Who Becomes Minister in an Autocratic Regime? Evidence From DRC

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Abstract

Who Becomes Minister in the DRC is a newly created database that provides information on members of government. The purpose of this article is to present the database and to document some facts about the background of political leaders. The database covers the period 2000-2016. The profile of politicians in this database is as follows: born mainly in the DRC, a Congolese minister is a 50-year-old male and Swahili-speaking, with a bachelor's degree mainly in law or economics. Finally, some avenues likely to be explored for future research with this database are indicated.

INTRODUCTION

Since the empirical work of Jones and Olken (2005), the identity of political leaders has become a major empirical question. A nascent literature has developed to improve our understanding the consequences of the background of political actors (biological, educational, experience, etc.). One of the weaknesses of this literature is the significant attention given to leaders in developed countries (e.g. Alesina et al., 2019; Hayo & Neumeier, 2012, 2014, 2016; Moessinger, 2014, Jochimsen & Thomasius , 2014) or cross-sectional or panel studies including all countries (e.g. Besley & Reynal-Querol, 2011; & Kodila-Tedika & Mulunda, 2016). However, there are few studies devoted only to Africa to estimate the impact of the characteristics of African leaders (eg Constant & Tien, 2010; Jorgensen & Bjornskov, 2015; François et al., 2015; Díaz Serrano & Sackey, 2016).

The purpose of our work is not to understand the consequences of the characteristics of leaders, but rather to identify the profile of the leader particularly in an autocratic regime. Accordingly, this paper contributes to the literature on the selection of leaders (Dowding & Dumont, 2009; Goemans et al., 2009; Alexiadou, 2016; Dal Bo et al., 2017; Gerring et al. 2019; Bértoa, 2020). The aim of this research is to examine whether certain variables that are considered in the empirical studies match with the reality of an autocratic country. This goes beyond empirical work to a question of discussing the theoretical elements of leaders' selection, with a special focus on the Congolese data.

This work is also original because of the database compiled. Indeed, leader studies tend to focus more on government leaders and very rarely on members of government. To do this, the database of Dowding & Dumont (2009), Alexiadou (2016), Goemans et al. (2009), Bértoa (2020) are the best known. Within the framework of this study, we are using a series of documents to compile a database that allows us to identify the features of the members of the Congolese government and not only of heads of government as in Goemans et al. (2009), or only finance ministers as in Alexiadou & Gunaydin (2018) or only foreign affairs ministers as in Flores (2016). We, therefore, present a database that will be regularly updated to understand the Congolese political landscape. To this end, we also suggest some avenues of research likely to be carried out with this database. Moreover, such an exercise focused on a country is not common. There are few other studies such as Bäck et al. (2009) for Sweden, Berlinski et al. (2010) and Kam et al. (2010) for the UK, Fischer & Kaiser (2007) for Germany, Kerby (2011) for Canada, Rodríguez (2011) for Spain. However, "the bulk of this work focuses on the determinants of minister selection and survival on a country-by-country

basis" (Nyrup & Bramwell, 2020, p.2). We also note that these different studies are focused on developed countries. They are fewer studies linked to developing countries such as Buehler & Ayari (2018) for Tunisia; Kung & Chen (2011) for China; Schleiter (2013) for Russia; Woldense (2018) for Ethiopia,

Another element of originality in this work is that the few studies which are focused on members of the government have been more concerned with understanding the impact of certain biological traits or finance ministers' background on the orientation of public policies (eg Moessinger, 2014, Jochimsen & Thomasius, 2014). Other work is focused on the background of the Prime Minister (e.g. Hayo & Neumeier, 2012, 2014, 2016). Still others are focused on power sharing based on the ethnicities of government members (Francois et al., 2015). However, in our case it is a question of defining the characteristics that identify the members of the government as a whole. It is not only a question of knowing their background, but much more, namely: their origin, their place of birth, their level of education, their past (professional, political, etc.), their socio-demographic elements (age, sex, etc.), etc.

The limitation of this study is related to the time horizon covered. Indeed, our newly created database covers the period from 2001 to 2016. The limited time horizon is attributed to the cost of information. In the DRC, the Curriculum Vitae of ministers are not accessible. Thus, we have so far been unable to collect information on the three governments that run the country between 2017 and 2020.

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. Apart from this introduction, first we present the sources of information. Then, we identify the profile of Congolese ministers. Fourth, we discuss a few avenues of research that can exploit this database. Finally, a conclusion is drawn.

