

UDPS, *yoka base!*

The difficult quest to build a grassroots-led party





The [Congo Research Group \(CRG\)](#) was founded in 2015 to promote rigorous, independent research into the violence that affects millions of Congolese. This requires a broad approach. For us, the roots of this violence can be found in a history of predatory governance that dates back to the colonial period and that connects the hillsides of the Kivus with political intrigue and corruption in Kinshasa, as well as in the capitals of Europe, China, and North America. Today, CRG's research aims to explain the complicated interplay among politics, violence, and political economy in the Congo to a wide audience.

[Ebuteli](#) is a Congolese research institute on politics, governance, and violence. Ebuteli ("staircase" in Lingala) aims to promote, through rigorous research, an informed debate to find solutions to the many challenges facing the DRC.



This report was made possible thanks to funding from the European Union's Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and the Swedish International Development Agency. The contents are the sole responsibility of CRG and Ebuteli, its research partner in DRC. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union or Sweden.



Table of Contents

Summary.....	5
Introduction.....	5
From UDPS to UDPS/Tshisekedi: the birth of a sphinx.....	6
From <i>le mal zairois</i> to the letter of the 13 members of parliament: the party's first steps.....	7
The letter written by 13 members of parliament.....	8
1981-1989: the difficult early days of the party and creation of the UDPS myth.....	9
From Gbadolite to Cabu Bridge: the birth of the Sphinx.....	11
Coming out of hiding and the first party split.....	11
The Beltchika affair: <i>tshintu tshetu</i> and the second split.....	14
2011 to 2017: the Sphinx's last act.....	15
Organization and distribution of power in the UDPS.....	16
Initial structure: clandestine and collegial.....	16
Bondeko and the first reorganization of the UDPS.....	17
Reform of the statutes in 2006 and congress in 2010.....	19
Organization and operation of street parliaments.....	21
Street parliaments: the street and the party.....	21
<i>Toyebi ndako</i> : street parliaments and violence.....	22
Conclusion.....	22
Recommendations.....	23
Endnotes.....	25



About the Mukalenga wa Bantu series

On October 3, 2022, the [Congo Research Group \(CRG\)](#) and its research partner Ebuteli launched a series of reports on democracy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This project focuses on structures of mobilization as a means of better understanding how political accountability works—or does not—in the country.

The Congolese overwhelmingly believe in electing their leaders—in our recent poll with BERCI, 77% said this was the best form of governing; very few would like to return to the days of single-party or military rule. And yet, most Congolese are not happy with what democracy has provided. Only 37.5% express some degree of trust in the central government; that same figure is 32% for the national assembly.

What explains this gap between democracy’s popularity and dissatisfaction with the government and elected officials? There are many factors that contribute to the country’s democratic weaknesses. Much of the focus has been on the electoral process itself—the electoral commission, the court system, and allegations of vote rigging. In October, CRG and Ebuteli published an analysis along these lines in preparation for the upcoming 2023 polls. Other analyses have highlighted the need for civic education and the dysfunctions of the media ecosystem in the Congo.

This series of reports takes a different approach, focusing on the various channels of popular mobilization in the country that influence the government’s behavior. The title of this series—“Mukalenga wa bantu, bantu wa mukalenga” (the leader exists thanks to the people, and vice versa)—a saying from Kasai, indicates the need for leaders to be accountable to the people, while at the same time citizens have a duty to mobilize and make themselves heard.

Political parties themselves are the most obvious example of this kind of structure. We are publishing two reports in this series, one on the *Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social* (UDPS) and the other on the *Parti du peuple pour la reconstruction et la démocratie* (PPRD), the two most important parties to arise since democratization began in 1990. The argument here is clear: the degree to which political parties can forge internal mechanisms of accountability and a coherent ideology will influence how they govern.

We also look at other mobilization structures that do not seek to govern but are key to ensuring a properly functioning democracy. Our first report examined the role of the Catholic Church in the country’s democracy. The Congo is a plural society, and these kinds of institutions—and we will highlight their strengths and flaws—have contributed to the vitality of its democracy: protestors have ensured term limits had to be respected, and a majority of members of parliament are not reelected when citizens go to the polls.

Our final report will examine how politicians have used football teams to boost their popularity and influence, including at the electoral level, while underlining the characteristics of accountability within the clubs.

All these reports will be published on our website and on social media. We very much value your ideas: keep us accountable by emailing us (info@ebuteli.org, contact@congoresearchgroup.org) or mentioning us on social media (@GEC_CRG, @ebuteli).



Summary

This report analyzes the history and development of formal and informal structures within the *Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social* (UDPS) in order to gain insight into the dynamics at play in the party today. The study is divided into two main sections. Our research starts by analyzing the factors that furthered Étienne Tshisekedi's rise to power and the path he took from his role as one of 13 members of parliament to sign the "52-page letter to Mobutu" to the position of uncontested leader and symbol of the UDPS and Congolese opposition, from the time of Mobutu Sese Seko through the governments of Laurent and Joseph Kabila. It then looks at the changing internal organization of the UDPS at different moments in its history, and the effects of these changes on internal party democracy.

The study is based on about thirty semi-structured interviews with people who played various roles within the UDPS over the past 40 years. The interviews were sometimes conducted over several days and lasted between one and four hours. We also observed a dozen *parlements debouts* ("street parliaments") in Kinshasa (people discussing political issues in the street) to determine the significance of the discussions and subjects tackled. We then examined the party's internal documents and existing literature on the UDPS in detail. The research presented in this report was undertaken between July 2021 and October 2022.

The report shows that the UDPS continues to be shaped by events surrounding its creation, particularly the Katekelayi massacre and Mobutu's repression in the 1980s and 1990s targeting UDPS activists and fighters, principally the Luba people. It also describes the rise of Étienne Tshisekedi, the charismatic UDPS leader. We show how his radicalism and the fact that he was often aligned with popular opinion gradually set him apart from other party founders, to the point where, at times, they were pitted against each other. This reality, combined with infighting for leadership, led to the UDPS splitting into two, the creation of UDPS/Tshisekedi, and the end of collegiate governance at the head of the party. Tshisekedi became the sole party leader, its moral authority. This meant the party's health was inextricably tied to its leader's. Periods when Tshisekedi suffered ill health corresponded to periods when the party underwent internal crises.

The UDPS thus embraced the trend for centralizing executive power within the party, especially the presidency. This shift was formalized in the statutes, which significantly reduced the power of deliberative assemblies at

the national and federation levels. From sections to cells, these bodies were simply shut down at the grassroots level, sounding the death knell of the idea of organizing the party as an inverted pyramid. Recent calls by party activists to "*yoka base*" [listen to the grassroots] come as no surprise. These reforms have weakened the party's internal democracy and laid the foundations for future crises.

Introduction

No one could have predicted that an everyday incident on the road that connects the center of Kinshasa to the commune of Limete would put an end to Jean-Marc Kabund-A-Kabund's meteoric rise within the UDPS. On January 11, 2022, the convoy of the vice-president of the national assembly of the DRC encountered a vehicle driving the wrong way down the road. As he had become accustomed to do, Kabund decided to confront the driver. Sitting in the vehicle were a few members of the Republican Guard, a unit of the Congolese army responsible for protecting the head of state and his family. The resulting filmed altercation lasted a few minutes. It ended with the police in charge of guarding Kabund getting the upper hand and disarming a soldier.

Two days later, the Republican Guard led a punitive expedition on Kabund's home. He was then also the acting president of the UDPS, a position he took when Félix Tshisekedi came to power in 2019. Images showing his ransacked house were widely shared on social media. Soldiers from the Republican Guard arrested the police officers in charge of guarding Kabund's house. The next day Kabund demanded that the Republic Guard apologize and threatened to resign. A succession of activists and senior members of the party and of the *Union sacrée pour la nation* (USN), the ruling coalition, visited his home to beg him not to resign, unsuccessfully. On January 14th, Kabund announced his resignation from the post of first vice-president of the national assembly on his Twitter account.¹ It was the beginning of the end for the man who headed the UDPS in the final years of the confrontation with Joseph Kabila's regime and who had fearlessly led the "parliamentary revolution" of 2020: the revolt ended in Jeanine Mabunda losing her post at the head of national assembly and the parliamentary majority being overturned.

After trying to ease tensions between Kabund and Tshisekedi, Christophe Mboso N'Kodia, president of the national assembly, relented. He was followed by other senior



figures in the USN who had initially shown sympathy for the “right-hand man turned pariah.”² The *Force du progrès*, one of the powerful informal movements within the UDPS led by an ally of the head of the state, was among the first presidential party structures to repudiate Kabund in a protest organized in front of his home. The women’s league of the party and several UDPS federations around the country, including in Goma and Mbuji-Mayi, followed in its footsteps. However, other party structures stood by Kabund. Their support did nothing to change the course of events, however: on January 29, 2022, the *Convention démocratique du parti* (CDP), a UDPS national structure which had convened the day before, announced Kabund’s exclusion from the party. He was officially accused of “refusing to appear before the [party’s] national discipline commission to answer charges of fraud from selling cards, acts of corruption and extortion relating to appointments to state positions, and physical and verbal attacks on soldiers.”³

Increasingly isolated, on March 31st Kabund officially handed in his resignation from the post of first vice-president of the national assembly, three months after announcing it on social media. A few months later, in July, he announced the creation of his political party, *Alliance pour le changement* (ACh). During the press conference organized to announce the news, he criticized the “mismanagement” and “amateurism” of the state. As a result, he was stripped of his parliamentary immunity before being arrested and charged with “insulting the head of state” among other offences.⁴

When Tshisekedi first came to power, however, the two men seemed to have a good relationship. On January 22, 2019, two days before his investiture as head of state, Tshisekedi, then president of the UDPS, used a “special mandate” to appoint Kabund as interim party president. Victor Wakenda, CDP president, and Jacquemain Shabani, president of the *Commission électorale du parti* (CEP), felt the appointment did not adhere to party regulations, as did other senior UDPS figures. They included Paul Tshimbulu and Peter Kazadi,⁵ who demanded, unsuccessfully, that a directorate be created and tasked with appointing the new party president in 30 days, in compliance with party statutes.⁶ Kabund and Augustin Kabuya, appointed as UDPS secretary general, did not agree.

In March 2020, Kabund counterattacked and suspended Shabani and several other executives from the party. They were furious and set up a collective called *Sauvons l’UDPS*. They took issue with the way Kabund ran the party. The collective levelled several accusations at the interim UDPS president, including “opaque manage-

ment of the party which does not allow it to serve as a real lever for power supporting the head of state in his efforts to rebuild the country; serious and persistent suspicions of trafficking party posts for the benefit of people outside the struggle; irreversible amateurism, and the inability to manage the party’s human resources and unite all the party’s daughters and sons around the same goal; creating a climate of futile conflict for the purposes of deliberately projecting an aura as head of state in order to serve his own ambitions.”⁷ A few weeks later, in April 2020, Paul Tshimbulu, one of the collective’s founders and until then the UDPS spokesperson, was also suspended.⁸ At this point, as relations between Kabund and Tshisekedi worsened, various party structures, including the CDP and CEP, rapidly aligned themselves with the head of state’s position. Kabund fell from grace. This amounted to a precipitous downfall for the man who in 2018 was still threatening to expel Félix Tshisekedi from the party. This was after Félix Tshisekedi, then the UDPS presidential candidate, had signed the agreement with other parties in Geneva designating Martin Fayulu as the official opposition candidate. While Félix Tshisekedi is Étienne Tshisekedi’s biological son, Kabund had always seen himself as the ideological heir of the historical opposition figure. As we will see below, the crisis triggered by Kabund’s resignation and the brief tug-of-war that followed are characteristic of the different tensions running through the UDPS, in its move from fighting for independence to the struggle for political power.

