Electoral Violence Risk Assessment

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

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Assessment Report Prepared For Course “Political And Electoral Violence: Analysis For The Policy And Practitioner Communities”
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Executive Summary

The legislative and presidential elections scheduled to take place this November have the potential to transform democratic politics in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Unlike neighboring rulers in Burundi, Rwanda, and Republic of Congo, President Kabila still has the ability to set a powerful precedent for respecting constitutional term limits. While some remain hopeful, it is becoming increasingly evident that President Kabila intends to stay in power beyond his two legally mandated terms. Whether or not the elections will occur as scheduled remains a deeply divisive issue, especially since the current voter registry excludes over seven million Congolese youths who came of age since the last update was completed.

This report outlines the main risks for violence surrounding DRC’s upcoming elections and proposes recommendations for preventing or mitigating these identified vulnerabilities. In so doing, the report examines key factors that either drive or mitigate destructive electoral violence, in so far as they inform the overall findings regarding risks for violence. After conducting extensive research and numerous interviews across the relevant United States Government (USG) agencies and democracy assistance organizations, this analysis presents five main findings and corresponding recommendations:

Negative Dynamics

1. **The Congolese National Police is likely to use intimidation to deter protests.** Excessive use of force by the Congolese National Police in response to post-election protests could cause violence to escalate. The Congolese National Police are ill-equipped and insufficiently trained to deal with large scale protests in places such as Lubumbashi and Kinshasa and in order to curtail pre-election mass demonstrations, they will use their limited means to intimidate people into refraining from public protest.

2. **Delaying elections will spark violent protests.** Opposition and civil society leaders will reach out to their network of followers to hold demonstrations against President Kabila if he announces that he will postpone the election and remain in power. Based on the January 2015 protests, it is likely that anti-Kabila demonstrations will turn violent as protestors feel they have no voice in the political process.

3. **The Republican Guard will use violence against protesters to delay elections.** Members of the Republican Guard are loyal to President Kabila, and if he leaves office, they will lose their privileges. This will likely result in the Republican Guard’s use of violence as directed by Kabila against protesters and opposition supporters calling for Kabila to step down. This violence would create a fearful environment in the pre-election period to delay the election process and prolong Kabila’s regime.

Positive Dynamics

4. **Catholic leaders can use their influence to encourage parishioners to protest peacefully.** Cardinal Monsengwo Pasinya, the head of the The Catholic Church, can encourage his followers to hold peaceful protests during the election period to call on President Kabila to respect the
constitutional term limits. However, he only endorses non-violent demonstrations and reminds Congolese Catholics of the importance of peace and solidarity.

5. **Civil society groups can mobilize youth groups to advocate for timely elections.** Members of LUCHA seeking democratic change are mobilizing youth groups in Kinshasa and Goma over the government’s inability to provide basic necessities such as water, electricity and roads throughout the pre-election period and are advocating for President Kabila to update the voter registry by holding peaceful protests.

**Recommendations**

1. **Provide the Congolese National Police with non-lethal anti-riot equipment and training.** As the largest financial contributor to MONUSCO and a provider of security assistance to professionalize the DRC armed forces, the USG should provide short-term programming to ramp up PNC training and provide non-lethal equipment specifically addressing how to manage large-scale protests.

2. **The international community should target Kabila with sanctions to press him to step aside.** The USG in collaboration with other EU stakeholders such as Belgium, France and the United Kingdom should impose targeted sanctions on President Kabila and key officials in his inner circle until he publicly announces unequivocally that he will not seek to extend his rule either by “glissement” (the extension of his term) or a constitutional amendment. The sanctions should include targeted visa denials and asset freezes and they should be implemented immediately to be lifted only after the announcement is made. This will eliminate the grievance of an illegal extension of the Presidential mandate that drives many of the protests.

3. **The USG should utilize democratic African leaders to push Kabila to refrain from coercion.** The USG in collaboration with African leaders like Nigeria’s Goodluck Jonathan and Zambia’s Rupiah Banda should press Kabila to hold elections according to schedule and to allow space for peaceful demonstrations. These African leaders who stepped down in the face of electoral defeat rather than resorting to coercion could influence Kabila to refrain from deploying his Republican Guard against protesters.

