THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

A TROUBLED MARRIAGE TOWARDS DEMOCRATISATION?

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Introduction

''Africa is failing, Africa is booming, African economies have the best growing rates of the world and Africa has extreme inequality levels. Africa has free elections and growing and prospering democracies and is home of authoritarian regimes'' (Bloom & Poplak, 2016, p.9). And Africa faces a lot of challenges: poverty, ethnic conflicts, ongoing and widespread corruption, economic development and high inequality to name some (Eifert & Miguel & Posner, 2010; Cheeseman, 2015; Bloom & Poplak, 2016; Gazibo, 2016). Regimes and governance are at the core of these challenges and the solutions towards it since they both have implications for the continent's development on a social and economic level as well as on its political stability (Hyden, 2016, p.10). During the 1990s, 19 African countries held their first competitive elections, in many cases supported and advocated in the wake of demonstrations led by civil society such as labour unions, students and religious leaders (Mueller, 2013, p.399). Civil society became increasingly willing to use their influence and in those countries where civil society groups had maintained some degree of independence from the state, they often emerged as leading actors in the democratisation (Cheeseman, 2015, p.70).

While civil society can play a strong role in democratisation, this is not always the case. In fact, civil society has also been co-opted by authoritarian regimes to support incumbent authoritarian rule (Lewis, 1992, p.36; LeVan, 2011, p.137; Cheeseman, 2015, p.69). Why do some civil society organisations decide to act for democratisation while others co-opted with authoritarian regimes? In this thesis I investigate the role of civil society in the context of Sub Sahara Africa by focusing on which factors explain the position of civil society organisations in the process of democratisation. To address this question I look at the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and more specific into the role of the Catholic Church as part of civil society. The case is relevant since the church plays an important role in Congolese politics. Boyle (1992, p.52) even named the Catholic church in the DRC the 'only group powerful enough to even think of sustaining opposition to the government.'

Besides of being a relevant actor, the Church took upon and different positions and roles towards the incumbent government. In 1965, a group of liberal Catholic intellectuals in the DRC went to see Joseph-Albert Malula, the Archbishop of Kinshasa, and demanded that he spoke out against the atrocities of the Mobutu regime. Malula responded by telling them to mind their own business, telling them that he recognised the authority of Mobutu which he derived from God himself (Boyle, 1992; Cheeseman, 2015, p.73). 27 year later in January 1992, Catholic leaders called people to the streets for a "March of Hope'' against Mobutu and elected an archbishop as the chair of the Sovereign National Conference. This Sovereign National Conference had the ambition to define the way forward

for the DRC and called for democratic reforms and a new constitution (Gifford, 1995, p.1; Cheeseman, 2015, p.75). Today, the Catholic Church still plays an important role in Congolese politics, recently declaring the victory of opposition candidate Felix Tshisekedi as fraud and proclaiming Martin Fayulu as the legitimate winner (BBC, 2019). In other words, the Catholic church in the DRC walked a fine line between co-optation and resistance of incumbent governments (Cheeseman, 2015, p.84).

So what explains the position of the Church towards the regime? To answer this question first regime, democratic governance, democratisation and civil society are defined. Then, the role between democratisation and civil society is further looked upon, and the place of the church as part of civil society is examined. Next a theoretical framework for examining the church as part of civil society in the context of Sub Sahara Africa is offered and finally the case of the DRC is studied towards an answer of the research question:

Which factors explain why the Catholic Church chooses to support authoritarian rule or democratisation in the Democratic Republic of Congo?

Literature review

A regime is a deliberately constructed order that establish shared expectations about desired behaviour, and governance is the exercise of establishing and sustaining it (Hyden, 2016, p.12). In many African states the regime type is, to different extents and varieties, democratic governance (Eifert & Miguel & Posner, 2010; Cheeseman, 2015; Resnick, 2015; Gazibo, 2016; Baldwin, 2016). Hayden defines a regime as a constructed order that establishes shared expectations and defines governing as maintaining that order (Hayden, 2016, p.10). Democratic governance is defined as ''what citizens and their governments do in order to make the rules of the political game acceptable and legitimate in the eyes of as many stakeholders as possible'' (Gazibo, 2016, p.28). The same definition also emerges from the data of the Afrobarometer where people are asked how they conceive and perceive a democracy. Most used were " a government by the people," followed by "government by, for, and of the people'' (Bratton, Mates & Gyimah-Boadi, 2004, p.71). So governance is exercising and maintaining a regime and democratic governance is doing it together in the best interest of as many stakeholders as possible (Hayden, 2016; Gazibo, 2016; Bratton & Mates & Gyimah-Boadi, 2004). The process of a state becoming a state governed by democratic governance is called democratisation (Cheeseman, 2015; Hayden, 2016; Gazibo, 2016; Eifert & Miguel & Posner, 2010).

Many scholars made clear that civil society has influence on democratisation. Civil society creates a greater demand for responsible government and provides social cohesion and stability for a society (Lewis, 1992, p.32; Barro, 1999, p.164; Birdsall, 2007, p.596; McCarthy, 2011, p.574). That makes sense since due to civil society and by being active in civil society organisations people develop mutual expectations and develop and establish bonds of reciprocity and trust (Englebert & Dunn, 2013, p.119). Coalitions between civil society and political parties are often formed, enforcing the political impact of civil society as a whole (Demarest, 2016, p.77). Civil society has also a democratic effect on the individual level, where civil society associations establish and develop an educated electorate (Mottiar, 2010, p.124; Warren, 2011, p.5). Civil society is by some scholars even seen as a pre-condition for democracy (Törnquist, 1999). And many scholars find that the stronger civil society is, the better the democracy functions (Englebert & Dunn, 2013, p.121; Mueller, 2013, p.400; Resnick, 2015, p.712; Gazibo, 2016, p.28).

