

Congo

Ethnicity in Congo

Group selection

The boundaries of politically relevant ethnic groups (or ethno-political blocs) have been rather fluid in Congo, with certain groups splitting along lines of subgroups during specific eras and with different ethnic divisions being relevant in different time periods. The Mbochi group, for example, which consists of several subgroups (like the Mbochi “proper” and the Kouyou) could long be considered a relatively united bloc in national politics. After Nguabi’s assassination, however, cleavages between the Mbochi “proper” and the Kouyou became politically relevant (¹²⁴⁰). Thus, the ethnic category “**Mbochi**” refers both to a larger ethnic family and to a specific subgroup of this family (¹²⁴¹).

¹²⁴⁰ [Radu & Somerville, 1988]

¹²⁴¹ [Clark, 2008]

The large Kongo family of southern Congo (making up about half of the country’s population) consists of several important subgroups (**Lari, Vili, Bakongo** etc.). Whereas divisions between the Vili and Lari groups have always been relevant (¹²⁴²), the distinction between the Bakongo and the Lari only had political relevance in certain periods (¹²⁴³). To capture this the latter two subgroups were combined to one politically relevant ethnic group during the remaining periods.

¹²⁴² [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

¹²⁴³ [Horowitz, 1985]

Estimating the sizes of the distinct subgroups is extremely difficult. In order to arrive at a complete list, the analysis had to rely on different sources. The whole Kongo family makes up about half of Congo’s population (47-53% over time) (¹²⁴⁴, ¹²⁴⁵). The Lari group is estimated to make up about 21% of the whole population (about 45% of the Kongo family) (¹²⁴⁶; ¹²⁴⁷). For the size of the Vili ethnic group, the analysis relied on Fearon’s (¹²⁴⁸) number: 7%.

¹²⁴⁴ [Decalo, 1976]

¹²⁴⁵ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

¹²⁴⁶ [Englebert & Ron, 2004]

¹²⁴⁷ [Radu & Somerville, 1988]

¹²⁴⁸ [Fearon, 2003]

Regarding the Bakongo subgroup, Horowitz (1985) seems to give a number for the combined group of Lari and Bakongo: 30%. This would mean that the Bakongo group constitutes about 9% of the whole population (30% minus the Lari group’s 21%). This seems reasonable because according to Morrison et al. (¹²⁴⁹), the Bakongo are the second largest Kongo subgroup. Lacking any other reliable information, this number was used.

¹²⁴⁹ [Morrison, Mitchell & Paden, 1972]

For the sizes of the **Bateke** group (13%) and the combined Mbochi family (12%), the analysis relied on Decalo, Thompson and Adloff (1996). For the size of the Kouyou subgroup of the Mbochi family, the analysis relied on Fearon’s (2003) number again: 3%.

Therefore, for the Mbochi “proper”: $12\% - 3\% = 9\%$. Finally, for the **Bembe**, who become politically relevant as ethnic group in the 1990s the analysis had to draw on absolute numbers provided by the Joshua Project, which was then divided by the country population given by the same source ($46,600 / 4,220,850 = 1\%$) (¹²⁵⁰).

¹²⁵⁰ [Joshua Project, 2014]

Although these numbers are a bit sketchy, they should nevertheless provide an accurate picture of Congo’s ethno-demographic reality.

Power relations

1960-1963: Youlou’s rule

Youlou was a Lari. During his rule, the Lari group was clearly the leading ethnic group in Congo and favored by the president (¹²⁵¹). Nevertheless, there were also leaders of other ethnic groups included in the government, as, for example, Massemba-Debat, a Bakongo. It seems, however, that some of these leaders were rather “token” members appointed in order to reach a proportional representation of ethnic groups in the cabinet, and without genuine influence. The Batéké, for instance, had just one member in the government, the combined Mbochi group three (¹²⁵²). The latter could be seen as “token” representatives, as the Mbochi group became increasingly marginalized in political terms (¹²⁵³). The Mbochi party, the MSA, was gradually eclipsed (¹²⁵⁴). Meanwhile, the political patronage system was dominated by the Lari, and Youlou did not really care about the northern part of the country (and even proposed a partition of the country) (¹²⁵⁵; ¹²⁵⁶). The clear anti-northern bias in his economic policies also has to be interpreted as a sign of political powerlessness of the northern ethnic groups. Their then leader Opangault was named vice-president in the first government but had to resign soon thereafter. He entered the government once again in 1962 as minister of public works (¹²⁵⁷). Opangault’s unsteady political trajectory does not speak of much genuine influence within the government either. Thus, the Mbochi and the Batéké groups were coded as “powerless” during Youlou’s rule.

¹²⁵¹ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

¹²⁵² [Decalo, 1976]

¹²⁵³ [Radu & Somerville, 1988]

¹²⁵⁴ [Horowitz, 1985]

¹²⁵⁵ [Decalo, 1976]

¹²⁵⁶ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

¹²⁵⁷ [Radu & Somerville, 1988]

When the Vili party, PPC, disappeared from the political scene, its membership merged with Youlou’s UDDIA. A Vili leader (Tchichelle) was vice-president (and minister of foreign affairs) after Opangault, from 1961 to 1963 (¹²⁵⁸). Therefore, the Vili as well as the Bakongo groups were coded as “junior partners” during this period, while the Lari are coded as “senior partner”.

