemy; (b) attempts or conspiracies against government leaders; (c) certain economic crimes; (d) sexual crimes against government leaders; (e) religious crimes; (f) crimes of speech; (g) rebellion, riot, and resistance to authorities in the performance of their official duties; (h) attempts by political leaders against the liberties of people; (i) membership in or the organization of illegal societies; (j) usurpation of official function and authority by unauthorized persons; (k) non-denunciation of treasonable plots and conspiracies; and (l) miscellaneous offenses. The state is presented as a victim in ten of the categories; in only two of them does it appear as a possible perpetrator.

The state sees itself as a victim when the perpetrated crime is political; many dangerous and harmful acts of commission or omission are not considered or addressed as crimes.<sup>1</sup> An African case confirmed this perception: in the early 90s when the Rwandese Hutu government obliged thousand of its citizens to flee their country and become unwanted refugees in Zaire, the Rwandese government interpreted this act as political and viewed itself as victim rather than perpetrator. But when some Rwandese intellectuals decided to raise their voices about the situation, they were immediately targeted as national enemies and accused of conspiracy against Rwandese national security. In another historical example, Ingraham (1979) reported the case of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, president of the second French republic, who executed a military and unconstitutional coup d'état by dissolving the French congress.

State crime has existed since the existence of the first human group. Since many definitions of state crime have been advanced, there is no consensus on a unique definition of the concept. Nevertheless, most authors



agree on common elements of state crime, including, (a) illegal, harmful behavior; committed by state or government agents during the exercise of their official functions; (b) harmful behaviors remaining unpunished most of the time.<sup>2</sup>

The perspective changes when one assumes that the state may be a perpetrator of crime. From a philosophical standpoint, the state becomes an active subject capable of bearing responsibilities for its acts and is brought back to the same level of consideration as any citizen's criminal behavior. State criminality deserves even more severe punishment because of the cloak of honorability, respectability, and public trust invested in the offenders.

State crime may be viewed as harm inflicted upon people by their own governments or the governments of others. Because these acts inflict damage to the body of society, state crime is also a violation of universal human rights. In fact, state crime is harmful to society because its victims are often defenseless.<sup>3</sup> This definition has the advantage of considering three level of analysis: (a) individual, (b) institutional, and (c) structural. Harm to an individual is perceived as harm to the institution to which the person belongs (e.g., family, community) and is a harmful act originated by the global structure in which the person is submerged. State crime can also affect the social environment. The following description of state environmental crime is useful:<sup>4</sup>

1. Failure to protect the populace from social harms;
2. Failure to alleviate various social problems (e.g., poverty, unemployment, etc.) when the state has the power to do so; and
3. Failure to criminalize corporate conduct that causes physical, economic, and environmental harm to countless individuals.

This definition has the advantage of considering the state explicitly responsible for crime.

In a 1992 monograph on the sociology of criminology, D. Kauzlarich defined state crime as an illegal act or socially injurious act of omission or commission by an individual or group of individuals in an institution of legitimate governance that is executed for the consummation of the operational goals of that institution of governance. He proposed four types of state criminality: (a) Domestic-International Government Crime (DIGC), (b) Domestic-Domestic Government Crime (DDGC), (c) International-Domestic Government Crime (IDGC), and (d) International-International Government Crime (IIGC). A state crime is committed with the intention to terrorize people by slaughtering them and/or assassinating individuals or a group in order to compel them to accept the government order.

Mobutu's political crimes fall within the category of Domestic-Domestic Government Crime, defined as criminal acts that occur within the state's geographical jurisdiction in violation of the criminal or regulatory code of that state. Most of his activities were in violation of the Zairian constitution and of Zaire's procedural and civil laws.