The modern concept of civil society was first used by Georg Hegel at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He described civil society as the system of 'meeting needs, the market economy, various forms of public regulation, the legal system and policing' (Lavalette & Ferguson, 2007, p.448). Later in the nineteenth century Alexis de Tocqueville (as quoted in: Englebert & Dunn, 2013, p.121) defined civil society as: the associational life, autonomous and intermediate between state and the family and with a mission: preventing the state from getting too much power. Larry Diamond (1996, p.208) defines civil society as the realm of organised social life, acting as an intermediate between the private sphere and the state, bound by a legal order or a set of rules that makes demands towards the state and hold state officials accountable. Lewis (1992) states that the idea that civil society will always act as a counter-balance for the government seems more based on a hopeful assumption then on a reality and argues that the role and stance of civil society towards regimes differs. Civil society exists of non-state organisations like churches, trade unions and interest groups, but has not primarily or conclusive one shared set of rules or a clear goal as Tocqueville and Diamond argued (Lewis, 1992, p.31; Mottiar, 2010, p.113; McCarhty, 2011, p.565; Englebert & Dunn, 2013, p.119; Mueller, 2013, p.399; Cheeseman, 2015, p.69; Resnick, 2015, p.711). All scholars mentioned above agree that, to a different extent, civil society is in the organisational space between the state and the private sphere of the family, and thus consists of organisations and associations. The point made here is that civil society can indeed function as a democratisation force, but not necessarily, and is definitely not one ideologically linked set of organisations but more a broad and diverse pallet of organisations with similar and non-similar ideas and different ideological beliefs. Lewis (1992, p.36) states that ''civil society is neither homogeneous nor cohesive; the particularities within the private realm provide

considerable basis for conflict and division.'' The term civil society is in some literature combined or simultaneously used with middle class, but those are two different concepts. Middle class is a pure economic concept, used as a distinction of the poor and the rich on a basis of income and thus differs from the concept of civil society (Turnbull, 2002; Bratton & Chu & Lagos, 2010; Rensick, 2015).

Civil society in Sub Sahara Africa

Before further looking into which factors explain whether civil society supports democratisation or authoritarian rule, a better understanding of civil society in the Sub-Saharan Africa context is needed. The definitions and theoretical expectations as mentioned in literature seem to create a gap with the empirical reality in Africa (Lewis, 1999). As once stated by Moore: ''no bourgeois, no democracy'' (Moore, 1966, p.418). Although a simplification, the notion that in Sub Sahara Africa there were hardly any independent non-state organisations or bourgeois in the period that states decolonised in the 1960s is important to make and distinguishes the African context from the societies Tocqueville and Diamond describe in their work (LeVan, 1992; Englebert & Dunn, 2013).

The lack of civil society in the new formed states after decolonisation was a direct result of colonial rule, since colonial rule was typically distant from their subject populations, and almost no autonomous organisations apart from the state were allowed since colonial rulers feared opposition and protests (Lewis, 1992, p.41; Cheeseman, 2015; Fierens, 2016). In fact, the non-state organisations in postcolonial Africa that survived authoritarian rule usually did so because they had been co-opted by the incumbent regime (Lewis, 1992, p.36; LeVan, 2011, p.137; Cheeseman, 2015, p.69). Later, in the 1990s, the civil society flourished in Sub Sahara Africa in the wake of the third wave of democratisation after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Cheeseman, 2015; LeVan, 2011; Englebert & Dunn, 2013). Besides these historical notes, the practice of clientelism, the exchanging of resources, jobs, or gifts for political support, reduces the role of civil society in Sub Sahara Africa in comparison to many European and American societies where research upon civil society is conducted, since the public and private become intertwined without the role of an intermediary civic sphere (Lewis, 1992, p.41; Englebert & Dunn, 2013; Cheeseman, 2015, p.58).

An important role in civil society in Africa is played by churches and religious leaders. From the pre-colonial era onward, authority structures in Africa have proved to be most durable when they combined political and religious power (Cheeseman, 2015, p.67; Hesselbaink, 2007) That makes sense since Africa has the highest rates of religious activity in the world: 90% considers themselves religious (Cheeseman, 2015, p.69; Engelbert & Dunn, 2013, p.92). From the colonial era onwards, mission education from the Catholic Church has provided a basis for self-advancement and created a new

elite, whom could easier participate in the newly formed democracies after decolonisation in the 60s (Mottiar, 2010, p.124; Warren, 2011, p.5; Cheeseman, 2015, p.24). The creation of these elites is according to Mottiar (2010, p.124) and Warren (2011, p.5) who state that civil society associations establish and develop an educated electorate. Also, active religious membership usual promotes interests in the politicsal system (Manglos & Weinreb, 2013, p.214). The fact that mission education provided this educated elite before decolonisation is important since the case for many African states is that civil society only had the chance to organise after decolonisation (Engelbert & Dunn, 2013; Cheeseman, 2015). The one civil society actor that was present during decolonisation and fits the description of associational life in Sub Sahara Africa was the church (Cheeseman, 2015, p.82). The church did not only took a role in education, nearly 70% of all basic health services in Sub Sahara Africa was provided with church or church associated hospitals and clinics (Lusey et. all., 2018, p.2). Churches also can be 'voices of democracy and protest' (Manglos 2011, p. 336). Many examples show the relevance of the Church, either in supporting an incumbent authoritarian regime or supporting democratisation (Gifford, 1995). In Zambia for example the church played an important role in opposing a change in the national constitution offering the incumbent president a third term (Bwalya & Maharaj, 2018, p.75). Since religious organisations are the most significant civil society organisation in many African societies their voice has political significance, resulting in regimes granted them privileges and favours. That provided a way for regimes to keep their voice silenced (Hoywegen, 1996; Titeca, De Herdt & Wagemaker, 2013, p.118)