DATA

There is a tradition in the DRC, or at least for those interested in the DRC, an interest in writing biographical essays of Congolese leaders (ministers) or major actors. Artique (1961) and Verhaegen & Gérard-Libois (1961) are undoubtedly emblematic examples, and, to our knowledge, the first to embark on this sociographic exercise. Since then, volumes have been produced by different actors (Mabi & Mutamba, 1986; Kimbulu 1987; Mazanza & Nlandu, 2005, Agbumana, 2005; Omasombo & Kennes, 2006; Omasombo, 2009) or institutions (Chambre de commerce et d'industrie franco-zairoise, 1996). However, this does not mean that it is easy to access the detailed identities of Congolese politicians, contrary to the case of

advanced countries (e.g. Razafindrakoto et al, 2017), where the Curriculum Vitae of ministers are available online. In addition, the information collected by these different authors remains biographical without analysis. The strong point of this work is precisely to go beyond the simple narrative of these authors to identify a profile. Also, another major element is filling the gaps in the narrative of one author by expanding it with another source to collect more data.

Moreover, the database only covers the period from 2000 to 2016. The incompleteness of documents or content does not allow us to consider the period before 2000 effectively. The period after 2016 is the next challenge. Thus, the database will be regularly updated at the indicated periods.

To collect the data, we used several sources to document the profile of a Congolese minister during the said period. First, we considered the books of Mabi & Mutamba (1986), Kimbulu (1987), Mazanza & Nlandu (2005), Agbumana (2005), Omasombo & Kennes (2006), Omasombo (2009) to glean all necessary information. The presidential ordinances appointing the various ministers were also put to use in addition to news articles. We also used the information available in the media to fill in the information gaps.

For the period under review, it should be noted that the information was difficult to access for all the 217 ministers of this period. Thus, we will have less observations for some variables compared to others.

RESULTS

3.1 Regionalism

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the number of ministers by province of origin. In fact, there is a literature that indicates the close link that exists between the association between power and ethnicities, particularly in Africa (Francois et al., 2015). Figure 1a is based on 189 ministers, ie a coverage rate of 87.1% for all ministers for the period. Figure 1b is based on an 84.3% coverage rate. According to figure 1a, the ministers come from Katanga (15%), then from Bandundu (13.2%) and Équateur (12.7%). 41% of ministers came from these three provinces. In the case of 1b, the province of South Kivu provided the most ministers (12.6%), followed by Kwilu (8.7%) and Kongo-central (7%). The difference between the two maps is that Figure 1.b applies to the new administrative configuration of the country. However, the old configuration prevailed longer than the new one to the extent that it covered more of the

governments that ran the country. In comparing the two maps, the salient fact is in map 1a the province of the President also provided most of the ministers, while in map 1b, the province of the President does not even appear in the top three.

This does not mean that questions of regionalism are absent in the Congolese government composition. The reality confirmed by this figure is that it is the linguistic distance that is a determining variable. In map 1.a, 53.4% of the Congolese ministers come from an area where the Swahili language is the spoken language. While on map 1.b, 55.2% of the ministers come from this Swahili - speaking space.

