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The Role of Religion in the Democratization Process
- A Case Study on the Catholic Church in the Democratic Republic of the
Congo

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ABSTRACT

The role of religion as part of politics, and democratization in particular, is a debated subject. One side argues for religion not being compliant with democracy while another side would argue for the opposite, with both being able to prove their point. This study takes on this subject and examines a highly recent case – the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its recent election where the Catholic Church has been a prominent actor. The study examines the role of the Catholic Church and their work towards a democratization in the country. By using Social Movement Theory and its concept of the powers of Repertoire of Contention, Networks and Mobilizing structures, Constructing Contention and Political Opportunities and Threats we can analyze the role of religion with the case of the Catholic Church in the Congo and are able to see that they worked as a pro-democratic force with a non-violent approach focusing on the common good. These findings contribute to the current discourse on Religion in politics by providing a new study of the Congo.

Keywords: Catholic Church, The Congo, DRC, Religion, Politics, Democratization, Democracy, Social Movement Theory

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1 Introduction

Today we can find arguments for religion being both compliant and non-compliant with democracy. It can be a source for non-democratic attitudes, as well as a pro-democratic force. Some scholars argue that religion is related to a type of politics that challenge democracy. Its conservative and traditional values have been seen as incompatible with democratic norms. It is based on beliefs and a transcendent truth, while democracy rather is based on the idea of laws and establishment, is dependent on context and open to change. It is based on the idea that we are individuals with rights to think and believe independently. Similar arguments can be seen in world value studies where religion, and religious identity often is related to traditional and conservative values and negatively related to openness to change and individual autonomy.

Some scholars, on the other hand, emphasize the importance of the social work of religious organizations which can have a positive impact on democracy and support for democracy.¹ In addition, religious institutions have a potential to work towards democratic support as their places of worship can function as a base for social movements and civic skills to be developed, which in turn can aid the development of a strong civil society and democratic norms. It has an influence on its followers and provides a feeling of meaning in a world that may feel complex. It gives its believers a feeling of security and belonging. Religious institutions are often considered powerful mobilizers who promote political participation and who encourage their public to practice their democratic rights.² The latter argument of the two, of religion as a positive actor in democracy and positive factor for democratization, will be shown in this study.

Religion's compatibility with politics and democracy will certainly be an ongoing debate for a long time. The recent events in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has, in media specifically, given this topic new light. In December 2018 the DRC held the election that originally was planned for December 2016. One of the strongest forces for this election to

¹ Bloom & Arikan, 2012, p377

² Ibid, p375ff

finally take place was the Catholic Church in the country, and the question has been whether the church will be able to bring democracy to the country.³

Given the above-mentioned debate, and the fact that the Catholic Church during the latest election in Congo, and historically as we will see, has participated in the political life and in the work towards political change, I find it interesting to more closely examine their role in the work towards democracy in the country.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 *A Historical Overview of the Catholic Church in the Congo*

During the colonial Congo, the relationship between the Catholic missions and the colonial government was valuable for the government, as the church was a suitable actor and mechanism of social control in the country. The missionaries often had an ethnocentric view and saw themselves as social engineers, in addition to their role as evangelists. They were builders of society and not destroyers of local culture, however, they did not understand or take the local context into consideration. Instead, they saw their chance of building a new Christian society, the kind of society that they no longer could see in their home countries.⁴ Thus, the Catholic Church in the Congo, which is part of the Roman Catholic Church under the Pope in Rome⁵, has been part of the country's civil and political life for a long time.

During the first civil war in 1960-1965 and the years that followed the church both had support and was seen as the embodiment of colonial mentality. When the Mobutu regime came to power, he launched a new approach of "authenticity" which would be a way to give back the pride to the African population. Some of the changes included banning Christian names, and the church became a target of verbal attacks from the regime. The Catholic Church was criticized, in contrast to the Protestant church, for receiving and obeying orders from abroad – the Vatican and the colonizers. This is also the time when Congo became Zaire. These new changes hit hard on the Catholic Church who previously had been a supporter for Mobutu and the relationship between the church and the state remained tense.⁶

³ See e.g. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2017/01/06/can-the-catholic-church-save-democracy-in-congo/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.99ba3b24634c and <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/dr-congos-catholic-church-prays-change-election-181223174711404.html>

⁴ Markowitz, 1970, p236

⁵ Dizolele & Kambale, 2012, p111

⁶ Prunier, 2001, p142

In the civil society the church had been seen as an institution that was supporting the rich and the powerful, with its colonial past still embedded. However, the shift came when the church during Mobutu's time started criticizing the regime for the same things as they themselves had been criticized for. The church now instead became "the voice of the voiceless"⁷. It was not only the moral stand the church took that gave them their legitimacy, they were able to provide for the people the necessities and social services that the collapsing state could not. They could provide health and education services. They had land from which they derived good income and their farms gave employment. The press was supported by the church and they were also able to provide technical services such as radio communications.⁸ At the end of Mobutu's time, he tried to take down the Constituent Assembly that was about to take form from the Bishops national conference, with Bishop Monsengwo as the president. This dictatorship was about to come to its end when Bishop Monsengwo was able to gather 1 million demonstrators to protest the leadership after Mobutu had been able to stop the assembly. The dictatorship was about to fall and a democratic state to take form with the Catholic Church in the front. Bishop Monsengwo was even suggested as a possible presidential candidate.⁹ This time has been marked as the fourth period in the struggle for democracy in the Congo.¹⁰

However, the struggle did not have the desired outcome and Mobutu didn't step down until 1997 when Laurent Kabila seized power. This halted the democratization process once again.¹¹ A glimpse of hope came when Laurent Kabila's son Joseph Kabila took over the presidency after his father's assassination. Kabila established a voter registration, giving each one eligible to vote, a voter card that also worked as an identity card. This card became an important symbol of the hope for democracy.¹² The hope for a democracy transitioning to be fulfilled did not last long as the postponement of the planned democratic election of 2005 was announced the same year. Since this day, the civil society, with the Catholic Church in the lead, has been fighting for political change and foremost the resignation of Joseph Kabila.¹³

⁷ Prunier, 2001., p142f

⁸ Ibid., p156

⁹ Prunier, 2001, p144

¹⁰ Elenga, 2006, p248

¹¹ The Crisis Group Africa Briefing No123, p5

¹² Ibid.

¹³ The Crisis Group Africa Briefing No123, p5

This is the part that this study will focus on, the fight of the Catholic Church for political change and to succeed with the democratization process. I will specifically focus on the time leading up to the last election, which was also being postponed, from 2016 to 2018, and the work of the Catholic Church until the election finally occurred in December 2018.

1.1.2 Politics, Democracy and the Catholic Church from a Historical Perspective

Starting from the Second Vatican Council 1962, the church took some steps towards embracing more modern, or liberal, democracy norms. However, the relationship with modern norms of democracy is complicated and the arguments are often around abortions, divorce, fetal research, war and the UN's overpopulation policy. The most significant difference in the Vatican II, compared to its earlier view on political authority, is the declaration of religious liberty as a basic root in the dignity of a person. This declaration was meant to protect religious freedom – the practice of other faiths as well as the protection of the church's own rights.¹⁴ Interestingly, it did not refer to democracy as such, instead it referred to the right of the people to choose its governance and leaders, the right to reject despotism, and emphasized the importance of political participation. It also stressed the importance of law, coordination and institutions in order to establish democracy, and attain human rights and peace.¹⁵

Under the leadership of Pope John Paul II, head of the Catholic Church between 1978-2005¹⁶, this teachings, with more modern and liberal democracy norms was further evolved, and he gave human rights a central role in Catholic teachings and talked about universal human rights as rooted in the nature of the person. With this view he could also criticize modern nations way of exercising “human rights” in regard to crimes against life. He argued that it is a crime against life when we do not accept those who are weak and, for example, have just been conceived.¹⁷ This understanding of human rights has not changed within the Catholic teachings. He spoke of a democracy in which he included rule of law and respect for human rights. By adapting a strong stand with democracy and human rights, the church has been able to work together with other institutions and civil society movements to oppose authoritarian

¹⁴ Carozza & Philpott, 2012, p23

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ The Official Website of the Vatican <http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/en/holy-father/giovanni-paolo-ii.html>, Accessed June 5, 2019

¹⁷ Ibid., p24

regimes violating these norms, and it has proven to be powerful. One example is what Samuel Huntington called the third wave of democratization - the transition of 80 countries from authoritarianism to democracy, with three quarters of these countries being Catholic¹⁸. The new teachings from the Vatican were an important reason of the transition of these countries. It is the people power that the church focused on in their work towards political change in non-democratic countries.