The role of individual religious leaders is more of a debate, since the grand theories of international relations, liberalism and realism, consider individuals rational actors. They assume that their personal beliefs and ideas do not have an impact on policy (Heywood, 2014, p.13). Civil society theories also focus on the associations and organisations in societies, and not on individual leaders (Lewis, 1992; Mottiar, 2010; McCarhty, 2011; Englebert & Dunn, 2013; Mueller, 2013; Resnick, 2015) However, the beliefs and lenses leaders perceive the world through have an impact on their policy, for example whether they perceive the world a priori as hostile or friendly (Hermann et. al., 2001, p.118). Renshon & Renshon (2008, p.509) and Schafer & Walker (2006, p.578) consider the fact that the information that leaders see is, to an important extent, filtered through the several lenses of their own beliefs and subject to significant cognitive limitations a leader has to cope with. Therefore the beliefs of leaders have an important effect on state's policy behaviour. In Sub Sahara Africa there are many cases where religious leaders made an impact on policy. The Frelimo government in Mozambique for example worked since independence in 1975 successfully together with religious leaders, self-proclaimed spirit mediums and medicine-men in order to get people to vote (Maier, 1991, p.66). And in Senegal bureaucrats and party officials privately mocked the marabouts, local Islamic leaders, but also

recognised that the stability of their regime and the success of development projects was rested on the cooperation of the marabouts (Cheeseman, 2015, p.77). Many other African autocrats dictated themselves religious powers, usually with the approval of the church or influential religious leaders (Englebert & Dunn, 2013; Titeca, de Herdt & Wagemaker, 2013; Cheeseman, 2015). The point made here is that individual religious leaders can have an impact on policy of the organisation they lead and thus also on direct policy of the stance of a civil society organisation towards the incumbent government.

Theoretical framework

How can the role of the civil society organisations present in Sub Sahara Africa be examined further? For examining the individual beliefs of leaders different kinds of qualitative speech analysis are used, all requiring public record of speeches and (spontaneous) interviews (Hermann et. al., 2001; Renshon & Renshon, 2008). That makes the individual beliefs of religious leaders harder to study for the Sub Sahara context, where there is less record of such data then there is available for many Western democracies and parliaments. Therefore for this thesis, remarks of leaders will be accounted for the organisation they represent, and the impact of an individual leader will not be examined apart. Carl LeVan (1992, p.140) offers a model that is useful for the Sub Sahara Africa context to examine civil society organisations. He acknowledges the definition of civil society as varied and without a single set of shared rules or shared ideology. LeVan makes two important distinctions to examine civil society organisations, whether they are low or high on autonomy and whether their goals are outward or inward orientated, see figure 1.

Figure 1

		Autonomy	
		Low	**High**
Goal orientation	**Inward**	- Professional associations for government workers - Corporatist unions	- Hometown associations - Community development - Self-help groups
	Outward	- State run mobilisation programs - Front groups for the government - State run media	- Human rights organisations - Independent press - Non-state governmental organisations

Based on: LeVan, 1992, p.140

Whether an organisation is high or low on autonomy is based on different factors. Does the organisation chooses its own leaders, is it for its funding dependent on other actors like donors, the state or is it self-sufficient? An organisation that scores high on autonomy is less vulnerable to the influence of other actors and can easier establish and maintain their own beliefs and boundaries, while high autonomy enhances the legitimacy of the organisation towards the constituents it stands for. An organisation low on autonomy is more vulnerable to state-control, intervening foreign donors and has less legitimacy formulating the demands of its members (Tripp, 2001). Organisations whom are inward orientated only try to improve the life of their members and their constituency, whilst outward orientated organisations aim for society as a whole and have goals that are non-excludable and benefit the public, not only members or like-minded (LeVan, 1992, pp. 140-141).

Political independence, what LeVan's terms autonomy, is associated with democratisation (LeVan, 1992, p.140). Civil society actors that are low on autonomy have a smaller change to oppose a regime than those who score high on autonomy, and inward orientated organisations tend to focus merely on their constituents rather than on democratisation as a good for the whole of society (LeVan, 1992, p.141). The figure can be used to identify and measure different civil society actors across time to analyse the positions they took in society as a whole, but does not necessarily predict whether the civil society actor supports democratisation or the incumbent regime. Further study of a case is necessary before making such conclusions (LeVan, 1992, p.142).

Case selection

This paper examines one specific case, namely the case of the Roman Catholic Church in the DRC, formerly Zaïre. Boyle (1992) saw the Catholic church in the Congo and its leadership capable to 'intervene as a catalyst to begin or facilitate processes for change.' The Church took different positions over time, and played and plays an important role in the politics of the country (Fabian, 1983; Boyle, 1992; Beke, 2000; Meeuwis, 2011; Englebert & Dunn, 2013; Cheeseman, 2015; Fierens, 2016), which makes it an interesting and important case to investigate further. I will examine the role the Catholic Church played as a member of civil society in the democratisation of the DRC in different events in history: are they outward or inward orientated, and low or high on autonomy? And does that framework of LeVan explain the position the church took towards the incumbent government? The research question is as follows:

Which factors explain why the Catholic Church chooses to support authoritarian rule or democratisation in the Democratic Republic of Congo?

Before answering this question, I give an overview of the history of the DRC. Afterwards, five moments in the history of the DRC are chosen to examine the role of the Church in-depth to what factors explained the position the church took on that period. This methodology is according to Titeca, De Herdt & Wagemakers (2013, p.119) who state that 'political actors interests and abilities can best be identified in the process of unfolding events.' The five moments are: the Church and colonial rule; the Church on the road to independency; the Church and the coup d'état of Mobutu; the Church and the Sovereign National Conference, and last the Church and the recent elections.

History of the DRC

The first archaeological remains of people living in the territory nowadays known as the DRC dates from around 8000BC. The original inhabitants of the Congo are assumed to be the pygmy people, whom were driven south by the migration of Bantu people around 2000BC. The territory became ethnically more diverse with migration flows from now Sudan from the north and from Eastern Africa. Many tribes and ethnic groups organized around fertile grounds and rivers, and villages and towns started to develop, finally resulting in small kingdoms all over the Congo (van Reybrouck, 2010). In the 15th century one of these kingdoms, the Congo Kingdom, was at the height of its power and included a large part of now Angola and the territory West and North of the Congo river (Kisangani & Scott, 2009). By that time, Portugese ships started to trade with the King of the Congo Kingdom, exchanging guns, sugar, horses, jewellery and many other goods for slaves, ivory and other natural resources. The Portugese set up a trade post near what is now Boma, at the estuary of the Congo river in the Atlantic Ocean. The slave trade on the west coast was dominated by the Portugese and on the east coast by Arab slave traders, and disrupted and destabilized the Congo Kingdom. From the island of Zanzibar, in what is now Tanzania, many Arab slave traders invaded the eastern part of the Congo (van Reybrouck, 2010). The Swahili language was influenced by Arab traders, whilst the Lingala language was influenced by the Portugese, and the language territory still marks today the areas to where the slave traders influenced and intruded the African continent (Meeuwis, 2011).