# Notes

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE

1. O'Donnell, & Cie (1988). *Transiciones desde un gobierno autoritario*. Buenos Aires: Paidos.  
For more research on Mobutu's system, see Michela Wrong (2000), "Living on the brink of disaster in Mobutu's Congo" in *The steps of Mr.Kurtz*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers. In the Bibliography, Wrong offers a comprehensive list of further readings and background materials on Mobutu's political system.
2. Duverger, M. (1964). *Introduction a la politique*. Paris: Gallimard.
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4. Sartori, G. (1991). Repenser la democratie: mauvais regimes et mauvaises politiques. *Revue Internationale de Sciences Sociales*, 129, 476 and Linz, J. J. (1991). *Revue Internationales des Sciences Sociales*, 129, 975.
5. Vidal, G. (1916). *Cours de droit criminel et de science penitentiaire*. Paris: Rousseau.
6. Barak, G. (1991). *Crimes by the capitalist state. An introduction to state criminality*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
7. Kauzlarich, D. (1992, November). Epistemological barriers to the study of harms: A sociology of criminology. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, New Orleans, LA.
8. Tunnell, K. D. (1993). *Political crime in contemporary America. A critical approach*. New York: Garland.
9. Ross, J. I. (1995). *Controlling state crime*. New York: Garland.
10. Asante, M. K. (1987). *The Afrocentric idea*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. p. 6.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO

1. Diop, C. A. (1991). *Civilization or barbarism*. Brooklyn, NY: Lawrence Hills.

2. Ayittey, G. B. N. (1992). *Africa betrayed*. New York: Saint Martin's Press.
3. President Mobutu of Zaire, who ruled the country from 1965 to 1997, justified the imposition of a one party-system as being a reflection of "our mentality and . . . our culture" (Sese Seko, 1989, p. 82).
4. Ayittey, G. B. N. (1992). *Africa betrayed*. New York: Saint Martin's Press.
5. Niane (1965) has powerfully illustrated the role of oral traditions in traditional Africa. Also see Ayittey (1992).
6. Diop, C. A. (1991). *Civilization or barbarism*. Brooklyn, NY: Lawrence Hills.
7. Ayittey, G. B. N. (1992). *Africa betrayed*. New York: Saint Martin's Press.
8. Ayittey (1992) pointed out a few illustrations of this type of society, including the Igbo of Nigeria, the Mbeere of Kenya, the Fulani of Nigeria, the Nkru of Liberia, the Konkomba of Togo, the Somali of Somalia, the Tallensi of Ghana, and the Jie of Uganda.
9. Ayittey, G. B. N. (1992). *Africa betrayed*. New York: Saint Martin's Press.
10. For more detail regarding the four units of government, see Ayittey, 1992.
11. *Sundiata, An Epic of Mali* (Niane, 1965) made popular this important characteristic of African kings. In fact, the king of Mali was known for being an honest person whose primary role was not only to protect his people, but also to welcome and look after guests.
12. Diop, C. A. (1991). *Civilization or barbarism*. Brooklyn, NY: Lawrence Hills. p. 104.
13. ————. p. 104–105.
14. ————. p. 105.
15. ————. p. 109.
16. ————. p. 110.
17. ————. p. 131.
18. "The feeling of patriotism is, above all, a feeling of national pride. The individual is subordinated to the collectivity, since it is on the public welfare that the individual welfare depends: thus private right is subordinated to public right." (Diop, 1991, p. 131.)
19. Diop, C. A. (1991). *Civilization or barbarism*. Brooklyn, NY: Lawrence Hills. p. 130.
20. ————. p. 131.
21. ————. p. 131.
22. The king was "a supratribal authority, a national authority, accepted by all, invested with the powers necessary to conduct and coordinate irrigation and water distribution, works essential to the general activity." (Diop, 1991, p. 130.)
23. Diop, C. A. (1991). *Civilization or barbarism*. Brooklyn, NY: Lawrence Hills. p. 165.
24. Niane, D. T. (1965). *Sundiata. An epic of old Mali*. Edinburg Gate: Longman. p. 1.
25. In fact, the griot was a very skilled orator whose role was to teach the king the history of his ancestors and the art of governing the kingdom according to the principles established by the ancestors. According to Niane (1965), griots filled important roles in traditional African politics, including professional

