

Democratization In Democratic Republic Of Congo: An Empirical Analysis

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Abstract

Most of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa are the hybrid and authoritative regimes. The process of democratization was triggered in 1990s when most of the countries of the world were moving towards democratization. This concept got momentum and occupied significance place for the practical governance. The aim of this paper is to analyze the process of democratization in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Several indicators like civil society, education, political institutions, civilian control, ruling elites, free media and free and fair elections are used to measure the process and efficacy of democratization in the Congo.

Keywords: Democratization, Civil society, education, political institutions, free media

1. Introduction

Democratization refers to a process which brings and ensures democracy. At this level democracy is not flourishing rather it is in the transition phase. This is an abstract idea which cannot be touched and counted. However, there is an obvious question that how to measure the existence of democracy in a particular country? Or how the process of democratization is going on in the selected case study?

According to formal definition: "Democratization is the transition from authoritarian or semi-authoritarian systems to democratic political systems, where democratic systems are taken to be those approximating to universal suffrage, regular elections, a civil society, the rule of law, and an independent judiciary."¹The Economist

enumerates different categories of countries regarding democracy which includes full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes, and authoritarian considered as dictatorial regimes.²

DR Congo is one of the very richest countries of Africa in terms of mineral and natural resources but this country never enjoyed her wealth due to certain problems. Mobutu ruled the country for 32 years and turned it into African nationalism, although he has been inclined towards the West and served for them as well. There have been vital interests of different foreign countries in the DR Congo; therefore this country fell into the civil war which marked the history of the country.³ Congo gained independence from Belgium in 1960 and Lumumba was elected as prime minister.⁴ He was pressurized by the U.S when

he showed his sentiments towards Soviets rather than the U.S during the Cold war period. U.S felt direct threat of spreading socialism, losing her influence as well as their ideology of capitalism. Lumumba was murdered. After him Mobutu Sese Seko in 1965 came into the power and brought the one party system. He was such a powerful dictator and ruled the country from 1965 to 1997.⁵ Firstly he converted the name of country into Zaire in 1971 and introduced many reforms. He gave the most important seats to his party personals and they worked for prolonging his rule.

Mobutu had dual personality; on one hand he brought the native African nationalism in Congolese people, on the other hand he had good relations with the West. At that time there was no free media and press, therefore whenever he was on visit it was showed by the press that he is inside the country so that fear among the people could be maintained.⁶ However, Mobutu's regime was shaken by the rebellion movement by the Laurent Kabila in May, 1997.

This movement was supported by the neighboring countries Rwanda and Burundi. Later on the rebellion spreaded anarchy in the Eastern region which later on spread like fire in the country. Troops came from Zimbabwe, Namibia, Angola, Chad and Sudan in order to help the Kabila's government. Cease fire was announced in 1999 by the DRC and coalition groups with the Congolese and other armed rebellion groups.⁷ Kabila asked the foreign troops to leave the country but they refused which resulted in nation-wide fighting among the rebel groups. Country was divided into three segments:

- Controlled by the Laurent Kabila
- Controlled by the Rwanda
- Controlled by the Uganda

Eventually in July, 1999 the peace accord was signed which paved the way for the UN peace keeping forces, later foreign troops withdrew

but rebellions got much strength.⁸ Laurent Kabila was assassinated on 16 July in 2001. His son Joseph Kabila came into power and installed a transition government under Pretoria agreement on April 2, 2003. He set the national dialogue for peace and reconciliation. There were four voice presidents from different rebel groups and other factions.⁹ A referendum which was held in 2005 for adopting the new constitution. It was approved by 84 percent people. This constitution established a decentralized semi-presidential republic with the separation of powers between the executive, legislative and judiciary. Joseph Kabila did many efforts to bring harmony and peace in the country. He made the progress in terms of political and economic terms but overall situation is bad as far as human rights and violence is concerned which paved the way for the general elections which took place after four decades in July, 2006.¹⁰

2. Theoretical Framework:

There is a need for a comprehensive model which provides theoretical foundation for the analysis and measurement of democracy. The theoretical model used for analysis comprises of different indicators including civil society, education, political institutions, civilian control, ruling elites, free media and free and fair elections. These indicators provide the basis for the measurement of democracy and also measure the level of democracy. The basic assumptions are:

- If there is lack of transiency and use of unfair meanings in general practices and particularly in elections then this will lead to political instability.
- When there will be political instability then there will be military coup which leads to dictatorial or authoritative government.
- The highly centralized government, consequently will result in weak democracy. There will be subject culture, absence of national political

parties, no civil society, controlled or tied media and snatching of civil liberties. This all will result in ethnic and religious conflicts.