In 1874 a new era began for the Congo, initiated by Henry Morton Stanley who was the first to travel the whole Congo river downstream on an expedition largely paid for by the Belgian King Leopold II (Hochshild, 1998; van Reybrouck, 2010). King Leopold was inspired by a new wave of imperialism and militarism across Europe and adopted the view that Belgium should become an imperial power. This ambition came to a climax at the conference of Berlin in 1885, where King Leopold gained the personal property of the land he from then on called the Congo Free State (Hochshild, 1998; van Reybrouck,

2010). King Leopold II introduced a system of *chefferie*, a system of enforced political collaboration of local chiefs and leaders with colonial invaders (Meeuwis, 2011, p.191). The rubber quota King Leopold adopted were notorious, forcing every chief to deliver a very high amount of rubber, ivory and other high-valued goods and many were forced into labour (van Reybrouck, 2010). An estimated 5 to 6 million Congolese people died due to the rule of King Leopold (Hochshild, 1998; Weiss, 2007; Kisangani & Scott, 2009).

The Congo Free State existed until 1908, when the Belgium government had to annex the territory of King Leopold under international pressure to end the atrocities of King Leopold's rule (Fabian, 1983; Meeuwis, 2011; Fierens, 2016) Belgium government wanted to reform the Congo in a model colony, diverting the attention from the scandals of King Leopold II's mistakes and rule out imperialistic ambitions by implementing a paternalistic colonial policy. They adopted the so-called *triade* of Belgium rule: state, private companies and businesses, and the Church (Fabian, 1983, p.169). The main focus of the policy was the '*Belginazation'* of the Congo: the language became French in the administration, court, school, and the army. Especially education and basic healthcare were important instruments in building the colony of Belgian Congo (Yates, 1980, p.261; Fabian, 1983). The belief and motivation for the Belgium government to do so was that the Beglian government believed it had a moral duty to 'detribalize' and 'modernize' the people of the Congo (Yates, 1980' van Reybrouck, 2010; Fierens, 2016). The Belgian rulers developed a system of the so called *évolués*, the people whom were 'detribalized' and could access higher education (Fabian, 1983; Meeuwis, 2011; Fierens, 2016, p.84).

Évolués created a very small Congolese elite of whom some got inspired by the African nationalism sweeping through the continent and publish in July 1956 the *Conscience Africaine* (Beke, 2000). That was the start of the road to independence for the Congo, which became a fact after a round table conference in Brussels on the 30th of June 1960 (Beke, 2000). Belgian Congo became Congo-Kinshasa instead and adopted a bicameral parliament with as prime-minister Patrice Lumumba and as president Joseph Kasavubu. After a lot of political turmoil, a secession of the richest province Katanga from the Congo, Belgian military intervention and the murder of prime-minister Lumumba, Joseph-Desire Mobutu seized power in a coup d'état in 1965 (Aksu, 2018). With help from support from the US and international donors by promising to fight communism and executing his opponents Mobutu established a regime of 'extreme centralised neglect and kleptocracy', stealing and collecting him and his closed ones billions of dollar off the natural riches of the Congo (Taylor & Francis Group, 2005, p.245; van Reybrouck, 2010). Mobutu adopted several policies towards the unification of Congo-

Kinshasa, all meant to centralise the power around him and his administration, renaming all colonial names into Congolese, and changed the name of Congo, the state and the river, into Zaïre in 1971 (Reno, 1997). When the Soviet Union fell and the Cold War was over the need for the US to support strong authoritarian leaders in Sub Sahara Africa against communism became less important. Human rights and democratisation became more prevalent in foreign policy, leaving less place for autocrats like Mobutu (Englebert & Dunn, 2013). Failing central government and the lack of basic healthcare, education, an army that fell in mutiny and ethnic tensions in the eastern provinces did the rest: the Mobutu administration was about to collapse (Reno, 1997; Taylor & Francis Group, 2005). In 1990 Mobutu declared opposition parties legal on TV and elections and promised a rewritten constitution in a year written by the Sovereign National Conference (SNC) (TIME, 1990). But nothing really changed and civil war broke out in October 1996. Fueled by rebels whom perpetuated the Congolese border after the genocide in Rwanda, rebels with the support of Rwanda, Uganda and Angola joined forces in the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) (Prunier, 1995, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005). On May 17, 1997 the AFDL marched in the streets of Kinshasa and Mobutu fled into exile (Taylor & Francis Group, 2005; van Reybrouck, 2010; Aksu, 2018). Laurent-Desiree Kabila became president, renaming Zaïre to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (Taylor & Francis Group, 2005, p.245).

Kabila's first allies Rwanda and Uganda turned against him in 1998 by supporting new rebel groups in the eastern province and again, war broke out, leading to a vacuum of power in the Congo. Without any effective central authority many profited by laying their hands on valuable resources like copper, tin, cobalt and diamonds (Taylor & Francis Group, 2005, p.245; van Reybrouck, 2010). In 2001 Laurent Kabila was assassinated and succeeded by his son Joseph Kabila, whom took part in the Inter Congolese Dialogues (ICD) that came after months of peace negotiations to an agreement on the 16th of December in 2002 (Taylor & Francis Group, 2005, p.246). Rwanda and Uganda promised to withdrawal their troops from the DRC and all parties involved backed the transition government towards general elections in 2006 (Taylor & Francis Group, 2005, p.247). By that time, around 5.4 million people had died in the Congolese wars (Southall & O'Hare, 2002). Jospeh Kabila won the elections and became president of the DRC. His main contester, Jean-Pierre Bemba, got arrested by the International Criminal Court in 2008 for war crimes, leaving the opposition without a leader. Since Etienne Tshisekedi, an opposition leader who boycotted the 2006 elections, was sick and retrieving medical care in Europe (Dizolele & Kambele, 2012, p.113). However, in 2010 Tshisekedi came back home and announced that he would run for president, sparking a fierce campaign with Kabila for the 2011 elections (Dizolele & Kambele, 2012, p.114). Both the Catholic Church and other observers called out Tshisekedi as the real victor of the elections, but Kabila got himself sworn in and changed the