¹²⁵⁸ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

1964-1968: Massemba-Debat’s term

With Youlou’s demise, power moved from the Lari to the Bakongo subgroup among the southern groups (¹²⁵⁹; ¹²⁶⁰; ¹²⁶¹). The Bakongo were coded as “senior partner” in this period.

¹²⁵⁹ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

¹²⁶⁰ [Horowitz, 1985]

¹²⁶¹ [Zolberg, 1968]

There was no concrete information available about the Vili group during this period. However, Massemba-Debat’s government also in-

cluded other southern leaders, apart from his Bakongo group. Hence, the Vili were assumed to be included within a (more limited) southern power-sharing and were, thus, coded them as “junior partner”.

In contrast, the information regarding the Lari group during this period is ambiguous. Some sources (¹²⁶²) suggest a continuing influence of the group. Other sources speak of the Lari having “fallen from power” and of Lari discontent and violent demonstrations in support of Youlou (¹²⁶³; ¹²⁶⁴), of attempted invasions by the Lari political opposition, street violence against Lari in Brazzaville, and purges of Lari in the administration and the gendarmerie (¹²⁶⁵). The latter information was regarded as more convincing and, thus, coded the Lari as “powerless” during this period.

The situation of the Batéké does not seem to have changed in this new period, as the group still had but one member in the cabinet. Therefore, the Batéké remain coded as “powerless”. The same seems to be true for the Mbochi group, which did not increase its influence in Massemba-Debat’s new government who ignored the north as much as Youlou did. Mbochi participation in the cabinet even shrank to one single member. It should be mentioned that during Massemba-Debat’s term, the army which was dominated by members of the Mbochi group (¹²⁶⁶; ¹²⁶⁷; ¹²⁶⁸) became more and more powerful politically. Nevertheless, most sources still speak of a political dominance of the southern Kongo group (¹²⁶⁹; ¹²⁷⁰). Therefore, the Mbochi were coded as “powerless” again.

1969-1971: First part of Ngouabi’s rule

After the 1968 coup, northerners clearly became the leading group in the country (¹²⁷¹; ¹²⁷²). The army figured as the most important pillar of the political system in subsequent years. However, at the beginning, the new “Marxist” unity party PCT, with its Politburo and the Central Committee, also had some political influence. In these two organs, many southern and Bateke politicians were included, such as Vili leader Thystère-Tchicaya (¹²⁷³; ¹²⁷⁴). Hence, this first period of Ngouabi’s rule was coded as a power-sharing arrangement, with the combined Mbochi group as “senior partner”, and both the Batéké and Vili groups as “junior partners”.

The Lari and Bakongo subgroups can now be seen as one single politically relevant ethnic bloc, characterized by its opposition to the new northern regime which they perceived as a threat to their own interests. Several (real or alleged) coup attempts and invasions by the Lari political opposition are mentioned, followed by purges of Lari/Bakongo personnel from the state bureaucracy. (As early as 1968, the first two Lari ministers were dismissed from the government.) Ngouabi tried to subordinate the Lari-dominated police and gendarmerie to the army (¹²⁷⁵; ¹²⁷⁶; ¹²⁷⁷; ¹²⁷⁸). The combined Lari/Bakongo group is thus coded as “powerless” in this period.

¹²⁶² [Decalo, 1976]

¹²⁶³ [Horowitz, 1985]

¹²⁶⁴ [Zolberg, 1968]

¹²⁶⁵ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

¹²⁶⁶ [Clark, 1997]

¹²⁶⁷ [Decalo, 1976]

¹²⁶⁸ [Radu & Somerville, 1988]

¹²⁶⁹ [Decalo, 1976]

¹²⁷⁰ [Radu & Somerville, 1988]

¹²⁷¹ [Horowitz, 1985]

¹²⁷² [Radu & Somerville, 1988]

¹²⁷³ [Decalo, 1976]

¹²⁷⁴ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

¹²⁷⁵ [Decalo, 1976]

¹²⁷⁶ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

¹²⁷⁷ [Horowitz, 1985]

¹²⁷⁸ [Radu & Somerville, 1988]

1972-1977: Second part of Ngouabi's rule, until his assassination in March 1977

The regime-internal power struggles led to extensive purges between December 1971 and February 1972 (especially after the attempted coup by Diawara in February 1972). Hence, a new period was inserted in the coding in order to reflect this new ethno-political situation.

The purges entailed the dismissal of many influential non-Mbochi political leaders that were seen as possible rivals by Ngouabi, and a serious ravage of the political institutions and party organization. Leaders like Ndalla, Noumazalay or Pougui were either purged (and judicially persecuted) or lost much of their power during this time (¹²⁷⁹). Hence, the army officers loyal to Ngouabi had won the internal power struggle and were now in total control of state power (¹²⁸⁰). The northern Mbochi group was thus coded as "dominant" during this period and all other ethnic groups as "powerless".

¹²⁷⁹ [Decalo, 1976]

¹²⁸⁰ [Radu & Somerville, 1988]

1978-1979: Transition period after Ngouabi's death

After Ngouabi's murder, the cleavages between the two Mbochi subgroups - the Mbochi "proper" and the Kouyou - became more salient as a basis for political divisions and power struggles (¹²⁸¹; ¹²⁸²). They were thus listed as two separate politically relevant ethnic groups from this period on.