This model will provide an insight to look and assess the process of democratization in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

3. Democratization in DR Congo: Measurement through Framework

3.1. Education

Education is very necessary for every society and provides the foundation for the other indicators of democracy. The formal definition of education is: "the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life."¹¹

Table: Literacy Rate in DR Congo

Total population	Male	Female
67 %	80 %	54.1 %

Source:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cg.html>

The literacy rate is showing good results which means that Congolese people strives for education yet there is a need of improvement for the promotion of democracy and peace.

3.2. Civil Society

Civil Society is an important and comprehensive indicator of the democracy. The London School of Economics, Centre for Civil Society working definition elaborates: "Civil society refers to the arena of un-coerced

Education gives acceleration to the process of democratization because the more people are educated the more they will get awareness of their rights, liberty, advance development and form the modern society which will be beyond from the clutches of traditional society. This thing will pave the way for the democratization in the country.

Education in DR Congo is greatly affected by the ongoing civil war in the Eastern and other parts of the country. There is a bad economic situation as well as armed conflict in the country which is stopping the children from getting education. However situation has improved with the installation of democratic government, yet there are difficulties due to the structure of the education which needs immediate attention. According to the current statistics the literacy rate of Congo is 67 percent.

collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organizations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organizations, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trades unions, self-help groups,

social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy group.”¹²

The concept of civil society got momentum in modern era. According to some scholars it refers to the associational groups which are responsible for the raising the voices for the rights of the people such as human rights, social issues, women rights, business associations and unions. Some scholar believes that these associational groups are the artificial society. The real civil society is based on the commonality of people, in which he or she could raise his or her issues. This depends on the level of awareness of the common people. If there will be active participation by the people then there will be civilian rule which will ensure the liberties of the masses. Giving more roles to civil society will trigger the process of democratization which will ultimately show progress in the political development.

Right from the independence DR Congo is facing worst crisis, although this country is very rich and perhaps this is the main reason that foreign countries take interest in it, but the common people of DR Congo are affected. This war torn area is deprived of the any associational groups and the violations of human rights is common. Right from Mobutu to Joseph Kabila this area has been under the rebellions and armed groups which has hampered the fabric of the society and did not let the people to be integrated and united.¹³

3.3. Civic Political Culture

Civic political Culture means orientation, belief and attitude about political system. When these beliefs are collected and combined this is called political culture.

“A civic culture or civic political culture is a political culture characterized by "acceptance of the authority of the state" and "a belief in participation in civic duties". The term was first used in Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's

book, *The Civic Culture*. Civic political culture is a mixture of other political cultures namely parochial, subject and participant political cultures.”¹⁴

Participative culture in the society enhances the political awareness which results in the progress of democratization. People realize their duties and leave their prejudice for sake of national integration.

In DR Congo there is a subject+ parochial culture in which people are stick to their tribal identities and authorities. They submit their authorities to tribal chiefs and war lords. Therefore at state level the culture is subject which means that people are the subjects of tribal chiefs and war lords. They are more loyal to their tribes than state and nation.¹⁵ Civic political culture is absent from the society of DR Congo. They are operating within the boundaries of prejudice and strong ethnic identity. Therefore there are horizontal and vertical cleavages in the society.

3.4. Strong Political Institutions

Political parties form the foremost and most significant element of the political institutions. The basic purpose of political parties is that they articulate and integrate the interest of the people. “Political parties are the organized groups that voluntarily agree on an ideology and they perused power under the framework of constitution”.

Political parties try to organize the public opinion and formulate the general will. They do political communication and aware the masses about their political rights. Therefore they do interest articulation or aggregation as well as representation. Hence it is essential for the democracy and political education, there is a dire need of political parties in the process of democratization.

In Africa before 1990s there was the trend of one party system which mainly concerned with

the ruling government. After 1990s this trend was changed and multi-party system appeared in political arena. There are altogether 278 political parties but in DR Congo the most dominate are:

- People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy
- Movement for the Liberation of Congo
- Unified Lumumbist Party
- Social Movement for Renewal
- Forces for Renewal
- Congolese Rally for Democracy
- Coalition of Congolese Democrats
- Convention of Christian Democrats
- Union of Mobutuist Democrats

In spite of all these parties there has been weak nation and poor institution building. The main reason is that mostly parties are consisted of different rebels groups or factions which make the institutions weak and ineffective.

3.5. Free and Fair Elections

Free and fair elections is an important indicator of democracy. The level of democracy can be

Table: Data of Election 2006

Polling stations	Number of voters	Presidential Candidates	Turn out
53,000	25.7 million	33	47%

Source:http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_in_the_Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo;
http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-africa_democracy/congo_name_3776.jsp

In this election Joseph Kabila got overwhelming majority and became the president. After becoming the president he has to face many difficulties like the problem of North Kivu and South Kivu. Now there is a largest number of UN peace keeping forces of the world is operating in DR Congo. They have their special mission name as MONUIC. Kabila

checked by analyzing the continuation of the elections. If there are free and fair elections in the country then that country is on right track of democracy.