constitution in a way he could be president until the next elections in 2016 (Dizolele & Kambale, 2012, p.115). Postponed and delayed, the elections eventually were held in December 2018, where Felix Tshisekedi, son of opposition leader Tshisekedi won the elections of Emmanuel Shadary, former minister of the Kabila regime, and opposition leader Martin Fayalu. By doing so he was declared the new president of the DRC (Englebert, 2019). Same as in 2011, allegations about fraud and corruption the election results were widespread, but the son of a former opposition leader is now the president of the DRC (Englebert, 2019; Freytas-Tamura, 2019).

The Church and colonial rule

European Catholic and Protestant missionaries had worked in the Congo from the sixteenth century, at first mostly Portuguese missionaries and later, under the rule of King Leopold II, Belgian and English missionaries (Gifford, 1995). The Church was part of the triade of King Leopolds' rule in the Congo Free State: state, private companies and businesses, and the church were intended to centralise the Congo and therefore create a stable basis from which King Leopold could exploit the colony (Yates, 1980, p.260; Fabian, 1983, p.169). On the 26th of May 1906, the Congo Free State signed a covenant with the Vatican to strengthen the relationship with the church. The covenant provided Catholic missions 100 to 200 acres of free land and payment for their schools in exchange for establishing elementary school and a composed curriculum with forestry, manual crafts, agriculture and the Belgian national language: French (Fabian, 1983, p.170; Meeuwis, 2011, p.192). Missionaries could travel for free in the colony, paid almost no taxes and kept administration for the state (Yates, 1980; Gifford, 1995). The agreement between the Church and the colonial power was reinforced within Belgian Congo's official Belgian Colonial Manifest, adopted on the 18th of October 1908 where the Congo Free State officially became Belgian Congo (Gifford, 1995; van Reybrouck, 2010).

The most important goal of the Colonial Manifest was the *Belginazation* of the Congo (Yates, 1980, p.260). French became the official language for the colonial administration and ruler and the Catholic church grew in numbers, mission stations and followers (Yates, 1980). The control of education and language was no coincidence nor just a side effect of the *Belginazation*: it was an import aim of colonial rule, establishing and maintaining power through it (Fabian, 1983, p.183). According to Au (2017, p.65): 'national and Catholic became identical.' The Belgian minister of Colonies Louis Franck stated that 'only the Catholic church could change the mentality of the natives and teach them a conscience, and therefore loyalty to the Belgian state' (van Reybrouck, 2010, p.312). Maurice Lippens, Governor-

General of the Congo called government officials 'apostles of labour' demonstrating the intertwining of state and church (Fabian, 1983, p.178).

Maquet (1949, p.271) defends the racial segregation that came into being by the *Belginazation* policies stating that 'legal recognition of different levels of civilisation and the resulting discrimination is not to be regarded as based on race.' The different levels of civilisation were best seen in the so called *évolués*. *Évolués* are the people of the Congo whom became civilized citizens in the eyes of the Belgians and 'rejected their fore-bears and culture' (Fierens, 2016, p.84). The status of the *évolués* is made clear in the Lingala word for *évolués, mundule nombe,* what is literally translated as 'black white', including the Catholic faith. As a consequence the *évolués*, many of whom were Catholic priests, were rooted in Catholic ideology (Maquet, 1949, p.248; Gifford, 1995).

According to the framework of LeVan, what was the position of the Catholic church under colonial rule? It was outward orientated in getting more Congolese people baptized and providing education and healthcare (Yates, 1980, p.261; Fabian, 1983). However, the church indicates low on autonomy: all their possessions and privileges were granted by the state, most of the clergy was Belgian, the church was a vital part of the policy of the Belgians and the Congolese educated elite was for a large part a member of the church (Maquet, 1949; Gifford, 1995; van Reybrouck, 2010). That explains the position the Church took in supporting the authoritarian rule of Belgium in Belgian Congo. As archbishop of Kinshasa Malula stated in 1973 about the Church under colonial rule: 'for my people, the Church was the state, and the state was the Church' (Gifford, 1995, p.81).

The church on the road to independency

In December 1955 the Belgium author Jef van Bilsen published a 30-year plan the independence of Belgian Congo in the *Afrika Fokus*, a science journal for African politics (Beke, 2000). The article proposed building a bureaucracy that could be run by educated Congolese in order to have a smooth transition of power and in 1985 a decolonized Belgian Congo, 30 years after publication of the article (Beke, 2000, p.44). The plan was picked up by several newspapers and caused shocked reactions by both Belgians and Congolese whom saw it as undermining of the state (Beke, 200, p.44). But a small group of *évolués* got inspired and publicised a year later the *Conscience Africaine* in July 1956 (Beke, 2000; Fierens, 2016). The manifesto called for the people to *''be civilized Congolese, not 'black-skinned Europeans''' (…) 'and that while we embrace the values of European civilization, we wish to remain ourselves.'* And later in the manifesto: *''Give up your attitude of racial segregation''* (*Conscience*