2 Purpose and Research Question

Religion and Politics are two spheres that tends to be separated and argued for being non-compatible. I therefore believe it is interesting to look further into the role of religion as a pro-democratic force. This has been done before, for example on South America¹⁹, however, I want to look into the fairly recent case of the election in Congo. The Catholic Church in the country was involved and pushed for the latest election to be held and furthermore participated in observing the election. I therefore want to examine their role in the development of the country during the time of the latest election. Thus, my research question is: *What role did the Catholic Church in the Congo have in the democratization process in the country between 2016 and 2019?*

My aim is to understand the role of religion in politics, more specifically, political change towards democratization, and the Catholic Church in the Congo works as the case for that purpose. The Catholic Church as an organization and powerful institution and as the predominant Christian church in the country²⁰ is interesting to study due to their perceived influence and resources. The Congo as the location of the case study is chosen due to the Catholic Church being well established in the country and was, during the recent election, highly engaged and took a prominent role. Thus, the choice of studying the case of the Catholic Church in the Congo. I hope with this study to contribute to the understanding of the role of religion, which the Catholic Church is representing in this study, in politics, particularly regarding the work towards political change and democratization. A stable democracy will not arise in a short amount of time and therefore we must continue looking at the actors involved and the movements working for this to happen. Naturally, the reports and

¹⁸ Philpott, 2004, p32

¹⁹ Mantilla, 2010 in Mobilizing Religion for Democracy: Explaining Catholic Church Support for Democratization in South America

²⁰ Elenga, 2006, p252

articles on the current and recent events in the Congo are mainly news reports and news articles and I therefore hope for my research to also fill the gap of an academic analysis of the recent events in the Congo.

2.1 Terminology and Definitions

In order to study religion within the field of, or related to, politics and political science, one needs to be clear of the definition of religion for the specific study. Allen and Allen suggest in their study a rhetorical definition that enables studies on democracy and political science. In the definition that Allen and Allen are developing religion is a “naturalistically observable phenomenon comprising transcendental signifiers and systemically shared activities”.²¹ The definition focuses on *systems of shared activities*, that is religion not only in one’s head, but also entails practices, communities and institutions, and *transcendental signifiers* as terms that religious activities are organized around. These terms can be recognized as transcendental from within and outside religious communities, regardless of our own relation to the term. Examples are “Allah”, “Jesus” and “ahimsa”. Belief is still a part of their definition, however, the emphasis is on the key terms (transcendental signifiers) in a discourse that can be observed in shared activities.²²

The term “Catholic Church” can include many different actors and factors, such as organizations and networks, participants, bishops, everyday people and so forth. I will in this study use the term “Catholic Church” when speaking about local parishes, lay committees, bishops, priests, and other Catholic intellectuals. I will refer to “the Catholic Church” when these groups have been involved and their support has been present, thus I refer to the Catholic Church in a rather physical and organizational sense. As we saw in the background, bishops from the church in Congo has been able to organize big demonstrations, and we will also see that the networks of the church (parishes and bishops) has been a contributing factor to the organization. Therefore, I find it appropriate to gather these actors under the umbrella term “the Catholic Church”.

Democracy is a term mentioned frequently in this study. It is a term that is debatable regarding its meaning, and has been set with many different definitions, such as the

²¹ Allen & Allen, 2016, p562

²² Ibid., p559ff

minimalist definition.²³ In this study I refer to a democracy that leans towards a minimalist definition. My aim is not to assess the church's democracy work, if that was the case, one must first decide whether DRC is a democracy or not, and that will in turn result in different arguments due to the choice of democracy definition. As this is not my intention, I therefore choose to refer to a minimalist definition. This definition involves thinkers such as Schumpeter, Przeworski and Popper, who defines democracy as a type of system where the people are able to choose and get rid of governments peacefully. Schumpeter defines it as "a system in which rulers are selected by competitive elections". Przeworski agrees with these minimalist definitions, yet, adding that the quality of the democratic system matters for its survival²⁴ and that its main principle is majority rule.²⁵

2.2 Previous Research

Studies on the church – state relation and the influence and impact of the Catholic Church in politics has been examined before by, among others, Philpott in *Christianity and Democracy: The Catholic Wave*. Philpott focuses his study of the Catholic Church's relationship to democracy on the concept of Twin Tolerations. He takes us back to the third wave of democratization, which marks the time period where thirty countries transitioned to democracy, a study made by Huntington. Historically, Catholicism and democracy have clashed, however, a majority of the countries that went through the democracy transition were Catholic countries²⁶. Philpott is examining the reason for these Catholic countries to go through the transition and to help democracy, and why some didn't or even hindered democracy.²⁷ He concludes that the explanation for this can be found within the concept of Twin Tolerations – the state respects the rights of religious bodies to express their faith, and the church respects the rights of religious freedom for everyone.²⁸

Studies that has its focus more specifically on the Catholic Church and its role in democracy and political development is e.g. Obadare who in his article *A Sacred Duty to Resist Tyranny? Rethinking the Role of the Catholic Church in Nigeria's Struggle for Democracy* focuses on

²³ Przeworski, 1999, p23ff

²⁴ Przeworski, 1999, p45ff

²⁵ Ibid., p3

²⁶ Philpott, 2012, p32

²⁷ Ibid., p41

²⁸ Philpott, 2012, p32

the role of the church in the democratization process in Nigeria. He shows how the church has a history of non-compliance with democratic values. He focuses on a specific context and the question of *why* the church acted as they did. He is examining the role of the church from the aspects of local structures, histories, circumstances and institutional dynamics, and he shows in his conclusion how the work of the Catholic Church is highly contextually based.²⁹

Additionally, we have Manglos and Weinreb who studies thirteen countries (excluding Congo) of the great region of Sub-Saharan Africa and the interest of politics in relation to religion in these countries. In their study they focus specifically on analyzing the effects of religious identity, active religious membership and education with the dependent variable being political interest, which they find being positively influenced by an active religious membership. Furthermore, the religious identity influences the effects of education on political interest, and they conclude that the effects of religion on political interest is highly context based³⁰.

Furthermore, there are studies on the subject focusing on South America, e.g. Mantilla's study which is examining the role of the Catholic Church in South America, and under what conditions it has pushed for democratization. His study shows that there are several factors, which can be connected to Social Movement Theory, that are necessary for pro-democratic forces to grow: cultural framing, mobilization, political opportunity. He argues that all three of these factors must be present in order for a democratic environment to be developed.³¹

Wald, Silverman and Fridy are in their study concerned of the topic of religion in the political life. They address the way on how to study religious movements and institutions that participate or show interest in politics. They conclude that studying religious groups in civil society and in relation to politics should be done in the same way as one approaches secular groups, and they conclude that Social Movement Theory is most suitable for this task.³²

The two latter studies are using Social Movement Theories (SMT) to understand both under which conditions the church was working (Mantilla) and how to study religious movements

²⁹ Obadare, 2013, p93ff

³⁰ Manglos & Weinreb, 2013, p195

³¹ Mantilla, 2010, p571

³² Wald, Silverman & Fridy, 2005, p121ff

involved in politics (Wald, Silverman, Fridy). In this study I will take inspiration from these previous studies using SMT and take this topic to the Congo and focus on the role of the church. This will be elaborated on further below. In regard to the former mentioned studies, with a focus on the role of religion in political development in different countries on the African continent, I hope to contribute to this collection of studies by bringing in a study of the Congo and with the perspective of Social Movement Theory.