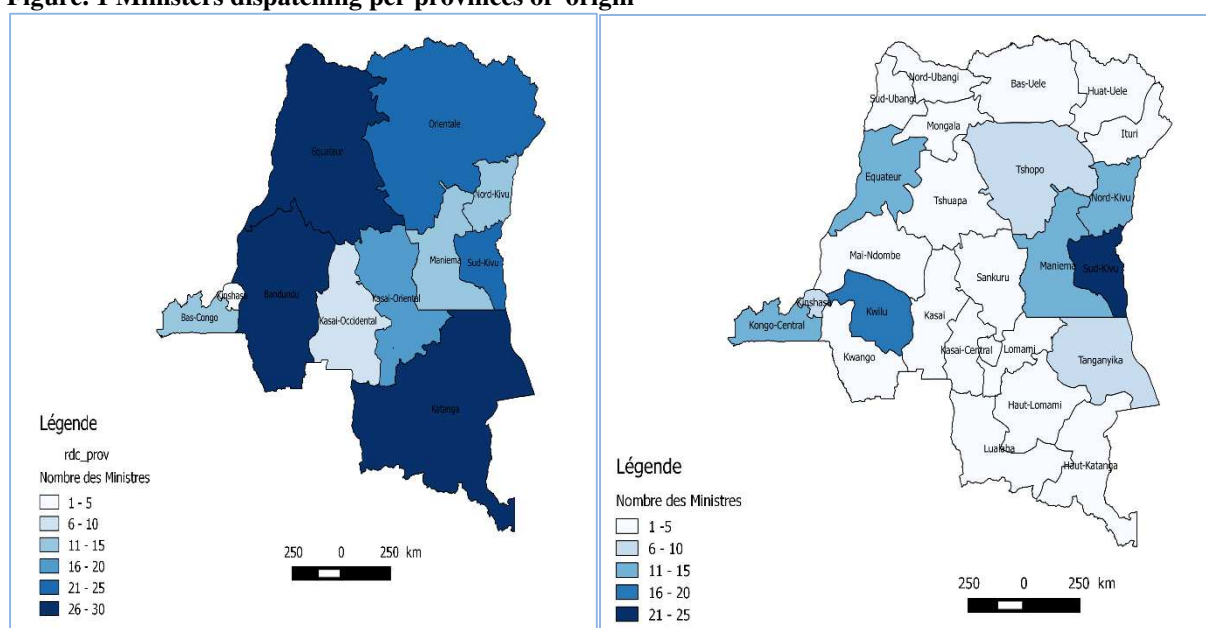**Figure. 1 Ministers dispatching per provinces of origin**

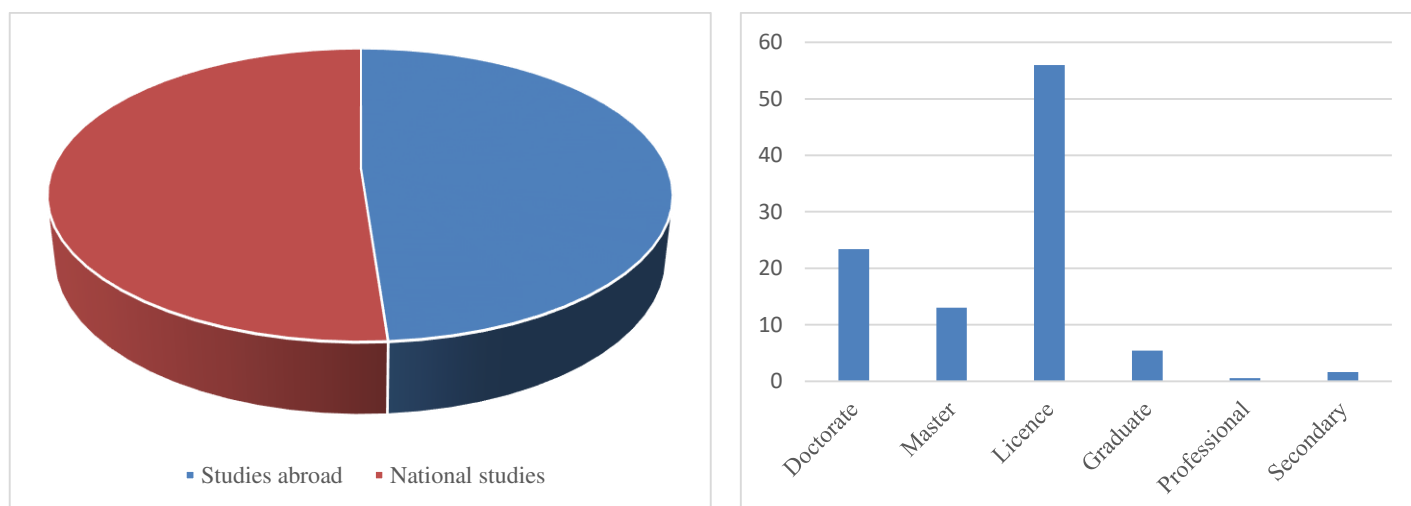Figure 1.a   Figure 1.b

3.2 *Skills*

To consider the skills of politicians, we use several approximations including location of training, level of education attained, number of diplomas and field of study. Figure 2 compares the proportion of Congolese ministers who have studied abroad and the level of education attained by them. These variables are increasingly studied in the literature. For instance, Mercier (2016) documents a positive effect of the chief executive having studied abroad on the level of democracy in his country during his administration. This effect remains after controlling for the level of education and the initial professional occupation. This work by Mercier (2016) is an exploration of a channel highlighted by Spilimbergo (2009), who first documented the positive impact of foreign education of leaders on democracy in their home country, provided that their studies are carried out in a democratic regime. To also support

Spilimbergo (2009), Gift & Krcmaric (2015) prove that leaders who studied in the West support the democratization of their country of origin. Constant & Tien (2010) find a significant advantage on FDI flows for African leaders who have studied abroad. Dreher & Yu (2016) also provide evidence on foreign education, but this time on home country foreign policies. Minasyan (2017) also examines the impact of the foreign studies by American leaders on the allocation of American aid.