Africaine, as quoted in Fierens, 2016, p.87) The *Conscience Africaine*, although not directly referring to independence, followed the idea behind the 30-year plan of van Bilsen: that Congo needed an elite who could run the country without the Belgians (Beke, 2000, p.45). All of the group were *évolués*, rooted and educated in Catholic ideology (Fierens, 2016, p.88). Part of the initiators of the *Conscience Africaine* were Patrice Lumumba and Moïse Tshombe, the later prime-minister and governor of Katanga in the independent Congo (Beke, 2000, p.46). Another group involved in advocating for the decolonization of Belgian Congo was the Association of Bakongo (Akabo), founded for the preservation of the Kikongo language in Central Africa, but later mainly a political party for the Congo and the interest of their people. In contrary to the ideas of the *Conscience Africaine* manifesto the Akabo was the first advocating and politicizing the immediate independence of Belgian Congo (Fierens, 2016, p.90). Their chairman was Joseph Kasavubu. Akobo's wanted a politicization of the Congolese people and argued that the national languages should be spoken in their territory on schools, administration and the church (Fierens, 2016). That threatened the monopoly of Catholic churches over educational institutions they had due to the *Belginazation* policies of Belgian Congo (Fierens, 2016, p.94). The Catholic Church saw the political organisations and parties as 'evil and useless, characterized by struggling, whereas we want unity of the Congo' (Fierens, 2016, p.89). One of the authors of the *Conscience Africaine*, Patrice Lumumba shared this idea about unity and took a moderate stance on the independency, not very different from van Bilsen's idea (Beke, 2000, p.46; Fierens, 2016, p.90). In 1958 this changed at the World Expo in Brussels where 200 Congolese were shown in a 'human zoo' (Boffey, 2018). Facing this racial segregation Lumumba left his initial stance on a slow independence for the Congo and became more radical, founding by his return to the Congo the *Mouvement National Congolaise* (MNC), where he declared himself chair and demanded direct independence for the Congo (Beke, 2000, p.47; Fierens, 2016; Aksu, 2018).

On 13 January 1959, King Boudewijn of Belgium asserted the Congo's right to independence in a speech in response to riots in Elisabethville, contradicting Belgian policy until that moment (Beke, 2000; van Reybrouck, 2010; Fierens, 2016). A political round table conference was held in Brussels to discuss the framework of independence in the beginning of 1960 (Fierens, 2016, p.92). The Congolese joining the round table conference decided to act as one front, despite different political ideas for the Congo (Fierens, 2016, p.92). A resolution was adopted by the Belgian and Congolese members: fixing the date of independence on the 30th of June and adopted a bicameral parliamentary system: Kasavubu, of the Abako, became president and Lumumba, of the MNC, prime minister (Beke, 2000).
The Catholic Church in the meantime went through a change in leadership. Where in 1935 only 214 Congolese clergy worked for the church, by the end of 1959 this number was grown to 2.284 (Gifford,

1995). That was such a large group that pope John XXIII declared the Catholic Church of the Congo an independent church on 1959 November 25, being no longer a mission field of the Belgian Catholic church but an independent entity, with own hierarchy and structure, giving the Congolese Catholic Church more autonomy (Gifford, 1995). However, this was also a political move, best explained by Patrick Boyle (1992, p.53): ‘’*the state's sphere of action are set by the definition of 'temporal,' that is, those activities of civilization that arise in the 'earthly' city (…) The church in no way limits the state's rights: church and state complement one another, each by working in its proper realm*.’’ This idea of *laïcite*, or the two-realm principle, gave the church the autonomy to distance itself from the political tensions between the new political movements and the Belgian state. Although the two-realm principle might indicate towards a complete abstention of the ’temporal’ realm, bishops in the early 1960s claimed the colonial legacy of the Church: a network throughout the whole country linked through hundreds of parishes, mission stations, schools, and hospitals and focused their policy on maintaining their privileges and protecting Church institutions (Boyle, 1992).

The *laïcite* principle also explains the position the church took in LeVan’s model. The goal orientation of the church was amidst all the political turmoil stability and perseveration of their privileges, which the new political parties threatened. The autonomy of the church was also in danger, since all the land and privileges were agreed with the incumbent regime of Belgian Congo, not with new political forces (Gifford, 1995). However, Congo was becoming independent, whether the church wanted that or not (van Reybrouck, 2010; Fierens, 2016, p.94), and there was no stability . The orientation of the Catholic church was inward in the sense that they focused on the spiritual realm and by stating that they were against political parties, but not a political force itself, they kept a low-profile on the road to independency of the Congo (Fierens, 2016, p.88). The stance of the Catholic Church toward the new state was, in other words, self-protective (Boyle, 1992).

The church and the coup d’état of Mobutu

The first years of independent Congo-Kinshasa were characterised by political turmoil and crises: mutiny, coup d’état, and a foreign intervention force to name some (Schatzberg, 1997). One of the main crisis facing the newly independent state was the self-proclaimed secession of Katanga, the richest province of the Congo in the South West. Moïse Thsombe, the governor of Katanga, declared the secession of the province on 11 July 1960, backed by the USA and Belgium government, whom wanted to retain control of the rich mineral grounds of Katanga (Schatzberg, 1997; Beke, 2000; Aksu, 2018). Under pressure of the international community Belgian stepped down, but in the aftermath

made clear, with support of the US who were afraid for Soviet influence in Central Africa, that 'that communist Lumumba' must be removed (Beke, 2000, p.49; Aksu, 2018). Kasavubu was pressured to sack Lumumba from his role as prime-minister and handed him over the commander of the army, Joseph Mobutu . He later handed Lumumba to Katangese secessionists of Tshombe, who murdered him with approval of the CIA and the Belgians (Beke, 2000). In 1964 a rebel group calling themselves Simba caused chaos in the Kivu province of Congo, and insurgency spread through the whole country. The army was undisciplined, lacking leadership and loyalty and was feared as a 'pillaging and raping force', and Kasavubu could not stop the Congo slipping further into rebellion and chaos (Bechtolsheimer, 2012, p.29).

On November 25th of 1965, amidst all that political turmoil, Mobutu seized power in a military coup d'état (Naniuzeyi, 1999). Mobutu's powerbase was the army, which was strong due to the American military aid and of whom Mobutu was the commander (Bechtolsheimer, 2012, p.72) Over the 30 years Mobutu was president of the Congo US$300 million worth of military hardware and US$100 million worth of military training was given to the army (Southall & O'Hare, 2002).

