



# SPECIAL REPORT

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## ABOUT THE REPORT

The surprising results of the 2006 elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo reveal the fractious nature of Congolese politics as the country struggles to maintain peace. This Special Report examines the election results and the state of democracy in the DRC by tracing the history of the Mouvement de Libération du Congo and its transition from rebel movement to political party. The analysis is based on extensive fieldwork in the region and interviews with MLC members and DRC observers.

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SPECIAL REPORT 200

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## CONTENTS

Introduction	1
The Rebellion (1998–2003)	3
MLC Leadership	4
Raising an Army	6
An Army of Liberation	7
The Front de Libération du Congo Experiment	8
Bemba and the International Criminal Court	9
The Political Party (2003–06)	10
The Political Program of the MLC	10
The Bemba Surprise	11
One Year after Elections: A Return to Authoritarian Rule?	13
Recommendations	15

*Tatiana Carayannis*

## Elections in the DRC

### The Bemba Surprise

#### Summary

- The surprising showing of Jean-Pierre Bemba in the 2006 presidential elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has its roots in the histories of both the candidate and his party in the conflict in the DRC.
- However, the space for opposition politics in the DRC is rapidly closing. With weak political institutions in place, the government increasingly relies on strong-handedness at home even as it is looking abroad for financing and infrastructure development.
- The violence in eastern DRC poses great challenges for the new government but also opportunities for external actors to support peacebuilding efforts by working multilaterally.
- Should President Joseph Kabila's progressive weakening continue and a leadership vacuum emerge, Bemba would be a strong candidate to fill it.

#### Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been the battleground for wars within wars since the 1996 invasion of Zaire by a coalition of neighboring states, which ended the thirty-two-year rule of Joseph Mobutu and installed Laurent Désiré Kabila as president. The DRC wars trace their roots to the 1994 Rwanda genocide and the subsequent destabilization of the DRC's eastern region. They have involved at least nine African countries as direct combatants and many more as military, financial, and political supporters; they have also involved a number of internal rebellions in complex and often shifting military, political, and economic networks. The result is one of the most devastating humanitarian disasters of our day.<sup>1</sup>

When the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement was signed in July 1999, three rival Congolese rebel groups—the Mouvement de Libération du Congo (MLC) and the split factions of the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD-Goma and RCD-K/ML) controlled two-thirds of the DRC's territory. Laurent Kabila's government in Kinshasa, which had itself

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**Table 1: Presidential Election, July 30, 2006 (first round results, in percent)**

Province	Voter participation	Kabila	Bemba	Gizenga	Mobutu	Kashala	Ruberwa	All others
<i>Kinshasa</i>	72.1	14.7	49.1	22.0	0.2	7.7	0.3	6.0
<i>Bas-Congo</i>	76.0	13.9	36.2	1.8	0.7	6.5	0.3	40.6
<i>Bandundu</i>	69.3	2.6	9.7	80.1	1.2	0.4	0.1	5.9
<i>Equateur</i>	74.3	1.8	63.7	0.3	30.6	0.1	0.1	3.4
<i>Orientale</i>	77.6	70.3	5.2	0.9	5.1	0.4	6.1	12.0
<i>Maniema</i>	85.0	89.8	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.4	8.7
<i>North Kivu</i>	81.0	77.7	0.8	0.4	0.5	0.5	3.8	16.3
<i>South Kivu</i>	90.2	94.6	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	2.0	2.6
<i>Katanga</i>	71.6	78.0	3.4	0.5	0.5	2.7	0.4	14.5
<i>Kasai Orientale</i>	39.2	36.1	14.7	1.2	0.5	17.9	0.8	28.8
<i>Kasai Occidentale</i>	45.3	11.4	31.9	14.7	0.4	17.8	1.7	22.1
<b>Total DRC</b>	71.0	44.8	20.0	13.0	4.8	3.5	1.7	12.2

taken power by force two years earlier, controlled the remaining third. A bodyguard assassinated him in January 2001, and his son, Joseph, was inaugurated on January 26. After numerous failed attempts to negotiate a post-Lusaka settlement, a South Africa-brokered power-sharing agreement in 2002 led to a transitional government of national unity in June 2003, mandated to draft a new constitution, rebuild the national army, and organize national elections within three years. On July 30, 2006, over 70 percent of the DRC's 26 million registered voters cast ballots for a president of the republic and representatives to the National Assembly (one chamber of the national parliament) in the first free national elections since the elections of May 1960.<sup>2</sup> The elections ended a largely dysfunctional interim governing arrangement that had forced former—and in many cases current—enemies to work together to develop new and durable institutions. Yet the elections are merely one step in a long and fragile process of peace consolidation.

Joseph Kabila, the incumbent president, received 44.8 percent of the votes for president in the first round. In second place was Jean-Pierre Bemba, a vice president of the transition government and head of the MLC, which had become a political party. His surprising 20 percent of the vote beat a number of seasoned Congolese politicians and stunned many of Kabila's domestic and international supporters, who had considered Kabila a shoe-in. As none of the thirty-three presidential candidates received the required simple majority of votes, the top two vote-getters were forced into a runoff, held on October 29, 2006, along with provincial assembly elections.<sup>3</sup> Kabila then beat Bemba 58 to 42 percent, following a suspense-filled compiling process. It was Kabila's election to lose, and he nearly did (see table 1).

How did a rebel leader—accused by his political opponents of encouraging cannibalism, charged (and acquitted) by Belgian authorities with human trafficking, and facing possible investigation by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes in the Central African Republic (CAR)—rise to such prominence in Congolese national politics and come so close to a spectacular electoral upset?

## The Rebellion (1998–2003)

### *Bemba's Motivation*

The MLC was formally established on September 30, 1998, one month after the Second Congo War began, when Bemba, then thirty-six years old, and 154 Congolese recruits commenced military training under Ugandan officers at Camp Kapalata, twenty kilometers outside of Kisangani. It is unclear exactly when Bemba decided to take up arms against Kabila, but as early as February or March 1998, he tried, with Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni's encouragement, to join the newly formed Rwanda and Uganda-backed RCD rebellion in eastern DRC. Bemba's flirtation with the RCD was brief, and his participation refused. By his own account, he grew skeptical about the RCD's potential to succeed because the group did not include the local population in the governance of territories it controlled and it chose to rely militarily almost entirely on Rwandan forces rather than developing Congolese military capacity.<sup>4</sup> No doubt it was a mutual rejection and was the first of three critical interactions with eastern DRC that help to explain Bemba's difficulties in the east.