¹²⁸¹ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

¹²⁸² [Radu & Somerville, 1988]

The military interim leadership was clearly dominated by northerners. Southern members remained without any political influence, merely serving as figureheads and unable to challenge northern hegemony. De-facto power-sharing between Yhombi-Opango and Sassou-Nguesso. Yhombi-Opango is from Owando (a Kouyou stronghold in the northern Cuvette region) and a cousin of Ngouabi. He soon became the leader of the Kouyou faction within the regime. In contrast, Sassou-Nguesso is a member of the Mbochi ("proper") subgroup. Although Yhombi-Opango held the post of the president, Sassou-Nguesso was already clearly the leading figure (¹²⁸³). The Mbochi "proper" were thus coded as "senior partner" and the Kouyou as "junior partner" during this period. All other groups remain coded as "powerless".

¹²⁸³ [Radu & Somerville, 1988]

1980-1984: First part of Sassou-Nguesso's rule, until the purges of 1984

In February 1979, Sassou-Nguesso became Congo's new president. Note that due to EPR's January-1st-rule, the new period is coded as starting in 1980.

Although Yhombi-Opango had to resign as president and was placed under house arrest, his Kouyou group was still influential in the army. Furthermore, Vili leader Thystore-Tchicaya was de-facto the second most powerful leader in the country (¹²⁸⁴). Hence, we can observe a certain ethno-political opening again during this first

¹²⁸⁴ [Radu & Somerville, 1988]

period of Sassou's rule. Accordingly, the Mbochi were thus coded as "senior partner", and the Kouyou, the Vili, and the Bateke as "junior partners". In contrast, according to the author's sources, the combined Lari/Bakongo group remained politically marginalized (1285; 1286). They are therefore coded as "powerless".

¹²⁸⁵ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

¹²⁸⁶ [Horowitz, 1985]

1985-1990: Second part of Sassou-Nguesso's rule

The two northern groups Mbochi and Kouyou are clearly in control of the country's politics (1287). They are coded again as "senior partner" and "junior partner", respectively.

¹²⁸⁷ [Radu & Somerville, 1988]

New regime-internal purges in 1984 led to the dismissal of southern leaders like Thystère-Tchicaya. Consequently, the Vili group is coded as "powerless" in this period. Also the Batéké were first affected by these purges. However, they established a secret "liberation organization", FROLIBABA, that promoted their ethno-political interests within the regime, and apparently achieved to influence Sassou-Nguesso who appointed four new Batéké ministers and rehabilitated some of the purged leaders (1288; 1289). It appears thus reasonable to maintain the coding of the Bateke group as "junior partner" for this period.

¹²⁸⁸ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

¹²⁸⁹ [Radu & Somerville, 1988]

The Lari/Bakongo were completely marginalized in the political system (1290) and are therefore coded as "powerless".

¹²⁹⁰ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

1991: National conference and interim government

This situation is best conceived as an ethno-political power-sharing arrangement. The interim government was headed by Andre Milongo, a Bakongo politician. The Bakongo/Lari were thus coded as "senior partner" and all other relevant groups as "junior partners".

1992-1994: Lissouba's first governments

Note that in accordance with EPR's coding rules, the coding does not reflect each change brought about by the various government reshuffles during these years, but instead focuses on the overall picture of the ethno-political power structure in this period.

Lissouba's party, UPADS, which won the elections, drew its electoral support from the non-Lari southwest of the country (the so-called "Nibolek" cluster). The term "Nibolek" became politically relevant in the 1990s and refers to the different peoples of the three regions Niari, Bouenza, and Lékoumou. Politicians used this regional identity marker in the 1990s to mobilize these people against their Mbochi, Vili and Lari rivals who had strong political support from their own groups, which had played prominent roles in Congo's ethno-political history. Lissouba himself is an ethnic Bandjambi from the Niari region (1291, 175). However, the groups of these regions do not constitute a unified cultural bloc, but instead are ethnically diverse, including a) various different Kongo and Batéké subgroups, b) smaller independent ethnic groups, and c) ethnic groups that mainly

¹²⁹¹ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

live in Gabon. Hence, referring to a regional rather than an ethnic identity, the Nibolek category cannot be considered a politically relevant ethnic group, according to the EPR definition. In fact, the UPADS party was essentially an alliance of various regional parties and power barons coalescing behind Lissouba. Hence, it is not surprising that with Lissouba's fall from power, the term has become less relevant again (¹²⁹²; ¹²⁹³).

Whereas Lissouba's and the UPADS's electoral support exhibited a regional rather than a specifically ethnic character, the political power distribution under Lissouba did follow a clear ethnic logic. While Lissouba's own ethnic group did not play any significant role in politics, throughout his presidency, he mainly relied on a selected group of key advisors who were all from Bouenza region and of Bembe ethnic origin: Martin Mberi (his powerful minister of the interior), Nguila MOUNGOUNGA-NKOMBO (the also very powerful minister of economy and finance), Christophe MOKOUKEKE (secretary-general of the UPADS), Victor TAMBA-TAMBA these four politicians being called "the gang of four" by Clark and Decalo, and Claudine MUNARI (the influential chief of his ministerial cabinet). To ensure the loyalty of the security forces, Mberi (who also helped Lissouba organize his militia groups) started to replace members of other ethnic group by Bembe personnel. As a consequence, the Bembe became the main supporters of Lissouba's regime. Thus, the group is listed as politically relevant from this period on, and code it as "senior partner" during Lissouba's presidency (¹²⁹⁴; ¹²⁹⁵).