“An election is a formal decision-making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office. Elections have been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracy operates since the 17th century.”¹⁶

Election provides the formal way for the accountability of the previous regime as well as the role of opposition parties. However, regular elections mean that sovereignty belongs to the people and they have the free choice to choose or elect their leaders. Therefore it paves the way for flourishing the democratic process.

In Africa free and fair elections are missing due to the autocratic regimes. Same is the case with the DR Congo where there was a civilian dictator who ruled for more than 32 years but there was no election in this era. On July, 2006, this so called democratic country observed her first elections. With the collaboration of EU and South Africa DR Congo was able to conduct elections. EU donated 432million U.S dollar.

has the different rebels groups in coalition. Therefore over all county's position and governess is bad. Hence I can say that there is a domination of one party and opposition is weak on the one hand and there are different militia factions operating in various parts of the country on the other hand.

Table: Presidential Votes in the Election 2006

Candidates	Votes	Percentage
Joseph Kabila	7,590,485	44 %
Jean-Pierre BembaGombo	3,392,592	20.3%

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_in_the_Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo

3.6. Free Media:

Free Media refers to free press which has underling meaning of freedom of right, express and speech. Media has occupied the significant place in the state being a 5th pillar of the state. Media gives awareness about different socio-political issues which enhance the capabilities of the civil society, and a strong civil society will actively participate in political, social and

other issues of the state. Therefore it plays a crucial role in the process of democratization.

Free press is very essential indicator of democracy. Unfortunately in DR Congo since independence, it has been controlled by the ruling regimes. No efforts have been made by the leaders or by the society to make media efficient and free.

Table: Democracy and Freedom of Press

Corruption perceptions index (2009)	1.9	8.9
Corruption perceptions index (Rank of 180 states) (2009)	162	6
Democracy index 2008 (Overall Score) (2008)	2.28	9.25
Democracy index 2008 (Rank of 167 states) (2008)	154	6
World press freedom index (2009)	53.5	0.00
World press freedom index (Rank of 175 states) (2009)	146	1

Source: Corruption Perceptions Index 2009, Transparency International, The Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy 2008, World Press Freedom Index 2009, Reporters without Borders

3.7. Civilian Control

Broadly speaking civilian control means the control of the common people. Civilians have the right to rule rather than the army or military regime. In this civilian control, civilians must be responsible for controlling the institutions. Military and other institutions should be in their limits. This can happen when the ruling elites

are capable to perform in a proper framework. Ruling elites promote the civic culture as well as ensure the civilians liberties.

There is dire need of civilian control on the political and governmental institutions. But in this case there is no ruling elite who could integrate the people as well as lead the nation. Instead, there are militia and rebel groups who are controlling the vast land of the country. Therefore there is no civilian control on political and governmental institutions.

3.8. Civil Liberties

“Civil liberties are rights and freedoms that protect an individual from the state. Civil liberties set limits on the government so that its agents cannot abuse their power and interfere unduly with the lives of private citizens. Common civil liberties include the rights of people, freedom of religion, and freedom of speech, and additionally, the right to due process, to a trial, to own property, and to privacy.”¹⁷

As above mentioned definition illustrates that there are different types of liberties which expand the process of democratization.

Democracy implies for the civil liberties and rule of law. Therefore Georges Nzongola asserts that “democracy is the continuous social process of explaining fundamental human rights.”¹⁸ Civil liberties cannot do alone anything rather there must be political, economic, social, cultural and other liberties.

Civil liberties are hampered in this war torn area. There are many violations of human rights as well as other liberties. During last 3 months 1244 women were raped which shows the absence and level of liberties in DR Congo.¹⁹

Table: Civil Liberties Index of DR Congo

Country	Civil liberties score2009	Civil liberties score2007	Civil liberties democracy2009
DR Congo	5	5	113

Source: <http://www.worldaudit.org/civillibs.htm>

Conclusion

In DR Congo unfair means and lack of transparency results in political instability. The authoritarian regimes have been installed and this resulted in highly centralized government. Consequently, this hampered the role of civil society which resulted in weak democracy. The weak democracy results in religious and ethnic clashes as it happened in DR Congo where there are weak political institutions with the weak civil society and the one dominated political party. Thus the highly centralized government results in weak democracy and weak democracy consequently resulted in

ethnic and religious clashes. Therefore in order to avoid this type of situation there is a major requirement for the democratic development and that development needs a paradigm change. Basically democracy is the expansion of political and civil rights. It ensures the rule of law and persuasion of common goals. For this reason, there is a need of good governance and existence of public institutions. There should be some different policies options for the South and North Kivu and various issues related to health, human rights and drought as well.

End Notes

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