Bemba claims to have been motivated by Kinshasa's disregard for human rights, attacks on private property, and racist anti-Tutsi and anti-Equateur propaganda, as well as the monopoly of power in the hands of one ethnic group—what he has, on numerous occasions, called a "new mafia network" from Katanga province, which he has denounced as a return to *le tribalisme*, or the ethnicity-based politics that some Congolese credit Mobutu for ending. However, his central disagreement with Laurent Kabila initially was his exclusion of the political class from Equateur province—Bemba's own province of origin and Mobutu's power base—and the confiscation of Bemba family and business property after Mobutu was deposed.

What the hyperinflation and army lootings of the 1990s did not destroy of the Bemba family business assets in Kinshasa, the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre (AFDL), the foreign-backed armed group led by Laurent Kabila, did. After his installation as president on May 17, 1997, Kabila temporarily improved personal and property security by eliminating arbitrary and capricious roadblocks and arrests by unpaid soldiers and police officers, which had been a daily phenomenon during the waning years of Mobutu's rule. The Congolese people initially welcomed Kabila's domestic changes, but elites were less appreciative: they lost access and influence and saw their property seized on the grounds that it was ill-gotten under Mobutu, only to be redistributed to members of Kabila's inner circle.

Under Laurent Kabila, the old political class and the business community and their families were increasingly harassed and arbitrarily detained. Bemba's father, Jeannot Bemba Saolona, was arrested on several occasions and released reportedly only after paying considerable "fines." Much of the Congolese elite went into exile. Bemba's father opted to stay in the country and collaborate with the new authorities, eventually serving as Kabila's minister of the economy and industry, but Bemba chose to leave Kinshasa just before Kabila's arrival. Over the next year, he split his time between residences in Belgium and Portugal.

### *Jean-Pierre Bemba*

Jean-Pierre Bemba was born just outside of Gemena in Equateur province in 1962, the oldest child of Bemba Saolona. His mother died when he was thirteen years old. He is

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married to Liliane Texeira, with whom he has six children. One of his three sisters is married to Nzanga Mobutu, the deposed president's son, a rival for president in the first round, and now minister of agriculture in Kabila's government. Bemba's father was one of the most powerful figures in the Mobutu regime and a prominent businessman who acquired enormous wealth under Mobutu's nationalization measures in the mid-1970s. He made his fortune largely in agriculture and transport but wielded influence over most sectors of Congolese economic life. His Scibe Group, a holding company, has included enterprises ranging from the agro-industrial treatment of palm oil and coffee to commercial aviation and transportation.

Bemba spent his first five years in Equateur and the next twenty in Belgium, seeing the DRC only during school holidays. From 1982 to 1986, he studied business, finance, and development economics at l'Institut Catholique des Hautes Études Commerciales (ICHEC) in Brussels. He then entered the family business, eventually becoming the Scibe Group's chief executive. Under him, the group developed a commercial air-transport network; for several years, Scibe Aviation and the Belgian Sabena airlines were the only companies flying between Kinshasa and Brussels. In the late 1980s, Bemba branched out into telecommunications, television, and other business ventures, including a private postal company and a freight transport company with operations throughout Africa.

Called a bully by his opponents and a visionary by his supporters, Bemba is a bit of both. He is impatient, impulsive, stubborn, and rarely seen to smile. These qualities, combined with his imposing physical stature and youthful face, make him frightening to some and an endless target for political cartoonists, who depict him as an overgrown, demanding baby still in diapers. His self-professed sense that it is his divine destiny to fix the DRC's problems seems like sheer arrogance to some, yet he truly believes it and speaks frequently of sacrifice for country. He can be ruthless with those who disagree with him, and opponents and supporters alike complain that he is tight with money which in Congo politics can be a virtue.

Even Bemba's critics, however, acknowledge that he is an extremely charismatic and effective public speaker who, despite his privileged upbringing, manages more than any current Congolese political figure to speak to the needs and aspirations of the average Congolese. In private, he talks with an intensity and conviction about the need for a new political order in the DRC that can be infectious. He can describe skillfully both his grand vision for the country and the minute details of how to realize it. A conversation with Bemba about a particular policy idea, such as revitalizing riverine travel and trade, involves a detailed account of how the policy would be executed, from a cost-benefit analysis to a description of the specific type of boat architecture needed, effectively articulated without notes. He is also an aviation enthusiast—he can fly small planes and helicopters—a hobby that grew out of necessity when he feared relying exclusively on pilots-for-hire lest they deliver him to the highest bidder but which has since become a genuine passion and escape from his daily pressures and public responsibilities. The self-discipline to learn how to fly under less than optimal conditions is one of the best illustrations of Bemba's internal drive and self-motivation.

Bemba's efforts to run his family businesses (mostly profitably), organize a rebellion (successfully), administer rebel-held territories in both the west and the east (with mixed results), and hold office as vice president of the transition government (during which he did not shy from wielding the power of the purse) suggest that Bemba is really everything that both his supporters and his detractors say he is.

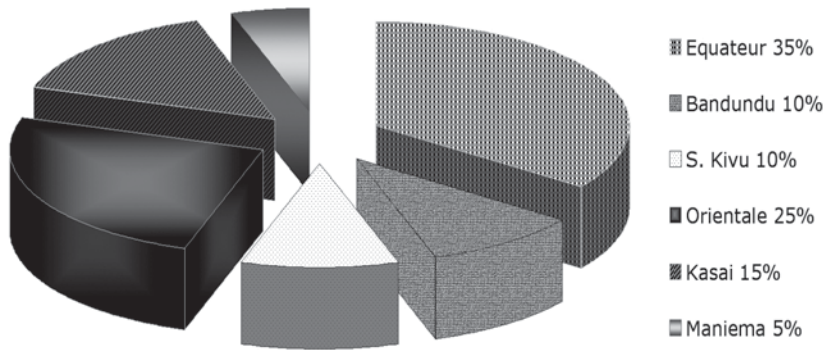
## **MLC Leadership**

The MLC political leadership has been composed primarily of young, affluent Congolese businessmen and some women, the children of Mobutu's robber barons who nonetheless maintain a critical distance from the former regime. They are part of a Congolese diaspora

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Figure 1. Regional/Ethnic Composition of MLC Leadership, 2000



educated mostly in Western Europe and the United States, some in the same schools. Most have lived abroad for extended periods, and some families hold dual citizenship. Under Bemba's orders, the founding members of the MLC, who had until then led pampered lives far from any prospect of military service, underwent four weeks of rigorous basic military training with the Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF). Bemba argued that without such training, leaders could not command troops in battle or gain their respect.