2.3 Thesis outline

Given the above-mentioned headings I will now continue to describe my choice of theory and why the choice. I will do this with the background of previous research on the subject. Next, I discuss method and material, my choice of material and the way it will be analyzed. I will also be presenting my analytical tool and operational questions in this section. Some clarifications for the reader will be done as well, in addition to a section of terminology where I will be discussing the terms *democracy* and *religion* in relation to Social and Political Science studies. I will also clarify how the term *Catholic Church* is used in this study. A short section of Ethical Considerations will follow before presenting my analysis which has two main headings: *Politics and the Catholic Church* and *The Catholic Church in the Congo November/December 2016 - January 2019*. Finally, in the conclusion, I will discuss my findings in relation to my aim and research question.

3 Theory

Religion has got an increase of interest from scholars within Political Science. It has been seen as something too exotic and, when considered in studies on political change, it has mostly been regarded as a problem that needs a solution.³³ With the increase of interest, an understanding of the impact as well as the motives of religious organizations participating in politics became necessary. In their article *Making Sense of Religion in Political Life* Wald, Silverman and Fridy describe scholars of religion and politics as homicide detectives – they need to understand both motives, means and opportunity. The theory that has shown to be useful for this purpose is Social Movement Theory (SMT). It became suitable for understanding social movements participation in politics. It considered mass movements as legitimate political participants and was therefore picked up by scholars in research on

³³ Wald, Silverman & Fridy, 2005, p122f

religious groups within politics.³⁴ The theory has been developed and discussed by many scholars over time. For this research I will use Sidney Tarrow and his work *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, the third revised edition published in 2011. Tarrow focus on four main powers in this theory: Repertoire of Contention, Networks and Mobilizing structures, Constructing Contention and Political Opportunities and Threats. These powers are what creates and maintains social movements and their impact on outcomes. This theory has its base in the research on contentious politics, meaning the way movements act in order to change the political environment. The theory can also be used to show how movements emerge, are formed and maintained.³⁵

Using this theoretical framework of Social Movement Theory will help me understand the impact and, in turn, the role of the Catholic Church in the work towards political change in the Congo. I will use this theory and its four main powers in order to examine and to see what role the Catholic Church took on. Wald et al., are focusing on the three components of Opportunity, Networks and Cultural Frames. By using Tarrow's theory, the fourth component of Repertoire of Contention (collective action) will be added. I believe that, as I will be looking at the work and actions taken by the church in order to see their role, it is important to include the actual collective action they turned to. Though it may seem obvious that action is necessary to reach change, Tarrow points out that it is these four components, or powers, that together has an impact on producing the movement campaigns, and also the outcomes.³⁶ This study does not aim to test SMT on religious movements in politics, I rather aim to use SMT as a guide for examining the role of the church in the democratization process in Congo. Below I will describe each of the four powers separately in more detail.

3.1 Repertoire of Contention

This power refers to the collective action that groups and movements participate in, for example, voting, striking, marching, attacking with intent to bodily harm, obstructing order etc. It comes not only from organizers or mobilization but is culturally inscribed and socially communicated. Different groups have different history and memory of contention, for instance, Tarrow uses workers as one example and points out that “workers know how to

³⁴ Ibid., p124

³⁵ Tarrow, 2011, p28ff

³⁶ Ibid., p120

strike because generations of workers struck before them”.³⁷ Activists and movements can engage and carry out a variety of forms of action and can choose and be flexible in accordance to the environment and the context. They can combine actions with a range of actors and thus force political leaders to deal with new issues. Media has been a factor that changed the way collective action can work. Now protests, for example, can be organized through the Internet, Facebook and Twitter and outcomes will reach a bigger crowd, including the diaspora communities³⁸.

There are three different types of collective action – disruption, violence and contained behavior. The first one, disruption, provides an indication of the movement’s determination. To this group belongs the actions of blocking traffic, interrupting public business, obstruct routine activities of civil society and authorities, and it can also affect and challenge social and cultural expectations. It is the source of much of innovation in the repertoire, however, it is often unstable and can become violent.³⁹ The second, violence, is, naturally the most visible kind of collective action. Both violent and non-violent forms of collective action can be part of one movement. Collective violence can take different forms, for instance, groups can be highly violent but without coordination, opportunistic with higher level of coordination, scattered in their attacks, or being less violent but more coordinated.⁴⁰ The third and last form of collective action is contained behavior, or, contained collective action. In this group we can find the demonstrations, strikes and marches, it is this type of collective action that build on routines and ways of action that people understand and that elites can accept, for example demonstrations and strikes. However, repressive states often see demonstrations as potential riots, which can lead to repression and impediments for the protesters.⁴¹

3.2 Networks and Mobilizing structures

It is within social networks that collective action often is activated and sustained, although it is personal who chooses to participate, it is often within the social group that collective action is triggered due to the normative pressure and the feeling of solidarity within a movement. Institutions often provides incentives to collective action, for example the Civil Rights

³⁷ Tarrow, 2011, p29f

³⁸ Tarrow, 2011, p99

³⁹ Ibid., p99ff

⁴⁰ Tarrow, 2011 p105

⁴¹ Ibid., p99

movement and the black churches.⁴² Tarrow points out that historical memories, political traditions and cultural artifacts is what influences collective action and the organization of contention. Some scholars argue that it is the hierarchical and the more formal organizations that will be successful in their work for change, however, some argue that this instead can harm the main power.

Tarrow distinguishes between three different types of modes of organizing in order to understand its role. The first is “the organization of collective action at the point of contact with opponents”⁴³, this type of organization can be with or without a leader, controlled by formal organizations or stand by itself. The second one is “advocacy organizations”⁴⁴, that are more formal associations either promoting or resisting social change. The third one refers to “the connective structures or interpersonal networks”.⁴⁵ These networks link leaders and followers and different parts of the movements to one another. This is the type of organization that can persist even without a formal structure, and from where the solidarity and normative pressure grows. They socialize and build the identities within movements.⁴⁶

Movements also develops within institutions. This happens when the structure and ideologies of the institution is being used to develop contacts among different networks, an example is the female monastic orders that has developed within the Catholic Church. Informal connective nets that work within and between formal movement organizations is the motive of successful organizations.⁴⁷ Without some degree of formal organization and structure, movements fade away or disperse.⁴⁸

3.3 Constructing Contention

This is the third power in movements. It is dependent on the shared identity and understanding among participants it is the “collective action frames that justify, dignify, and animate collective action”.⁴⁹ There are three elements within this power. The first one is