From UDPS to UDPS/Tshisekedi: the birth of a sphinx

Once seen as the “firstborn of the Congolese opposition”, on February 15, 2022, the UDPS celebrated its 40th anniversary. Over the last four decades, the political party has been more closely associated with the figure and vision of Étienne Tshisekedi, its *líder máximo*, rather than with the 13 members of parliament who founded it. This section provides a brief overview of the history of the UDPS to explore the factors that contributed to putting Tshisekedi senior center stage of UDPS missions and activities. It also looks at the causes of the erosion of the party’s grassroots over the years.

Despite being the center of gravity of the USN, the ruling coalition, the UDPS came to the power with limited representation across the country. In 2018 elections, the



party only managed to win 6.4% of seats in the national assembly or 32 of the 500 members of national parliament. A meager result concentrated mainly in Kinshasa, Haut-Katanga and Grand Kasai: these three regions represent 90% of UDPS elected representatives.⁹ The picture is very similar to the UDPS results in the 2011 legislative elections: the party won 41 of 500 seats. Étienne Tshisekedi, the party's presidential candidate, came second with 32.33% of votes, primarily from the former Kasai-Oriental (70.41%), former Kasai-Occidental (75.67%), Kinshasa (64.09%) and Kongo Central (74%) as well as a number of constituencies in Équateur (33.8%) and Nord-Kivu (21.20%).¹⁰

From *le mal zairois* to the letter of the 13 members of parliament: the party's first steps

The roots of the UDPS go back to the country's socio-political context during the second half of the 1970s. That was a period marked by the global economic crisis; the two Shaba wars; the institutional reforms of 1977 when the ruling *Mouvement Populaire pour la révolution* (MPR) began to democratize; and the massacres in Katekelayi, Kasai, in 1979.

Having sought refuge in Angola several years earlier, around 2,500 former gendarmes from Katanga carried out a surprise attack in March 1977 on several towns in Katanga (formerly Shaba). The Zairian soldiers did not resist for long and the rebels succeeded in quickly gaining control over several mining areas, including Kisenge, home to a manganese mine, Dilolo and Kapanga. The situation threatened to paralyze Zaire's economy, which was overly dependent on mining. An anxious President Mobutu called on his Belgian and US allies, but was unsuccessful. He finally received help from France and Morocco in ending what has become known as "the 80-day war."¹¹

Politically, the fiasco of the Zairian army and its inability to deal with the attack by the former Katanga gendarmes shone a light on the fragility of Mobutu's regime and the cracks opening up in the MPR.¹² These fissures led to harsh self-criticism by Mobutu of his governance and the system he had put in place, which, in his words, "is in danger of being totally paralyzed."¹³ "A leader who does not recognize the failings of his actions and, especially, makes no effort to put them right, is either anti-democratic, too set in his ways, or despotic," declared Mobutu.¹⁴ He then said: "The people's voice is often stifled, and there is a risk that it will be heard when it is too late." Mobutu ad-

opted the same approach during the MPR congress on November 25, 1977, with his criticism of the political elite and Zairian bourgeoisie which had established a "conspiracy of silence around [Mobutu]" and did not report the people's complaints to the center of power.

In addition to the security crisis in Shaba, Zaire was also facing a deep-reaching economic crisis and over in debt-ness due to the drop in raw material prices (especially copper and cobalt), as well as major projects, such as the construction of the Inga II dam and Inga-Shaba power line. This situation led Mobutu to undertake a number of institutional reforms with a view to "restoring to the people their right to scrutiny and ultimate control over all the country's political activity."¹⁵ The most significant of these reforms was the introduction of a direct election for members of the legislative council (parliament) and members of the party's policy bureau. The reform was meant to bring the people closer to their leaders and make it easier to control the executive by direct representatives of the people.

These initiatives were, however, limited in scope. They were implemented within the MPR and were not intended to lead to a multi-party system, which remained forbidden. And the president-founder was still a central and untouchable figure. Nevertheless, the reforms created the conditions for parliamentary activism and sowed the seeds of what would become the UDPS. The parliament resulting from the October 1977 elections then went on to challenge the executive on a range of subjects. These challenges led to the resignation of five state commissioners (ministers) and, in 1979, two opposition figures becoming members of government: Frédéric Kibassa Maliba and Bernardin Mungul Diaka.¹⁶ Other members of parliament, such as François-Xavier Beltchika Kalubye, were offered ambassadorships.¹⁷

Other events, however, brought these democratic overtures to a halt. First came the second Shaba war in 1978, ending in Katangan rebels capturing the city of Kolwezi and leading to the arrest of a number of senior MPR figures, such as Jean Nguza Karl-i-Bond.¹⁸ More significant were the Katekelayi and Luemwela massacres in July 1979. Zairian soldiers operating with mixed *Société minière de Bakwanga* (MIBA) and gendarme teams led a bloody crackdown on small-scale miners operating outside the MIBA mines, a few kilometers from Mbuji-Mayi, leaving the latter no choice but to face the army or cross the Mbuji-Mayi river. The repression caused the deaths of numerous people, although the numbers are disputed. According to MIBA, seven people lost their lives, six of them by drowning. The regional political authorities put the number at 15 deaths.



In response, members of the parliamentary group of representatives from Kasai-Oriental decided to submit the case to Joseph Ileo, president of the legislative council. In their letter, a copy of which went to the president, they claimed that between 180 and 230 people died due to the crackdown. They also complained of the increasing number of these types of attacks, which they said they had already denounced in their parliamentary recess reports, with no action taken. Additionally, they raised the alarm over the Kasai people's growing frustration: "It has become usual to unashamedly inflict massacres on the people of the Kasai-Oriental region." They claimed that this led the people of Kasai to "see themselves as a people apart rather than fully-fledged Zairians." The letter remained unanswered. Instead, its signatories, including Anaclet Makanda, Joseph Ngalula Mpandanjila, Tshibuy, Milambu and Étienne Tshisekedi, were summoned by the president of the national assembly and subjected to intimidation. An unsuccessful attempt was made to force them to recognize the official version of events.¹⁹

The MPR reacted immediately. As the signatories prepared to submit the letter, Ngalula was arrested and held at the OAU complex. He was soon joined by other members of parliament, including Étienne Tshisekedi, Anaclet Makanda Mpinga Shambuyi and Lusanga Ngiele, who were taken prisoner.²³ Another member of parliament, Gabriel Kyungu wa Kumwanza, was imprisoned in Lubumbashi. Three days later, the MPR legislative council met at President Mobutu's request, to remove the dissidents' parliamentary immunity. And a few days after that, the same council decided to expel the 13 members of parliament who had signed the letter from the party.²⁴ While only seven of the 13 stood by the position expressed in the letter to Mobutu, all of them were banished to their home provinces.

The letter written by 13 members of parliament

The following year Ngalula Mpandanjila secretly convened a meeting of a small group of members of parliament to draft a letter to President Mobutu. Ngalula, Protais Lumbu Maloba and Lusanga Ngiele, with the help of a handful of senior party figures including Professor Dikonda wa Lumanisha from the University of Kinshasa, drafted the letter²⁰ with the goal of exposing the inconsistencies between Mobutu's words, his commitments and his actions. Ngalula, the group's leader, then proposed opening up the initiative to other members of parliament.

Anticipating the repression likely to follow, Ngalula and his colleagues decided to limit their group to members of the legislative council, since they were protected by parliamentary immunity. Thirteen members of parliament, including Étienne Tshisekedi, agreed to sign the letter. Nine of them were from Kasai, including some who had also signed the letter denouncing the Katekelayi massacres. This was partly thanks to Ngalula, who was very influential among Kasai members of parliament due in part to his leadership and his role in drafting the African Consciousness Manifesto in 1956.²¹ He was the one who succeeded in convincing several members of the legislative council to join the initiative.²² According to one of the letter's signatories, they were asked to get other members of parliament interested, but several of them were too afraid of reprisals to do so.



The 13 Members of Parliament who signed the open letter to President Mobutu

	Name	Province of origin
1	Ngalula Mpandanjila	Kasaï-Oriental
2	Tshisekedi wa Mulumba	Kasaï-Oriental
3	Makanda Mpinga Shambuyi	Kasaï-Oriental
4	Kyungu wa Kumwanza	Shaba
5	Kanana Tshiongo A Minanga	Kasaï-Oriental
6	Lusanga Ngiele	Kasaï-Oriental (but elected to represent Likasi)
7	Mbombo Lona	Kasai-Occidental
8	Lumbu Maloba	Shaba (now Katanga)
9	Kapita Shabangi	Kasaï-Occidental (now Kasaï-Central and Kasaï)
10	Biringanine Mugaruka	Kivu
11	Ngoy Mukendi	Kasaï-Occidental (now Kasaï-Central and Kasaï)
12	Dia Onken A Mbel	Bandundu
13	Kasala Kalamba	Kasaï-Occidental (now Kasaï-Central and Kasaï)

This episode marked the end of the involvement of several of the MPR's co-founders in the state party. It was also the end of the democratic overtures initiated four years earlier in 1977. The members of the MPR bureau politique were once again appointed by the president and a central committee was created inside of that institution to take over the legislative council's role in nominating officials. The questions so characteristic of parliamentary activities in 1977 were henceforth to be approved by the president-founder. Paradoxically, this repressive period also saw the emergence of extra-parliamentary opposition and an "illegal party."²⁵

1981-1989: the difficult early days of the party and creation of the UDPS myth

The early years of this nascent extra-parliamentary opposition were difficult for the UDPS founders as well as their supporters. Their struggle was repressed, forcing various former members of parliament who signed the 52-page letter to rejoin the MPR. At the same time, what emerged from the repression was the image of the UDPS as the symbol of opposition to Mobutu's dictatorship and of the fight for democracy.

Thanks to their persistent resistance and symbolic actions

seeking to "destroy the myth surrounding Mobutu", the UDPS founders gradually won the people's sympathy. Étienne Tshisekedi was the first to benefit from it, as the man who was already seen as one of the key figures in the struggle due to the different roles he had played in the past in relation to Mobutu. The consequences of the choices made during this period were to have a lasting impact on the dynamics between the founders, eventually leading to the first split within the party in the late 1990s.

On December 14, 1981, the 13 members of parliament were authorized to return to their homes. Once they were back in Kinshasa, they gathered for a meeting convened by Ngalula and decided to create a political party. On February 15th of the following year, they informed President Mobutu of their actions with another letter signed by 13 people. The new text was signed by the former members of parliament as well as their supporters, including Kibassa Maliba. Mbombo Lona, on the other hand, who had signed the 1981 letter to the president-founder, was no longer on the list. This did not prevent the others from first announcing the birth of the UDPS when they were visiting Katanga. Kibassa Maliba, Protais Lumbu, Kyungu wa Kumwanza and Lusanga Ngiele were immediately arrested and transferred to Kinshasa. They were joined there by Étienne Tshisekedi, Makanda, Ngalula, Kapita and Kanana.²⁶ On July 1, 1982, following a summary trial, they were sentenced to 15 years in prison before being



transferred to various prisons around the country.²⁷

In May 1983, President Mobutu promoted himself to the rank of Field Marshal. To mark the event, he decided to once again grant pardons to the dissident former members of parliament. The rebels returned to Kinshasa. That same year, a delegation from the U.S. Congress visited the Zairian capital. The UDPS founders went to meet them at the Intercontinental Hotel dressed in suits and ties, attire that was banned in Zaire by the national authenticity policy. In their message to the members of Congress, they asked for “a national round table under international supervision attended by all the political movements and factions inside and outside the country to redefine a democratic vision of the nation and draft a new constitution.”²⁸ The Mobutu regime acted to quell this act of symbolic defiance. The unrepentant dissidents were arrested once more and there was a crackdown on their supporters, including hundreds of students from the University of Kinshasa. Ngalula, Tshisekedi, Kanana and various others were again banished to their native villages, this time with their families. They were joined by Faustin Birindwa, Marcel Lihau, and Bossasi.