Much of Bemba's success with the MLC is due to his choice of collaborators. Olivier Kamitatu, the secretary-general or "prime minister" of the movement until 2006, was born in Brussels in 1964, the son of Cleophas Kamitatu, a leading 1960s politician from Bandundu who was sympathetic to Patrice Lumumba but eventually held political office under Mobutu. Olivier's mother, Mafuta Mingi Mbuta, was one of the first women in the Congolese parliament and a successful businesswoman in her own right. Like Bemba, Kamitatu studied at ICHEC and while there became the smart, likeable, younger protégé of his ambitious and increasingly powerful classmate.<sup>5</sup> Kamitatu joined the Scibe Group as managing director of a news magazine. In 1990, he founded a public-opinion and marketing firm in Kinshasa, but he left it in 1999 to join the MLC. Kamitatu's deft political and administrative skills allowed Bemba to focus on military affairs while he became the movement's chief negotiator.

Although Bemba is from the Ngwaka tribe of northern Equateur, the movement has avoided drawing most of its leadership from Equateur. In 2000, only 35 percent of the leadership was from Equateur, 10 percent from Bandundu, 10 percent from South Kivu, 25 percent from Province Orientale, 15 percent from Kasai, and 5 percent from Maniema (see figure 1).<sup>6</sup>

Some of the later political leadership—such as José Endundo, the former MLC secretary for the economy, Alexis Thambwe, a former adviser to Bemba, and Thomas Luhaka, the party's national executive secretary—came to the MLC from the RCD. Others held key positions under Mobutu: Raymond Ramazani, the MLC's long-time diplomatic adviser and representative in Paris, was Mobutu's ambassador to France and one of his most loyal advisers; and François Muamba, the party's secretary-general, served as minister of the economy and industry and senior adviser to Mobutu.

Rather like Laurent Kabila's Forces Armées Congolaises (FAC) and the RCD, much of the MLC military leadership was drawn from the ex-Forces Armées Zairoises (FAZ) and Mobutu's former special guard, the Division Spéciale Présidentielle (DSP). General Dieudonné Amuli, the MLC's U.S.-trained former chief of defense, was part of the DSP and held Kinshasa's airport against AFDL forces before they took the city; he has expressed bitterness about Mobutu's neglect of the national army.

Generally, both Bemba and the MLC membership have had difficulty distancing themselves from Mobutu's legacy, despite the presence of former Mobutu government officials in the ranks of the Kabila government and the RCD. While MLC leaders acknowledge their

links to Mobutu, they emphatically reject the politics of nepotism and corruption that Mobutism represents. The elections further exposed the complexities of linking Mobutu and his legacy to any one political actor, given the alliance of Mobutu's son, Nzanga Mobutu, with Kabila and the split in the Mobutu family over which candidate to support.

## Raising an Army

In spring 1998, Bemba sought to motivate a group of Congolese exiles to join an armed struggle with support from Kampala. He elaborated a political program with a network of friends and former classmates and discussed financing and training with Museveni. By Bemba's own account, he met Museveni while exporting fish to Belgium through Uganda in the early 1990s, though it is widely believed that Mobutu used Bemba's aviation companies to transport goods for Jonas Savimbi, then leader of União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA), through Uganda throughout the 1980s. Another account claims that Bemba met Museveni through Museveni's half-brother, General Salim Saleh, then chief of staff of the UPDF, while seeking to establish a link between ex-FAZ troops cantoned at the Kitona military base in southern DRC and UNITA forces in Angola.<sup>7</sup> The MLC emphatically denies any involvement with the Angolan insurgency movement. But the firm belief, at least in Luanda, that Bemba, Uganda, and Rwanda had links to UNITA largely accounts for Angola's switching sides in the Second Congo War to back Laurent Kabila and its strong antipathy toward Bemba to this day.

As more ex-FAZ/DSP officers joined Bemba's effort—many of whom, under Mobutu, had been trained in the United States and Israel—they took over the training of new recruits. After initial Ugandan provision of weapons, uniforms, and artillery, the MLC captured much of its heavy materiel, munitions, and transport and communications equipment in battles with the FAC and their supporters; it also seized FAC and ex-DSP weapons caches, especially in Gbadolite. Unlike the RCD-Goma, which had embedded Rwandan forces, MLC troops remained separate from the UPDF. All recruits, regardless of age or gender, were trained in firing weapons, setting ambushes, spying, and survival and escape methods. Troops were unpaid but were provided with weapons, ammunition, uniforms, food, and very minimal medical care, at least in the early years of the war.

Once established in northern Equateur, the MLC subsidized its operations by taxing local business elites and drawing funds from provincial Bemba family enterprises that had not been seized by Kabila, such as coffee plantations and timber exports. The latter was done with help from the Victoria Group, a commercial network of Ugandan political and military elite and Lebanese businessmen. When Ugandan support waned, the MLC diversified, conducting small-arms transfers, commodity exports, and transportation services through Libya and the CAR. Individual MLC leaders supported themselves and their families largely through personal wealth or businesses inside and outside of the country.<sup>8</sup>

In August 1998, when Uganda occupied the towns of Bunia and Isiro in the DRC's border region with the CAR and Sudan, Khartoum intervened on behalf of Kabila, no doubt to undermine Museveni. Despite MLC claims that there were approximately one hundred Sudanese troops in Gemena by late 1998, Khartoum's involvement consisted largely of sending two to three hundred anti-Museveni Ugandan rebels from the West Nile Bank Front to reinforce Kabila's FAC; providing logistics assistance and training for the FAC in DRC and Sudan; and running aerial bombing raids against the UPDF and MLC troops, which the MLC publicly denounced as deliberate attacks on Congolese civilians, though it is unclear whether the Sudanese pilots were deliberately targeting civilian villages or just being true to their reputation of having lousy aim. To reinforce the FAC in northern Equateur, Kabila also received Chadian troops, whose brutal treatment of civilians is one of the principal reasons that Bemba was perceived as a liberator of that province.

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## An Army of Liberation

During a nine-month campaign that moved west from Kisangani along two fronts in northern Equateur, Bemba's Armée de Libération du Congo (ALC), with UPDF battalions and Ugandan air transport, ejected the FAC and Chadian troops and installed the movement's headquarters in Gbadolite by July 1999. The MLC estimates that by May 1999 it had 8,600 troops. After the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and considerable international pressure not to proceed to Mbandaka, the MLC concentrated on recruitment and training throughout northern Equateur, raising an army of fifteen to twenty thousand. Recruitment was not difficult, due to pervasive poverty, resentment against the FAC and Chadians, and often family encouragement. Unlike some armed groups in eastern DRC, for which minors constituted up to 60 percent of fighting forces, the ALC was composed mostly of adult recruits.

