Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)
Vanderbilt

The DRC is coded as non-democratic from independence in 1960 until 2005 and democratic thereafter. In 2006, the country held its first free and fair elections and 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). Geddes codes three different successive personalist systems in the DRC (including one post 2005). There is no SOLS change at independence. Patrice Lumumba of the Movement Congolese Nationaux Congolese-Lumumba (MNC-L) party ruled very briefly in 1960 as prime minister.

On 5 September 1960 president Joseph Kasavubu of the Association des personnes de Bakongo (ABAKO) party dismissed him and appointed Joseph Iléo in his place. However, this action was not recognized by the parliament; Lumumba continued to rule until Colonel Joseph-Désiré Mobutu (later known as Mobutu Sese Seko) seized power in a coup d'etat on 14 September (Gibbs 2000, 374). Mobutu "dismissed both Kasavubu and Lumumba and suspended parliament. ... Mobutu insisted that this rule would be temporary" (Gibbs 2000, 374). He immediately ceded power to a College of Commissioners made up of Congolese intellectuals (Schatzberg 1997, 72). This commission replaced the parliament until June 25, 1961 when the parliament reopened (Nohlen, Thibaut, and Krennerich 1999, 295). Furthermore, Gibbs (2000, 380) states, "Mobutu stepped down from power in February 1961 and returned to his role in the military." Given that he said his rule would be temporary, and indeed it was, his rule is considered an interim regime. Thus, the beginning of his rule is a not SOLS change. Before stepping down again, Mobutu ceded power back to President Kasavubu, and Archigos codes Kasavubu as the leader from then on. This means that the DRC transitioned from a system where the PM could be considered leader to a system where the president is the effective leader. Geddes (2009) codes the start of a personalist system when Kasavubu assumes power. Thus we code a SOLS change here. Kasavubu ruled as president until 1965 when Mobutu again seized power and this time, declared himself president. This is a SOLS change since Mobutu was not Kasavubu's pre-designated successor and instead installed his own personalist regime between 1965 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 1967 Mobutu's SOLS changes from Mil to MRP. This is not a SOLS change. After Mobutu supported the genocidaires escaping to the DRC from the 1994 genocide in neighboring Rwanda, Rwanda and Uganda began a campaign to oust Mobutu. In 1996 Laurent-Désiré Kabila, with the support of Rwandan and Ugandan troops, headed an insurrection. The conflict continued until 1997 when Mobutu left the country and Kabila declared himself president (U.S. Department of State, 2010). This is a SOLS change, as Kabila is clearly not Mobutu's pre-designated successor and he is coded as installing his own personalist regime by Geddes. Laurent-Désiré Kabila was assassinated in 2001 and replaced by his son Joseph Kabila. This is not a SOLS change since Joseph was his father's pre-designated successor and Geddes codes the Kabila personalist regime as continuing through the leadership change. 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. In 2006, the country held its first free and fair elections and we code the country as a parliamentary democracy starting with this election. Interestingly, Joseph Kabila was democratically elected. Since there is no leadership change in 2006, we do not code a SOLS change here. Note that Geddes consider Kabila's personalist regime to continue despite the election. (Note also, however, that given that Kabila's support group shifts from his personalist clique to a wider support base in the general population, this could be considered a SOLS change).

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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