

*“Do not demand accomplishment of those who have no talent”*

Sun Tzu

On November 29<sup>th</sup> 2006, Joseph Kabange Kabila will be declared the elected President of the (un)Democratic Republic of Congo, while the Commission Electorale Independente (Independent Electoral Commission-CEI) has outlawed projection, I could not help but predict the final results to see who will lead the DRC for the next five years, and according to my projections based on published results Kabila is the likely winner with 56% of the vote to Bemba's 44%.

Leadership is a talent and it is the subject of this essay; it entails responsibility or to be more exact a sense of duty. The reason the political leadership of the DRC never fails to disappoint is simple, they have no talent that is no leadership skills because it lacks any sense of duty. In *Gettysburg: A Meditation on War and Values* (1997) American historian Kent Gramm writes “duty is always a requirement of the future, often without reward for the doer, and often entailing sacrifice. The sacrifice is made for those to come.” Twice now Joseph Kabila and Jean Pierre Bemba's troops have engaged in combat in Kinshasa while at least part of the Congolese people have defied all odds to carry out their civic duty and vote, despite the Machiavellian choice given to them by an “International Community” that does not know where to turn when looking at an array of selfish paper leaders. Many will read this and opine that Etienne Tshisekedi is a bona-fide leader but I beg to differ, if and when Kabila wins his victory will be imputable to Tshisekedi who not only decided to boycott the elections but also asked his supporters to do so; a call that was heeded especially in Kinshasa and both Kasais. In taking that decision Mobutu's old foe once again showed his lack of leadership as it was his duty to contest both Kabila and Bemba in this elections, because of his self imposed marginalization he marginalized 2-3 million voters. True there were fears that the elections would be fraudulent and we will come back to that, but the true reason behind Tshisekedi's refusal to take part was selfishness. In other words, Tshisekedi should have participated in these elections regardless of whether or not he thought they would be fraudulent. By refusing to participate in elections he thought he would lose, by way of fraud, Tshisekedi decided that defending his reputation as the most popular Congolese leader was worth marginalizing two regions (in both Kasai around 50% of the population registered to vote, of that roughly 45% voted) even in the second round when most of his supporters called for him to throw his weight behind Bemba the ageing leader of Union Democratique pour le Progres Sociale (UDPS) decided to stay out of the elections, again the reason was not Bemba's lack of talent but the fact that he would not

be the President. The fact is in 26 years of opposition Tshisekedi has delivered nothing to his people, other leaders, such as Lumumba, Martin Luther King, Ghandi or Mandela faced more implacable foes yet they all managed to deliver. If one takes Tshisekedi out of the picture the DRC is left with two national figures (the electorate clearly humiliated Azarias Ruberwa in the first round) namely Kabila and Bemba and those two lack talent.

Unlike other regions of the country, the southern part of Kabila's heartland of Katanga which is where copper and cobalt mines are located, has not been directly affected by the wars that has ravaged eastern Congo in the past ten years, it has remained under government control in the past decade that means under the control of Joseph Kabila and his father yet the government has been unable or probably unwilling to share the wealth with the people of Katanga instead it has solidified a system whereby Kabila, his clique and Western multinationals have profited.<sup>1</sup> If one had to describe the presidential campaign of Kabila the correct term would be "absence" Kabila left campaigning to his advisers. In Katanga, Gabriel Kyungu an ethnic baron was his mouthpiece and it is alleged that he threatened to murder anyone who will campaign for a candidate other than Kabila, given the man's reputation (working for Mobutu in the early 1990s he led an effort to cleanse ethnic Luba from Katanga, tens of thousand died and many more were displaced) his warning was heeded. Kabila also refused to take part in a face to face debate with Bemba, Olivier Kamitatu one of his lackey proposed that another member of his political platform debate Bemba and Vital Kamhere the leader of his party the PPRD, alleged that the reason Kabila did not want a face to face debate with Bemba was that he feared that he would be attacked by a man with whom he had worked, without incident, for three years and whom he met a few days after the debate was canceled. The reality is that Kabila lacks not only leadership but also charisma or even plain formal education (he graduated from a fictitious US university) he would have been exposed had he had to debate with the much more charismatic and Western educated Bemba. So Kabila sat and through and his platform the Alliance pour la Majorite Presidentiel did the rest, in both war-stricken Kivu where people still remember the crimes of Bemba's Ugandan backed militias he got close to 90% of the vote, Kyungu delivered for him in Katanga, Maniema the home of his mother also gave him a mandate and in the western part of the country Antoine Gizenga managed to provide him with more than a million votes and took away another half million from Bemba. The 4+1 government that was lead by Kabila did not accomplish anything on time, the elections where scheduled

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<sup>1</sup> Global Witness: « Digging in corruption »; July 2006.

for a year ago at any rate they were the responsibility of the CEI, war still rages in the east and the socio-economic situation across the land could not be dearer.