Gbadolite was Mobutu's hometown, and he spent an estimated \$15 million each month to staff his palaces, hydroelectric plant, airports, and agricultural plantations there, yet the province remains one of the poorest in the country. It is not a significant producer of diamonds; and a once vibrant agricultural economy has been reduced, after a decade of war, to subsistence farming. The province has virtually no transportation and communication infrastructure and, like most rural areas in the DRC, whatever education and health systems existed have collapsed. International humanitarian and development non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were largely absent from northern Equateur over the last decade, establishing programs there only in recent years.

Nonetheless, northern Equateur and Gbadolite were strategically significant. First, the proximity to Bangui gave the MLC an essential rear base and convenient exit and entry point for troops, small arms, and income-generating exports. Second, with one of the longest runways in Africa—built so Mobutu could receive visitors to his palaces via the Concorde—the Gbadolite airport could land and take off large and long-range supply aircraft as needed. Third, the local perception of Bemba as a son of the land who liberated northern Equateur from Chadian occupation greatly advantaged the movement in the early years of the war. Even Bemba's critics acknowledge that the MLC vastly improved security in the region, which is why, at least early in the war, the movement enjoyed considerable popular support in the territories it controlled, in contrast to eastern rebel groups. Polling data conducted in Gemena in 2002 show that nearly 70 percent of respondents felt protected against crime. The same number would have supported Bemba and the MLC if national elections were held then, even though nearly 70 percent still were dissatisfied with social services.<sup>9</sup> Later, popular support eroded as negotiations for a unified transition government dragged on and local taxes tripled to finance the movement. But in the early years of the war, before the MLC launched military operations into neighboring CAR and eastern DRC, many observers considered the ALC to be the best trained and most disciplined of the Congolese armed groups.

What set the MLC apart from other rebel groups in the DRC were its efforts to create civilian administrations for the territories under its control. As soon as a town or village fell to the MLC, the movement established a local administrative structure, consisting of an executive branch; a territorial council comprised of women's groups, unions, and business, civic, and church leaders; and a territorial assembly. Each local administration had its own budget and authority to levy taxes, while the MLC provided security and acted as provincial governor. This decentralized administration permitted a greater inclusiveness of local actors and was consistent with the MLC's position in favor of decentralized government across the DRC. However, given the realities of war, these provincial and local administrations were probably oriented more toward recruitment and mobilization for the war than actual governance.

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## The Front de Libération du Congo Experiment

On January 16, 2001, Uganda forced rebel leader Wamba dia Wamba's RCD-K/ML to merge with the MLC to create a common front—the Front de Libération du Congo (FLC)—and to deal with the leadership split within the RCD-K/ML. For managing the war effort successfully, Bemba was appointed president of the front. Wamba dia Wamba was offered the vice presidency, and Wamba's two challengers, Mbusa Nyamwisi and John Tibasima, were appointed coordinator of the movement and minister of mines and energy, respectively, even though Wamba had just expelled Nyamwisi and Tibasima from the RCD-K/ML. Roger Lumbala, who only months before had founded the RCD-Nationale with Ugandan backing, was made minister of mobilization. Wamba dia Wamba refused to sign the agreement, denouncing the merger as contrary to the Lusaka Agreement.

With new authority over the whole of the north of the country, the MLC quickly began a series of initiatives that briefly contained the anarchic conditions prevailing in eastern DRC. On February 17, 2001, the MLC successfully brokered an agreement between leaders of the Lendu and Hema communities, temporarily lulling a very bloody interethnic conflict. The agreement, signed at a meeting of 156 traditional Hema and Lendu chiefs in Bunia, tasked the FLC with closing ethnic militia training camps, disarming civilians, deploying security forces, setting up peace tribunals throughout the region, rehabilitating prisons, and creating a special provincial follow-up committee. When the FLC failed to deliver, largely due to continued Ugandan manipulation and fierce competition between the MLC and the RCD-K/ML for control of Ituri's lucrative resources, the conflict resumed, deadlier than before.

Seeking to broaden the FLC's support base in North Kivu, where the MLC was viewed as an outsider, on March 21, 2001, Bemba signed the so-called Butembo Agreement with six Mai Mai groups in the presence of representatives of chiefs, churches, civil society, and the Ugandan army. The Catholic Church and civil-society groups had actively pursued an agreement following months of violence between Mai Mai groups and the occupying Ugandan army, in which both forces indiscriminately attacked and looted civilians. The agreement created a ceasefire between the FLC and the local Mai Mai militia, and the latter agreed to join the FLC, undergo military training, and become a special battalion in the FLC army. According to MLC sources, the retrained Mai Mai fighters were given their own brigades with special responsibility for border control, a move calculated to calm the Mai Mai by appealing to their desire to expel foreign occupiers from the Kivus and the DRC.

Soon after the FLC was formed, the MLC also brought in its trusted commanders to deal with the leadership vacuum in the northeast, where individual rebel leaders dominated different localities. Local populations very much resented this, seeing it as a move on Bemba's part to control the area and steal its wealth. Unlike in Equateur, where the MLC had a reputation for being disciplined in its interactions with civilians, in the northeast, the MLC was seen as an occupying force. This perception was exacerbated by the behavior of some of the approximately three thousand MLC troops from Equateur, who reportedly harassed civilians. Some complained to local human rights organizations, convinced that former FAZ commanders, who had terrorized them under Mobutu, had returned to the region as FLC commanders, having lost none of their past habits.

The FLC finally disintegrated due to clashes over revenue. Earlier, Bemba had argued that the RCD-K/ML area should be taxed to help pay for the war effort, and the MLC insisted on implementing an accord brokered by the groups' Ugandan patrons that instituted a 70 to 30 percent split of total revenues in the MLC's favor. The RCD-K/ML ignored this accord until the formation of the FLC; under the FLC, the disagreement became acute, fueled by Ugandan officers in business for themselves. The FLC collapsed in December 2001 as the two groups fought over cash-generating customs posts on the Ugandan border—the main



revenue source—and other regional resources. Despite the FLC's early successes in pacifying the region, this was Bemba's second major debacle in eastern DRC, from which the MLC retreated, leaving bitter enemies behind, notably Mbusa Nyamwisi.

## **Bemba and the International Criminal Court**

Mbusa Nyamwisi's alliance with Kabila in 2002 seriously challenged the MLC, as it added a new, eastern front to the MLC's war against Kinshasa. This provocation resulted in Bemba's third and perhaps most significant encounter with it in eastern DRC, given the resulting public relations disaster for the movement and impact on civilians.