⁴² Tarrow, 2011, p30f

⁴³ Tarrow, 2011, p121ff

⁴⁴ Ibid., p123

⁴⁵ Tarrow, 2011, p124

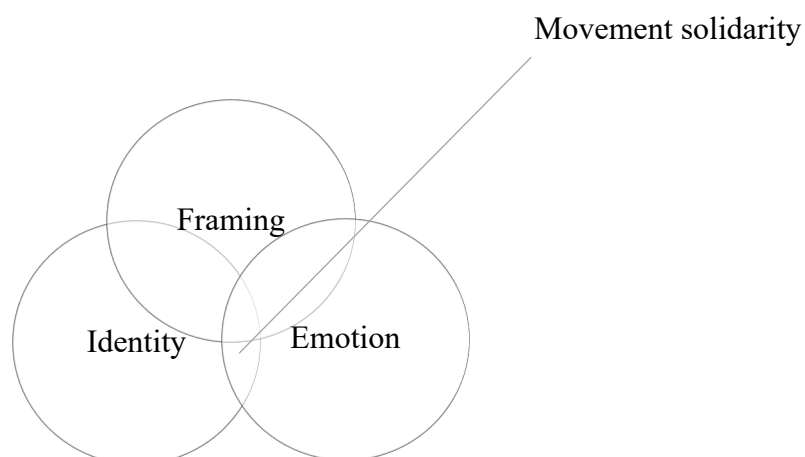
⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Tarrow, 2011, p136f

⁴⁸ Ibid., p124

⁴⁹ Tarrow, 2011, p31

framing of contentious politics - movements constructs the interpretations of society, an event or political situation. In the second, movements define and construct collective identities like the “we” and “them” – concept, in order to point out who “we” are and who “they” are. The third element refers to how movements capture and shape emotions in order to mobilize followers. Scholars agree that all three of these elements, framing, identity construction and emotion are important in creating solidarity within the movement, and among potential participants.⁵⁰



3.4 Political Opportunities and Threats

Tarrow defines opportunity with help from other scholars in the field as “the perceived probability that social protest actions will lead to success in achieving a desired outcome”.⁵¹ Any change in political opportunities, a shift in balance of resources, a weakened state, or a shift in outside support will therefore increase opportunity.⁵² It is the change in the political environment that provides incentives for action, specifically collective action of movements, and this change in environment and collective action affects the expectations of success and failure.⁵³ In order to take advantage of political opportunities mobilization and organization is crucial. Tarrow points out that “short-term changes in opportunity cannot compensate for weakness in cultural, ideological and organizational resources”.⁵⁴ These opportunities encourage engagement in contentious politics. By threats, Tarrow mean the constraints and

⁵⁰ Tarrow, 2011, p142f

⁵¹ Ibid., p160

⁵² Tarrow, 2011, p160

⁵³ Ibid., p163

⁵⁴ Tarrow, 2011, p164

acts of repression that groups and movements can encounter from authorities and other sources of power, which discourage contention. Threats doesn't necessarily mean an actual threat but instead the costs and risks of action, or inaction.⁵⁵ Generally, these opportunities and constraints are shaped by political regimes.⁵⁶

Tarrow summarize the connection between the four powers as follows "By mounting familiar forms of contention, movements, become focal points that transform external opportunities into resources. Repertoire of contention, social networks and cultural frames lower the costs of bringing people into collective action, induce confidence that they are not alone and give broader meaning to their claims".⁵⁷ In the next section, I will in more details provide my analytical tool with the operational questions developed based on this theory of Social Movements. This tool will be used to answer the research question.

4 Method and Material

For this case study I will primarily use secondary literature on the Catholic Church in the Congo, previous studies as well as media reports and websites. The secondary literature and previous studies will help me to get a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the church and the state in the country and its political situation now and historically, as well as the church's relation to politics. In addition, to understand the relationship between the Catholic Church and politics I will use the website of the Vatican. It provides information, clarifications and thoughts from the church on the Catholic faith and politics. Using this website is a good compliment to secondary literature written about the Catholic Church, since the website will give as close to first-hand information I will be able to get. As this research doesn't have a historical focus on the Catholic Church and its work towards political change, rather a contemporary one, I will primarily use media reports. This is due to lack of current and up to date academic research on the subject, where I hope my study will be able to fill a gap. The media reports will also let me come closer to the subject, since this study is not carried out in the Congo. Thus, media reports, journalistic articles, reports from organizations based in the country will give me, as the website of the Vatican, as close to first-hand information as I can get. Some news sites that I will use are France24, Human Rights Watch,

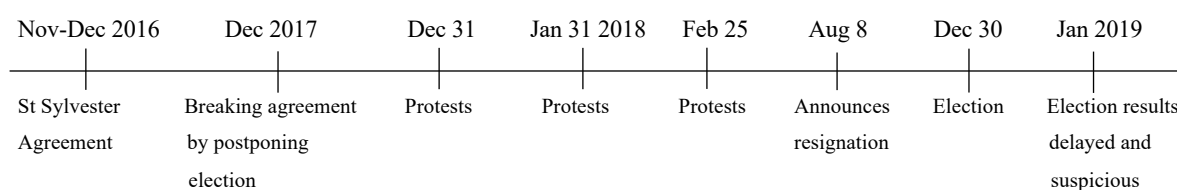
⁵⁵ Tarrow, 2011, p160

⁵⁶ Ibid., p32

⁵⁷ Tarrow, 2011, p33

Catholic News Agency, Al Jazeera and The Guardian. In addition, by using both secondary literatures, the official website of the Catholic Church and media reports from the country will help me to avoid bias as far as possible. This mix of sources provides me with a broad understanding of the topic and not a one-sided view. However, it is crucial to also mention limitations of the material. Although it gives me an understanding of what was going on in the country at the time, it also gives me only the information chosen to be presented by the journalists. By not being present myself, or being able to do interviews, both at the time of the protests and during the election, there is a risk that contextual matters are being left out. This can have an effect on the validity of the study if different methods of gathering the material yields different results.⁵⁸ Despite limitations to the material, I find this the most suitable way of conducting this research. It will work as a stepping stone towards more thorough research on the subject, and towards an understanding of the role of the church in the Congo and its democratization process.

I will look at news articles between the dates of November 2016 and January 2019, more specifically, news reports regarding specific events that occurred during this time. The reason for choosing this specific timeframe is partly due to time limit and the reliability of the study regarding how much I will be able to scrutinize. In addition, during this timeframe several actions were taken by the Catholic Church towards political change and it was a critical time for the country hoping for democracy, as well as for the president trying to control the people and his own future. The events that I will look into follows this timeline:



As a clarification for the reader, throughout my text I refer to the Catholic Church as either “the Catholic Church” or simply “the church”, not to be confused with any other church operating in the country, unless specified. The keywords that I have used to gather the material are: The Catholic Church, The Congo, DRC, Politics, Church – State, Democratization.

⁵⁸ Engler & Stausberg, 2011, p8

Following I present the operational questions in my analytical tool that will help me sort out the material and to analyze it through the lens of Social Movement Theory. The questions have been developed through the theory and its four powers and turned out as follows:

The four powers	Operational questions used on the material
Repertoire of Contention	What type of collective action can we see was being used by the Catholic church? Is there a disruptive, violent or contained approach? Did it change over time? Are there traces of a historical perspective in their choice?
Networks and Mobilizing structures	How did the Catholic church mobilize for change? Did they use their formal organization or work via more informal settings? Did they work alone or in cooperation with others? If so, with who?
Constructing Contention	Did the Catholic church work with framing, identity and emotions to bring solidarity? If so, how?
Political Opportunities and Threats	What were the threats that the church met? What opportunities did they come across and how did they seize them?

4.1 Ethical Considerations

In my research I will follow the ethical principles of the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity established by ALLEA. The four principles to consider are: Reliability which refers to ensuring the quality of the research regarding method and the use of resources for the analysis. The second principle is Honesty and stands for the unbiased stand one need to have and to be transparent when handling the material and conducting the analysis. The third principle is Respect and refers to the standing point towards colleagues and others within the field, as well as cultural aspects and context of the environment one is studying. The last, nevertheless important, principle is Accountability and goes back to the accountability of the

researcher and the management around the research.⁵⁹ Thus, I find it important to have a clear analytical tool, and throughout my analysis I will clarify and relate my arguments to both the material and the theory and my analytical tool with my operational questions. In addition, I strive to analyze as broad material as possible in order to avoid bias and fulfill the principle of reliability.