As for the educational attainment of the leader, there is also an abundant literature. There are basically two streams of literature. The first is interested in the cognitive skills of leaders (e.g. Rindermann et al., 2009; Kodila-Tedika, 2014; Dal Bo et al., 2017). Given that these variables are not available for our context, our approach follows the second stream, which considers the level of educational attainment of political leaders. Besley et al. (2011) finds that the level of education attained by leaders counts for better economic performance, captured by economic growth. Jørgensen & Bjørnskov (2015) confirm this conclusion, considering the background of the first African leaders after independence. Diaz-Serrano & Pérez (2013) found a statistically significant association between the level of study of leaders on the education of their citizens. Besley & Reynal-Querol (2011) show that democratic regimes are those which select both leaders with a high level of education but also those who have notably studied abroad.
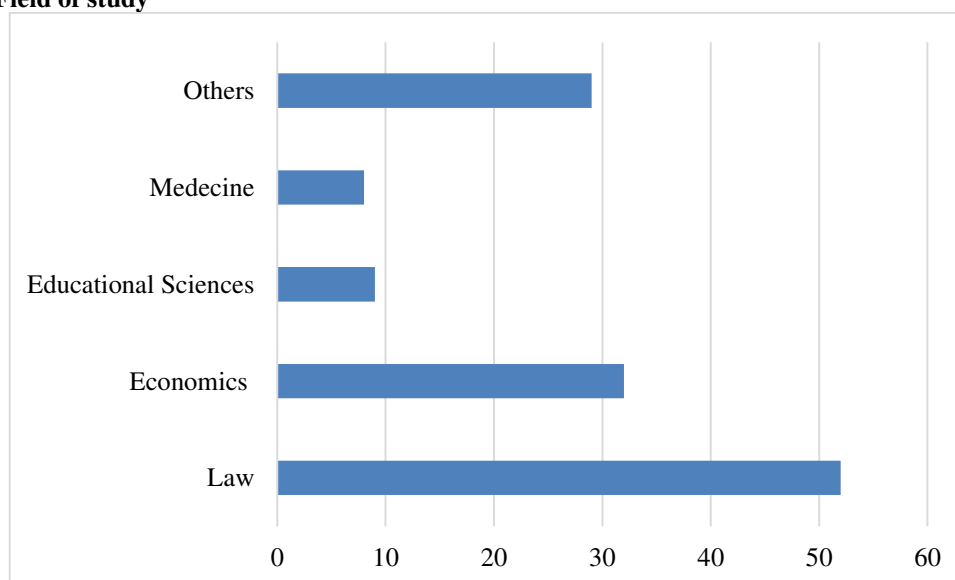
In our database, we were able to determine the location of training of 80.2% of all Congolese ministers of the period. For this portion, 48.9% were at least trained in foreign countries against 51.1% that were not. This difference is not statistically significant with a p-value of around 0.3262. We have 85% of ministers for whom we have education level information. The trends are as follows: 56% of Congolese ministers have reached the bachelor's level; 23% have a doctorate degree; 13% obtained a master's degree; 5.4% have completed the first university cycle, ie the graduate; 1.6% have just a high school diploma and 0.5% have vocational training.