In October 2002, the MLC and RCD-Nationale launched Opération Effacer le Tableau (Operation Clean Slate) against Nyamwisi's forces in Ituri. The joint operation was controversial within the MLC leadership, with some arguing against it. The results were devastating, for the civilian populations in the town of Mambasa and for Bemba politically, giving Kinshasa enormous latitude to denounce Bemba widely as a war criminal in the national and international press. Both Kinshasa and local human rights groups accused MLC and RCD-N fighters of raping and killing civilians, engaging in cannibalism, and committing other atrocities against perceived collaborators of Mbusa and Kinshasa, especially the pygmy communities. Some reports suggested that the effaceurs may have deliberately targeted Nande civilians, members of Nyamwisi's ethnic group, as revenge for Nyamwisi's rejection of Bemba's leadership in the FLC in 2001.

The MLC denied that their troops engaged in cannibalism, and to combat the overwhelming negative press reports, they invited Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International to investigate. The MLC also arrested and convicted twenty-seven of its soldiers in trials that HRW later called "a mockery of justice."<sup>10</sup> However, HRW's investigation found no widespread evidence of cannibalism and some pygmy groups later publicly retracted their accusations. But both HRW and the United Nations Mission in DRC (MONUC) investigations found evidence of other crimes committed against civilians, prompting Kinshasa to call for an ICC investigation. This further reinforced the MLC's and Bemba's image in the east as heirs to Mobutu's brutal regime.

Two MLC military interventions into CAR in 2002 further tarnished the MLC's image and exposed Bemba to ICC investigation. Both interventions were efforts to prop up democratically elected president Ange-Felix Patassé against Chadian-backed rebels. In December 2002, nearly one thousand MLC fighters joined Libyan troops in Bangui to shore up the Patassé government. Libya's objective was to maintain a friendly government in CAR to allow Tripoli a rear base of operations against Chad's President Déby and his French supporters. The MLC sustained heavy losses in the fighting and were widely accused of looting and raping civilians. In February 2003, the Paris-based International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) filed a petition with the ICC accusing both Bemba and Patassé of war crimes. Patassé was overthrown in March 2003, and in 2005 François Bozizé, his ouster, formally petitioned the ICC to investigate all crimes under its jurisdiction committed on CAR territory after July 1, 2002, the date of entry into force of the Rome Statute.

The ICC's announcement on May 22, 2007 that it was formally investigating allegations of rape in the CAR does not mention Jean-Pierre Bemba or the MLC by name, but it is widely assumed that he will be a target of the investigation. The ICC is already drawing criticism both inside and outside the DRC for the choice and timing of this case. First, it is widely agreed that Bemba is not at the top of the list of worst offenders in the DRC and that the MLC's actions do not compare to the levels of violence found in the Kivus, Ituri, or Northern Katanga. Also, some human rights advocates have expressed concern that the CAR investigation might justify Kabila's crackdown against the political opposition, including efforts to marginalize his staunchest political opponent.

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## The Political Party (2003–06)

The MLC's growing pains as a political party were evident as early as 2002, during the Inter-Congolese dialogue in Sun City, South Africa. The failure of the Sun City agreement greatly strained the cohesion of the movement's leadership but was also a blow to individual MLC leaders, who had started to bring their families back to Kinshasa in anticipation of the end of hostilities and the resumption of normal lives as political party leaders.

Due to political accommodations, the new transition government comprised leaders representing almost every Congolese actor in the wars, many of whom were enemies for the past seven years. This body had to begin the reconstruction process by temporarily running the country, drafting a new constitution, preparing the country for democratic elections, and establishing a new, integrated, national army—within two years.

The transition government adopted a so-called 1 + 4 formula, modeled loosely after the South African 1 + 2 model. President Joseph Kabila retained his position; four new vice presidents were appointed, two from each of the principal rebel groups, the MLC and the RCD-Goma, and one each from the former government and the nonviolent political opposition to it. Over sixty ministers and deputy ministers were also appointed. Government ministers and representatives in the Assembly and Senate were drawn from the government, rebel groups, unarmed political opposition, civil society, and Congolese citizen-militia groups, such as the Mai Mai.

The MLC has always claimed to be a political-military movement pushing for a power-sharing arrangement in the country that would end the Kabila regime. Consistent with that goal, the MLC began its transition to a political party. Once Bemba left Gbadolite for Kinshasa on July 15, 2003, the movement's political and military wings split. Most of the political leadership and the top military commanders assumed positions in the transition government in Kinshasa and no longer saw themselves as affiliated with a rebel army administration. Also, members of the movement quickly stopped speaking with a unified voice. The public split among MLC ministers in July 2003 over whether the swearing-in statement that ministers had to read inferred allegiance to the state or to the president was the first time such internal differences were aired in public. One MLC leader noted that the natural competition that occurs in any political party had begun. Privately, some expressed the need to depersonalize the party to ensure its survival should Bemba not perform well as vice president or lose the elections. Ultimately, Kabila effectively co-opted some MLC members into his broad electoral coalition, and a number of senior MLC leader have defected to him since.

## The Political Program of the MLC

Of all Congolese armed groups, the MLC had the most articulated political and economic program, which tried to address systematically what it perceived to be the shortcomings of the Kinshasa government and its policies. For the most part, the program remained consistent as the group evolved from rebel organization to political party. While the movement's founding documents<sup>11</sup> initially sought a qualified continuation of the democratization process started by the Sovereign National Conference (SNC) of 1992, which elected the Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social (UDPS) leader Etienne Tshisekedi as prime minister, they also noted that SNC resolutions needed to account for events of the last fifteen years. Later, and unlike the UDPS, the MLC accepted the legitimacy of the transitional government of 2003–06 to oversee elections held six weeks after the government's mandate had expired and did not call for a return to the political transition process begun by the National Conference.

Not surprisingly, given the business background of much of the MLC's political leadership, the movement favors economic liberalism. Its stated objective has been to end dictatorship and establish a democratic rule of law under which business, private enter-

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prise, and investment—both foreign and domestic—can flourish. The movement’s emblem, the common worker ant, reflects its emphasis on jobs and the economy; according to the MLC, it symbolizes organization, courage, solidarity, social cohesion, and work.

On the political front, the MLC program was initially less specific. The documents of both rebel organization and political party make general claims to support human

rights and good governance, and support the separation of powers. The MLC initially called for a federal system of government, though it tempered its position when it became evident that the vast majority of the war-torn Congolese population increasingly saw federalism as code for partition. Likewise, the MLC initially supported the idea of dual citizenship, but abandoned it as the rumor that masses of Rwandans were masquerading as Congolese citizens became a popular myth. The rebel group also vacillated between supporting a generous immigration policy “in consultation with the region” and supporting “the strict adherence to Congolese law and national interest” as it tried to take a middle position between the respective policies of the RCD-G and Kinshasa on the thorny question of citizenship.<sup>12</sup> However, Bemba, as party leader, later called publicly for granting Congolese citizenship to eligible Congolese Tutsi. This nonexclusionary position was consistent with MLC practice during the war, which had a Congolese Tutsi commander leading one of the ALC brigades consisting of Tutsi troops.