5 Analysis

In the following section I will first analyze the Catholic Church in the Congo following my timeframe. My operational questions work as a foundation in my analysis of the material in relation to the work of the church. I will continuously relate my analysis to Tarrow and the analytical framework. The analysis will finish with a look into politics and the Catholic Church in general and how their view on the church and politics is being applied and relates to the Congo case during the specific timeframe. This last section will be analyzed from and referred to a historical as well as contemporary perspective on the church's standing point on politics.

5.1 Catholic church in the Congo November 2016 - January 2019

In this first section I will go through the powers found in the Social Movement Theory and look specifically at the timeframe and the Catholic Church in the Congo. Under each power I will analyze the Catholic Church and their work and actions in the Congo.

5.1.1 Repertoire of Contention

Throughout this timeframe, 2016/17-2019, the Bishops of the Catholic Church in the Congo encouraged the people to stand up against Kabila. They have supported Kabila's political opposition and been critics of the corruption. As we know, the power of Repertoire of Contention stands for the type of collective action that the organization takes to. The approach the church has chosen is mainly a contained approach. Just like back in the days, the church urged for the people to stand up against the president and also managed to organize big demonstrations⁶⁰.

⁵⁹ The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, Rev. Ed.

⁶⁰ Prunier, 2001, p144

In December 2016, the final presidential term of Kabila was coming to its end, however, there were concerns over the fact that Kabila would not step down from his power. The national Episcopal Conference (CENCO), which represents the bishops of Congo, were asked to be part of the mediating and negotiating process of an agreement, finally concluded on Dec 31, known as the Saint Sylvester Agreement or the New Year's Eve Agreement. It was mediated by the Catholic Church and negotiated between the government and the opposition. The agreement stated that new elections would be held in 2017, that Kabila would step down and not seek another term or amend the constitution.⁶¹ However, this deal was not fulfilled by Kabila who chose not to step down, nor arrange for an election in 2017, instead it was postponed until December 2018.⁶² This event sparked demonstrations pushed for by the church, as well as CENCO who decided to withdraw as a mediating actor as a way of protesting and showing their disappointment. However, this did not mean that they withdrew their participation or engagement in the country's politics and future.⁶³ The bishops still urged the people to stand up for their rights and the hope for a democratic future.⁶⁴

Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports that the demonstration on December 31, 2017, that sparked after the announcement of postponing the election, was peaceful and calm until the attacks from the government came. Several protesters died and many more were injured. During the protest church activists knelt in prayer and peace when facing the security forces.⁶⁵ The church did not back down, despite the violence they met with several protesters being killed as a result. Two other peaceful demonstration were being held, with only a month apart, January 31 and February 25. Sadly, these two had similar outcome as the December 31 protest.⁶⁶ If we go back to the events in the beginning of the 90's, when Bishops and Catholic leaders were fighting against president Mobutu, we can see that today, there are historical traces in the choice of repertoire made by the church and the parishes. As in Tarrow's

⁶¹ Human Rights Watch, Jun 26, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/blog-feed/democratic-republic-congo-crisis#blog-305775>, Accessed, May 5, 2019

⁶² BBC, Dec 31, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-42529862>, Accessed Apr 28, 2019

⁶³ Human Rights Watch, Apr 2, 2017 <https://www.hrw.org/blog-feed/democratic-republic-congo-crisis#blog-301958>, Accessed, Apr 28, 2019

⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch, Jan 2, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/blog-feed/democratic-republic-congo-crisis#blog-305775>, Accessed May 5, 2019

⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch, Jan 19, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/19/dr-congo-security-forces-fire-catholic-churchgoers>, Accessed Apr 28, 2019

⁶⁶ Sawyer, Human Rights Watch, Apr 9, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/04/09/overview-political-crisis-dr-congo-and-human-rights-security-and-humanitarian>, Accessed Apr 28, 2019

Repertoire of Contention, historical events and traditions has an impact on the people's collective action, it is partly based in the culture.⁶⁷ This is clear regarding the Congo case. The primary way of showing political dissatisfaction, or satisfaction, has been to take to the streets, this has been a vital part of the political life in the Congo.⁶⁸ In August 2018, Kabila finally announced that he will step down, and not run for a third, unconstitutional, term. This news was welcomed by the Catholic Lay Committee (LCC), a spiritual group with several members of bishops, who had taken part in organizing the demonstrations. Although pleased with the decision of the president stepping down, they urged the people not to give up the fight for a democratic country. Now the urge for transparency and free and fair elections became the focus. When this news reached the people, the lay committee decided to cancel the upcoming demonstrations which were planned for August 12-14. This was done in order to show good faith in the announcement.⁶⁹

The way of protesting – withdrawal from participation, demonstrations, marches on the streets which took place close to the churches, shows us a trend of peaceful protests, by kneeling in prayer, holding Bibles, making prayer and not attacking the regime or other opponents back.⁷⁰ This approach of contained collective action do not see any significant change during this timeframe, peaceful demonstrations and negotiations has been the primary choice. When the election finally came in December 2018, CENCO participated with around 40,000 election observers. They did not give up the fight for a peaceful and fair election.⁷¹ The church, as the respectful actor it is in the Congo, had a clear and well-understood agenda when urging the people to stand up for its democratic rights. This is an important factor for social movements and organizations for maintaining support, and to grow.⁷² The well-respected church was being listened to through their power which enabled them to organize the protests with a clear agenda.

⁶⁷ Tarrow, 2011, p29

⁶⁸ The Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°123, 13 Oct, 2016

⁶⁹ Catholic News Agency (CAN), Aug 10, 2018, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/as-kabila-steps-down-catholics-in-dr-congo-continue-push-for-democracy-83618> Accessed, May 3, 2019

⁷⁰ Al Jazeera, Dec 23, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/dr-congos-catholic-church-prays-change-election-181223174711404.html>, Accessed, May 6, 2019

⁷¹ Mclean, The Guardian, Jan 4, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/04/congo-catholic-church-knows-election-clear-winner-drc-us-african>, Accessed May 5, 2019

⁷² Tarrow, 2011, p118

Tarrow points out that it is not the large number of demonstrations that build and constitutes a social movement, instead, the actors, such as the Catholic Church, must coordinate contention and organize themselves. This is much dependent on their social networks and their ability to build upon these in order to maintain solidarity and collect and use resources.⁷³ This will be scrutinized further within the next power. Between the years of 2016/17-2019, the church has been focusing on being a peaceful force towards democratization. Directing their actions of peaceful demonstrations, negotiation and prayers shows us that the church did not have any other intentions than wanting change in a peaceful way. However, as Tarrow points out, collective action such as demonstrations can lead to repression in states that see these protests as a threat.⁷⁴ We will see this clearly in the Congo case as well, when analyzing the power of Political Opportunities and Threats.

5.1.2 Networks and Mobilizing structures

In their fight for democracy and for a democratization process, the Catholic Church has been helped by already being a respected actor in the country that sometimes is trusted more than the politicians.⁷⁵ The Saint Sylvester Agreement that was mediated by the church marks an important step in the role of the Catholic Church in the democratization process. CENCO was asked to mediate between president Kabila and the opposition, as well as civil society groups. Being respected to the extent that the president requests CENCO to participate in the process of establishing an agreement, and to settle political disputes is clearly a sign of having influential networks within institutions.⁷⁶ We have seen that there are arguments for both formal and informal organizations to be successful.⁷⁷ In the case of the Catholic Church in the Congo, there are traces of formal organization that has helped them in their work and success of the mobilization of activists. An example is the local parishes with Bishops, priests and clerks. However, they were not formed as formal organizations for the sake of political participation or for working towards political change. Thus, the Catholic Church in the Congo, with its local parishes and engaged bishops is rather a hybrid form of organization.