Banished or in prison, the UDPS founders were subjected to fiercely repressive measures and various humiliations. At the same time, the government, via the heads of the intelligence services, was asking them to rejoin the MPR.²⁹ One example was Lusanga Ngiele, banished to Mwene Ditu. He recounted how he was tortured by the intelligence services then taken to Kinshasa, where he was housed at the OAU complex, receiving several requests from senior figures in the MPR, including André-Alain Atundu, Edouard Mokolo wa Mpombo and Pierre Pay-Pay, to abandon the opposition movement.³⁰ Kibassa also met with the heads of the *Agence nationale de documentation* (AND) more than once and, later on, Félix Vunduawe with a view to paving the way for dialogue.³¹

The UDPS founders were not released until 1985, at the same time as the celebrations marking the 25th anniversary of the country’s independence. Their morale had been significantly shaken. Nevertheless, they sent a 23-page memorandum to President Mobutu partially reiterating their demand for the country’s democratization, but this time taking a far more conciliatory tone:

“The group of thirteen members of parliament never questioned the existence of the MPR, but rather defended its survival while recommending a reform of the Constitution. Our desire to protect the stability of institutions and give voice to the people, the wish to improve the management of public life—in short,

the democratization of our political system, was expressed in the collective letter addressed to the head of state on November 1, 1980. It was followed not only by a lack of understanding and political intolerance, but more false accusations and arbitrary arrests of the 13 members of parliament who signed the collective letter (...).”³²

Despite this olive branch, the Mobutu regime made no concessions—quite the opposite. Instead, the field marshal’s government ramped up the crackdown on everyone suspected of supporting the new opposition party. The repression even saw the creation of the *Corps des activistes pour la défense de la révolution* (CADER) in the MPR youth section. The unit was tasked with “repressing subversion and opposition to the single party.”³³

The reports, information bulletins, and other documents published by Jean-Marie Mutamba Makombo, historian and former deputy head curator of the national archives of Congo, give us an idea of the scope of the crackdown as well as the use of state resources to carry it out. These documents show that the repression targeted the members of parliament, their supporters, and the families of the UDPS founding members with extreme brutality. At the time, CADER units organized “surveillance and ideological clarification patrols” ending in UDPS activists being questioned, beaten up, and humiliated. Their homes were destroyed or set alight and their meeting places ransacked. The CADER went as far as cutting off UDPS supporters’ water, electricity, and telephone lines. This surveillance policy also encompassed senior figures in the MPR suspected of sympathizing with the opposition. For instance, Professor Vunduawe, who had tried to negotiate with the opposition on several occasions and recalled them from their first internal exile, was regularly criticized in CADER information bulletins.³⁴

In late October 1985, the UDPS founders were arrested yet again, some of them in Kinshasa, others in Lubumbashi. In June 1986, they were then once more banished to their native villages.³⁵ Two of them were seriously ill: Makanda was transferred to a Kinshasa hospital before being sent to Brussels where he died on March 6, 1987. Bossasi, who had been banished to Bolamba in the province of Équateur, was refused healthcare. The other founders were released in July 1987. But the crackdown, their sufferings, and Mobutu’s invitations overcame their resistance.³⁶



From Gbadolite to Cabu Bridge: the birth of the Sphinx

Once they were released, certain UDPS founders were received by Mobutu at Gbadolite and decided to return to the MPR fold. However, they did have the "right of creating a new tendency" within the single party.³⁷ These developments were known as the "Gbadolite agreements". In reality, they centered on a letter rather than an agreement. Its authors, Kibassa Maliba, Ngalula wa Pandanjila, Mpindu Bwabwa and Étienne Tshisekedi, stated that they recognized, among other principles, "the affirmation of freedom of opinion within the MPR" and "respect for the leader and national unity."³⁸

After Gbadolite, Tshisekedi and Birindwa returned to Kinshasa before flying to Europe, officially to receive health care. Once there, they were soon confronted by the party's grassroots, including Congolese students in Belgium, and decided to reject the "Gbadolite agreements."³⁹ In Kinshasa in October 1987, Ngalula, Kibassa, Vincent-Robert Mbwanikiem and Kapita Shabangi joined the MPR central committee. Other senior party figures, such as Protais Lumbu, Pindu Bwabwa and Bossassi, were appointed to public companies.⁴⁰ These different appointments confirmed the *de facto* existence of the Gbadolite agreements.⁴¹

This situation created friction between, on one side, Tshisekedi and Birindwa, and on the other their colleagues who remained in the country. In the eyes of the public, Tshisekedi was establishing himself as a leader in tune with the aspirations of a people becoming increasingly critical of the Mobutu regime. On his return to Kinshasa, he organized a protest on January 17, 1988, at Cabu Bridge. The protest was doubly symbolic: it took place on the day Patrice Lumumba's death was commemorated, and was held at the place where Mobutu's opponents had been hung, including former prime minister Évariste Kimba, in 1966. It aimed to "make an impression and attack Mobutu with the symbols of his tyranny," explains Beltchika Kalubye, former senior figure of the UDPS and member of parliament from 1977-1982.⁴² The crackdown on the protest was a bloodbath. Tshisekedi was again arrested and forced to take various neuro-psychopathological tests. The medical report published by the official press agency concluded that he needed treatment. But three of the four doctors meant to have taken part in the tests opposed the results and were arrested.

In April that year, Tshisekedi went back on the offensive, calling for "passive resistance to the government

and a boycott of the legislative elections." Along with Birindwa, Kanana and Bijangu Lutunda, he was yet again arrested then banished to Province Orientale, while Birindwa was sent to Kivu.⁴³ On his return from exile, Tshisekedi decided to briefly leave the party: "A renewed political leadership is in place for the other activists left without leaders."⁴⁴ In 1989, Tshisekedi was in the spotlight once more. When he was meant to be received by Mobutu along with Kibassa, he refused to comply with the order not to wear a suit and tie. He was placed under house arrest until 1990, further bolstering his image as a radical opponent of Mobutu.

Coming out of hiding and the first party split

During the first decade of its existence, the UDPS mainly toiled in hiding. Its leadership was regularly arrested and banished from Kinshasa and its activists hunted down by state militia. These repressive measures helped to shore up the people's sympathy for the party and thus increase its legitimacy. However, they prevented the UDPS from structuring itself effectively across the country. Small groups of party members did emerge in several major Congolese towns and cities thanks mainly to the symbol of resistance the UDPS represented.

During the various periods when they were banished, the UDPS founders used the extensive networks of institutions such as the Catholic Church to exchange messages among themselves and with their contacts in the diaspora.⁴⁵ In addition, a network of young party members, nicknamed the G8, took on the tasks of alerting human rights organizations and foreign embassies as well as mobilizing members each time the leaders were arrested.⁴⁶ These different strategies enabled the UDPS to maintain its presence in public opinion despite the limited grassroots organization.

After several years of relentless struggle and violent repression in a climate marked by the end of the Cold War, Mobutu, his hand forced by his opponents inside the country and allies outside it, finally decided to set the democratization process in motion. On April 24, 1990, following several months of popular consultation, he made a historical speech announcing the end of the single party, the government's resignation, and the revision of the Constitution. It was the start of political liberalization. The UDPS, which until then had been a clandestine movement, found itself weakened by internal strife on how to approach the struggle as well as by the repression. Most of its senior figures rejoined the MPR, feeling



that the struggle should be continued within the single party. Tshisekedi held steadfastly to his position and was kept under house arrest for several months.⁴⁷

Following the changes announced by Mobutu, Tshisekedi was released. A college of UDPS founders was set up and asked for party recognition, over eight years after having officially made its request for approval. The UDPS was finally registered as a political party in 1991. Twenty-two people, including most of the 13 members of parliament who had signed the open letter to Mobutu and other opponents who had joined them during the 1980s, formed a group once again, despite several of them withdrawing.

In the absence of a party congress, the college of founders was the *de facto* embodiment of the party's highest authority. Its members set up the political party's directorate. Its members were Kibassa, Mbankeim, Lihau and Tshisekedi. The latter, who had just been released from house arrest, was generally seen as the leader of the opposition at this decisive moment in the fight for democracy.



College of UDPS founders (1990)

	Name	Group of 13 Members of Parliament	Province of origin
1	Alphonse Mpassi Tshiangani	-	Bandundu
2	Athanase Kengele	-	Kasaï-Occidental
3	Bernard Nkwedi Lusielo	-	Bas-Congo
4	Christophe Belanganayi	-	Kasaï-Occidental
5	Étienne Tshisekedi	Yes	Kasaï-Oriental
6	Faustin Birindwa	-	Sud-Kivu
7	Ferdinand Simba	-	Province Orientale
8	François Luakabwanga	-	Kasaï-Occidental
9	François Lusanga-Ngiele	Yes	Kasaï-Oriental
10	Frédéric Kibassa-Maliba	-	Katanga
11	Gabriel Kyungu wa Kumwanza	Yes	Katanga
12	Isidore Kanana Tshiongo	-	Kasaï-Oriental
13	Jacques Tshilemb Kot	-	Katanga
14	Joseph Ngalula Pandanjila	Yes	
15	Kasala Kalamba	-	Kasaï-Occidental
16	Marcel Lihau	-	Équateur
17	Paul Kapita Shabangi	Yes	Kasaï-Occidental
18	Protais Lumbu	Yes	Katanga
19	Raymond Mukoka	-	Kasaï-Oriental
20	Thérèse Kanyeba Makanda	Yes	Kasaï-Oriental
21	Vincent Mbwankeim Naroliem	-	Bandundu
22	Zéphirin Diayikwa	-	Bas-Congo

Source: UDPS, letter reiterating the request for approval, April 24, 1990.



Mobutu felt that this political liberation should be no more than a modest change, without challenging his power. A few reforms were proposed along these lines during his speech of April 24, 1990. But the UDPS did not grant him sole power to decide on the content of the reforms to be introduced. Instead, Lihau proposed convening a round table to discuss the issue. Most of the country's social and political forces supported the idea of the *Conférence nationale souveraine* (CNS). But Mobutu was reluctant. He suggested a "constitutional" conference whose role would be limited to drafting a new fundamental law for the country. Finally, thanks to pressure exerted by the people, the CNS was convened on July 17, 1991. On July 22, Tshisekedi was appointed prime minister. Under pressure from opposition activists, he was obliged to refuse this first appointment.⁴⁸

After several months of power struggles, the CNS finally began on August 7, 1991. A provisional bureau headed by Isaac Kalonji Mutambayi was set up.⁴⁹ On September 30, Mobutu named Tshisekedi prime minister again. Before taking up the post, Tshisekedi refused to be sworn in before the President of the Republic. He was dismissed and replaced by Bernardin Mungul Diaka.⁵⁰ While this latest episode confirmed Tshisekedi's status as a radical opposition figure in the eyes of the people, who gave him the nickname of Moses,⁵¹ it also implied, for his opposition colleagues, that the sphinx of Limete was secretly negotiating with Field Marshal Mobutu.⁵²

In 1992, after the CNS was reconvened after months of tensions, Tshisekedi was chosen by his UDPS colleagues to serve as prime minister before being elected to the post by the CNS. However, relations between Tshisekedi and his colleagues had changed. For instance, on August 29, he formed a government which only included three of the senior UDPS figures: Roger Gisanga, Paul Bondoma and Paul Kapita, the only co-founder to be part of the governmental group, who took up the post of minister of small and medium-sized businesses and the craft industry.⁵³ In December that same year, following various disagreements on several subjects, including the composition of the government, monetary policy and application of the decisions taken by the CNS, Mobutu dismissed Tshisekedi's government and set in motion parallel negotiations at the *Palais de la nation*. In April 1993, he appointed Faustin Birindwa, UDPS co-founder and head of the technical secretariat for the opposition as part of the *Union sacrée de l'opposition radicale et alliés* (USORAL), as prime minister.