- musicians, guitarists, counselors of kings, keepers of the constitutions of kingdoms, guardians of tradition, tutors for young princes, and recorders of customs, traditions, and the governmental principles of kings.
26. Ayittey, G. B. N. (1992). *Africa betrayed*. New York: Saint Martin's Press. p. 57.
  27. \_\_\_\_\_ . p. 60.
  28. For example, this author, born before the adoption of the authenticity policy, was named Jean-Louis Peta, the first being my Christian name, the latter being my family name. After the adoption of the policy, my parents were required to name me after one of my ancestors. I, therefore, became Peta Ikambana, the latter being my grandfather's name. Peta means *wedding ring*, and Ikambana stands for *the one who shares everything he has with others*. Therefore, the full meaning of the author's name becomes: *a wedding is the beginning of a large family union*.
  29. For example, by the renaming of this author Ikambana, it became obvious that I am an integral member of my grandfather's lineage with all the rights that membership brings. In contrast, *Jean-Louis* did not give this author any rights to consider myself a member of the saints' families and denied me any connection to my African roots.
  30. Scheler, M. (1955). *Le formalisme en ethique et l'ethique materielle des valeurs. Essai nouveau pour fonder un personalisme ethique. Traduit de l'allemand par Gandillac*. Paris: Gallimard.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE

1. O'Donnell's theoretical model (O'Donnell & Cie, 1988) has the following analytical framework:
  1. After ascent and consolidation, an authoritarian regime acquires certain tendencies and well-defined characteristics that allow the regime to achieve a certain level of equilibrium.
  2. Such equilibrium can be either stable or unstable, according to the degree of institutionalization achieved by the regime.
  3. When the capacity of the regime to deal with internal and systemic difficulties weakens (which leads to an unstable equilibrium), it usually is the beginning of crises, which could very well be the precursors of a regime transformation.
2. Totalitarianism will be defined here as any philosophical, political, or ideological system that pretends to control the totality of national life by exercising a monopoly of power and imposing a unique vision of the world. According to Friedrich (1965), these are the main characteristics of totalitarianism:
  1. inclusive ideology,
  2. a single political party through which the ideology is injected into the mass,

3. the presence of a powerful dictator who controls the application of the ideology,
  4. a very organized and secret police, usually under the strict control of the dictator, and
  5. the total control over mass media, operational arms, and every single aspect of social, economic, cultural, and political organization.
3. Lingala is one of the five national languages spoken in the Republic of Zaire. The other four are: Kikongo, Swahili, Tshiluba, and French. During Mobutu's years, Lingala was the most-used language by the system leaders in their communication with the masses.
  4. As an example, consider the following: in 1970, one zaire (i.e., the country's national currency) equaled two American dollars. In 1993, one American dollar equaled 2,500 zaires. Therefore, it appears that mainly mismanagement and the abandonment of the principles of effective fiscal law resulted in the failures and misdeeds of the totalitarian system of the Second Republic.
  5. Di-Kuruba, M. (1992).
  6. Bondo, L. D. (1992, December).
  7. The rise of public consciousness is operationally defined as the process by which the totality of inhabitants of a country (e.g., Zaire) becomes more aware of the problems and challenges affecting its quality of life (including violations of its rights). The inhabitants become more aware that these problems and challenges are caused by the failures of a political system that led to a country's economic and social chaos; institutional collapse; discrediting of authority; and unprecedented socio-economic misery.
  8. O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead (1988) offered a theoretical explanatory model for transitional crisis that stipulated that internal and external crises are the primary causes of transformation of authoritarian systems.
  9. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, scholars like Saint Thomas Aquinas declared that the kingdom was not made for the King, but that the King was made for the kingdom. In other words, kinship was an obligation, not a right, and the king's role was to work for the well-being of all citizens. French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau defended the theory of the social contract as the foundation of any society. Through the contract, the individual subordinates his person and rights to the service of the community and freely commits himself/herself to abide by the rules of the community. In doing so, the individual denies or renounces his/her particular individuality and self-will with the goal of strengthening the larger society. This is a free and rational act to the extent that the person disposes himself/herself to obey rules he/she freely accepts.
  10. O'Donnell et al. (1988) formulate a theory of institutional crisis and in so doing offer us an analytical tool to establish a correlation between popular consciousness and attainments of the NSC.
  11. O'Donnell, et al. (1988).
  12. Burdeau, G. (1970).
  13. For example, Mobutu's armed forces opened fire on peaceful Catholics during a march supporting the re-opening of the NSC after it was suspended