The coup d'état of Mobutu was welcomed by many Congolese, who were tired of the *évolués*, criticised of being the substitutes of the Belgian rulers, profiting from opportunities left by the Belgians, while most Congolese saw no change or even a worsening in their situation since independence (Naniuzeyi, 1999, p.679). In a way, decolonization was not per se ending the colonial project, it just changed the rulers (Englebert & Dunn, 2013, p.39). With a parliament consisting of 70 ethnic groups, Congolese politics were characterised by strong regional and ethnic loyalties, and the collapse of Congo as a state after the political turmoil was something to be reckoned with (Aksu, 2018, p.101). Mobutu therefore favoured a unitary state and consolidated and centralized power in Kinshasa (Schatzberg, 1997, p.73). Mobutu offered stability, choose governors serving at his pleasure, reorganised the provinces into larger territories, professionalised the Congolese army and abolished political parties other than its own (Schatzberg, 1997; Fierens 2016).

The downfall of Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana in 1966 demonstrated to Mobutu that being a nationalist leader and centralising control under the presidency was not enough to stay in power. 'Authoritarian rule threatened to be very unstable unless regimes could maintain some public support. As a result, autocrats spent effort in co-opting those groups within the government that were too dangerous to exclude' (Cheeseman, 2015, p.58). Mobutu first and foremost promised stability and was backed by the Belgian and US government (Bechtolsheimer, 2012, p.29). The church greeted the coup of Mobutu

in 1965 with relief and even cautiously expressed enthusiasm about a strong leader for Congo (Boyle, 1992). Mobutu affirmed military control and in 1967 founded the *Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution* (MPR), acknowledging the MPR as the only party allowed and abolishing step by step all other forms of possible opposition, from youthgroups to unions (Schatzberg, 1997, p.73). The church remained, being the only territory-wide organization and thus a strong opponent. That is why Mobutu choose co-optation, following the argumentation of Cheeseman (2015, p.58). Mobutu agreed of funding and during the regime first years most school children were enrolled in state-financed and Catholic-affiliated schools. Mobutu enhanced this relationship with the Catholic church by visiting religious conferences and financing elementary education via mission schools and the church (Boyle, 1992). Joseph Malula, the Archbishop of Kinshasa welcomed Mobutu in an open letter in 1965 with the following words: ''*Mr. President, the Church recognizes your authority, because authority comes from God. We will loyally apply the laws you establish. You can count on us in your work of restoring the peace toward which all so ardently aspire*.'' (Joseph Malula as cited in Boyle, 1992)

According to the framework of LeVan the Church under the coup d'état of Mobutu was low on autonomy since there was no stable political climate which had an effect on the church. But most importantly because the Church was funded with state revenues, lowering their autonomy. The goal orientation of the Church was inward orientated, focused on preserving Catholic institutions and stability and thus co-opting with strong man Mobutu.

The Church and the Sovereign National Conference

The third wave of democratisation rolled through Sub Sahara Africa, the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and the Soviet Union was about to collapse. (Schraeder, 1995; Englebert & Dunn, 2013; Heywood, 2014). Inspired by these political changes and shifts, opposition became more militant in Kinshasa. Combined with the decline of an already weak economy this created an opportunity where Mobutu could lost control of the Congo (Schatzberg, 1997, p.74). The people were done with a ruling class that ruled "at the pleasure of foreign powers to the disadvantage of their own people" (Naniuzeyi, 1999, p.672). The opposition was further strengthened by a renewed focus of the international community and donor aid on civil society and democratisation (Englebert & Dunn, 2013). Considering all this tensions and acknowledging that the Mobutu regime relied on international aid, Mobutu adopted in January 1990 a three-party structure and promised that he would listen to suggestions for the future of Congo, proposing a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) (TIME, 1990; Schatzberg, 1997; Kisangani & Scott, 2009, p.207).

The Church held Mobutu on his word and published in April 1990 a letter to Mobutu asking for the SNC, by doing-so abandoning the self-protective policy the church held from independency onwards (Boyle, 1992). The letter's last section emphasises on the need of a new constitution based on the concept of subsidiarity, wanting to have the decision-power of a political community on the lowest level possible (Boyle, 1992). The letter of the bishops was important in two ways, at first it contradicted an idea the Mobutu regime usually used in their defence: that the Congo needed strong central authority or it would collapse and second that a unitary state was the way to obtain a stable Congo (Boyle, 1992). That was according to the Bush administration whom perceived Mobutu as both "part of the problem" and "part of the solution" for a stable Central Africa (Schraeder, 1995, p.1168). However, the bishops showed another way: that of political dialogue and decentralisation. The pressure on actually organising a SNC became stronger, characterised by an interview of the chair of the Zaire League of Human Rights, Buana Kabwe, whom responded to a New York Times journalist in 1991 about the SNC ''If the same thing does not happen here, Mobutu could be in trouble" (Noble, 1991).

And thus came the SNC into being in 1991. The aim of the SNC was for representatives of different ethnic and regional groups to discuss and come up with an idea how to take Congo forward, formulated in a written constitution (Cheeseman, 2015). Mobutu stacked the National Conference with hundreds of his own supporters whom delayed and watered down the proceedings of the SNC (Schraeder, 1995, p.1167). From the beginning the archbishop of Kisangani Monsengwo, an outspoken opponent of Mobutu, chaired the SNC.

Monsengwo was one of the new leaders of the church replacing the old episcopal leadership like Jospeh Malula whom were close to Mobutu, being his supporters from the early days of his rule (Boyle, 1992). The new leaders were from a new generation, inspired by the visits to Pope John Paul II's appeal to Catholics to "step forward and play a role in their societies" and witnessing that independency did not equal social and economic justice for the Congolese people (Cheeseman, 2015, p.75). In 1991, Monsengwo stated in an open letter to all bishops that 'the church has to be more prophetic, addressing the social and economic systems which keep people and societies underdeveloped' (as cited in Boyle, 1992). Monsengwo gained popular respect for his strong anti-Mobutu stance. To undermine Monsengwo's popularity, Mobutu used 1990 invited several US evangelists to his TV station, fiercy preaching that 'the downtrodden should accept their lot in this life and expect relief in the next' (Reno, 1997, p.53).