In July 1994, to address the tensions within the UDPS and comply with the membership requirements of the Socialist International, which the party wished to join, a first conclave was convened at the Bondeko center in Kinshasa. The conference's goal was also to reflect on the

"organization of the party and current political issues."⁵⁴ Tshisekedi advocated keeping a directorate while Kibassa and other senior party figures preferred the idea of having a party president. At the end of their discussions, the conclave decided "to keep college-based leadership of the UDPS, i.e. the national directorate, but also reconfirm Kibassa Maliba [after a vote between him and Tshisekedi] as the party's national president."⁵⁵ Tshisekedi, Lihau and Mbwankiem were the other members of the directorate/party presidency. This decision did not suit Tshisekedi, as the party leader who enjoyed the highest degree of popular legitimacy, even though what happened was that "the UDPS founders overlooked that reality and continued to act as though all the co-founders were on an equal footing."⁵⁶ The following year, Tshisekedi set about creating an "orthodox and radical UDPS."⁵⁷

The conclave also led to the creation of a national party secretariat headed by Dr Adrien Phongo, assisted by three deputies, all alleged to be close to Tshisekedi. Kibassa refused to ratify their nomination. A mediation process was then put in place led by Roger Gisanga. But the members of street parliament, the *parlement debout*, an informal movement affiliated with the UDPS, saw it as a maneuver for blocking Phongo's team and decided to intervene, violently breaking up the meeting. Gisanga, who was ill, lost his life in the incident.⁵⁸

The crisis between Tshisekedi and Kibassa deepened, culminating in the exclusion on March 22, 1996 of Kibassa, due to accusations including "betrayal of the party" and "political bed-hopping." The decision was signed by Tshisekedi and Mbwankiem as co-presidents of the UDPS. This was followed by other founders, who supported Kibassa, also being expelled from the party. Kibassa then gathered a few members of the college of founders prepared to "attest to the dissidence" shown by Tshisekedi.⁵⁹ The party had effectively split in two.

The next year, the rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) came to power. Kibassa joined the government led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, the new head of state. Senior figures in the UDPS were divided over what position to take regarding the forces that had overthrown Mobutu. Mbwankiem, whose son was also part of the new governing team, withdrew from the party. Other UDPS figures, such as Kapita, one of the party founders, also joined the new regime. As for Tshisekedi, he hardened his position opposing Kabila and his government. He was arrested and banished. In the eyes of the public, Tshisekedi was the one true leader of the UDPS. However, on paper, Kibassa was still party president, supported by most of the members of the college of founders.



In May 2000, a new law on political parties required the UDPS to register anew. Kibassa complied with the law and took the opportunity to appoint Ngoy Mukendi and Dia Okein as members of the directorate. There were now two UDPS parties facing off: a legal party headed by Kibassa, and the party of the people led by Tshisekedi. But at the Inter-Congolese Dialogue in Sun City, South Africa, only Tshisekedi was recognized as the leader of the UDPS opposition party. Kibassa fell ill and died in 2003.

In 2004, on the eve of preparations for the first free elections, a new law on political parties was promulgated. Ngoy Mukendi, who succeeded Kibassa, and Tshisekedi both asked for official recognition of the UDPS. Théophile Mbemba, then minister of the interior, took the decision to ratify the existence of two UDPS parties: UDPS/Kibassa and UDPS/Tshisekedi. The decision marked the formal existence of Tshisekedi's party.

The Beltchika affair: *tshintu tshetu* and the second split

In 2005, Tshisekedi made it clear he was not ready to compromise with the transitional government, refusing to join it. His party, the UDPS, campaigned against voter enrolment and then against the constitution, which was put to a referendum in December 2005. Tshisekedi also decided to call for a boycott of the 2006 elections, which he felt were rigged. But the context of the UDPS struggle had changed. While it had been the main opposition party between 1980 and the late 1990s, it now had to deal with other elements, such as the *Mouvement pour la libération du Congo* (MLC), an armed group turned political party headed by Jean-Pierre Bemba. Mobutu was no longer in power and the democratization process took on a new dimension with the first democratic elections. The party structures were also increasingly showing their limits, with internal strife and dysfunctional bodies.

A reform commission was put in place within the UDPS. Comprising 13 members from the party's different structures, its goal was to propose the "modernization of the party."⁶⁰ The commission was headed by Beltchika Kalubye. It produced a report proposing reforms which confirmed the importance of the national president's role as the party's central authority. It also suggested closing down the college of party founders, until then considered as the "highest moral authority" of the UDPS. The document further recommended holding the party's first congress. A committee to organize the congress was im-

mediately set up by Tshisekedi. But the process broke down. In September, Tshisekedi suspended Valentin Mubake and Rémy Massamba, president of the national committee and secretary general of the party, respectively.⁶¹ He accused them of refusing to appoint their delegates to the preparatory committee for the congress. Tshisekedi appointed six people as members of the committee for organizing the UDPS congress. The *Comité organisateur du congrès* (COC) was then effectively running the party, contrary to the rules set out in the statutes. The Massamba and Mubake camp refused to recognize the new UDPS organization. The party then split into two branches: the Massamba wing of the UDPS, which met in Limete, and the Beltchika wing of the UDPS, which met at the home of Beltchika, COC president, in Righini district. Masamba and Mubake were finally restored to their posts in June 2008 and Massamba then joined the COC as first vice-president, alongside Beltchika Kalubye, president, Aka Mantsia, second vice-president, Mayay Nkumu, general rapporteur, and Désiré Birihanze, deputy general rapporteur.

In the meantime, Tshisekedi had been seriously ill since 2007. At the age of 75, the sphinx of Limete was less and less of a visible presence. His family and senior party figures even feared he would die. Later on, in 2010, he admitted it himself in an interview with *Jeune Afrique*: "I have been through some extremely painful moments over the last three years. I nearly died."⁶² In his absence from the political scene, the battle for his succession raged within his party. The Mubake wing accused party members from Kasai, including Beltchika Kalubye and Joseph Mukendi wa Mulumba, of wanting to take over the party to prevent anyone from outside Kasai leading it in the event of Tshisekedi's death, especially since the Beltchika wing was initially supported by Tshisekedi's biological family. For the first time, a number of senior party figures described the UDPS as *tshintu tshetu* (our possession in tshiluba), claiming "ownership of the party."⁶³ This was also the period when Félix Tshisekedi, Étienne Tshisekedi's son and until then a senior party figure based in Brussels, joined the central bodies of the UDPS as deputy national secretary for external relations.

In 2008, Tshisekedi put an end to the crisis by appointing Alexis Mutanda as party secretary general. On January 17, 2009, he dissolved the COC, led by Beltchika, for the crime of rebellion. "I never wanted to take Tshisekedi's place, instead I wanted the party to function properly," Beltchika explained repeatedly.⁶⁴ The party's new leadership then went on "tours to revitalize the party." According to Mutanda, "the biggest problem was convincing people that the UDPS existed and the president was alive and going to return."⁶⁵ Despite everything, Belt-



chika's group did not give up the fight. It held its congress from April 15 to 21, 2009 and recognized Tshisekedi as party president. But Tshisekedi refused to meet them. This second revolt led to the creation of the UDPS/Beltchika, later renamed the *Congrès pour la démocratie et le progrès social* (CDPS).

2011 to 2017: the Sphinx's last act

Presidential and legislative elections were announced for November 2011. Tshisekedi, then aged 78, was coming out of a long period of convalescence and knew that the elections would be the last round in his long political fight. "It's the struggle of a lifetime," he told *Jeune Afrique* in an interview on the eve of his return to Kinshasa.⁶⁷ In December 2010, the sphinx returned to Kinshasa after a three-year absence. From the 10th to the 14th of that month, his party held its first congress: 779 party delegates and around a hundred guests took part in the conference, the first of its kind in the party's 28-year history.⁶⁸ It was a historic moment.

In his opening speech, Tshisekedi announced that he was running for president of the Republic: "I'm determined to go all the way."⁶⁹ When the congress closed, Tshisekedi had effectively been named as the presidential candidate for his party.⁷⁰ On January 10, 2011, the new senior figures of the party were nominated. Jacquemin Shabani, then aged 35 and already national secretary in Massamba and Mutanda's team, was appointed secretary general in 2011. The UDPS was ready for the major event of the forthcoming elections.

The elections were held on November 28, 2011. On December 9, the *Commission électorale nationale indépendante* (CENI) announced the provisional results: Kabila came out on top with 49% of votes followed by Tshisekedi with 32%. The results were contested by several actors. Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo, for example, believed that they "corresponded neither to the truth nor to justice,"⁷¹ while the Carter Center felt the "results process is not credible."⁷² For the UDPS, Tshisekedi had won the election.⁷³ On December 23, in the presence of party activists, Tshisekedi was sworn in as president of the Republic. It was the beginning of another period of resistance. The UDPS decided to boycott the institutions created by the elections. UDPS members who had, for the most part, agreed to sit in parliament were expelled from the party, including Rémy Massamba, former UDPS secretary general.

While the UDPS wrestled with this new post-electoral

crisis, Jacquemain Shabani, until then the party number two, was accused of "mishandling party funds" and suspended in June 2012. He was removed from office in September 2012 and replaced by Bruno Mavungu, until then the party's deputy secretary general. In the meantime, Tshisekedi stayed in his home, living like a recluse. The opposition veteran and self-proclaimed "elected president" did not have access to his doctors. His health was very fragile. Senior figures in his party were given less and less access to him and his close circle narrowed more and more, almost exclusively comprising family members. Nonetheless, Tshisekedi tried to reorganize his party—unsuccessfully.⁷⁴ After several weeks of illness at home, on May 20, 2014⁷⁵ he was transferred to the Monkole hospital in Mont-Ngafula, Kinshasa, before being taken to Belgium on a medical plane on August 16, 2014.⁷⁶

In January 2015, protests against the electoral law under debate by parliament were organized in Kinshasa and the country's main cities and towns. The UDPS, the main opposition force, did not take part, even though informal movements inside the party took action contrary to party decisions. On February 14, 2015, the UDPS published its "roadmap"⁷⁷ in which Tshisekedi's party asked for dialogue to be rapidly put in place. In May that year, Kalev Mutond, then the general administrator of the *National Intelligence Agency* (ANR), got in touch with senior figures in the UDPS in Limete. On August 14, 2015, a series of secret negotiations began, held successively in Venice, Italy; Ibiza, Spain; Brussels, Belgium; and Paris, France. The discussions resulted in a "strategic partnership agreement" allegedly signed by the Kabila government and UDPS representatives, according to at least two sources.⁷⁸ Once he was told about it, however, Tshisekedi is said to have rejected the agreement.⁷⁹ Instead, on September 13, the UDPS leader "acknowledged the failure of the meetings held in Venice and Ibiza (...) and asked his delegates to immediately withdraw from the negotiating table."

While these developments were unfolding, Moïse Katumbi, who had just joined the opposition, campaigned to prevent a deal between the UDPS and Kabila's government. He established ties with Félix Tshisekedi and, more directly, with Tshisekedi senior himself, mainly via his brother Raphaël Katebe Katoto. From June 8 to 9, 2016, an opposition conference was held in Genval, Belgium, under the leadership of Tshisekedi senior. The conclave rejected the dialogue proposed by Kabila and announced the creation of the platform *Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales de la République Démocratique du Congo*.⁸⁰ Tshisekedi senior was appointed president of the Council of Elders.⁸¹ On July 27, 2016, Tshisekedi returned to Kinshasa where he received a triumphant welcome. During



a meeting, he announced that he did not accept Edem Kodjo as the facilitator appointed by the African Union.