Which leaves us with Bemba who really is an enigma; as the son of a millionaire Jean Pierre Bemba was educated in the best schools in the former Zaire before going on to obtain a bachelor's degree in one of Belgium's top university? Thus many in the Diaspora thought that Bemba was a true leader as he took up arms against Kabila's father Laurent. True he allied himself with Uganda and is suspected of "war crimes" but as the saying goes "war creates strange bedfellows" furthermore, the distinction between crimes of war and legal acts of war is extremely subjective. Thus when people are abused in Abu Ghraib prison or Guantanamo Bay, Rumsfeld and Bush are innocent and the buck stops with some low level officer, when civilians die in Afghanistan as a result of a NATO air strike it is an "unfortunate" accident, when Israeli soldiers murder dozens of Palestinian women and children it is in the words of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert "a technical error" but when Bemba's troops commit atrocities it is he who must be held to account. So many in the Diaspora, excluding this author, supported Bemba; yet his leadership was characterized by an indelible poverty of the mind, what did he want the Congo to become, what was he fighting for, and as the war went he proved to be without talent. The situation in the territory under his control did not improve on the contrary he was one of the most greedy and therefore less likely to sacrifice (remember the definition of duty) war-lord. When Bemba got to Kinshasa and was put in charge of Economics and Finance bureau (ECOFIN) the management of the state's purse was simply disastrous, he along with Ruberwa and Kabila must share the failure of 1+4.

As for his campaign, unlike Kabila it has been extremely vociferous, Bemba has labeled himself "Muana Mboka" or "Native Son" with the help of Mobutu's eminence grise Honore Ngbanda they have exacerbated inter-ethnic tensions, labeling Kabila as not only Rwandese but also the ally of evil foreigners who want nothing else but to exploit the Congo thereby bypassing the fact that Bemba was the front-man of Ugandan exploitation of the DRC.<sup>2</sup> Bemba has also taken steps to appear as a victim; true Kabila did attack his house but forgive me for not shading tears when the house of a war-lord

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<sup>2</sup> Uganda has actually been ordered to pay billions of dollars of compensation to the DRC by the International Criminal Court.

responsible for the death of hundreds of thousands if not millions is under attack. His latest trick as been to cry wolf over the elections, he has said that Kabila cheated, again if this was done out of sacrifice for the people one might be tempted to call Bemba a true leader but he is doing it because he feels that what is good for him is good for the Congo, and there simply is no way that Kabila can win fairly. After a quick look at published results this is what I believe. Both Kabila and Bemba cheated wherever they had the upper hand, is there really anyone out there that believes that Bemba played fair in Equateur? In his home region of Equateur, turn-out was 80.88% and Bemba got 2,386,898 votes out of 2,445,335 that is 97.7% of the vote even more incredible are the results in the districts of Libenge and Lisala: in the first round, the CEI held that the electorate roll of Libenge contained some 101,460 voters and estimated that there had been a 78.29% turnout as 79,434 people went to the polls<sup>3</sup> however according to the same people in the second round 101,124 votes were cast for Bemba and a further 644 for Kabila which means that a total of 101,724 votes were cast when there where only 101,460 voters. In Lisala, 178,294 people voted for Bemba even though the CEI indicated in the first round that there were only some 178,275 people registered there.<sup>4</sup> Bemba supporters argue that Kabila has profited from some freakish voter turn-out in the East, yet turn-out in Nord Kivu at 77.8%<sup>5</sup> was lower than Equateur and slightly higher in South Kivu where it stood at 84.18%.<sup>6</sup> In the other areas where Kabila got overwhelming support that is Maniema, Province Oriental and Katanga turn-out was respectively 80.6%, 61.73% and 62.11%. Bemba won in Equateur as mentioned earlier but also in Bas-Congo, Bandundu, Kasai Occidental, Kasai Oriental and Kinshasa with respective turn-outs<sup>7</sup> of 50.37%, 54.22%, 45.16%, 45.37% and 53.3%. The lower turn-out in Kinshasa and both Kasai are a direct result of Tshikedi's call for a boycott, in fact in the Kasais more voters went to the poll than in the first round and Bemba supported by Oscar Kashala, a "native son" of the Kasai, got most of those votes (69.8% in Oriental and 82.7% in Occidental) in Bas Congo, people simply were not interested in the second round as turn-out slumped by about 20% as none of the candidates had real support in the region. Last but not least in Bandundu turn-out went down from 72.7% in the first round to 54.22% that is understandable since Antoine Gizenga, who had won 77.2% of the votes in the first round, allied himself to an unpopular Kabila.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cei-rdc.cd/clcr/resultats/libenge.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.cei-rdc.cd/clcr/resultats/lisala.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cei-rdc.cd>

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

<sup>7</sup> All figures compiled from <http://www.cei-rdc.cd>

So there are explanations as to why the results are skewed in favor of Kabila anyone disputing the high turn-outs in the Kivus or Maniema would have difficulties explaining the equally high turn-out in Equateur; moreover even if one were to reduce turn-out in Kabila's strongholds by 20% so as to put it in line with the national aggregate Kabila would still win. Now is the true test of leadership for Bemba, will he be responsible and accept his loss or even sacrifice his perceived "victory" for the sake of peace and stability in the country or will he continue to be greedy, undutiful and wage war to fulfill his own ambitions? I'm pessimistic, Bemba has already started agitating Kinshasa and I do not expect any accomplishment from Kabila for he is without talent.