⁷³ Tarrow, 2011, p118

⁷⁴ Ibid., p99

⁷⁵ Nicolon, France24, Dec 18, 2018, <https://www.france24.com/en/20181218-dr-congo-elections-look-catholic-churchs-impact-vote>, Accessed May 5, 2019

⁷⁶ Human Rights Watch, Nov 2, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/blog-feed/democratic-republic-congo-crisis#blog-296080>, Accessed May 7, 2019

⁷⁷ Tarrow, 2011, p123

Tarrow describes these as forms that include both local, regional, national, decentralized and centralized, membership and non-membership organizations.⁷⁸ He also points out that faith-based community organizations are successful in the way that they are able to gain organizational power and to transform religious identities into activism.⁷⁹ The way the church was able to gather and mobilize people for the demonstrations was in connection to the masses. The encouragement to stand up for the democratic rights and to participate often happened within the church. The demonstrations both on Dec 31, Jan 31 and Feb 25 was planned to occur right after and in connection to the masses.⁸⁰

Networks can also be established within and beyond organizations. According to Tarrow “Networks can link leaders across organizations and can link activists within movement clusters”.⁸¹ We can see this in the way the bishops and LCC organized demonstrations, and the bishops using the church setting to urge the people to stand up against president Kabila.⁸² Tarrow points out that when organizations draw on existing social networks, they are able to mobilize rapidly and put pressure on opponents and legislators, and acting towards the same goal and against the same opponent can too create networks.⁸³ The social network of the Catholic Church would in this case be the civil society. The church has a massive support, influence and respect among the people, and for some they draw more attention than politicians.⁸⁴ With these strong ties to civil society, mobilizing and organizing will be possible rapidly and with trust. When many people find trust within an organization or institution, a great pressure can be put on policymakers. There are no specific traces of any new established network or new relation that has grown out of this conflict during this timeframe. One could expect a deeper cooperation between different civil society groups and social movements such as “C’en Est Trop” (“This is Too Much”)⁸⁵. However, they participated in the same demonstrations, and, obviously towards the same goal, but it seems as if the church in some

⁷⁸ Tarrow, 2011, p129

⁷⁹ Ibid., p131

⁸⁰ Brown, Business Insider, Feb 26, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/dr-congo-dictator-protests-catholic-church-2018-2>, Accessed, May 5, 2019

⁸¹ Tarrow, 2011, p132

⁸² Brown, Business Insider, Feb 26, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/dr-congo-dictator-protests-catholic-church-2018-2>, Accessed, May 5, 2019

⁸³ Tarrow, 2011, p132

⁸⁴ Nicolon, France 24, Dec 12, 2018, <https://www.france24.com/en/20181218-dr-congo-elections-look-catholic-churchs-impact-vote>, Accessed May 5, 2019

⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch, Nov 17, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/blog-feed/democratic-republic-congo-crisis#blog-311588>

way wanted to stay on its side, and not engage too much in the politics. They mobilized to be a peaceful force for human rights and democracy, not with intention to seek any political power, an example is the fact that CENCO withdrew from their mediating role after Kabila and the government renegaded on the agreement.⁸⁶ The one network that they cooperated with can be found within the Catholic faith and is between the bishops and the spiritual group LCC. Demonstrations organized by this group, which also consists of Catholic intellectuals, were supported by the Bishops.⁸⁷

When the election finally was held in December 2018, CENCO was then there with almost 40,000 observers. They were supported by foreign donors but operated with staff from CENCO.⁸⁸ Their influence enabled for them unquestioned participation in the election. As mentioned, the status of the church in the Congo has been beneficial for them in order to mobilize for change. They have used their formal organization and formal settings to reach out and encourage the people to stand up for their rights. And on the other hand, regarding the demonstrations that has taken place, there has been no specific formal organization aiming towards political change.

The church setting has been used as the platform to mobilize for change, and their mobilizing structure lay in their natural legitimacy among the people. We have also seen that they did not seek a specific network or organization for cooperation. Although, their participation in and support of demonstrations and the work of LCC, as well as accepting the mediating role, is the type of cooperation in the Congo case.

5.1.3 Constructing Contention

Tarrow argues that both framing, identity and emotion are together important elements in creating solidarity. Framing refers to how movements frame grievances and connect these with collective action frames. Movements are involved in the work of naming and identifying grievances that the people can relate to and that has a meaning to them, which in turn help to

⁸⁶ Human Rights Watch, April 2, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/blog-feed/democratic-republic-congo-crisis#blog-301958>, Accessed May 7, 2019

⁸⁷ Brown, Business Insider, Feb 26, 2018 <https://www.businessinsider.com/dr-congo-dictator-protests-catholic-church-2018-2>, Accessed May 5, 2019

⁸⁸ Congo Research Group, Jan 16, 2019, <http://congoresearchgroup.org/congolese-election-leaks/>, Accessed May 13, 2019

produce a collective identity. Another type of framing is what Tarrow refers to as the “injustice framing”. This is the type of framing done by movements against oppression. For collective action to happen against oppression and in an unjust situation, people must collectively identify and define their situation as unjust.⁸⁹ We can clearly see the lack of democracy and transparency and the oppression the people were under. They did not hesitate to describe the country as being in a very bad shape. Not only due to the leadership and its lack of transparency and democratic values, but also economically. They stated that “the economic crisis is worsening by the day leading to an explosion of unemployed youth and making families struggle to make ends meet”⁹⁰.

The identity creating power refers to how movements and organizations are able to categorically and overlapping connect different individuals by using a specific identity, Tarrow gives an example of someone that is a mother at home and a factory worker during the day, here one can use both the identities of being a mother and a factory worker. Movements try to create identities that fit with the purpose. In this case we can see that the bishops were talking to the Congolese and encouraging them to stand up and “take their destiny into their own hands”.⁹¹ There are no traces of the church using Christianity or their Catholicism in creating identity. Since they, historically, have been part of civil society by providing social services⁹², it was therefore in their nature to stand up and participate in order to help their people. They have historically been part of working towards democratization, through e.g. demonstrating against dictators like Mobutu, and this time was no exception.⁹³ In order to establish solidarity and legitimacy as a representative of claims, identity construction is an important factor, especially for new not fully established movements, and will decline in importance the more established and institutionalized the movement or organization is.⁹⁴ By using the setting of the church, the Christian Catholic identity was already embedded and no further identity creation was needed when speaking to the congregation, and when outside congregation, the call has been for the people. For example, a

⁸⁹ Tarrow, 2011, p143ff

⁹⁰ Human Rights Watch, Jun 26, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/blog-feed/democratic-republic-congo-crisis#blog-305775>, Accessed May 13, 2019

⁹¹ Human Rights Watch, Jun 26, 2017 <https://www.hrw.org/blog-feed/democratic-republic-congo-crisis#blog-305775>, Accessed May 13, 2019

⁹² Prunier, 2001, p156

⁹³ Africa Center for Strategic Studies, Mar 27, 2018 <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/catholic-church-increasingly-targeted-by-government-violence-in-the-drc/>, Accessed May 9, 2019

⁹⁴ Tarrow, 2011, p152

statement from the lay committee when Kabila announced his resignation and that elections will be held in December 2018, read “Congolese people, the fight for democracy continues”.⁹⁵ As a well-established and respected institution, the identity had already been rooted.