In January 1992, Mobutu suspended the SNC. That was the trigger for the Catholic church to call people to protest in a 'March of Hope' for the Congo. Tragically, the 'March of Hope' was beaten apart because government forces fired indiscriminately at the participants, killing more than forty and wounding many more (Cheeseman, 2015, p.75). When teachers joined the 'March of Hope' to pressurise the Mobutu regime further, the Catholic Church introduced the system of 'salary top-ups': where parents pay most of the salaries, and thus a more autonomous church which used to be dependent on state-finance for their teachers (Titeca, De Herdt & Wagemakers, 2013, p.121).

According to the framework of LeVan, the church was high on autonomy, mostly because they were independent from state-finance. Their goal orientation was outward, opting for the SNC, addressing social and economic injustice and the need for political reform. The main explanations can be found in the new episcopal leadership, a new international political reality without the Cold War dominating foreign policy of the US, and an international community promoting and aiding civil society and democratisation.

The church and the recent DRC elections

At a press conference on 9 December 2011, Kinshasa's archbishop Monsengwo, the same who chaired the SNC, told journalists that the electoral commission's results 'represented neither truth nor justice'. Still, Kabila insisted that he had won legitimate and remained in office (Dizolele & Kambele, 2012, p.115). In 2016 according to the constitution Kabila needed to step down and organise elections (Englebert, 2019). However, he refused to give up his presidency and postponed the elections till 2017. He struck a power-sharing deal with the opposition towards that elections, making Etienne Tshisekedi prime-minister and agreeing on organising the elections (Africa Research Bulletin, 2017). The Constitutional Court ruled in a highly contested ruling that Kabila could be president until this elections, undermining constitutional restrains (Englebert, 2019). After

After this election the Kabila government launched a systematic attack on democratic mechanisms and check-and-balance processes towards the elections of 2016 (Dizolele & Kambele, 2012, p.115). After 2016 Kabila needed to step down according to constitutional restrains, but he postponed the elections several times due to ebola, logistics and other claims why he could not organise the elections. The pressure on Kabila to organise the elections grew and in a joint statement of the

European Union, the African Union and the UN Kabila was called to continue the dialogue among political stakeholders by fair elections (Africa Research Bulletin, 2019).

On the 23 December 2018 elections were held in the DRC. In the following days numerous reports of fraud and irregularities were reported by the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI). Irregularities between the polls of the CENI and the observatory samples direct from the polling stations are huge and suggest a virtually zero change that Tshisekedi had won and thus the elections were falsified on a huge scale (Englebert, 2019). The Catholic Episcopal Commission (CENCO) thus called Martin Fayalu, opposition leader, as the winner, openly contradicting the regime (Freytas-Tamura, 2019). Bishop Donatien Nshole, secretary general of the CENCO stated that the Congolese made a very clear choice at the ballot box according to the almost 40.000 observers of the Church whom observed the 2018 elections (Englebert, 2019; Freytas-Tamura, 2019).

On Thursday, 10 January 2019, Joseph Kabila declared Felix Tshisekedi as the victor of the 2018 elections and inaugurated him as the new president of the Congo, whilst Martin Fayalu is the official winner according to the Church. Fayalu responded to BBC-journalist Fergal Keane (10 January 2019): ‘’ I will do whatever is possible for me to do to get the truth because the Congolese want change."

The UN Security Council called upon all citizens and political opponents to remain calm and called that everyone should pursue the first peaceful transition of power in the history of the DRC (UNSC, 2019, 11 January). The Catholic Church one week later, on Wednesday, called on citizens to refrain from violence, fearing and recognising the security forces reputation of using tear gas, beatings and bullet rounds to stop the protests and restore order (BBC, 2019).

According to the framework of LeVan, the church had had an outward orientated goal, claiming that the general elections were a fraud and by providing the public good of elections observers. Another outward goal orientation of the church was stability for the Congo, urging the state and the people to refrain from violence. The autonomy of the church was high, almost independent from state-finance and with strong leadership.

Conclusion

The Catholic Church in the DRC took upon different positions towards the incumbent authoritarian regime. From co-opting with Belgian rule and Mobutu and choosing for democratisation during the SNC and the recent elections. Which factors explain why the Catholic Church chooses to support authoritarian rule or democratisation in the Democratic Republic of Congo?

Applying the framework of LeVan to each case in the DRC, both the goal orientation and the autonomy of the church differs across time. During colonial rule the church position is best explained by the low autonomy factor of LeVan, since the 'church was the state, and the state was the church' (Gifford, 1995, p.81). On the road to independency the autonomy factor also explains the focus on stability and perseveration of church privilege, since it was a time of political turmoil and uncertainty. That is also the best explanation why the Church co-opted with Mobutu at the early days of his regime, since he promised stability and the preservation of the Church privileges. Important is also that the elite of *évolués* whom formed the new political leaders of the Congo were all rooted and educated in Catholic ideology. The autonomy was low since the state-finance of Church organisations. A main thing that changed towards the SNC was the independency from state-finance for paying the salaries of teachers gave the church a voice of democratisation, chairing the SNC and call upon people to protest the Mobutu regime.

The goal orientation and position of of the church towards the incumbent government is mostly dependent on the autonomy factor. An inward goal orientation is seen when the church is low on autonomy and chooses for self-protective policies and co-optation, preserving its privileges and state-finance. The outward goal orientation, seen during the SNC and recent elections, were due to a change of leadership, international political shifts, the Mobutu regime that lost its international support, and the renewed focus on democratisation and civil society in international aid. Also the change of policy of the Vatican, calling for the Church to step forward played its role. But the Catholic Church in the DRC was most importantly outward orientated because the Church had the autonomy to act on their own, not depending on state-finance. Taking initiative in the road forward for the Congo at the SNC is a political mean to retain control on the Church possessions and influence but also gives the Church the room to be the 'voice of democratic protest'. They stayed that during recent elections. The church is institutional stable, political relevant and the independent voice that played and plays an important role in the troubled way of the DRC between authoritarian rule and democratisation, if it can preserve its autonomous position at least...

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