On August 8, 2016, in an effort to revitalize his party, Tshisekedi appointed Kabund as party secretary general. Political dialogue was finally initiated on September 1st, with a large part of the opposition and civil society missing. On September 19th to 21st, protests by the opposition and civil society demanding “real dialogue” were violently squashed. The Catholic Church, until then a stakeholder in negotiations at the OAU complex, suspended its participation and began consultations. Dialogue at the OAU complex ended on October 18th while another round of talks led by the *Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo* (CENCO) was held in December. The new talks resulted in what was known as the Saint Sylvester Agreement. A month later, on February 1, 2017, Tshisekedi died in Belgium. He was 84 years old. His son, Félix Tshisekedi, took over from him at the head of the UDPS/Tshisekedi party following an extraordinary congress held by the party in March 2018.

Organization and distribution of power in the UDPS

As mentioned above, the UDPS held its first congress in 2010, a fully 28 years after it was founded. This was an important moment for the party. The congress aimed to modernize it as a political party, giving it flexible institutions while also strengthening its grassroots democracy. But it was also an opportunity, just ahead of the 2011 elections, to attempt to breathe new life into a party weakened by its internal divisions. In the second section of this report, we will look at changes in the structure of the UDPS as well as the dynamics that led to reforms of the party’s structures in 2010 and 2013. This section will examine the consequences these various reforms had on internal party democracy.

The history of the UDPS can be split into two major periods: the struggle for liberation (1982-2006) and the conquest of power (from 2006). But once we examine key events in the life of the UDPS, five main stages become clear:

- the clandestine existence during the first years of the existence of the UDPS (1982-1990);
- the period when the party became organized following the transition between 1990 and 1996;

- the period of consolidation of Tshisekedi’s influence (1996-2006);
- the period of party restructuring with a president increasingly absent and ill (2006-2017);
- the era following Tshisekedi senior’s death and the arrival in power of Félix Tshisekedi.

From the outset, the UDPS has always been structured around national and local bodies. The idea was to create an inverted pyramid structure where local bodies had greater influence and were involved in the party’s major decisions.⁸² The roots of this organizational goal lie in the criticisms that the founders of the UDPS levelled at the highly centralized power structure of the MPR. However, this ideal was never attained. The opposite tendency can at times be noted, with national structures concentrating decision-making powers and frequent difficulties in effectively constituting forums for grassroots participation.

The reforms adopted in 2010 then further undermined local democracy within the UDPS. They consolidated the power of the party president over all other bodies in the party at the expense of the political ideals espoused at the creation of the party.

Initial structure: clandestine and collegial

When it was created, the UDPS had two main structures: the college of founders and the party executive. The party executive comprised a presidency (national president and three vice-presidents) and a national secretariat. The UDPS presidency was designed to represent the country’s four primary linguistic regions: Kibassa Maliba, from Katanga (Swahili-speaking) and the most senior of the founders in terms of his positions in the MPR, was appointed president of the party. He offered the further advantage of not being from the Kasai province, giving the UDPS a more national dimension. Three other senior figures were named vice-presidents: Ngulula Pandanjila, who drafted the 52-page letter, represented Kasai; Marcel Lihau represented Lingala-speakers, while Mbwanikiem represented the Kongo area. Several national secretaries were also nominated, notably Étienne Tshisekedi in charge of organization and Lusanga Ngiele for finance.

At grassroots level, party structures mirrored the country’s administrative subdivisions. The federations, sections, sub-sections, cells and sub-cells corresponded to




villages, groupings, municipalities, territories and towns or provinces, respectively, although we cannot be sure that the UDPS was then already present at the sub-cell level across the country. At various times, the party's strongholds also corresponded to areas where the leaders of the UDPS had the most influence: Matadi, Bukavu, and—in particular—Kinshasa and Grand Kasai.

It is undeniable that various defections weakened the party's organization nationally and limited its expansion at the grassroots level. The UDPS did, however, enjoy considerable support among the wider population. Most people identified anybody opposing Mobutu as being a member of the UDPS. On the eve of the CNS, the party was more or less dysfunctional at the top. Three of the four members of the party's presidency had joined the MPR since the Gbadolite agreements. Lihau, the fourth member, was living in exile in Boston, USA, where he taught. The party reformed around a directorate and the college of founders. Tshisekedi was now a member of the directorate as representative of the Kasai province.

This was when the street parliaments began. The idea, as we will show below, was not only to keep an eye on the party's senior figures, but also to spread the party's message during the CNS period.⁸³

Bondeko and the first reorganization of the UDPS

The first serious attempt to organize the party occurred during the Bondeko conclave in 1994. The UDPS was structured as a parallel government, with the party congress as the top-level body, followed by the college of founders. The executive was split into two arms, with a collegial presidency (one president and three vice-presidents) and a national secretariat, the party's government, led by a secretary general. The national committee acted as the party's parliament. It comprised a bureau and members. Kibassa Maliba continued as president of the party and Phongo was elected secretary-general. Mulumba Katchi was named president of the national committee.⁸⁴



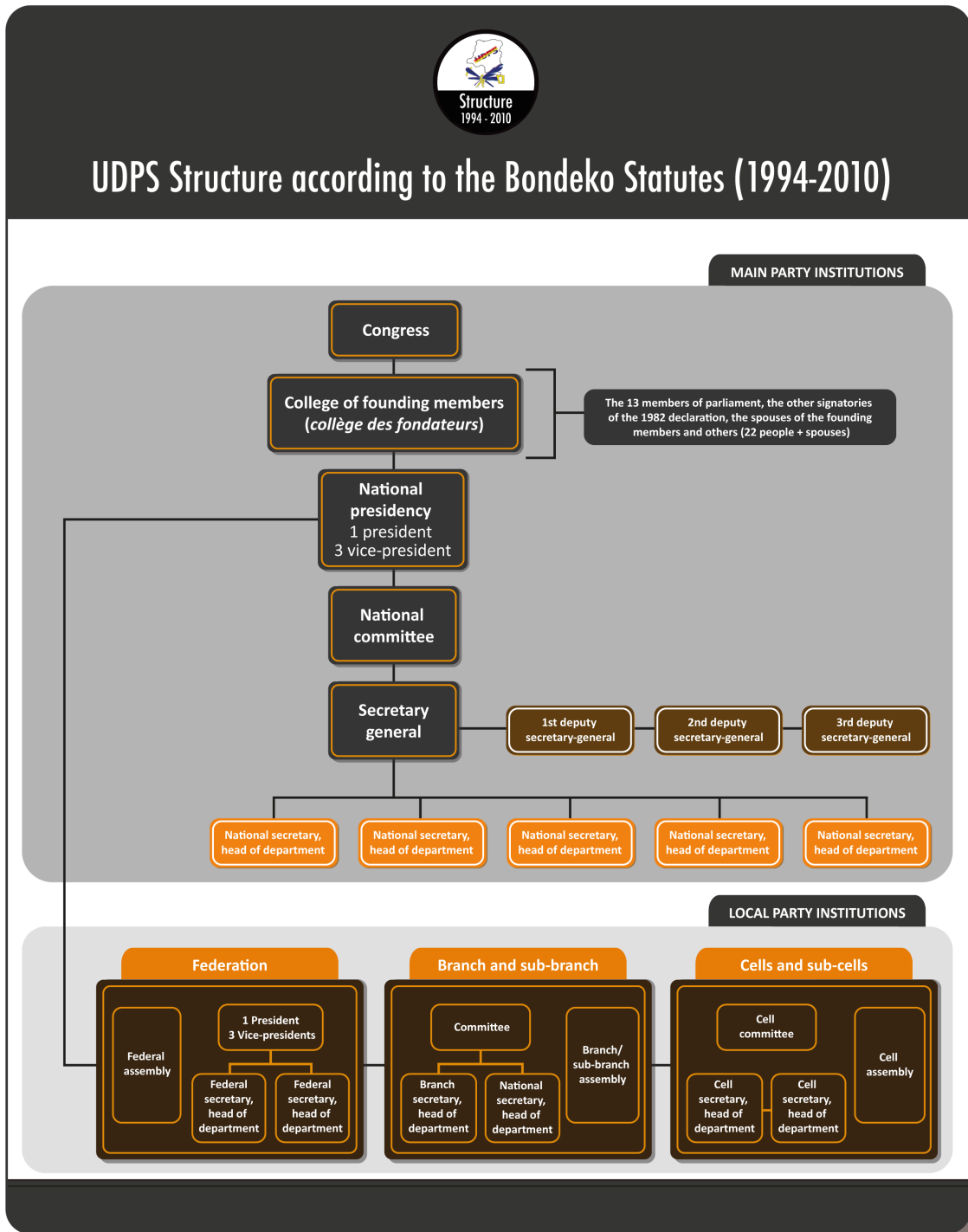
Secretaries general of the UDPS, 1994 - 2022

	Name	Province of origin
1	Adrien Phongo	Kongo-Central
2	Rémy Massamba	Kongo-Central
3	Alexis Mutanda	Kasai Oriental
4	Jacquemain Shabani	Nord-Kivu
5	Bruno Mavungu	Kongo-Central
6	Jean-Marc Kabund	Kasai Central
7	Augustin Kabuya	Kasai Oriental



This was a period characterized by infighting between the UDPS bodies, rendering the party dysfunctional. The presidency was divided between Tshisekedi and Kibasasa. Lihau, in poor health, returned to the USA. The war waged by the AFDL did not help: the rebels recruited se-

nior UDPS figures in the provinces it occupied and, later on, they co-opted other senior figures from the UDPS to join the Kabila government.





In 1997, Phongo commissioned a report to “evaluate the party’s progress and actions.” The report was led by the Alpha group, a discussion group of senior figures from the UDPS headed by Beltchika. Their report, entitled “Radioscopy of the Party” and submitted in March 1998, noted several weaknesses caused by the lack of a party congress. The document’s authors considered that this led to a “disparity between the decisions of the college of founders, acting as a mini-congress, and the will of the grassroots,” a “splitting off of the college of founders,” “material insecurity”, and “confusion [among founders] between personal interests and those of the party.” The consequence of all these weaknesses was “lethargy and conflicts among central bodies,” they added. While also recognizing the “courage and constancy” of Tshisekedi and his “commitment and loyalty to the party,” the report noted that “[the UDPS] is losing its dynamism, is petering out and becoming caught up in unclear activism leading to a focus on his [Tshisekedi’s] name alone and the risk of encouraging a personality cult.”⁸⁵

The executive summary also noted the difficulty the party had in retaining its senior figures:

“For the past two years, the UDPS has been hemorrhaging senior figures and activists. From the end of 1995 to date [end of 1998], ten members of the college of founders have left the party. Around half, maybe more, of the members of the national committee that numbered 480 members in early 1996 no longer answer the party’s call. Of five members of the bureau of the national committee, three have left the party. The team at the national secretariat comprised 56 people at the end of 1995 and now there are fewer than 20 permanent national secretaries and vice-secretaries. A vice-secretary elected in 1995 is no longer a party member.”⁸⁶

Overall, the report criticized the “empirical management” of the party and suggested reforms not just of its texts but also the replacement of some of its leading figures, notably the members of the national secretariat.

Reform of the statutes in 2006 and congress in 2010

In 2006, when Étienne Tshisekedi set up a commission to reform the statutes, the party was recovering from a long-term crisis affecting how it functioned. Although weakened by illness, its leader was now alone at the head of the UDPS. The college of founders numbered just five

members.⁸⁷ The congress had still not been held, but the national secretariat and national committee were operational.

The commission recommended ending the idea of the presidency. Because “it is at the level of this body that the jostling for position was the most devious,” says the report. It suggested replacing the presidency with a party president and doing away with the college of founders. This meant that the commission was granting sweeping powers to the president who, as well as presiding over the congress and political bureau, would also head the national council (the party’s parliament) “once each session” and the national executive council “once each quarter.” Deliberative bodies at grassroots level were abolished. As we can see, in practice these reforms signed off on a widespread centralization of power and ran contrary to the idea of a party with an inverted pyramid structure. However, the report was never enacted owing to the crisis that hit the party in the years 2007 to 2010.