The work on emotions can have different outcomes and be different in regard to the benefits. For example, emotions such as love, loyalty and reverence are more mobilizing than e.g. despair, resignation and shame.⁹⁶ The work of the church was not to make the people feel despair, rather, they encouraged them to do the right thing and reminded them of their rights rather than imposing depression or fear. For example, after they withdrew from their mediating role due to the commitments being ignored, they instead pointed to the injustice and that it is unacceptable that a minority has deprived a majority their freedom.⁹⁷ Their focus on emotions was based on encouragement, and building encouraged and strong people in the fight for their rights.

What we can note from analyzing this power is that the church worked with framing and emotions to fit their non-violent agenda. They wanted not to impose anger, rather encouragement, and they were framing the situation of the country simply out of pointing to injustice and wrongdoings of president Kabila and his government. They used the feeling of being oppressed by pointing to the minority vs the majority and how they used their power. When looking at framing, identity construction and emotions, they must be understood in their context and the specific movement or organization being studied. As for the church in Congo, an already established institution, the identity was already embedded, and their respected position was an opportunity and an advantage. These opportunities and the work in a local context and how that is being handled require an analysis of the power of Opportunities and Threats.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ CNA, Aug 10, 2018, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/as-kabila-steps-down-catholics-in-dr-congo-continue-push-for-democracy-83618>, Accessed May 15, 2019

⁹⁶ Tarrow, 2011, p154

⁹⁷ Human Rights Watch, Jun 26, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/blog-feed/democratic-republic-congo-crisis#blog-305775>, Accessed May 13, 2019

⁹⁸ Tarrow, 2011, p156

5.1.4 *Political Opportunities and Threats*

Tarrow speak about change in the environment in relation to opportunities and threats. One important factor that he mentions is the “opening of access to participation for new actors”.⁹⁹ This opening of access is what we saw at the beginning of our timeline – the Saint Sylvester Agreement, and the church being chosen as the mediator. The church had the opportunity to participate close to where the policy making was taking place. Opportunities are dependent on and shaped by features of the political system. This, in turn, enables interactions between different actors, movements and political parties¹⁰⁰, such as in our case – between Kabila’s government, the opposition and the church.

Tarrow points to the important relationship between Threat, Opportunity and Mobilization and that organizational resources are important in order to mobilize around opportunities. Consequently, it requires more than a short-term change in the environment for a movement or organization to successfully take advantage of it.¹⁰¹ In the case of the Catholic Church in the Congo, their organizational structures were well established, and they were respected within the political sphere as well. This status enabled them the opportunity of participating in the Saint Sylvester Agreement, which the president Kabila himself asked them to mediate.¹⁰² Their goal of providing the people free and fair elections, and a democratic state where people can choose their government, could be reached in a mediating role and to participate in an agreement that would, among other factors, state a date of the new election would give them tools to reach the goal.

Tarrow defines Threats as the risks and costs of action or inaction, i.e. the costs for a movement that may occur from protests, or the costs in form of the suffering they may experience if not taking action.¹⁰³ When the church decided to drop their mediating position due to the government not implementing the deal¹⁰⁴, and instead become a mobilizing actor, it was for this threat of suffering if not taking any action. If the church did not continue to work

⁹⁹ Tarrow, 2011, p164

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p33

¹⁰¹ Tarrow, 2011, p33

¹⁰² Human Rights Watch, Nov 2, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/blog-feed/democratic-republic-congo-crisis#blog-296080>, Accessed May 15, 2019

¹⁰³ Tarrow, 2011, p160

¹⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch, Apr 4, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/blog-feed/democratic-republic-congo-crisis#blog-301958>, Accessed May 17, 2019

towards political change and a democratization process, the risk of president Kabila staying in power was imminent.¹⁰⁵ As much as they were able to mobilize around their opportunities – as mediator, they were also able to mobilize around the threat that they saw and decided to drop their mediating role and instead become the mobilizer. They were able to mobilize and organize around their different opportunities.

The protests that followed the unreached deal, were also followed by violence and severe repression from the government. Tarrow defines repression and repressive tools used by governments as, for example, imprisonment and incarceration and deadly force to control public protest.¹⁰⁶ During all three of the demonstrations in December, January and February, the demonstrators were met with tear gas, live bullets - several demonstrators were killed, as well as arbitrary arrests of priests.¹⁰⁷ The government were so desperate in their need to stop the demonstrations that they, during the February 25 events fired into the churches and surrounded the churches before the people were even able to go out to the streets. Before even starting the demonstration, the protesters and churchgoers were again met with tear gas and bullets.¹⁰⁸ The arrests of bishops and priests and violence towards churches and churchgoers, shows the suppression of the people by the state, by limiting not only the right to get rid of the government peacefully, but also limiting and preventing the freedom of religion and right to worship.¹⁰⁹

The threat of not seeing any change was still present at the time of Kabila announcing his resignation and declaring a new date for the election (December 2018). Although the demonstrations, that had been organized by the church and planned to be held in August, were cancelled the church still expressed their uncertainty regarding the resignation of the president after the election. The result was then to take advantage of their position as trustworthy and respected and they sent out thousands of election observers in order to make sure the election was fair. Sadly, the church reported irregularities and suspicion of the election result, and the

¹⁰⁵ Africa Center for Strategic Studies, Mar 27, 2018, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/catholic-church-increasingly-targeted-by-government-violence-in-the-drc/>, Accessed May 9, 2019

¹⁰⁶ Tarrow, 2011, p170

¹⁰⁷ Human Rights Watch, Jan 19, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/19/dr-congo-security-forces-fire-catholic-churchgoers>, Accessed May 8, 2019

¹⁰⁸ Brown, Business Insider, Feb 26, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/dr-congo-dictator-protests-catholic-church-2018-2>, Accessed May 5, 2019

¹⁰⁹ Human Rights Watch, Jan 19, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/19/dr-congo-security-forces-fire-catholic-churchgoers>, Accessed May 8, 2019

threat of not having fulfilled a democratic election and the democratization being put on hold remained¹¹⁰.

The power of Political Opportunities and Threats is based on the external resources to a group and its way of taking advantage of these. We can see that there were several opportunities in the political environment that the church took advantage of, being asked to mediate, mobilize instead after the deal was broken, and then to observe the election. The threat the church met was, except in form of physical violence from the regime, the fact that Kabila would stay in power. The threat of suffering under the Kabila regime for another presidential term was prominent since he had already broken the Saint Sylvester Agreement.

5.2 Politics and the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church is not a political party and has never been. It was not created to run for elections and passing legislation. In addition, teachings of the Catholic Church hold that it is the preaching of values that is their job, not promoting or suggesting political solutions. However, not engaging politically such as party participation, does not mean one needs to completely be out of the political environment.¹¹¹ Thus, religious institutions can still hold political power. One can argue that there is a contradiction between the church's teaching of not being political since the Vatican or, the Holy See, is a sovereign entity under international law and has bilateral diplomatic relations with almost 200 sovereign states.¹¹² We have seen how the church works as a social movement, and how that has given them influence in political change. The Holy See, which is the pinnacle of the church, manages the world's bishops and who in turn manages territorial and local dioceses and parishes. The Catholic church can therefore be seen as either a transnational NGO, a state, or neither.¹¹³

As we know, the church has gradually over the twentieth century, with encouragement from Pope John Paul II, come to embrace norms of human rights and democracy. In a statement from the Vatican, on their official website, they point to the participation in political life being desirable and important, as democracy is the preferable type of governance. With

¹¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, Jan 5, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/05/dr-congo-voter-suppression-violence>, Accessed May 8 2019

¹¹¹ Allen, 2013, p147

¹¹² Ibid., p150

¹¹³ Ferrari, 2006, p33f

participation they exemplify voting or other forms of participation that has a contributive factor to the development of one's country and for the benefit of the common good. Democracy will not be productive unless the people is participating and involved. However, they emphasize, it rests a responsibility among Catholics to remind the society of the "deeper understanding of human life"¹¹⁴ when legislation is proposed that attacks the sacredness of human life. The statement refers to John Paul II, who stressed the obligation of those Catholics who participate in lawmaking to oppose any legislation that is an attack on human life. The Vatican is also emphasizing that its role or task is not to propose political solutions, however it is their right and duty to provide a moral judgement, and must "recognize the legitimacy of differing points of view about the organization of worldly affairs", and are also to "reject as, injurious to democratic life, a conception of pluralism that reflects moral relativism. Democracy must be based on the true and solid foundation of non-negotiable ethical principles, which are underpinning of life in society"¹¹⁵.

