Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)
Rice

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (also known as Congo: Kinshasa, or Zaire) gained its independence from Belgium in 1960. The government that was established had both a Prime Minister and a President, with the Prime Minister being the head of government. Shortly thereafter, parliamentary elections were held and Patrice Lumumba, a member of the Congolese National Movement-Lumumba Faction (MNC-L) became Prime Minister. He ran into opposition from President Joseph Kasavubu, who dismissed Lumumba on September 5th. Lumumba, however, won a vote of confidence in Parliament (which discredited the interim Prime Minister, Joseph Iléo, who is not listed on the spreadsheet). Shortly thereafter, on September 14th, Lumumba was deposed, arrested and murdered under circumstances that are still not completely known in the present day. Colonel Joseph Mobutu, a political rival of Lumumba was responsible for the coup which deposed Lumumba, gained control of the government for six days before ceding power to the President, Joseph Kasavubu, who was a member of the Association of the Bakongo People (ABAKO)(SOLS change). This is not a SOLS change, based on the short duration of his tenure in office.

In 1965, Kasavubu was overthrown in a military coup again led by Mobutu, who was at that point the commander-in-chief of the national army. Mobutu declared himself President, and consolidated power into his own hands. This is a SOLS change. In 1967, he created his own party, the Popular Revolutionary Movement (MPR). This change of affiliation from the military to the MPR does not represent a SOLS change because Geddes codes his regime as a pure-Personalist regime. In 1972, he changed his name to Mobutu Sese Seko, as part of his drive for cultural awareness in the DRC (which included changing the name of the country to Zaire). His government lasted until 1997.

Note: Unlike Geddes (2009) which codes Kasavubu and Mobutu (after Kasavubu) as two separate personalist regimes, GWF code the entire period from September 14, 1960 to May 16, 1997 as a single personalist regime controlled by Mobutu. This means that GWF treat Kasavubu as a puppet for Mobutu. However, while some sources imply that Mobutu was exercising power during Kasavubu's regime, there are not enough evidence to make us conclude that Kasavubu was a puppet. Also, some sources (see Britannica; Tetteh Osabu-Kle, 2000: 266) state that Kasavubu was actually exercising power during his tenure. Therefore, we treat each Kasavubu and Mobutu as an effective leader who was in charge. And, according to our pre-designated successor rule, we code a SOLS change in 1965 for Mobutu, because he was not a Kasavubu's pre-designated successor.

In 1996, an armed coalition called the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) was created with the goal of ousting Mobutu. It was led by Laurent-Desire Kabila, and had the support of Ugandan and Rwandan troops with it. Peace talks between Mobutu and Kabila failed, and in May 1997, Mobutu left the country. Laurent Kabila then marched into the capital (Kinshasa) and declared himself President (SOLS change). He consolidated power around the AFDL, and created a personalist regime that has lasted to the present day. He also changed the name of Zaire to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (the name which has persisted to the present day).

In 2001, Kabila was assassinated. His son, Joseph Kabila, then assumed the office of president (no SOLS change). Joseph Kabila reversed many of his father's harsher policies, and created his own party known as the People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD). In 2002, Kabila changes his party affiliation from AFDL to PPRD. This change does not represent a SOLS change because Geddes codes his regime as a pure-Personalist regime Joseph Kabila remains in office in the present day. Note that in 2006, the country held its first free and fair elections and Kabila was democratically elected. We code the country as democratic starting with this election. Note that while Cheibub et al. (2010) code the DRC as non-democratic during these years, we code the DRC as a presidential democracy (Schlager 2006; Murison 2003).

The drop in the Polity score in 2016 is likely due to President Kabile Kabange attempt to stay in power beyond his term limits by pushing back the presidential election (Jullien 2015; Al Jazeera 2016).

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