In 2010, the UDPS at last held its first congress, leading to major changes in party structure. Among other goals, the resolutions passed by the conference, based on some of the recommendations of the 2006 commission, sought to modernize the party and strengthen its internal democracy, as well as to:

“Put an end to the malfunctioning of the party caused, among other factors, by permanent and dangerous conflicts in the central bodies at the top of the party since April 24, 1990; structural dissipation caused by overlapping bodies (...) that have added passivity to the party’s failure, the ambiguous role tainted by conflict played by leaders of these bodies and their combination of incompetency and double-dealing in juggling crises in their respective areas of responsibility that have, in turn, had a non-negligible role in the responsibility for the paralysis of the party’s activities.”⁸⁸

At the end of this process, the party congress remained the supreme authority of the UDPS. But it was only required to convene once every five years. The college of founders was abolished, and with it the classification of members in effect since 1994. The presidency of the party was maintained, but with a radically altered composition: no longer a president and three vice-presidents, now only the president of the party and the national secretariat (secretary general and national secretaries). The national secretariat, the party’s government, was no longer an arm of the national committee but was now to be nominated directly by the president.

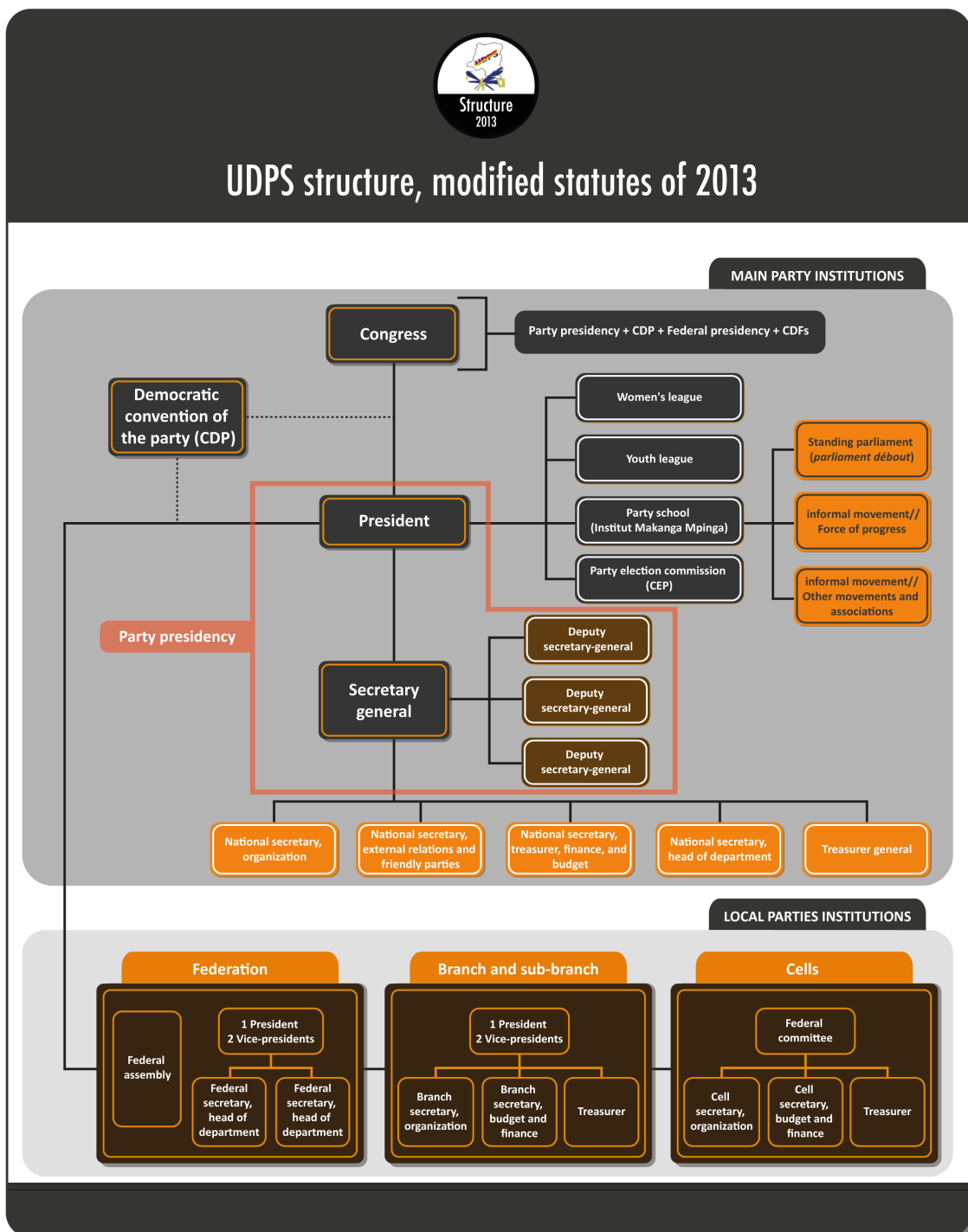


The national committee, the party’s parliament, was abolished and replaced by the *Convention démocratique du parti* (CDP), with extremely limited powers of oversight. Composed of the presidency, senior party figures (ministers, members of parliament and other officeholders) and members of federal committees and democratic conventions, the CDP was essentially a consultative body in the service of the party presidency, which appointed the large majority of its members.

The amended 2013 statutes made the CDP responsible for other party structures, but also for the “public figures nominated by the president of the party, five per province.” The practical difficulties of such an arrangement

made it very difficult to put into practice.⁸⁹

At the grassroots level, the party oversight bodies—at the federation, section and cell level—that made the UDPS a true party of the masses were abolished. Only the federations were granted democratic conventions along the model of the party’s central bodies. As a consequence, the UDPS became “truly a party of its elite members, and the millions of fellow countrywomen and countrymen [the creators] of the UDPS became simply fee-paying members and participants at public events,” in the words of Daniel Aselo, speaking during the UDPS days of reflection in 2013.⁹⁰





These reforms failed to revitalize the party. Quite the opposite. The UDPS lurched into a new crisis following the elections in 2011. Two years later, the UDPS federations in Kinshasa held a series of days of reflection about the party. In his contribution on “the applicability and nature of the UDPS’s legal texts,” Daniel Aselo, who was a member of the 2006 reform commission and the organizing committee of the 2010 congress, observed that the “the political desire to consolidate control is the root cause of the abolition of the bodies driving the party’s activities, doing away with frameworks where all members of a given entity could meet together, for the benefit solely of senior figures with formal functions within the party.”⁹¹

This was the new structure the UDPS had to deal with in 2013, during its next crisis. Tshisekedi was ill once more and weakened by his advanced age. The sphinx was 81 years old and had lost his strength.⁹² His allies in the party couldn’t reach him, and his cabinet director was dismissed by his wife Marthe Kasalu. Tshisekedi was initially hospitalized in Kinshasa, then transferred to Brussels.⁹³ Bruno Mavungu, who had taken over the reins of the party following the departure of Jacquemain Shabani, was left with the task of trying to keep the UDPS alive. It was also a time of considerable maneuvering with the national consultations called by then-president Joseph Kabila. This was followed by protests between 2015 and elections in 2018.

With its internal institutions weakened, the UDPS remained active essentially thanks to its informal structures, mainly the street parliaments and *Force du progrès* which, on several occasions, took actions that deviated from party policy.

Street parliaments: the street and the party

The street parliaments initiative dates back to 1992, immediately after the emergence of a multiparty system, at the same time as the CNS. Although these gatherings of people in the street reading newspapers seem to date from several years prior to 1992, the context of the national conference transformed these meetings into the center of political action for the UDPS.

In the early 1990s, young people would gather around newspaper kiosks on 12th street in the commune of Limete, in Kinshasa, to discuss the latest sports news. With the advent of democracy, political debate became a more frequent feature of the unstructured, informal discussions. In December 1992, Mobutu removed Tshisekedi from office. It was a decision that Tshisekedi contested. Leaders of these debates tried to

become more politically organized, remaining discreet for fear of reprisals. On September 26, 1993, representatives from these groups, which were slowly becoming more structured, met with Tshisekedi to ask for his advice and offer him their support. It was during this meeting that Tshisekedi described them as “members of street parliaments,” as opposed to the seated members of parliament from the CNS. The 16 founders of the street parliament adopted the name as their own.⁹⁴

Organization and operation of street parliaments

The first street parliament took place in Limete. Meetings were held on 10th street. Other street parliaments very quickly took root in Kinshasa and a few other areas of the country, particularly in Lubumbashi and Mbuji-Mayi, cities both known for their political activism at the time.⁹⁵ The street parliaments were not created at random: they were initially designed to facilitate discussion and the circulation of information.

In the capital, six of them very quickly took shape: first the original one on 10th street in Limete; then one run by the ACP (ex-AZAP, the *Association zairois de presse*) aimed at civil servants and bureaucrats in central Gombe; another at Cabu Bridge, a traditional center for the UDPS as well as a major newspaper sales outlet, two more in Bongolo and at Victoire, one of the city’s major junctions, and a final one in in Ndjili’s district 1. The Ndjili gathering also made it possible to communicate with people living in the working class communes of Tshangu and Masina. These communes also provided the opposition with a vast reservoir of protestors.

Each street parliament had its own bureau, with varying compositions. There was usually a president, two or three vice-presidents, a secretary and rapporteur, treasurer and mobilization secretary. These leaders were chosen by a show of hands during meetings and could easily be removed in the event of any suspicions.

Street parliaments filled four main roles: they served as points for mobilization, distributing information, and recruiting party members and as mechanisms for keeping an eye on, and reprimanding, senior party figures. At meetings of street parliaments, several speakers would follow one another, addressing the crowd about current affairs presented from the UDPS point of view.

When in opposition, speeches made to street parlia-



ments were designed to criticize actions taken by the government and to present the UDPS as the alternative: “Stay true, the UDPS will triumph!” was the slogan heard again and again in speeches. Since the arrival in power of Félix Tshisekedi in 2019, street parliaments have been used to support the president’s positions while also criticizing opponents and everyone else expressing views contrary to government policy. Information is shared in ways that show government action in a positive light and, occasionally, to promise that much-awaited change is just around the corner. “Long live the UDPS!” and, in particular, “Fatshi Béton!” have replaced “Stay true, the UDPS will triumph!” Determination to stay in power has replaced the determination to gain power. But the central function remains unchanged. For the party, street parliaments have remained major centers for mobilization and propaganda. They also still serve as key sources for information and disinformation.

Toyebi ndako: street parliaments and violence

One of the most controversial functions of street parliaments is undoubtedly their role in the surveillance and repression of senior party figures and activists. During its years in opposition, members of street parliaments would pore over speeches made by their leaders in search of any sign of “betrayal.” These practices were influenced by the numerous attempts by various governments, from Mobutu to Kabila, to recruit leading figures from the party. If a leader stopped being radical and began to adopt a more conciliatory tone toward the powers that be, they would be described as a “mole” and corrective steps would immediately be put in place. Activists would “visit” their home and their property, such as vehicles, would be trashed. Hence the warning “*toyebi ndako*” (we know the house) in Lingala.

Sometimes these actions included physical violence. On more than one occasion, the actions of street parliamentarians have led to the death of a leading party figure. Between 1994 and 1995, during the crisis resulting from the designation of Phongo as secretary general of the UDPS, members of street parliaments pressured a meeting of the party founders to take a stance on the Phongo case. Roger Gisanga, a leading figure in the party and one of the few to also be a member of the first Tshisekedi government, had a heart attack and died. “It was violence, sure. But corrective violence,”⁹⁶ is the justification proffered by Mathieu Kalele Ka-Bila, sociologist and former national organization secretary of the UDPS. He conti-

nues: “A liberation movement that fails to back up its objectives with sanctions will not meet them.”