Lacking a majority in the parliament, Lissouba entered a coalition with Yhombi-Opango's RDD, a Kouyou party, giving Yhombi-Opango the position of prime minister. Thystère-Tchicaya became minister of petroleum, and at least another Vili leader was included in the government (¹²⁹⁶). Hence, both the Kouyou and the Vili groups are coded as "junior partners" (although other sources claim that the Vili (with their party, the RDPS) were in the opposition (¹²⁹⁷)).

The Lari and Bakongo were both represented by the MCDDI party, which was in the opposition (¹²⁹⁸; ¹²⁹⁹; ¹³⁰⁰). Hence, the combined Lari/Bakongo group is coded as "powerless" in this period.

Sassou-Nguesso's PCT was based in the non-Kouyou north, above all his own Mbochi group (¹³⁰¹; ¹³⁰²). He first supported Lissouba in the run-off ballot, but when the PCT was only offered 3 out of 28 cabinet seats he joined the opposition of Kolelas' MCDDI (¹³⁰³; ¹³⁰⁴; ¹³⁰⁵). As a result, the Mbochi became politically marginalized. They are therefore coded as "powerless" during this period.

The situation of the Bateke group is more difficult to determine. According to John Clark (Florida International University, personal communication, April 15, 2014), they have never voted "in bloc" or been represented by a single most important political leader since the introduction of multi-party democracy. (However, there seems to have existed a small Batéké party in the 1990s (the Union pour le Progrès (UP)), according to Decalo, Thompson and Adloff (¹³⁰⁶,

¹²⁹² [Clark & Decalo, 2012]

¹²⁹³ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

¹²⁹⁴ [Clark & Decalo, 2012]

¹²⁹⁵ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

¹²⁹⁶ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

¹²⁹⁷ [Sundberg, 1999]

¹²⁹⁸ [Clark, 1997]

¹²⁹⁹ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

¹³⁰⁰ [Sundberg, 1999]

¹³⁰¹ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

¹³⁰² [Englebert & Ron, 2004]

¹³⁰³ [Clark, 1997]

¹³⁰⁴ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

¹³⁰⁵ [Sundberg, 1999]

¹³⁰⁶ [Decalo, Thompson & Adloff, 1996]

255).) While many Teke supported Sassou-Nguesso and his northern (Mbochi) PCT, some also formed part of Lissouba's winning southern electoral coalition. Some leading Teke politicians such as Charles David Ganao who served as Lissouba's prime minister for a while or military leaders for example, Raymond-Damas Ngollo were allied to Lissouba, tying at least some of the Bateke constituency to his regime. Thus, on balance, it appeared reasonable to code the Bateke group as "junior partner" in this period.

1995-1997

In Lissouba's new government of January 1995, Kolelas' brother was appointed to the sensitive post of minister of the interior. In a country that experiences severe political unrest and violence, this post has to be seen as crucial and Lissouba's move as a significant sign of cooperation. In the last months of Lissouba's rule, Kolelas himself also became prime minister. The Lari/Bakongo group was thus coded as "junior partner" in this period - along with the Vili, Kouyou, and Bateke groups - although Lissouba's Bembe key allies still constituted the most influential faction in the country's executive (¹³⁰⁷; ¹³⁰⁸, 195). In contrast, Sassou-Nguesso and his PCT remained excluded from this rapprochement within the "southern front", leading to further alienation in the north (¹³⁰⁹; ¹³¹⁰). There was also a major purge of Mbochi military officers in 1995. Therefore, the Mbochi group remains coded as "powerless" in this period.

¹³⁰⁷ [Clark, 1997]

¹³⁰⁸ [Clark & Decalo, 2012]

¹³⁰⁹ [Clark, 1997]

¹³¹⁰ [Sundberg, 1999]

1998-2021

In the forefront of the elections, violence broke out again in June 1997 - this time between Sassou-Nguesso's militia and Lissouba's forces. (In 1993-4, fighting had occurred between Lissouba's and Kolelas' forces.) Sassou-Nguesso won the war and declared himself president at the end of 1997, while Lissouba and Kolelas both fled the country.

Both Kolelas' and Lissouba's supporters engaged in a guerilla war against the new government. Peace agreements were reached in 1999 and 2003, providing for the reintegration of southern rebels into the civil service. Sassou subsequently pursued a strategy of "pacification" of the south by co-opting the defeated military leaders (¹³¹¹). According to Clark and the U.S. State Department's Human Rights Report of 2006 (¹³¹²), the northern groups dominated the country after Sassou's return to power. More recently, Clark has noted that Sassou now relies even more narrowly on northerners than during the one-party era. Apparently, the very core of political power is formed by a number of key officials from his hometown Oyo and his own family. Next, other Mbochi figures occupy key posts. And finally, power is shared with other northerners (of which the Kouyou are an important faction) (¹³¹³).