by Mobutu's Prime Minister Nguz. On October 3, 1992, President Mobutu deployed armored military cars from his special guard unit in front of the national central bank building after a decision by the NSC to dismiss the central bank governor, who had been appointed by Mobutu. On December 3, 1992, armored military cars of Mobutu's special guard unit circled the office of the elected prime minister and his ministers, preventing them from working. Moreover, the same military unit attacked the private residences of the elected prime minister and some of his cabinet members, most of whom were from the opposition parties.

14. In contrast, Machiavelli's provident man was sent by destiny to establish enduring institutions. The Machiavellian vision endows this unique, lonely genius with a mission to provide the state with enduring institutions and laws intended to survive throughout his life and beyond.
15. Linz, J. J. (1991).
16. Modern political power is legal, institutional, and constitutional. It is the same to say that modern political power favors a collegial model based on shared control. This model of political organization was present in traditional Africa, as seen in this Akan (i.e., the ethnic and linguistic group of Ghana and Ivory Coast) proverb: "Tum te se kosua; nsakoro nkura; nsakoro kura a, ofiri bo fam," [Power is like an egg: You cannot handle it with only one hand; otherwise there is a risk it can fall and break]. This African proverb suggests that power is not the responsibility of one individual only. On the contrary, power is to be shared for better societal outcomes and limited to prevent abuses. Such was the original intention of the Zairian NSC as expressed in the Transition Act.
17. William Lapierre (1973) discussed five types of possible solutions in case of conflict between two homogeneous and antagonist forces with incompatible demands.

These can culminate in the implementation of a democratic system or return to a totalitarian/military dictatorship. The Zairian experience illustrates the greater possibility of a short-term return to totalitarianism rather than democracy, given President Mobutu's and his allies' armed forces and enormous economic resources.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

1. Ingraham (1979); Vidal (1916). Even though Vidal uses the term *political crime*, he refers only to what he considers to be criminality against the state.
2. See Kauzlarich and Kramer (1993) for a theoretical approach to state crime that likens it to organizational crime and provides a basis for interpreting Mobutu's use of illegitimate means to preserve power.
3. Grabosky (1990).
4. Friedrichs (1965).
5. See Chapter 1 for introductory detail on the NSC (National Sovereign Conference), which in 1992 published a compilation of all its formal decisions.



6. See Appendix C.
7. Grabosky (1990).

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER FIVE

1. Jackson (1994).
2. Hegel was a German and an authority figure in the European intellectual world. His influence was and still is beyond the boundaries of his native Germany. History has taught us that people like Hitler were deeply influenced by Hegel's worldview. The result of that influence was a disaster in the history of humanity still felt today.
3. Fanon (1967).
4. Baker (1998).
5. Harding (1981).
6. Asante (1987), p.125. [Dr. Molefi Kete Asante is a professor in the Department of African American Studies, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.]
7. Lynch (1999).
8. Freire (1997).
9. DuBois (1973).
10. Lierde (1963).
11. De Witte (2000), p. 33.
12. Hoschschild (1999).
13. *ibid.*
14. Gorbatchev (1987).
15. Tocqueville (1978).
16. Dhal (1991).
17. Lijpart (1987).
18. Van Lierde (1963).
19. Asante (1987), p. 27.
20. Van Lierde (1963).
21. Asante (1987), p. 95.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER SIX

1. It has been widely speculated that the Alliance received substantive support from the governments of Rwanda and Uganda who, in their own security interest, longed to overthrow Mobutu.
2. The Great Lakes Region is comprised of countries in the heart of Africa, including Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.
3. As well as Uganda, Burundi was suspected of supporting the aggression.
4. Rwandan refugees and others had fled to Zaire in fear of retribution for the Rwandan genocide of 1994. There are other versions of the same story that affirm that refugees decided to go back to Rwanda not because of the United Nations intervention, but because of the stronger fear of a massacre by the Zaire-based rebel forces.