Because of their influence and methods, street parliaments never have settled relationships with the formal party structures. Relations between the two have been tense at times. This is partly because the party founders thought of these organizations as militia controlled by Étienne Tshisekedi, and partly because street parliaments had no hesitation in denouncing senior party figures they suspected of betrayal—as Phongo, Mubake Makanda, Kabund and others all discovered to their detriment.

Conclusion

After close to 40 years of opposition and repression, the UDPS had boosted its reputation as a radical opposition force, and Tshisekedi his status as undisputed leader of the opposition. While the radicalism of the sphinx of Limete earned him the respect of the base, repression and his empty chair policy deprived the party of many potential resources. The years in opposition saw the UDPS suffer a real brain drain. Initially as a result of repression coupled with aggressive attempts to lure people away, attempts that were helped by the atmosphere of internal disagreement due in part to differences concerning political choices and leadership struggles within the party (1980-92, 1994-98, and 2015-2018). When the AFDL rebellion broke out, several federal leaders of the UDPS were offered positions, sometimes following popular consultations. Tshisekedi’s decision not to take part in the 2006 elections and to ban party members from taking seats in parliament in 2011 resulted in further defections of senior figures. Notable departures were Ève Bazaiba, followed by Massamba and Samy Badibanga.

The uncertainty caused by Tshisekedi’s illness and the long process of post-Tshisekedi transition within the party led to friction between various currents within the UDPS, but also between senior figures in the party and members of Tshisekedi’s biological family. The last few years of the life of the sphinx of Limete saw the UDPS oscillate between various competing forces. Many of Tshisekedi’s loyal lieutenants also dreamed of picking up the torch themselves.

At the same time, the Kabila government and other opposition leaders constantly continued to woo the aging leader. This is probably the reason for the talks in Geneva, Ibiza, Brussels and Paris, or the about-turn at Genval and the signature of two entirely opposing agreements: the strategic partnership agreement between the UDPS and



the Kabila regime, and the unified opposition agreement.

In terms of its internal organization, the UDPS conducted reforms designed to modernize its internal management and make it more responsive, but also with a view to cementing its mission of gaining power after the years spent fighting for democracy. But these reforms also tightened the party's internal control mechanisms, and in so doing they undermined its internal democracy and the ideal of a system of governance with extensive powers for the grassroots.

This research project does not examine changes in the UDPS's structures and practices as a party in power. Furthermore, it only looks briefly at informal movements within the UDPS. Research at a later date will help shine a light on these dynamics. This report does, however, provide a basis for understanding the political and structural trajectory of the UDPS.

Recommendations

Political parties are critical to the health of a democracy. They are the main conduit for representation between the electorate and government. The lack of admissibility (*recevabilité*) within parties has hampered the ability of the population to hold their leader responsible. They have voted their legislators, governors, and now even the president out of office, but this turnover has not been able to staunch corruption or counter the rampant impunity that characterizes the Congolese state.

Three areas of reform should be considered to improve the performance of political parties: a change in the electoral law to reduce the number of parties; the implementation of finance laws to prevent parties from becoming beholden to unaccountable elites; the articulation of clear and realistic policy programs by political actors; and better institutions within political parties to make them more accountable to their constituencies.

Change in the electoral law: As our reports suggest, the sheer number of political parties represented in government and parliament make it difficult to hold the government to account and to develop clear policy platforms. Many political leaders recognize that this fragmentation is a problem, but many also benefit from this system. In July 2021, the government promulgated a new electoral law that introduces the requirement to run candidates in at least 60% of electoral districts, on top of the require-

ment that each list or independent candidate must reach a threshold to be eligible for the allocation of seats—the *seuil électoral* (1% of seats for legislative, 3% for provincial, and 10% for local elections). In theory, these reforms should reduce the number of political parties. However, as in previous elections, the persistence of *regroupements politiques*, essentially with electoral goals, will not achieve the desired result. Legislators should consider an amendment to the electoral law to make these requirements apply to parties and not *regroupements*.

Financing of political parties: Having a few large parties that are controlled by a few wealthy individuals or corporations would not solve the problems the current system faces. Indeed, currently political parties that try to field candidates in 60% of all electoral districts would have to pay large sums in registration fees alone. If there are other provisions, such as those mentioned above, then those fees should be reduced or eliminated. On June 10, 2008 parliament passed the law 008/005 on the public financing of elections. This law provides for significant government funding of political parties, proportional to their representation in the various legislative bodies in the country. In return, parties would have to open their accounts for inspection, which could help promote accountability. However, this law has never been implemented, and parts of the text are vague—the sums could potentially be very high and it is unclear how they would be distributed. Legislators should amend this law and make sure it is enforced.

The articulation of realistic and detailed policy platforms: Public debates over policy are necessary for a healthy democracy—they help hold leaders accountable once elected and they forge grassroots coalitions around core interests. There is currently very little public debate in the Congo over, for example, tax rates, army reform, an international tribunal for war crimes, or agricultural policy. Most major policy decisions are made without much public debate, as was the case for joining the East African Community, the legislative ordinance (*ordonnance-loi*) on military planning, or the creation of a value added tax in 2012. While parties such as PPRD and UDPS have official ideologies, it is often difficult to see any ideological difference between them, and policy proposals often boil down to broad slogans such as “good governance” and “peace and stability.” Political parties should develop nuanced and realistic policy platforms—ahead of the 2018 elections some candidates put forward utopian projections of revenue collection, for example—ahead of the next elections, and media and civil society organizations should promote this kind of dialogue by asking pointed questions and putting forward proposals themselves.



Investing in strong, accountable party structures: As our reports document, Congolese political parties have few internal accountability mechanisms. They are highly personalized; officials derive their status and power through their loyalty towards the main leaders. Statutory meetings are held irregularly, the agendas are set by a few individuals, and transcripts are not made available. Meanwhile, funds are managed opaquely with few if any audits, and little transparency regarding the source of funding. There are no easy fixes to this problem. Allowing the ministry of interior to police parties could lead to abuses reminiscent of the authoritarian past, and the Congo does not have a good experience in creating non-partisan national commissions—the CENI or the *Commission nationale des droits de l’homme* (CNDH) are examples of these pitfalls. Something, however, needs to be done. Following the next elections, the ministry of interior or CENI should convene a forum of political parties to discuss how best to monitor and implement this kind of accountability.



Endnotes

1. See Jean-Marc Kabund's tweet posted on January 14, 2022: "Today I have taken the decision to resign from my post as the first vice-president of the national assembly. And so a new page in history begins, it will be written with the sweat of our brows, which will flow every day that we confront bullying, humiliation and torture...", https://twitter.com/kabund_jmkkrock/status/1481982813767446535?s=20&t=mfi7xnNqtW4wa7RkwJaoww.
2. Romain Gras, "RDC : l'ascension brisée de Jean-Marc Kabund, l'incontournable devenu paria" (DRC: the downfall of Jean-Marc Kabund, right-hand man turned pariah), *Jeune Afrique*, January 31, 2022, available at <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1303252/politique/rdc-lascension-brisee-de-jean-marc-kabund-lincontournable-devenu-paria/>, viewed June 12, 2022.
3. *Actualite.cd*, "RDC : Jean-Marc Kabund définitivement exclu de the UDPS" (DRC: Jean-Marc Kabund definitively expelled from the UDPS), January 29, 2022, available at <https://actualite.cd/index.php/2022/01/29/rdc-jean-marc-kabund-definitivement-exclu-de-ludps>, viewed June 20, 2022.
4. Patient Ligodi, "RDC : le procès de Jean-Marc Kabund s'ouvre devant la Cour de cassation" (DRC: Jean-Marc Kabund's case comes before the court of cassation), September 5, 2022, RFI, available at <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20220905-rdc-le-proc%C3%A8s-de-jean-marc-kabund-s-ouvre-devant-la-cour-de-cassation>, viewed September 8, 2022.
5. *Ouragan.cd*, "UDPS : le trio Kabund-Shabani-Wakenda pour assurer l'intérim de Félix Tshisekedi à la présidence du parti" (UDPS: the Kabund-Shabani-Wakenda trio set to take over from Félix Tshisekedi and provide interim management of the party), April 27, 2019, available at <https://ouragan.cd/2019/04/udps-le-trio-kabund-shabani-wakenda-pour-assurer-linterim-de-felix-tshisekedi-a-la-presidence-du-parti>, viewed September 8, 2022.
6. Junior Malula, "RD Congo : l'UDPS, le parti présidentiel, dans la tourmente" (DRC: UDPS, the presidential party, in turmoil), June 14, 2020, *Le Point*, available at https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/rd-congo-l-udps-le-parti-presidentiel-dans-la-tourmente-14-06-2020-2379790_3826.php#11, viewed September 8, 2022.
7. Ivan Kasongo, "UDPS : le collectif « sauvons the UDPS » reproche à Kabund entre autres, la mise à l'écart du statut du parti et la conflictualité à des fins entretenues" (UDPS: the Let's Save the UDPS collective accuses Kabund of, among other things, ignoring party statutes and creating a climate of conflict for his own purposes), March 13, 2020, *Actualite.cd*, available at <https://actualite.cd/index.php/2020/03/13/udps-le-collectif-sauvons-ludps-reproche-kabund-entre-autres-la-mise-lecart-du-statut-du>, viewed September 8, 2022.
8. Alain Diasso, "UDPS : Jean-Marc Kabund suspend le porte-parole Paul Tshimbulu (UDPS: Jean-Marc Kabund suspends spokesman Paul Tshimbulu), April 11, 2020, *Agence d'information d'Afrique centrale*, available at <https://www.adiac-congo.com/content/udps-jean-marc-kabund-suspend-le-porte-parole-paul-tshimbulu-115246>, viewed September 8, 2022.
9. See the list of members of parliament on [talatala.cd](https://talatala.cd/deputes/), a barometer of parliamentary activity and government action, available at <https://talatala.cd/deputes/>
10. European Union – election observation mission, "Democratic Republic of the Congo: provisional results by province, 2011 presidential election."
11. Romain Yakemtchou, "Les deux guerres du Shaba : les relations entre la Belgique, la France et le Zaïre" (The two Shaba wars: relations between Belgium, France and Zaire), special issue of *Studia diplomatica* - Egmont Institute, available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44835906>
12. Egmont Institute, "Document 1: speech by citizen Mobutu Sese Seko, president and founder of the MPR, President of the Republic, given after the events that occurred in south-west Shaba, on July 1, 1977 at N'sele", in *Studia Diplomatica*, 1979, Vol. 32, no. 1, *De politiek Van Zaire in 1977* (1979), pp. 32-33, available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44834055>.
13. *Idem*, p.34
14. *Idem*. p. 44
15. Egmont Institute, "Document 2: speech made by President Mobutu on November 25, 1977" in *Studia Diplomatica*, 1979, Vol. 32, no. 1, *De politiek Van Zaire in 1977* (1979), pp. 45-74, available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44834056>.
16. Jean-Claude Willame, *Chronique d'une opposition politique, l'UDPS, 1978 - 1987 (An account of political opposition, the UDPS, , 1978 - 1987)*, Louvain-la-Neuve: CEDAF, Brussels, 1987, p.10.
17. Interview with François-Xavier Beltchika Kalubye, March 8, 2022.
18. Jean-Claude Willame, *op. cit.*
19. Jean-Claude Willame, *Chronique d'une opposition politique, l'UDPS, 1978 - 1987 (An account of political opposition, the UDPS, 1978 - 1987)*, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-13.
20. See "Open letter to the citizen president-founder of the Popular Movement of the Revolution, President of the Republic, from a group of members of parliament", available at https://www.persee.fr/doc/polaf_0244-7827_1981_num_3_1_6320.