¹³¹¹ [Clark & Carter, 2014]

¹³¹² [U.S. State Department, 1999-2016]

¹³¹³ [Clark, 2008]

Sassou needs the Bateke group to support his regime. Consequently, they are rewarded with some key appointments as well. In

contrast, the few southerners appointed to cabinet posts by Sassou are given minor portfolios. Clark and Carter (forthcoming) describe these individuals as co-opted token representatives who are used to disguise the region's political repression and economic neglect. Although the ethnic balance became less lopsided after the 2002 elections, according to Clark, Sassou's new cabinet was much "stingier towards non-northerners" than is usually the case in such African autocratic regimes. Also southern senior-level civil servants were replaced by loyal northerners (¹³¹⁴).

¹³¹⁴ [Clark, 2008]

In sum, based on this evidence, the Mbochi "proper" were coded as the "senior partner", and the Kouyou and Batéké groups as "junior partners" in a northern-leaning power-sharing arrangement. All other relevant groups are coded as "powerless". Note that the co-option of politicians who had earlier promoted the Bembe ethnic group (such as Mberi and Munari) forms part of Sassou's strategy to pacify the UPADS's previous Nibolek stronghold (¹³¹⁵, 278, 302). Hence, the Bembe are still listed as politically relevant. Yet, as all other southern groups they have to be considered powerless.

¹³¹⁵ [Clark & Decalo, 2012]

According to the U.S. State Department's HR Reports from 2006 to 2008, northerners still dominate the political system with only between 11 and 15 out of 35-38 cabinet seats in the hands of non-northerners. Moreover, the key posts are still held by northern loyalists of Sassou (mostly Mbochi) - a pattern elaborately described by Clark (¹³¹⁶, 260-2) for the years before. The new government after the July 2009 elections apparently includes "a number of high-ranking politicians from northern ethnic tribes as well as a number of representatives from other regions and ethnicities" (¹³¹⁷). However, this diction was not considered to be sufficient evidence for an actual change of the ethnic power relations in the country (apart from the fact that it would only apply to the last half-year of the 2006-2009 period). Moreover, northerners occupy a dominant position in the military, the higher ranks of which are largely composed of Mbochi and which exerts strong power in the country. The military is also a main source of PCT power, Sassou's party vehicle, which is rooted in the north and enjoys only limited support outside of that region (¹³¹⁸, 2008-2010).

¹³¹⁶ [Clark, 2008]

¹³¹⁷ [U.S. State Department, 1999-2016]

The MCDDI under Lari leader Kolelas (returned from exile at the end of 2005) formed an electoral alliance with the PCT in April 2007. (Lissouba's former party UPADS remained in the opposition (¹³¹⁹, 2008-2010).) However, the information presented before suggests that the MCDDI and its Lari/Bakongo constituency like any other southern faction do not have any significant political influence, and Kolelas himself was merely elected to the National Assembly in 2007. (Moreover, he was hospitalized in Paris shortly thereafter, suffering from Alzheimer, and died in November 2009.)

¹³¹⁸ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]

¹³¹⁹ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]

According to John Clark (Florida International University, personal communication, April 15, 2014), the southern groups remain politically marginalized. Hence, the last period of 1998-2009 was extended to the year of 2013. Note that ethnicity has become so im-

portant for access to political power under the current regime that according to Brett Carter (Harvard University, personal communication, April 15, 2014), “people claim to be Mbochi - whether they actually are or not - because it is politically useful.”

Local elections in 2014, a referendum for constitutional reform in 2014 and the presidential election in 2016 made this period potentially dangerous for the prevailing ethno-political dominance of the northern elites/ Mbochi. The local elections were a success for the northern-based PCT party, in turn, predicting the outcome of the 2015 referendum, in which a reported 94% of voters supported the President’s attempt to run for a third term (¹³²⁰, 2016: 1). Although this was critiqued by international media and opposition parties, the election in 2016 went ahead and Nguesso was elected comfortably (with around 60% of the vote) for a third term (BTI 2016). As Nguesso is a member of the Mbochi group, the “senior partners” status of his group continues, and the “junior partner” status of the other two northern groups, the Kouyou and the Bateke persist also, who rely on Nguesso for their power share (¹³²¹, 200).

¹³²⁰ [U.S. State Department, 1999-2016]

¹³²¹ [Wilson, 2017]

Both Bertelsmann Stiftung and the U.S State Department reports note that Southerners (Bembe, Lari/Bakongo, Vili) although they hold positions in the government, only have access to the least important ministerial portfolios (¹³²², 2016: 6). This would normally justify a continued powerless status of their group, however, following to the President’s selection of Clement Mouamba as Prime Minister in 2016, this is brought to question. Mouamba was a member of the opposition UPADS party, which represented southern (predominantly Bembe) interests, as discussed in previous comments (¹³²³). UPADS are widely held as the main opposition force, frequently demanding the release of prisoners and opposing government measures. However, it is unclear that Mouamba is a true representative of his native Bembe group, as he was ousted from the UPADS party for collaborating with Nguesso to ensure the passing of the referendum in 2015. The means by which Nguesso appears to be surrounding himself with supporters of his referendum campaign; career politicians both “old and new”; corroborates previous codings that predict the upper echelons of politics to be increasingly dominated by Nguesso’s “insiders” (¹³²⁴, 225; ¹³²⁵). According to Brett Carter (University of Southern California, personal communication 20.06.2016), only insiders surround Nguesso, and that Mouamba is part of this group - with his ethnic group, the Bembe, not being effectively represented regardless of Mouamba’s own ethnic identity. For this reason, Mouamba’s position does not justify a change in ethnic power status for his native Bembe group. Our coding, that the northern groups who rely on Nguesso for power, and his own group, are the only ones in the power sharing arrangement. They, along with the other southern groups, remain powerless.