5. Tshisekedi had long confronted Mobutu, and is considered the father of the country's opposition. Despite their confrontational relationship, Mobutu, always politically motivated, appointed Tshisekedi prime minister on several occasions.
6. The spokesperson for the United States Department of State, Mike Curry, was quoted as referring to "mobutism" as a creature of the past. France would echo the United States by declaring that Paris was not supporting any one individual in Zaire, only the country and its people. Brussels would soon join the choir by declaring the end of Mobutu's era and inviting him to resign. Switzerland announced its intention to freeze Mobutu's assets. Zimbabwe confirmed that its government had been supporting rebel leaders with military logistics. In a word, Mobutu had lost all his allies, internally and internationally.
7. Because of Mobutu's close ties to former Rwandan President Alexis Habyarimana, and considering the aftermath genocide that took place in Rwanda, including the role of certain Rwandan refugees who fled to Zaire after the genocide, one credible political theory declared that the president of Rwanda would favor a Zairean government without Mobutu. This theory based its framework on the promptness of the Kigali and Kampala regimes to welcome the internal political uprising against Mobutu by the different rebel groups, which came to be known under the coalition name of AFDL. The references made by an American official, Mike Curry, to Mobutu's regime as a "creature of the past," the French support to the "country and its people," and Brussels' statement about the "end of Mobutu's era" should be understood in the light of this new international environment, free from the cold war that created the rising of so many African and other third world dictators. It is unlikely that any support to a falling totalitarian regime would have been justified in the context of the old cold war buffer state strategies.
8. The Democratic Republic of Congo, with a population of about fifty-six million, is divided into ten provinces and one major city\* (its capital): Bandundu, Bas-Congo, Equateur, Kasai-Occidental, Kasai-Oriental, Katanga, Kinshasa\*, Maniema, Nord-Kivu, Orientale, Sud-Kivu.
9. On January 26, 2001, Joseph Kabila succeeded his assassinated father, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, as president.

## NOTES FOR APPENDIX C

1. Chambliss (1989).
2. See Barak (1990), Kauzalrich (1992), Tunnell (1993).
3. Barak (1990).
4. Chambliss (1989).



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# Index

## A

- AFDL. *See* Alliance of Democratic Forces for Liberation of Congo-Zaire
- African-centered paradigm, 11–12, 26, 80.  
*See also* Afrocentricity
- Africans in diaspora, 63–66  
*The Afrocentric Idea*, 11
- Afrocentricity, 11–12, 26, 68
- Agricultural products, 33  
exportation of, 33
- Alliance of Democratic Forces for Liberation of Congo-Zaire, 81–83
- America, rationale for racism in, 66–67
- Application of ideology, control by leader, as benchmark of totalitarian system, 55
- Asante, M. K., 11, 68, 79–80
- Assassinations, political, 55–62
- Authenticity, philosophy of, 11–12, 24–25
- Awareness of political system abuses/misdeeds, rise in, 36
- Ayittey, G. B. N., 13–15, 24

## B

- Baker, D.L., 65
- Barak, G., 8
- Basic political education of population, 92
- Benchmark events, Mubutu's totalitarian regime, 54–55
- Bilsen Plan, 35
- Bondo, L. D., 32
- Burdeau, G., 44

## C

- Centric vision of power, as obstruction to democratic process, 49–50

- Chief, governance by, 16
- Choice of political actors, 91–92
- Chronology of events, 6th century to Mubutu's second coup defined'etat, 95–99
- Class domination, 22
- Cobalt, exportation of, 33
- Coffee, exportation of, 33
- The Congo Cables*, 10
- Consciousness, popular, rise of, 26–27, 29, 35–36. *See also* National Sovereign Conference
- Constitutional threats, confrontation of by National Sovereign Conference, 45–46
- Continued transition, 5, 42
- Control, as criterion of democratic process, 7
- Control by leader of application of ideology, as benchmark of totalitarian system, 55
- Copper, exportation of, 33
- Cotton fiber, exportation of, 33
- Council of elders, governance by, 17–18
- Critique of Pure Reason*, 65
- Cultural-political organization, control of, as benchmark of totalitarian system, 55