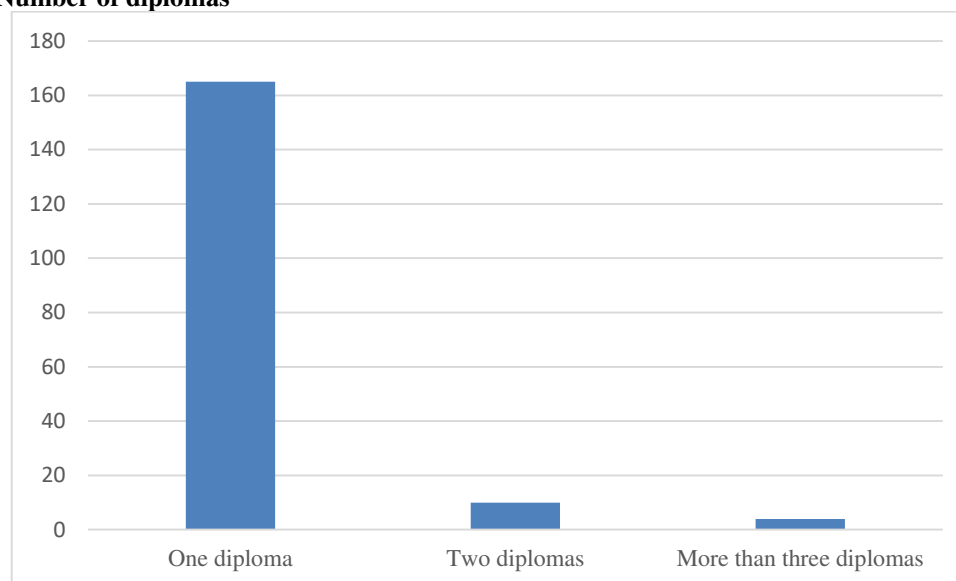**Figure 2. Place of training/formation and level of education**

In addition to these two variables, there is also interest in the literature for the leaders' field of study. Dreher et al. (2009) examine the effect of the field of study of leaders on reforms. Jochimsen & Thomasius (2014) explore the effect of the diploma of finance ministers on the budgetary and fiscal performance. Figure 3 presents the number of ministers who obtained each diploma. The figure shows that the majority of Congolese ministers have a law degree, followed by economics degree.

Figure 3. Field of study

We also consider another variable, which has not yet been considered in studies of political leaders, namely the number of diplomas obtained. Figure 4 below shows the situation of ministers who have obtained several diplomas. It is unusual for a Congolese minister to hold more than one diploma: 165 cases of a single diploma are identified compared to only 10 cases of at least two diplomas and 4 cases of at least three diplomas.

Figure 4. Number of diplomas

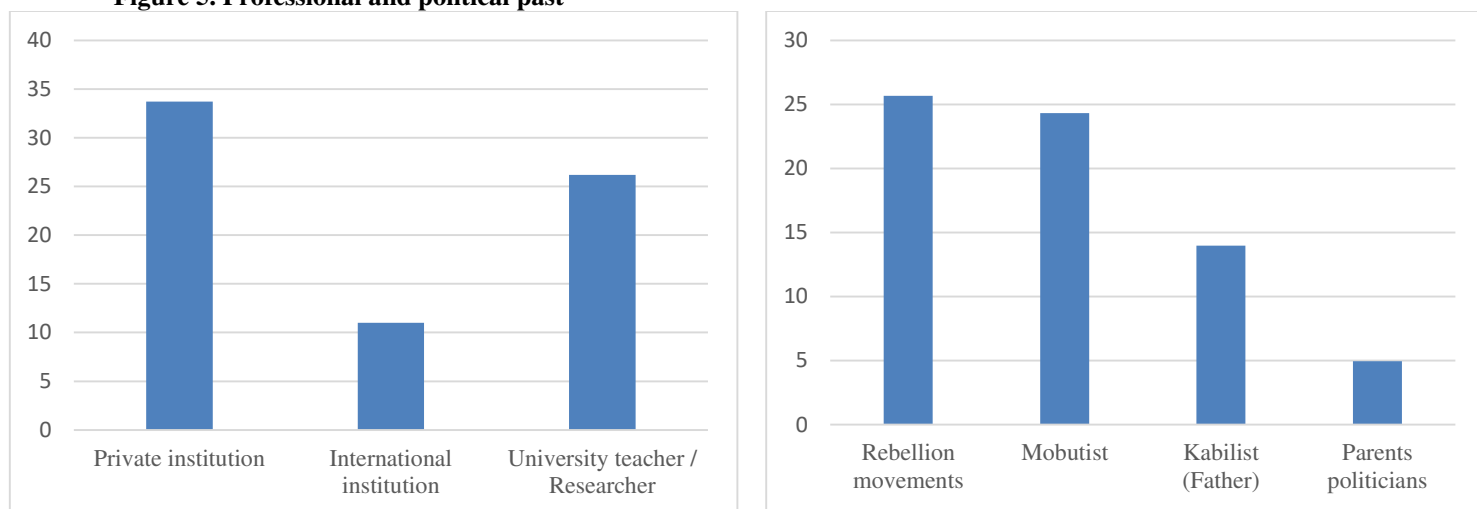### 3.3 Professional experience and political history