21. Martin Pongo Kalulambi, "Le manifeste Conscience africaine : genèse, influences et réactions" (The African consciousness manifesto: origins, influences and reactions), in Nathalie Tousignant, *Le manifeste Conscience africaine (1956) : élites congolaises et société coloniale*. Regards croisés, Brussels, Presses de l'Université Saint-Louis, 2009, viewed October 22, 2022, available at <https://books.openedition.org/pusi/10388>.
22. Interview with Lusanga Ngiele, August 30, 2022.
23. Interviews with Lusanga Ngiele and François-Xavier Beltchika Kalubye, *op. cit.*
24. Jean-Claude Willame, *Chronique d'une opposition politique, l'UDPS, 1978 - 1987 (An account of political opposition, the UDPS, 1978 - 1987)*, *op. cit.*
25. Isidore Ndaywel è Nziem, "Le Congo dans l'ouragan de l'histoire : combats pour l'État de droit. Des femmes et des hommes de foi et de bonne volonté" (The Congo in the hurricane of history: the struggle for the rule of law), L'Harmattan, Paris, 2019.
26. Interview with Lusanga Ngiele, *op. cit.* See also Jean-Claude Willame, *Chronique d'une opposition politique, l'UDPS, 1978 - 1987 (An account of political opposition, the UDPS, 1978 - 1987)*, *op. cit.*, p.58 and Amnesty International.
27. Jean-Claude Willame, *Chronique d'une opposition politique, l'UDPS, 1978 - 1987 (An account of political opposition, the UDPS, 1978 - 1987)*, *op. cit.*, p.59.
28. *ibid.*, p.75
29. Interview with Lusanga Ngiele, *op. cit.*
30. *Idem.*
31. Jean-Claude Willame, *Chronique d'une opposition politique, l'UDPS, 1978 - 1987 (An account of political opposition, the UDPS, 1978 - 1987)*, *op. cit.*, p.81
32. Jean-Claude Willame, *Chronique d'une opposition politique, l'UDPS, 1978 - 1987 (An account of political opposition, the UDPS, 1978 - 1987)*, *op. cit.*, p.84.
33. Jean-Marie Mutamba Makombo, *Sur les pas de the UDPS. Pour ne pas oublier (In the footsteps of the UDPS. Keeping their memories alive)*, Éditions du Lomami, 2019.
34. Jean-Marie Mutamba Makomba, *Octobre noir: l'UDPS dans l'oeil du cyclone, (Black October: the UDPS in the eye of the storm)*, Éditions du Lomami, 2019.
35. Amnesty international, *Urgent action*, October 21, 1986 (AI index: 62/27/86).
36. Amnesty international, *Urgent action*, August 14, 1987 (AI index: 63/13/87).
37. Jean-Claude Willame, *Chronique d'une opposition politique, l'UDPS, 1978 - 1987 (An account of political opposition, the UDPS, 1978 - 1987)*, *op. cit.*,
38. *Idem.*
39. Interview with Corneille Mulumba, one of the UDPS pioneers, July 5, 2021
40. See the UDPS White Paper.
41. Jean-Claude Willame, *op. cit.*, p. 108 and interview with Corneille Mulumba, *op. cit.*
42. Interview with François-Xavier Beltchika Kalubye, *op. cit.*
43. Interview with Corneille Mulumba, *op. cit.*
44. Interview with Corneille Mulumba, *op. cit.*
45. Interview with Corneille Mulumba, *op. cit.*
46. Interview with Lusanga Ngiele, *op. cit.*
47. *Idem.*



48. *Le Soft International*, “Comment Tshisekedi nargua Mobutu qui le lui rendit fort bien” (How Tshisekedi flouted Mobutu, who returned the favor), February 7, 2017, available at <http://www.lesoftonline.net/articles/comment-tshisekedi-nargua-mobutu-qui-le-lui-rendit-fort-bien>, viewed September 8, 2022.
49. Berci, *Les leçons à tirer de la conférence nationale souveraine et ses implications pour le dialogue intercongolais (Lessons learned from the National Sovereign Conference and its implications for inter-Congolese dialogue)*, 2001, p.26, available at https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/1296_cd_nat-conf2001_0.pdf, viewed September 8, 2022.
50. *Le Soft International*, *op. cit.*
51. Interview with François-Xavier Beltchika Kalubye, *op. cit.*
52. *Le Soft International*, *op. cit.*
53. EK archives reconstructed from Soft de finance of 09/01/1992.
54. Bondeko conclave report, 1994.
55. *Idem.*
56. Interview with Pascal Kambale, July 5, 2021.
57. Interview with Lusanga Ngiele, *op. cit.* See also interview with Corneille Mulumba, *op. cit.*
58. Interview with Lusanga Ngiele, *op. cit.* See also the interview with Raoul Nsolwa, UDPS founding member and former street parliament leader, October 11, 2022.
59. *Le Potentiel*, “UDPS : de la clandestinité à Sun City” (UDPS: from concealment to Sun City), September 15, 2005, no. 3527, p.13.
60. See the report written by the UDPS reform commission, p.1.
61. See the UDPS White Paper, *op. cit.*
62. François Soudan, “Étienne Tshisekedi : “Cette fois, j’irai jusqu’au bout !” (Étienne Tshisekedi: this time I’ll go all the way!), October 5, 2020, *Jeune Afrique*, available at <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/194778/politique/tienne-tshisekedi-cette-fois-j-irai-jusqu-au-bout/>, viewed september 8, 2022.
63. Interview with a senior figure of the UDPS, October 19, 2021.
64. Trésor Kibangula, “RD Congo : le nouveau combat de Beltchika, l’homme qui voulait succéder à Tshisekedi” (DRC: the new battle facing Beltchika, the man who wanted to be Tshisekedi’s successor), May 4, 2016, *Jeune Afrique*, available at <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/322590/politique/rd-congo-nouveau-combat-de-beltchika-lhomme-voulait-succeder-a-tshisekedi/>, viewed September 8, 2022.
65. *Latempete.info*, “Le SG honoraire de l’UDPS rappelle le rôle joué pour la redynamisation du parti” (The honorary SG of the UDPS recounts the role played in revitalizing the party), February 14, 2017, available at <http://www.latempete.info/?p=19486>, viewed September 8, 2022.
66. Interview with François-Xavier Beltchika, *op. cit.*
67. François Soudan, “Étienne Tshisekedi : “Cette fois, j’irai jusqu’au bout !” (Étienne Tshisekedi: this time I’ll go all the way!), *op. cit.*
68. See the general report of the first UDPS congress, Kinshasa, December 14, 2010, pp. 9-25.
69. See the opening speech at the first congress by the party president in the general report on the first UDPS congress, Kinshasa, December 14, 2010. p. 30.
70. See resolution no. 003/UDPS/1st congress on December 14, 2010 relating to the appointment and investiture of the party’s candidate for the presidential election.
71. *La Croix* with *AFP*, “Les élections en RD-Congo “conformes ni à la vérité ni à la justice”, selon le cardinal Monsengwo” (“The elections in DRC ‘corresponded neither to the truth nor to justice’ according to Cardinal Monsengwo), December 12, 2011, available at <https://www.la-croix.com/Urbi-et-Orbi/Actualite/Monde/Les-elections-en-RD-Congo-conformes-ni-a-la-verite-ni-a-la-justice-selon-le-cardinal-Monsengwo-2011-12-12-746301>, viewed September 8, 2022.
72. Centre Carter, *Final Report. Presidential and Legislatives Elections In the Democratic Republic of the Congo. November 28, 2011*, available at https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/election_reports/drc-112811-elections-final-rpt.pdf, viewed 24 novembre 2022.



73. UDPS, *Rapport sur le processus électoral et démonstration de la victoire du président Étienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba à la présidentielle du 28 novembre 2011 (Report on the electoral process and demonstration of the victory of President Étienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba in the presidential elections held on November 28, 2011)*, Kinshasa, January 17, 2012.
74. Interview with Albert Moleka, October 25, 2021.
75. *Jeune Afrique*, “RDC : Étienne Tshisekedi hospitalisé ?” (DRC: Étienne Tshisekedi hospitalized?), June 16, 2014, available at <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/50418/politique/rdc-tienne-tshisekedi-hospitalis/>, viewed November 24, 2022.
76. *Radio Okapi*, “RDC : Étienne Tshisekedi évacué vers la Belgique pour des raisons médicales” (DRC: Étienne Tshisekedi evacuated to Belgium for medical reasons), August 16, 2014, available at <https://www.radiookapi.net/actualite/2014/08/16/rdc-etienne-tshisekedi-evacue-vers-la-belgique-pour-des-raisons-medicales>, viewed November 24, 2022.
77. See the UDPS roadmap for solving the crisis, available at <https://softkens.com/Mains/Documents/Feuille-de-route-udps.pdf>, viewed November 24, 2022.
78. Telephone interview with a member of the teams facilitating the discussions held in Venice and Ibiza, September 29, 2022.
79. Interview with a member of civil society close to the UDPS.
80. See the commitments set out by the *Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales de la République démocratique du Congo* which held a conference at Genval, Belgium, on June 8 and 9, 2016.
81. See the report of the *Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales de la République démocratique du Congo* which held a conference at Genval, Belgium, on June 8 and 9, 2016, p.2, available at <https://www.congoforum.be/Upldocs/RAPPORT%20DE%20LA%20CONFERENCE%20DE%20GENVAL%20DU%2009%20JUN%202016.pdf>.
82. Interview with Vincent Shabani Tutu-Mushale, June 12, 2022.
83. Interview with Mathieu Kalele Ka-Bila, April 8, 2022.
84. See the UDPS statutes in 1994.
85. See the report *Radioscopy of the Party*, 1998, Annexe 4.
86. See the final executive summary (second part) of the evaluation of the party by the Alpha group, 1998, p.4.
87. See the reform commission report, 2006.
88. See the statement of reasons for the statutes of the UDPS, 2010.
89. Interview with a senior figure from the UDPS, *op. cit.*
90. Daniel Aselo, “L’applicabilité et la nature des textes légaux de l’UDPS” (The applicability and nature of the UDPS’s legal texts), in the Days of Reflection report, Annexe IV. p. 38.
91. *Idem.*
92. Trésor Kibangula, “RDC : Étienne Tshisekedi, un roi sans royaume” (DRC: Étienne Tshisekedi, a king without a kingdom), March 19, 2013, *Jeune Afrique*, available at <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/138041/politique/rdc-tienne-tshisekedi-un-roi-sans-royaume/>, viewed September 8, 2022.
93. Interview with Albert Moleka, *op. cit.*
94. Interview with Raoul Nsolwa, *op. cit.*
95. *Idem.*
96. Interview with Mathieu Kalele Ka-Bila, *op. cit.*

The logo for Ebuteli, featuring the word "EBUTELI" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font, stacked vertically.

CONGO RESEARCH GROUP
GROUPE D'ÉTUDE SUR LE CONGO

Congo Research Group (CRG) was founded in 2015 to promote rigorous, independent research into the violence that affects millions of Congolese. This requires a broad approach. For us, the roots of this violence can be found in a history of predatory governance that dates back to the colonial period and that connects the hillsides of the Kivus with political intrigue and corruption in Kinshasa, as well as in the capitals of Europe, China, and North America. Today, CRG's research aims to explain the complicated inter-play among politics, violence, and political economy in the Congo to a wide audience.

Ebuteli is a Congolese research institute on politics, governance, and violence. Ebuteli ("staircase" in Lingala) aims to promote, through rigorous research, an informed debate to find solutions to the many challenges facing the DRC.

All of our publications, blogs and podcasts are available at
www.congoresearchgroup.org and www.ebuteli.org

Ebuteli, asbl

1, avenue de la paix, immeuble SEDEC
Kinshasa, commune de la Gombe
République démocratique du Congo

 @ebuteli
www.ebuteli.org

Center on International Cooperation

726 Broadway, Suite 543
NY 10003, New York
USA

 @GEC_CRG
www.congoresearchgroup.org
www.cic.nyu.edu