Given the party platform emphasis on free enterprise, it would seem that Bemba and the MLC would be natural allies of Western industrialized powers, but incumbent privilege and geopolitical concerns trumped all. First, Washington was suspicious of Bemba’s cozy relationship with Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi, and France was not pleased with Bemba’s interventions into CAR and its sphere of influence in Central Africa. Second, foreign diplomats quickly judged Bemba as someone not easily manipulated or controlled. Bemba spent a good part of the war isolated in northern Equateur and was thus unknown personally by many foreign governments before he arrived in Kinshasa to assume his transitional vice presidency. Once there, his forceful style and populism reinforced some embassies’ perceptions that he would be troublesome. Finally, the defection of several high-ranking members of the MLC leadership, notably second-in-command Olivier Kamitatu, who were liked, seen as moderates, and the key interlocutors of many foreign offices, further exposed Bemba’s Achilles’ heel.

Two additional factors in Bemba’s inability to curry favor with most Western powers have little to do with Bemba himself. First, on assuming power in 2001, Joseph Kabila employed a vastly more cooperative and pro-Western leadership style than had his Maoist father. The younger Kabila played the international game well, quickly gaining donor support. Second, and most important, the tendency of states and external actors to privilege incumbents in postconflict elections worked in Kabila’s favor; in the DRC elections, several influential governments made no secret of their preference for him over Bemba, based largely on the age-old principle of supporting the devil you know over the devil you do not.

## The Bemba Surprise

How, then, does one explain the results of the 2006 DRC election? In the first round, the east voted overwhelmingly for Kabila and the west for Bemba, except Bandundu, which went to Antoine Gizenga, a septuagenarian politician from that western province. At first glance, the east-west split would appear to be based on regional and linguistic differences

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between Lingalaphone westerners and Swahiliphone easterners. But this explanation does not account for the fact that a large number of Congolese are Kikongo and Chiluba speakers. Instead, voting appeared to be organized around three overriding principles.

First, in the first-round vote, Congolese voted overwhelmingly against those who ruled them during the war.<sup>13</sup> In the east, voters voted against the former RCD rebel authorities and therefore for Kabila. In the west, where provinces had been largely under Kinshasa (Kabila) control, voters voted against Kabila and for Bemba. The two exceptions to this rule are northern Equateur, where Bemba carried the territory he controlled during the war, and southern Katanga, where Kabila won in Kinshasa-controlled territory. The exceptions can be explained by Bemba's particular relationship with the province, described above, and by Kabila's ethnic ties to southern Katanga. Second, after thirty-two years of Mobutu rule, the east saw the election as its turn to govern the country. Third, the chief priority for eastern voters at the front lines of the wars was peace and security, for which Kabila was given credit—while western voters prioritized the economy, blaming the incumbent administration for having done little to improve their lot.

Bemba also understood two key elements of the public mood in areas that had been under Kinshasa's control for the last ten years. First, there was widespread suspicion of state and international interference and manipulation of the electoral process and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), which was headed by a Nande, an easterner. Second, supporters of the popular principle of *Tout Sauf Kabila* ("Anyone But Kabila") would respond to any attacks on Kabila's legitimacy, although both camps used a political discourse of autochthony in the campaign. Those opposed to Kabila questioned his nationality credentials and parentage, calling him a migratory bird, a Tanzanian, sometimes even a Rwandan; while Bemba's opponents accused him of being of Portuguese parentage. The MLC's emphasis on *Congolité* resonated strongly in areas already opposed to Kabila for at least three reasons. First, many Congolese believe that Kabila was born and raised in Tanzania, an assumption reinforced by his inability to speak Lingala and his mediocre French. Second, the mass atrocities committed against Congolese civilians and retreating Rwandan Hutus in some provinces—such as Equateur—by advancing AFDL and Rwandan forces in the first war, and the FAC's attacks during the second, are very much a part of the collective memories of the current generation, particularly as both episodes have gone unpunished. Third, the overt support for Kabila's presidential bid by some members of the international community only reinforced the perception of Bemba's independence from foreign influence. The discourse on autochthony may not have won either candidate any new votes, but it did reinforce existing support.

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Each of the two presidential runoff candidates spent the three-month period between elections less on campaigning for votes directly and more on wooing other candidates and political parties into two broad coalitions, Kabila's Alliance pour la Majorité Présidentielle (AMP) and Bemba's Union pour la Nation (UN). The runoff election saw lower voter participation nationwide, except in Equateur (from 74 to 84 percent) and Katanga (from 72 to nearly 76 percent). The province of Bandundu, which Gizenga carried overwhelmingly in the first round, split its vote in the runoff between Kabila and Bemba, even though Gizenga had declared his support for Kabila. Similar splits were seen in Kinshasa neighborhoods that had voted heavily for Gizenga in the first round; in the second round, Kabila received only half of those votes, with the rest going to Bemba. Bemba carried all of Equateur even though Nzanga Mobutu, a rival son of the land, joined Kabila's coalition.

The runoff election results reinforce the overriding principle in the first round: Voters voted against those who had ruled them during the wars. It is unclear why all of the votes in Bandundu and in Gizenga supporting Kinshasa neighborhoods did not go to Kabila in the second round once Gizenga joined the AMP. One possible explanation is a generational split: Older voters remained loyal to Gizenga and his political legacy, which dates back to the independence period; younger voters voted for the candidate in opposition to Kabila's alliance. This may be a result of campaign strategy, as Kabila largely used traditional chiefs to mobilize support while Bemba spoke more directly to the electorate. Kabila may not

have anticipated that the urbanization of Congolese youth during the war had distanced many of them from the reach and influence of traditional chiefs.

The legislative plebiscite elected members of the national assembly and eleven provincial assemblies. Of the near-dozen coalitions that won seats in the National Assembly, none received a majority. The AMP received the most seats, with 42.4 percent of the national vote—a ten-point drop from its standing in the presidential vote. Independent candidates came in second with 24.4 percent. The MLC-led coalition came in with just under 18 percent.

The provincial assemblies are quite significant in the DRC's electoral system, as they elect senators and provincial governors. Governors have real power under the new national constitution, which, once fully implemented, grants greater provincial autonomy to manage local resources. International observer groups, however, largely ignored the provincial elections in favor of the more high-profile presidential vote.