¹³²² [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]

¹³²³ [Reuters, 2016]

¹³²⁴ [Roessler, 2016]

¹³²⁵ [Africa News, 2016]

The main political power dynamics did not change until 2021 with Sassou-Nguesso continuing to be the president. Key government positions are still controlled predominantly by his northern

Mbochi ethnic group. While other ethnic groups are included in the government, like the Batéké, their true influence is deemed as limited. Moreover, the Sassou-Nguesso regime does not leave room for opposition in general, with opposition leaders being detained or intimidated. In particular, political parties representing Congo's South face suppression from the government (¹³²⁶). This perception is also confirmed from the U.S State Department reports 2017-2018 and the Bertelsmann Stiftung Report 2020 (¹³²⁷; ¹³²⁸). Based on this information, we continue to code the Mbochi (proper) as senior partners with the other northern groups, the Batéké and the Kouyou, as junior partners. Southern groups, the Bembe, Lari/Bakongo and Vili, are coded as powerless.

Some news outlets indicate that new elections are scheduled for 2021, where Sassou-Nguesso is already confirmed to run again as a presidential candidate (¹³²⁹).

¹³²⁶ [Freedom House, 2018-2019]

¹³²⁷ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020]

¹³²⁸ [U.S. State Department, 2017-2018]

¹³²⁹ [Voa News, 2019]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Congo

From 1960 until 1963

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Lari	0.21	SENIOR PARTNER
Batéké	0.13	POWERLESS
Mbochi	0.12	POWERLESS
Bakongo	0.09	JUNIOR PARTNER
Vili	0.07	JUNIOR PARTNER

From 1964 until 1968

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Lari	0.21	POWERLESS
Batéké	0.13	POWERLESS
Mbochi	0.12	POWERLESS
Bakongo	0.09	SENIOR PARTNER
Vili	0.07	JUNIOR PARTNER

From 1969 until 1971

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Lari/Bakongo	0.3	POWERLESS
Batéké	0.13	JUNIOR PARTNER
Mbochi	0.12	SENIOR PARTNER
Vili	0.07	JUNIOR PARTNER

From 1972 until 1977

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Lari/Bakongo	0.3	POWERLESS
Batéké	0.13	POWERLESS
Mbochi	0.12	DOMINANT
Vili	0.07	POWERLESS



Figure 235: Political status of ethnic groups in Congo during 1960-1963.



Figure 236: Political status of ethnic groups in Congo during 1964-1968.



Figure 237: Political status of ethnic groups in Congo during 1969-1971.

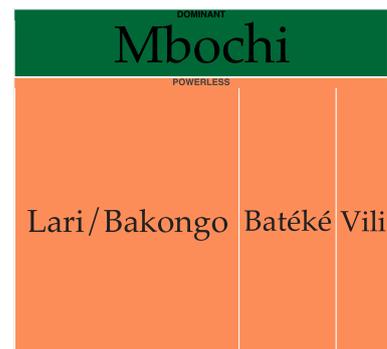


Figure 238: Political status of ethnic groups in Congo during 1972-1977.

From 1978 until 1979

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Lari/Bakongo	0.3	POWERLESS
Batéké	0.13	POWERLESS
Mbochi (proper)	0.09	SENIOR PARTNER
Vili	0.07	POWERLESS
Kouyou	0.03	JUNIOR PARTNER

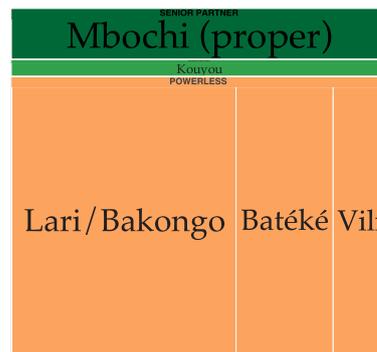


Figure 239: Political status of ethnic groups in Congo during 1978-1979.

From 1980 until 1984

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Lari/Bakongo	0.3	POWERLESS
Batéké	0.13	JUNIOR PARTNER
Mbochi (proper)	0.09	SENIOR PARTNER
Vili	0.07	JUNIOR PARTNER
Kouyou	0.03	JUNIOR PARTNER



Figure 240: Political status of ethnic groups in Congo during 1980-1984.

From 1985 until 1990

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Lari/Bakongo	0.3	POWERLESS
Batéké	0.13	JUNIOR PARTNER
Mbochi (proper)	0.09	SENIOR PARTNER
Vili	0.07	POWERLESS
Kouyou	0.03	JUNIOR PARTNER

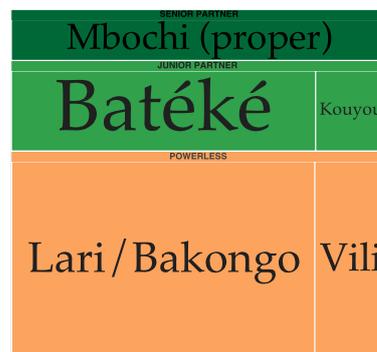


Figure 241: Political status of ethnic groups in Congo during 1985-1990.