What the church and lay committee did in the Congo, was precisely this. They did not propose specific legislations or propositions. They stood behind support for democracy in the form of people power to choose their own leader and their government. They were able to find a balance between participating in politics and supporting a democratic society. As stated by the Vatican in regard to responsibilities and duties, the church participated in political life by voting and organizing for change, and did not, as mentioned, propose political solutions. By being the mediator, they were able to participate whilst not fully participate in legislation. They had their focus on and contributed in the development of their country for the sake of the common good.

6 Conclusion

What we have seen in this study is a church with an aim to serve the people. Historically and until today the Catholic Church in Congo has worked for political change and a transition

¹¹⁴ The Office of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, The Vatican Official Website, Nov 24, 2002, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20021124_politica_en.html, Accessed May 15, 2019

¹¹⁵ The Office of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, The Vatican Official Website, Nov 24, 2002, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20021124_politica_en.html, Accessed May 15, 2019

towards democracy, in the way of people power. They have been a pro-democratic force in the fight against authoritarian regimes. This has been shown in their role as mediator and mobilizer. Although not engaging in politics through any political party, they have been the voice of the people by, partly mediating as someone from the outside, from civil society, as well as encouraging the people to remember their rights. In addition, their role as a prominent pro-democratic force is obvious in the way they protest undemocratic regimes, and in the way that they were able to be listened and being trusted by the people.

The Social Movement theory has enabled this study to examine the role of the Catholic Church in the Congo between 2016-2019. By analyzing the material with help from the powers of Repertoire of Contention, Networks and Mobilizing structures, Constructing Contention and Political Opportunities and Threats, I am able to find answers to my research question as well as fulfilling my purpose. The theory and the material tell us that the country has a history of taking to the streets to show political dissatisfaction, and the church has been part of this and encouraged this since the time of Mobutu.¹¹⁶ These historical traces has had an impact on the choice of repertoire made by the church. The contained approach has been the primary one for the church. Not only by choosing strikes and demonstrations, but also their strategy of being a peaceful protester, not promoting or encouraging violence even when being attacked, and being the observer and mediator reveals a contained approach.

Their networking and mobilizing abilities have benefitted from the fact that the church is seen as respected and trustworthy among the people, and within the political sphere.¹¹⁷ In addition, as they are, what Tarrow would call it, a hybrid organization, with its formal organizational structure as well as informal with local members, the organizing and mobilizing could occur, as we saw, within the church and the familiar setting of the masses. The church setting was used as the mobilizing platform. By having these strong ties to civil society, and especially trust among the people, they were able to easily mobilize, take the active role and encourage their people to fight for people power and the common good.

Together with their strategy of being the peace promoter with non-violent protest actions, and having the peoples trust and mobilizing abilities, they were able to paint a trustworthy, and

¹¹⁶ The Crisis Group Africa Briefing No123, p3

¹¹⁷ Nicolon, Dec18, 2018, <https://www.france24.com/en/20181218-dr-congo-elections-look-catholic-churchs-impact-vote>, Accessed May 9, 2019

true, picture of the country in need of political change due to lack of transparency and democracy. They pointed to the injustice in the fact that minority depriving the majority their rights and freedom.¹¹⁸ This is in line with their pro-democracy stance from a minimalist definition of democracy, where the important factor is the right to choose and get rid of governments peacefully¹¹⁹. It also goes in line with the democracy discussed within the Vatican where the emphasize has been on the importance of participating in political life, such as voting or other forms of action, and to stand outside from the legislative decisions. The Catholic Church were working as a pro-democratic Christian church with the role of being a local peace promoter as well as being aware of the role of the Catholic Church and faith as an international actor in the political sphere. As a mediator and then mobilizer they were able to maintain both roles. The mobilizing role also enabled them to take advantage of the opportunities that was laying ahead of them. Thanks to their status in the country they were provided opportunities, and their organizational abilities with networks in civil society enabled them to mobilize around changes in the environment. When the Sylvester Agreement wasn't being implemented fully, they choose to change position and instead through civil society focus on the threat of Kabila remaining in power for another term.

We have seen how the four powers are all important when examining the work of movements and organizations, not only how they emerge but also how they are maintained. The Catholic Church in Congo had historically been standing up for democracy for the people and therefore maintained their contained repertoire of contention as the non-violent actor, by using a non-violent approach with historical traces, such as taking to the streets, it was a familiarity among the people. Tarrow points out that “by mounting familiar forms of contention, movements become focal points that transform external opportunities into resources”.¹²⁰ The church saw what opportunities and threats they had before them and with cultural and contextual frames, by pointing to the injustice and undemocratic regime, and by using their social networks within civil society, the LCC and the masses, they were able to build and maintain their trust among the people. Tarrow argues that “repertoire of contention, social networks, and cultural frames lower the costs of bringing people into collective action, induce confidence that they are not alone, and give broader meaning to their claims”.¹²¹ Consequently, when the political

¹¹⁸ Human Rights Watch, Jun 26, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/blog-feed/democratic-republic-congo-crisis#blog-305775>, Accessed May 9, 2019

¹¹⁹ Przeworski, 1999, p23ff

¹²⁰ Tarrow, 2011, p33

¹²¹ Ibid.

environment changes, and opportunities open up, movements and organizations can adapt a repertoire of contention, a strategy for collective action. They bring people together by networks and mobilizing structures and with help from framing, identity creation and emotions they can produce a solidarity among the people and for the movement. These four components are crucial for movements in their work for change.

By examining these powers one by one I have been able to see role of the Catholic Church, what their role was and how it changed during this timeframe. They always maintained their position as a pro-democratic force, when going from mediator to mobilizer and kept their role of being a peaceful trustworthy actor with the focus of providing the best for the common good. One question that comes out of this study is, even though we can see their agenda aiming towards democracy, did they succeed? Have they been successful in their role? To answer this question, we must go back to the definition of democracy. In accordance with the Vatican's stance on democracy and the importance of serving the common good¹²² and the minimalist definition of democracy that has been taken into consideration in this study, we can see that they have been fairly successful. They fulfilled their role as pro-democratic force focusing on the common good. They participated in mediating an agreement, although 2 years late, it was finally implemented, the president stepped down and elections were held.

However, as the result of the election has been debated, and with a more comprehensive definition of democracy, including e.g. other elements such as representation and equality¹²³, their role as a successful democracy promoter could be debated. In addition, it nurtures more questions such as if the majoritarian rule is the best solution to converge on common interests and for the common good? These questions though require further and more thorough studies on the role of religion, and religious organizations' work towards democratization, with a deeper focus on democracy per se. Yet, what this study can tell us is that religion, with its national and international institutions, certainly can play and take on a prominent role as mobilizer towards political change, including democratization processes.

¹²² The Office of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, The Vatican Official Website, Nov 24, 2002, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20021124_politica_en.html, Accessed May 15, 2019

¹²³ See e.g. Dahl, 1991, Democracy and its Critics and Przeworski Minimal Democracy, 1999

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