The presidential majority coalition won a majority in only five of eleven provinces: Maniema (91.7 percent), South Kivu (81.3 percent), North Kivu (62.5 percent), Orientale (58.7 percent), and Katanga (53.6 percent). Despite this, Kinshasa got its own candidates appointed governors in every province but Equateur. The gubernatorial and senatorial elections were marked by such massive corruption that the senate roster is a list of the DRC's rich and famous. Money and ethnic loyalties trumped party allegiance.

Elections in the two Kasai provinces in 2006—the stronghold of long-time political opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi's UDPS party—showed a split in the UDPS over whether or not to boycott them. Voter turnout was low, the result of both the boycott and voter intimidation by boycott advocates.

Bemba faced several options on losing his bid for the presidency: run for senate, run for governor in Kinshasa or Equateur, go into exile, or resume the rebellion. He did not want to go into exile, as he knew he would largely be limited to Portugal, where he maintains a family home. Bemba also has no capacity for full-scale war, and conditions in the region, including the absence of a rear base in CAR, are not conducive to mounting one.<sup>14</sup> Maintaining his official government position thus continues to be a key objective, as it assures him both temporary immunity from prosecution as well as a bully pulpit. He opted not to run for governor as he wisely realized that he would be in Kabila's daily crosshairs in Kinshasa and marginalized if based in Equateur. Running for a senate seat instead allowed him to negotiate a role as national opposition leader, a position that the constitution mentions but leaves to the new parliament to define and fill.

## One Year after Elections: A Return to Authoritarian Rule?

The DRC faces numerous reconstruction challenges in the days ahead. The greatest threats to peace are the continued violence by Congolese and foreign armed groups which lie at the source of much of the insecurity felt in the region, and the narrowing of political space for opposition politics, marked by increased government repression.

In this first year of the Kabila presidency, the opposition in Kinshasa—particularly supporters of Bemba and the MLC—were systematically intimidated and harassed by the presidential guard. Opposition members of parliament staged a walkout in March 2006 to protest attacks on their homes and families by security forces in the middle of the night. Terese Nlandu, an outspoken supporter of and attorney for the MLC's legal challenge to the electoral results in the Supreme Court, was imprisoned for allegedly carrying weapons in her car and brought before a secret military trial, although she is a civilian. National and international human rights groups widely denounced the case and the charges were eventually dropped. In late January 2007, members of the religious sect Bundu dia Kongo (BDK) protesting the appointment of a pro-Kabila governor in Bas-Congo were met with deadly force by the police and the army, resulting in over one hundred civilian deaths. The Bas-Congo Massacres indicate what may lie ahead as the political process becomes more repressive and avenues for articulating grievances peacefully become more limited.

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The deadly clashes in Kinshasa in March 2007 between Bemba's troops and Kabila's republican guard—the result of failed negotiations to demobilize Bemba's personal forces—startled even the most hardened doomsday skeptics. At that time, Bemba had several hundred troops despite a government decree that all former vice presidents demobilize their militias and replace them with twelve police officers for close protection. With an ultimatum set for March 15, brinkmanship between hard-liners on both sides led to a deadly confrontation on Kinshasa's main boulevard for several days that broke the political opposition. It also led to Bemba's exile twenty days later, negotiated by the United Nations and others to avoid (at worst) the assassination of the candidate who won 42 percent of the popular vote or (at best) his arrest on Kabila supporters' charge that he had attempted a coup.

The stage for the March confrontation was set earlier by clashes between Bemba's and Kabila's security forces that paralyzed the capital for three days in August 2006. That round of fighting began as a skirmish between Bemba's guards and government forces on the eve of the announcement that Kabila would face a runoff. The following morning, the republican guard attacked MLC troops outside Bemba's official residence as he met with ambassadors from the International Committee in Support of the Transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (CIAT) and MONUC leadership inside. There was virtually no international condemnation of Kabila for this—hardly a deterrent from trying it again in March, despite having launched a military offensive in downtown Kinshasa that sent Bemba and members of Kinshasa's diplomatic community scrambling for cover and destroyed Bemba's personal helicopter. Bemba saw this episode as an attempt on his life, which only reinforced his desire to maintain a large security force.<sup>15</sup>

However, Bemba lost an enormous amount of political capital in the March debacle. Keeping a private militia was a political battle that he could not win and a military battle that ultimately he would lose—the latter more because of Kinshasa's ability to call in reinforcements from neighboring states, such as Angola. Kabila had already drawn away frustrated MLC members who complained that Bemba was building the party around himself, but he found it more difficult to co-opt Bemba's personal guard. Kabila could not trust them in his presidential guard and they knew that it would be useless to join the still-beleaguered national army. The March events achieved Kabila's objective of eliminating Bemba's soldiers by killing or arresting them. The events also exposed a weakness in Bemba's perceived strength, his popularity with the Kinshasa street, as it was unwilling to physically defend him.

The result of Bemba's miscalculation and international inaction is a vastly weakened and fragmented political opposition and a directionless political party that Bemba has been trying to lead from Portugal with mixed results. Bemba's greatest challenges now are managing the internal dynamics of the MLC and the tensions in its leadership, which the election heightened and the events of March 2006 brought to crisis level, and negotiating his return. That said, the party has no obvious leader with Bemba's national appeal and charisma to replace him. The top two leaders after Bemba—François Muamba, the party's secretary general, and Thomas Luhaka, its executive secretary, are considered to be moderates, and hard-line supporters from western provinces would not tolerate them, as neither are from the west. Some hard-line Equatorians have even accused Muamba of cozying up to Kabila.

The MLC's party convention, held July 20–22, 2007, in Kinshasa, aimed to reorganize and reenergize the party, line up the leadership behind a moderate, nonviolent agenda, and publicly establish the party as the leader of the Congolese opposition. The first resolution of the three-day convention called on Kabila to allow Bemba to return, while the declaration issued on July 22 and signed by Muamba included a rare public criticism of Bemba, though he was not mentioned by name. Convention participants criticized “the party” of clientilistic practices, managing resources poorly, and personal ambitions, denouncing the concentration of power in central party organs and the neglect of local party structures. The institutionalization of the most prominent opposition party and

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the effort to reduce its reliance on one individual may be a promising step, though it is unclear if it is merely an attempt to force party regime change. Those who interpret these developments to mean they can ignore Bemba, however, risk misdiagnosis: Bemba is young and too invested in the project of political change he started in 1998 to walk away from it, and he has the financial means to pursue it, whether he is in the DRC or not.