## D

- Dahl, R.
- December 1990, massacre of civilians, 60
- Decolonization strategy, progressive, 35
- Democracy, 2–4, 6, 8, 11, 14, 19, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37, 39–45, 47, 49, 51, 54, 59, 61–80, 87, 91, 115



as African-centered necessity, 76–89  
 derivation of word, 3  
 elements, 62  
 modalities, 77  
 obstruction of, as state crime, 8–10  
 as way of controlling state crime, 61–62  
 Description of state environmental crime,  
 108  
 DeWitte, L., 74  
 Di-Kuruba, M., 32  
 Diamonds, exportation of, 33  
 Diaspora, Africans in, 63–66  
 Dignitaries  
 chosen from class of Crown's prisoners,  
 105–106  
 chosen from class of free men, Marabouts  
 casted, noncasted men, 103–104  
 chosen from class of princes of blood, kings'  
 sons, princesses, 101–103  
*Dignity for Africa*, 11  
 Dikembe, Mutombo, 73  
 Diop, C. A., 13–14, 20, 22–23  
 Discontinued transition, 5, 42  
 Domination of class, 22  
 DuBois, W. E. B., 74  
 Duverger, M. ., 6

## E

Economic condition of people, 92–93  
 Economic failures, 32–34  
 Economic organization, control of, as bench-  
 mark of totalitarian system, 55  
 Education system, failures in, 34–36  
 Effective participation, as criterion of  
 democratic proces, 7  
 Election criteria, political elite in traditional  
 senegal, 101–106  
 Empire, as type of traditional political orga-  
 nization, 14  
 Enlightened understanding, as criterion of  
 democratic proces, 7  
 Environmental crime, of state, described, 108  
 Equity of vote, as criterion of democratic  
 proces, 7  
 Evaluation of effective democratic process,  
 criteria, 7  
 Exportation  
 national agricultural products, 33  
 national mineral products, 33  
 regressive results of policies, 34  
 External crises, as instigators of regime  
 changes, 40–41

Extortion of African tradition, 24–25

## F

Fanon, F., 64  
 February and March 1992, massacres,  
 60–61  
 Financial system, failure of, 31–32  
*The Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz*, 10  
 Freire, P., 72  
 Friedrich, John, 3  
 Friedrichs, D. O., 55

## G

Gold, exportation of, 33  
 Gorbatchev, M., 76  
 Governing methods, traditional African,  
 13–15  
 Grabosky, P. N., 54, 62

## H

Harding, V., 67  
 Hernandez, El Duque, 73  
 High council of republic, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48  
 Historical struggle of African people, mean-  
 ing of, 63–76  
 Hoschschild, A., 75

## I

Ideology, 3–4, 6, 46, 55, 65, 113–114  
 Idiofa slaughterer, 58  
 Inclusion, as criterion of democratic pro-  
 ces, 7  
 Inclusive ideology, as benchmark of totalitar-  
 ian system, 55  
 Ingraham, B. L., 53  
 Initial agenda, democratic process, 49  
 Inner council, governance by, 16–17  
 Internal crises, as instigators of regime  
 changes, 40–41

## J

Jackson, J., Jr., 63  
 June 1969, slaughter of students in, 57–58

## K

Kabila, President, regionalization of internal  
 conflict, 88–90  
 Kant, E., 65  
 Kasavubu Bridge massacre, 59–60  
 Kaulzarich, D., 8, 54  
 King, role of in traditional Africa, 22–26  
*King Leopold's Ghost*, 9

Kingdom, as type of traditional political organization, 14  
 Kramer, R. C., 54

## L

Lapierre, J. W., 51  
 Lenon, Lewis, 73  
 Lijpart, A., 77  
 Linz, Juan, 115  
     theory of actors, 49  
 Louisiana Slave Code, 65–66  
 Lumumba, 10–11  
 Lynch, A., 69

## M

Mass media, control of, as benchmark of totalitarian system, 55  
 Meaning of historical struggle of African people, 63–76  
 Military, control of, as benchmark of totalitarian system, 55  
 Mineral products, exportation of, 33  
 Misdeeds of political system, 2, 4, 36  
 Mobutu's political system, 1–2, 9–11, 14, 24–25, 27, 30–31, 33, 36, 38–39, 42–51, 53–62, 75–76, 80–90, 92, 99, 112, 115–117  
 Momentum of democracy, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 45, 47, 49, 51  
 Mulele, Pierre, assassination of, 57–58