From 1991 until 1991

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Lari/Bakongo	0.3	SENIOR PARTNER
Batéké	0.13	JUNIOR PARTNER
Mbochi (proper)	0.09	JUNIOR PARTNER
Vili	0.07	JUNIOR PARTNER
Kouyou	0.03	JUNIOR PARTNER



Figure 242: Political status of ethnic groups in Congo during 1991-1991.

From 1992 until 1994



Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Lari/Bakongo	0.3	POWERLESS
Batéké	0.13	JUNIOR PARTNER
Mbochi (proper)	0.09	POWERLESS
Vili	0.07	JUNIOR PARTNER
Kouyou	0.03	JUNIOR PARTNER
Bembe	0.01	SENIOR PARTNER

From 1995 until 1997

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Lari/Bakongo	0.3	JUNIOR PARTNER
Batéké	0.13	JUNIOR PARTNER
Mbochi (proper)	0.09	POWERLESS
Vili	0.07	JUNIOR PARTNER
Kouyou	0.03	JUNIOR PARTNER
Bembe	0.01	SENIOR PARTNER

From 1998 until 2021

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Lari/Bakongo	0.3	POWERLESS
Batéké	0.13	JUNIOR PARTNER
Mbochi (proper)	0.09	SENIOR PARTNER
Vili	0.07	POWERLESS
Kouyou	0.03	JUNIOR PARTNER
Bembe	0.01	POWERLESS



Figure 244: Political status of ethnic groups in Congo during 1995-1997.



Figure 245: Political status of ethnic groups in Congo during 1998-2021.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Congo

From 1960 until 1960

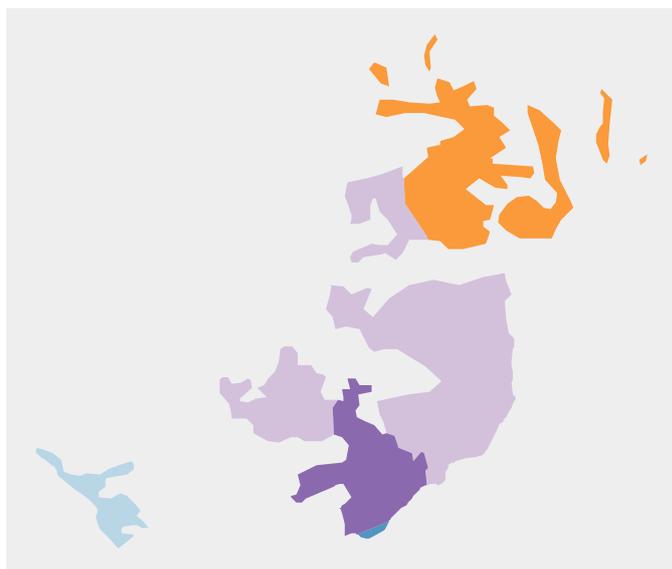


Figure 246: Map of ethnic groups in Congo during 1960-1960.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
Batéké	47 433	Regionally based
Mbochi	24 246	Aggregate
Lari	13 052	Regionally based
Vili	4505	Regionally based
Bakongo	317	Regionally based

Table 82: List of ethnic groups in Congo during 1960-1960.

From 1961 until 1968

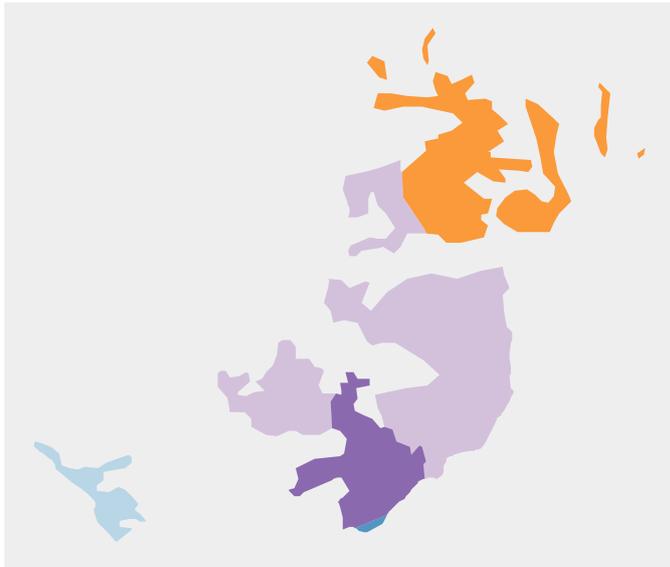


Figure 247: Map of ethnic groups in Congo during 1961-1968.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
Batéké	47 433	Regionally based
Mbochi	24 246	Aggregate
Lari	13 052	Regionally based
Vili	4 505	Regionally based
Bakongo	317	Regionally based

Table 83: List of ethnic groups in Congo during 1961-1968.