Where politicians come from before entering the political arena is also a major part of the literature today. Some studies examine the effect of managers' occupational choice on reforms (Dreher et al., 2009), on fiscal-budgetary results (eg Moessinger, 2014, Jochimsen & Thomasius, 2014), on growth (Jørgensen & Bjørnskov, 2015) and on foreign policy (Dreher & Yu, 2016), etc.

Other work has linked it to the family background of politicians. For example, Dal Bó et al. (2009) show that dynastic prevalence in the Congress of the United States is highly comparable to that in other occupations, and that political dynasties do not merely reflect permanent differences in family characteristics. Asako et al. (2014) investigate the effects of dynastic politicians in Japan. Mendoza et al. (2016) consider the impact of the political dynasty on poverty in the Philippines. Patrikios & Chatzikonstantinou (2015) show a certain stability of the political dynasty within the Greek parliament. In the Italian case, Geys (2017) indicates that a political selection process controlled by politicians rather than the electorate favours dynastic individuals with relatively lower levels of education. Besley & Reynal-Querol (2017) have linked hereditary leaders and economic growth.

Figure 5 shows the professional career for a politician before becoming a minister. Out of the data collected (83.4% of all ministers), 33.7% of ministers had a history with the private sector, 11% of ministers out of 84% of the data collected have experience with international institutions, and 26% of ministers out of 86% of the data collected have university experience either in research or in teaching. On the political past, out of 84% of the data collected, 4.9%

of Congolese ministers have political relatives, 38% of ministers have already worked with former presidents (24% with Mobutu and 14% with Kabila senior), out of 85% of the data collected. Out of 86% of the data collected, 25.7% are associated with rebellion movements.

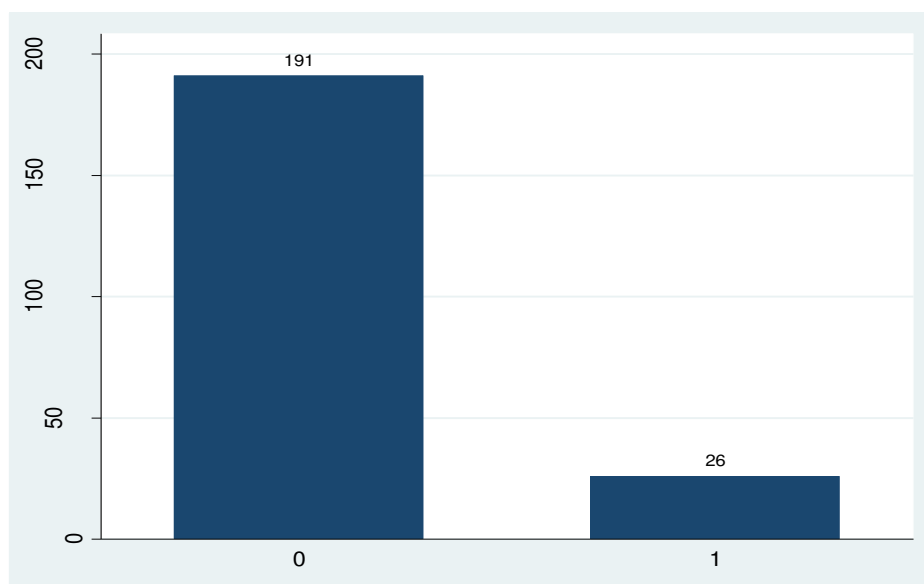**Figure 5. Professional and political past**

3.4 Sociobiological data

The literature on the gender of leaders is oriented more towards legislative issues (eg Austen & Mavisakalyan, 2016) and on heads of the executive (eg Baskaran & Hessami, 2017; Beaman, et al. 2012; Kodila-Tedika & Asongu, 2017). There is fewer literature on the effects of the gender of the members of the government. Some focus on the consequences of female members of government (Mavisakalyan, 2014; Dollar et al. 2001; Atchison & Down, 2009).