While Bemba's challenges are great, Kabila's are potentially even greater. Kabila's electoral victory was based on the east in large part because he was credited with reuniting the country and because voters there rejected the rebel leadership they knew all too well. He has since failed to deliver on peace and on improved governance, and his popularity is rapidly slipping. Moreover, he was forced to call a peace conference on the heels of a humiliating military defeat by General Nkunda. Should this progressive weakening continue and a leadership vacuum emerge, Bemba would be a strong candidate to fill it.

## Recommendations

While the MLC may be opening up, the space for opposition politics in the DRC is rapidly closing. The government increasingly relies on strong-handedness because its authority rests on weak national and local institutions—a crisis of governance that the elections did not solve.

External actors have little leverage. The timid international response to the presidential guard's brazen attack on August 20 emboldened Kabila, and there is much less coherence among international actors today, who now favor bilateral relations with Kinshasa. There is no reason to believe that this will change, as the new government flexes its sovereign muscles and looks to new partners for financing, security, and infrastructure development. The escalating violence between government forces and dissident Tutsi general Laurent Nkunda in North Kivu is marginalizing both the priorities set after the elections and the political opposition, which has largely been silenced.

There are several possible scenarios for the DRC given recent events, with implications for opposition politics. In the worst-case scenario, efforts to disarm Nkunda and other armed groups fail, moving the Great Lakes region into yet another war, further weakening the Congolese state, potentially creating a situation like that in Northern Uganda, in which most of the DRC is relatively nonviolent except for some eastern regions. In the best case, the Nkunda factor and the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) are dealt with successfully, though without strengthening the weak state institutions that make the DRC a haven for insurgents; this will likely only be a short-term solution.

Perhaps paradoxically, the immediate security concerns and Kabila's weakened position offer opportunities for external actors to pursue two priorities: strengthening and reforming security systems to protect civilians and borders, and strengthening national and local institutions and multiple centers of power to counter authoritarian tendencies. More specifically, external actors can

- leverage recent security threats and military defeats to push for national security reform as a matter of priority, especially reform of national army troops. Such troops are widely recognized as some of the worst perpetrators of human rights abuses against civilians, and in some cases, as in North Kivu, have reorganized themselves into provincial or ethnic militias.
- push, as part of this process, for the integration of the presidential guard, currently the key instrument of government repression against political opponents.
- facilitate Bemba's return to resume his senatorial duties as part of the normalization of political life and support efforts to build and democratize a broad-based non-violent political opposition that can select its own leadership. Co-optation of political opponents must not be interpreted as inclusiveness in the political process.

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- support provincial and local initiatives and institutions. Increasingly, the political battleground and possibility for opposition will move to the provinces, as decentralization measures are implemented and contested. The key will be to support a process driven from below that effectively decentralizes power and not merely institutions.

This is a period of fragile peace, as the escalating violence in eastern DRC attests. A healthy space for opposition politics, however, must be made a priority, not only for the MLC, but for what is likely to be a growing and diverse opposition as the AMP alliance of convenience—or the Alliance de la Marmite, as some call it, given the number of disparate actors in it—begins to fragment. Without opposition and avenues for the peaceful articulation of grievances, the politics of the gun will continue to remain an option. If the results of the 2006 elections and the Bemba surprise teaches us anything, it is that the Congolese people voted for change.

## Notes

1. For accounts of these wars, see Thomas Turner, *Congo Wars: Conflict, Myth and Reality* (London: Zed Books, 2007); Gilbert M. Khadiagala, ed., *Security Dynamics in Africa's Great Lakes Region* (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2006); Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History* (London: Zed Books, 2005); Tatiana Carayannis, "The Complex Wars of the Congo: Towards a New Analytic Approach," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 38, no. 2–3 (August 2003): 236–71; John F. Clark, ed., *The African Stakes of the Congo War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Jean-Claude Willame, *L'Accord de Lusaka: Chronique d'Une Négociation Internationale*, Cahiers Africains 51–52 (Tervuren: Institut Africain-CEDAF; Paris: Harmattan, 2002); and Colette Braeckmann, *L'Enjeu Congolais, L'Afrique Centrale Après Mobutu* (Paris: Editions Fayard, 1999).
2. Joseph Kabila assumed the presidency in January 2001, shortly after a bodyguard assassinated his father.
2. It elected the short-lived Lumumba-Kasavubu government that took over upon Congo's independence from Belgium, June 30, 1965.
3. The provincial elections are significant, as the provincial assemblies can appoint the senate and elect provincial governors. The latter are slated to have much greater power of the purse under the new constitution, which mandates that 40 percent of provincial earnings remain in the provinces.
4. Interview with Jean-Pierre Bemba, Gemena, June 2002.
5. Muamaba also attended ICHEC, but a decade earlier.
6. Compilation by Herbert Weiss and Tatiana Carayannis based on the key political leaders of the MLC in 2000.
7. Gauthier de Villers, *Republique Démocratique du Congo, Guerre et politique: les trente derniers mois de L. D. Kabila (aout 1998–janvier 2001)*, Cahiers Africains 47–48 (Tervuren: Institut Africain-CEDAF; Paris: Harmattan, 2001).
8. As Equateur is not rich in precious minerals, the MLC share of the diamond and other precious mineral trades was largely limited to the years it maintained close relations with Uganda; this relationship had soured by the end of 2001.
9. Herbert F. Weiss and Tatiana Carayannis, "The Enduring Idea of the Congo," in Ricardo Laremont, ed., *Borders, Nationalism, and the African State* (Lynne Rienner Press: Boulder, CO, 2005), 160–77.
10. "Ituri: Covered in Blood. Ethnically Targeted Violence in Northeastern DR Congo," *Human Rights Watch* 15, no. 11(A), July 2003, available at <http://hrw.org/reports/2003/ituri0703/DRC0703-05.htm>.
11. See, e.g., the MLC founding statutes signed at Lisala on June 30, 1999; "Le Mouvement pour la libération du Congo," (date unknown) a pamphlet outlining its platform; and the current MLC Web site at [www.mlccongo.org](http://www.mlccongo.org).
12. See the MLC founding statutes signed at Lisala on June 30, 1999.
13. See Herbert F. Weiss, "Voting for Change in the Congo," *Journal of Democracy* (volume 18, number 2, April 2007).
14. One of the more alarming aspects of the crisis in CAR today is that ongoing violence there could destabilize northwestern Congo. In particular, the fall or weakening of the Bozizé regime could change the political calculus of some Congolese opposition leaders by providing this missing rear base of military operations.
15. It is likely that the August 20 action was a deliberate attempt by some elements in Kabila's security forces to provoke a reaction from Bemba to justify his assassination or arrest, though it is unclear where the orders may have come from. It is also likely that Angolans close to hard liners in Kabila's inner circle have advised them to act before they end up with a twenty-year Jonas Savimbi-like "problem."