From 1969 until 1977

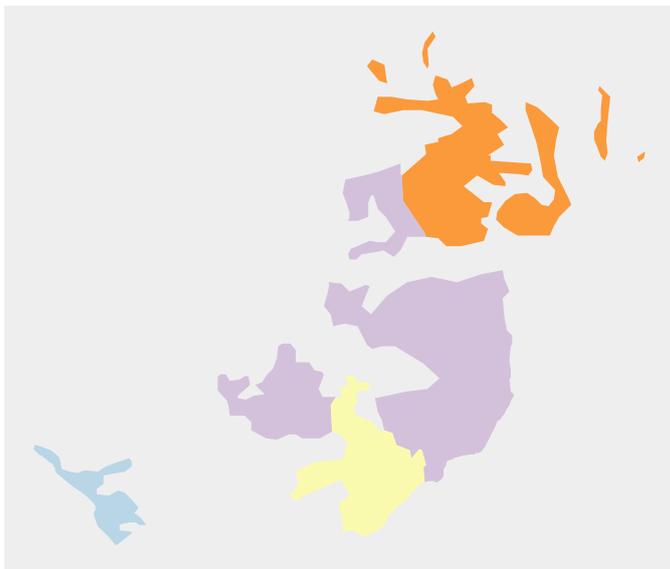


Figure 248: Map of ethnic groups in Congo during 1969-1977.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
 Batéké	47 433	Regionally based
 Mbochi	24 246	Aggregate
 Lari/Bakongo	13 369	Aggregate
 Vili	4505	Regionally based

Table 84: List of ethnic groups in Congo during 1969-1977.

From 1978 until 1991

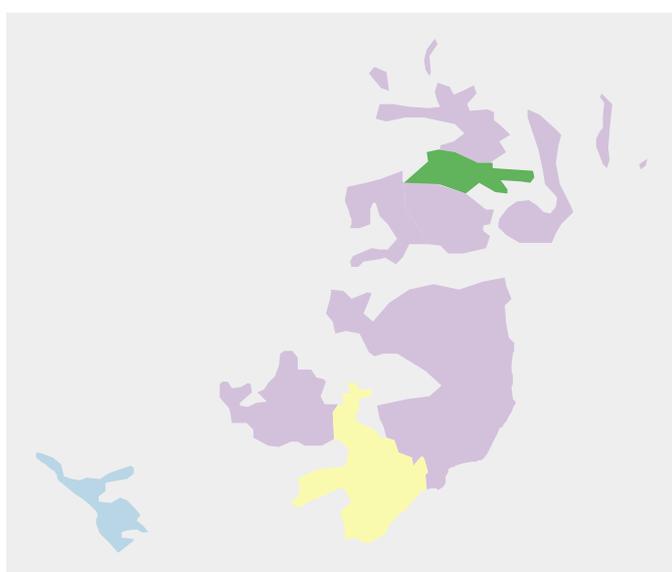


Figure 249: Map of ethnic groups in Congo during 1978-1991.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
 Batéké	47 433	Regionally based
 Mbochi (proper)	19 804	Regionally based
 Lari/Bakongo	13 369	Aggregate
 Vili	4505	Regionally based
 Kouyou	4442	Regionally based

Table 85: List of ethnic groups in Congo during 1978-1991.

From 1992 until 2021

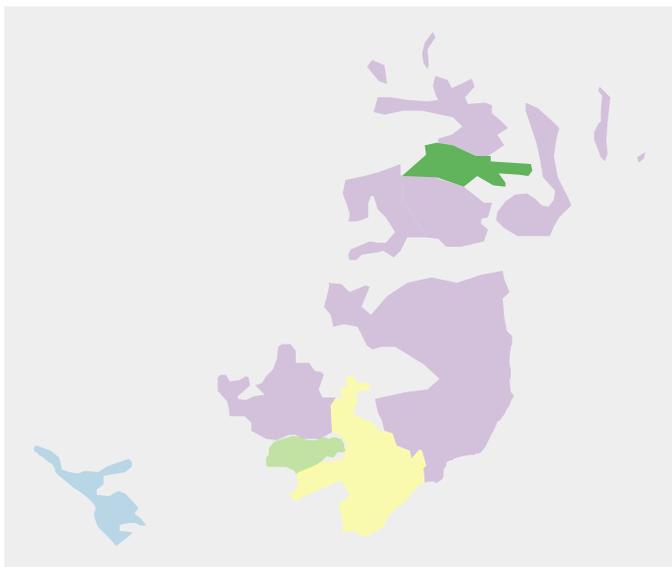


Figure 250: Map of ethnic groups in Congo during 1992-2021.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
Batéké	47 433	Regionally based
Mbochi (proper)	19 804	Regionally based
Lari/Bakongo	13 369	Aggregate
Vili	4 505	Regionally based
Kouyou	4 442	Regionally based
Bembe	2 822	Regionally based

Table 86: List of ethnic groups in Congo during 1992-2021.

Conflicts in Congo

Starting on 1993-11-02

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Congo	Ninjas	Lari/Bakongo	1993-11-02	No	Yes	No
Government of Congo	Cobras	Mbochi (proper)	1994-01-28	No	Yes	No
Government of Congo	Cocoyes		1997-10-17			
Government of Congo	Ntsiloulous	Lari/Bakongo	1998-08-27	Explicit	Yes	No