Figure 6 breaks down ministers according to their gender. Of the 217 ministers who have been assigned since 2000, the number is only 26. The gap is considerable, and, thus, the difference test is highly statistically significant.

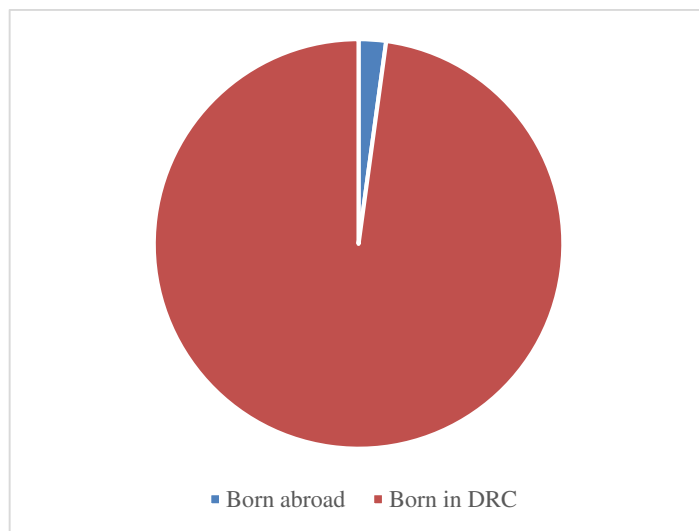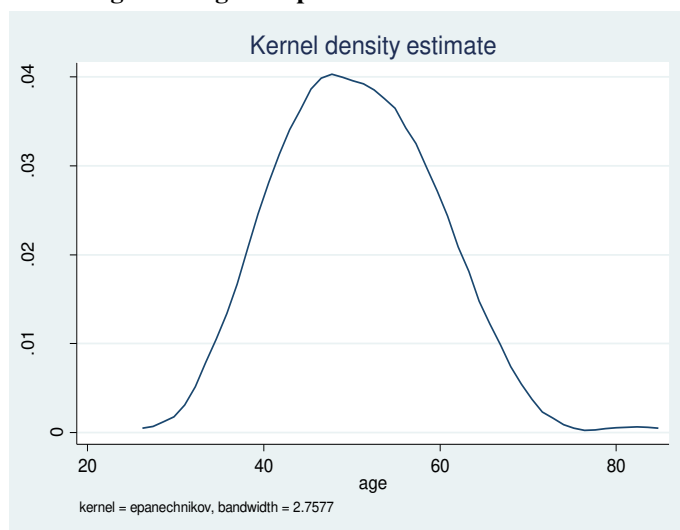**Figure 6. Dispatching of ministers by gender**

There are studies that also focus on the effect of the age of the politicians. Alesina et al. (2019) find that the age of politicians affects the quality of economic policy. Casaburi & Troiano (2016) indicates the effect of the age of politicians on tax application. Jong-A-Pin & Mierau (2011) examine the age of dictators on economic growth. Kodila-Tedika & Mulunda (2016) attempt to explore the association between the age of politicians and regulatory reforms. Horowitz et al. (20005) consider the age of politicians in international conflicts. Other works recognize the importance of the age of the leader variable and control for it in their estimates (e.g. Hayo & Neumeier, 2012, 2014, 2016; Diaz-Serrano and Pérez 2013; Diaz-Serrano & Sackey 2016).

Figure 7 shows the distribution of the age of the Congolese ministers. These graphs are created on the availability of 193 pieces of information, or 88.9% of the data collected. The age is the difference between the year of first coming to power during the period considered in the database and the politician's year of birth. The Skewness and Kurtosis tests argue for a normal distribution, because the two probabilities are respectively 0.123 and 0.899. We, therefore, cannot reject the null hypothesis of the normality of the distribution. In other words, Congolese political leaders are not concentrated on either the old age or the young age. The average age is 50.5 years and the median age is 50. The scatter around the mean is quite large because the standard deviation is 8.8.