## N

National agricultural products, exportation of, 33  
 National mineral products, exportation of, 33  
 National Sovereign Conference, 2–3, 29–51, 115  
     accomplishments, 42–45  
     achievements of, 4, 39–40  
     constitutional threats, confrontation of, 45–46  
     new socio-political environment, 39  
     political strategy of, 48  
     popular consciousness on resolutions, 40–41  
     resolutions, incidence of popular consciousness on, 40–41  
     resolutions of, 42–45  
     rise of awareness of achievements, 38–39  
 Necessity of state, 21  
 New socio-political environment, National Sovereign Conference and, 39

Niane, D. T., 14, 23  
 NSC. *See* National Sovereign Conference

## O

Obstruction of democracy, as state crime, 3, 8–10, 50  
 O'Donnell, et al., 5–6, 29, 38, 40, 42  
 Oil, exportation of, 33  
 Olajuwan, Hakim, 73  
 Opposition leaders, 51, 59, 83, 86

## P

Participation, as criterion of democratic process, 7, 14, 54, 62, 76–77, 80.  
     *See also* Democracy  
     as African-centered necessity, 76–89  
     elements, 62  
     modalities, 77  
 Participatory democracy as African-centered necessity, 76–89  
 Pentecost Hanging, 56  
 Personal power, 31, 47–48, 50, 90  
 Philosophy of authenticity, 11–12, 24–25  
 Political assassinations, 55–62  
 Political decision-making, 78–80  
 Political education of population, 92  
 Political strategy, 31, 44, 47–48, 85  
 Political theory, 5–12. *See also* Theory of Loss of Legitimacy  
 Popular consciousness, 29, 40  
     rise of, 26–27, 29  
 President Kabila, new regime, 88–90  
 Privy council, 16–17  
 Progressive decolonization strategy, 35  
 Public consciousness, rise of, 35–37. *See also* National Sovereign Conference

## Q

Queen Hatshepsout, women's political rights during reign of, 19–21

## R

Racism in America, 66–67  
 Rationale for racism in America, 66–67  
 Renteria, Poncho, 73  
 Requirements for reform, by people, 38–39.  
     *See also* National Sovereign Conference  
 Rise of popular consciousness, 26–27, 29, 35–39. *See also* National Sovereign Conference  
 Ross, J. I., 9

Rubber, exportation of, 33

## S

Sartori, G., 7

Scheler, Max, 26

Second Republic, 2, 29–38, 41–42, 44–45, 48, 50, 114

Secret police under leader's control, as benchmark of totalitarian system, 55

Single party, as benchmark of totalitarian system, 55

Social organization, control of, as benchmark of totalitarian system, 55

State birth, through resistance, 22

State crime

in Mobutu's political system, 2, 5, 8–9, 53–62, 107–108, 111, 115  
theoretical approaches, 107–109

Stateless society, as type of traditional political organization, 14

Systemic change, 8, 87

## T

Territorial integrity, 91

Theoretical approaches to state crimes, 107–109

Theory of Loss of Legitimacy, 6–8

Tocqueville, A.D., 77

Totalitarianism, 3–4, 6, 31, 41–51, 80, 87, 91, 113, 115

characteristics of, 3

defined, 3, 55, 113–114

Traditional African governing methods, 13–27

Transitional Act, 39–40, 49–50

Tunnell, K. D., 8

Types of traditional political organizations, 14–27

## U

Units of government in traditional Africa, 16–27

## V

Values, in African-centered perspective, 26–27

Van Lierde, J., 79

Venus and Serena, Williams sisters, 68

Vidal, G., 8, 53

Village assembly, governance by, 18–19

Vote, equity of, as criterion of democratic process, 7

## W

Women, role of, in ancient Egypt, 19–21

## Z

Zairian experience, 74–76

Zairianization, 33, 37

Zinc, exportation of, 33