The place of birth of politicians is not directly studied in the literature, nor the question of performance of leaders with dual nationality. However, this variable could be critical in determining the performance of politicians and other outcomes. In our data, the proportion of

those born outside is very insignificant: out of 85% of information available, only 2% of Congolese ministers were born abroad.
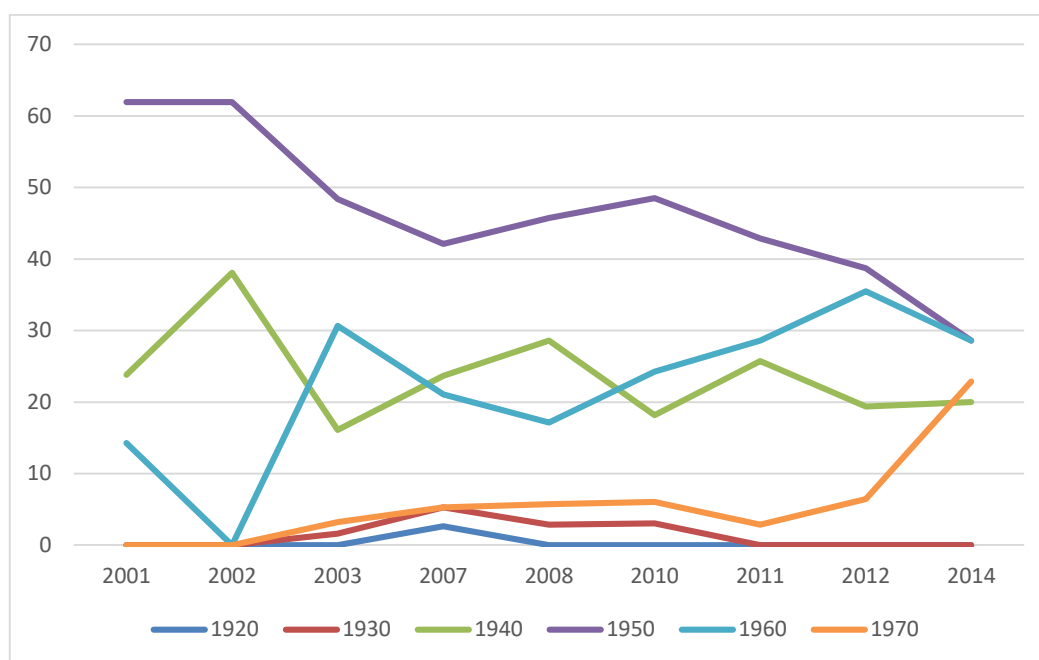
Figure 7. Age and place of birth

FUTURE RESEARCH

FUTURE RESEARCH

This database is useful because it allows us answer several questions. The first research questions arise from the observation of the data in this database. As an example, we create graph 8 from the database. This graph shows that all ministers born in the 20s are housed in 1920 and so on. We can see that those belonging to the 1920s did not appear until 2007. But those of the 1930s are present in the governments of 2003, 2007, 2008 and 2010. It is clear that the trend is declining till 2011. The decade of the 1940s remains almost constant in all governments with an average proportion of 23.7%. This is quite a puzzle compared to the decades that have come after the 1940s. The questions that arise are: What is so special about the 1940s? What explains the rapid decline in the number of ministers born in the 1950s? How can we understand the slow increase of the 1960s? what about the increase in the number of those born in the 1970s? Is it the change in the political class de facto or de jure?

Figure 8. Evolution of the political class by age

Other questions also arise from the database. Is the overwhelming majority of male ministers seen in figure 6 a situation that is escalating over time? Is the political market closed to women? Are these considerations linked to cultural considerations?

There are also external questions for which this database can be useful. As a way of illustration, one can consider the recent research of Kodila Tedika et al. (2019). The authors are interested in technological adoption at the micro level. They use the sample of Congolese politicians with the variables associated with each minister to try to understand why politicians are or are not adopting a technology, in this case twitter. Why is there a delay in adoption? What explains the intensity of use for those who have adopted it? This research is very original, more particularly for developing countries. This line of research would not be possible without this database.

The literature mentioned in this article seems to indicate that the human capital of managers is critical for performance. In order to try to explore such a track within each Congolese sectoral ministry, it is necessary to use the variables in this database.

Finally, another avenue of research is the profiling of the Congolese political landscape. It is true that these are not all politicians, but at least with this base we know how to regularly draw the contours of those who become ministers in the DRC.

CONCLUSION

This paper compiles a database that allows us to explore the background of politicians and cabinet members in the DRC from 2000-2016. The paper examines the education, age, professional experience, language, gender, and the birth place of these political figures. The compiled data shows that these politicians are mostly born in the DRC, a 50-year-old male, Swahili-speaking, with a bachelor's degree mainly in law or economics. The paper also suggests some avenues to be explored for future research.

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