4. **The USG should facilitate dialogue among religious leaders to promote peaceful demonstrations in their communities.** The USG should encourage Catholic leadership to access their networks to encourage peaceful participation. This would strengthen influential leaders’ priorities in fostering norms of peaceful demonstrations, leading to a decrease in the incidence of ostensibly peaceful protests deteriorating into violence.

5. **The USG should support civil society groups and the EMB in the effort to update the voter registry.** The USG should spearhead a multilateral effort to provide financial and technical assistance to CENI, specifically supporting the process of updating the national voter registry to include the 7 million new youth voters and to civil society groups to aid in education on the voter registration process in order to eliminate this grievance.
INTRODUCTION

This electoral violence risk assessment report was prepared as the final project for the course, “Political and Electoral Violence: Analysis for the Policy-Making and Practitioner Communities” within Georgetown University’s Democracy and Governance M.A. Program. To inform the findings, we conducted several interviews with government and non-governmental officials and performed an extensive review of secondary sources. The methodology of this report follows the Department of State’s Conflict and Stabilization Operations Electoral Violence Assessment Framework.

The current political environment in the DRC is fraught with tension and instances of escalating violence throughout the country. Civil society organizations and opposition groups have mobilized against Kabila numerous times throughout his rule, and as uncertainty regarding the electoral process grows, the scale and intensity of the demonstrations is growing. The lack of clarity regarding Kabila’s intentions as has even affected his ruling coalition, the Alliance of the Presidential Majority (AMP) which is suffering from internal fragmentation. This frustration crystallized in September 2015 when a group of seven politicians (G7) from the AMP signed a letter of protest urging President Kabila not to stay in power after his term ends in November.

One of the main reasons the G7 grew suspicious of Kabila was in January 2015 when he proposed an electoral reform bill which would require a national census to be completed prior to holding the presidential elections. The National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) estimated that the census and subsequent updates to the voter roll would take over 13 months to complete. This announcement resulted in large-scale protests which triggered repression and lethal violence against activists in Kinshasa, Lubumbashi and Goma. During this short period of time, over 40 people were killed by Congolese security forces and dozens more were beaten, hospitalized and even imprisoned. The public’s response to Kabila’s attempts at delaying the election was a clear indication of how far the Congolese citizens are willing to go for democratic change.

I. INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES AND SOCIAL PATTERNS

This first section evaluates the potential for electoral conflict and analyzes institutional practices or societal patterns that make the country more or less vulnerable to election violence.

Social and Historical Patterns

History of Violence

Elections were first implemented after the First and Second Congo Wars. Joseph Kabila ran for his first elected term, and Jean Pierre Bemba ran as the main opposition candidate. Violence was endemic in the 2006 election. Several months before the election, in April of 2006, members of the Presidential Guard fought with opposition leader Jean-Pierre Bemba’s personal security detail in Kinshasa. After the announcement of election results, violence between the Presidential Guard and Jean-Pierre Bemba’s forces lasted for three days.
After election results were announced, both Kabila and Bemba’s forces persisted in targeted violence against one another. Five people were killed in this fighting, as confirmed by the UN. The next day, while international diplomats from North America, Europe, and Africa met with Bemba at his compound, loud explosions were heard in the area. While the opposition claimed that Kabila’s forces were targeting the opposition, the ruling party says that Bemba’s forces were holding two members of Kabila’s forces captive.¹

The 2011 elections were also fraught with violence due less to opposition and ruling party egos than to fraud. Seven districts had questionable results which led to violence on the day of the election. Prior to the elections in November 2011, the UN monitored violence linked to targeting opposition parties, journalists and human rights defenders. The cities where most violence was recorded were in Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, and Mbuji-Mayi. Clashes between ruling party and opposition party supporters occurred several times, beginning with the submission of Etienne Tshiskedi’s application for candidacy. This situation deteriorated quickly, leading to the damage of the party headquarters of both ruling and main opposition parties as well as the RLTV, a television station linked to the opposition party. During these incidences of violence, several political parties mobilized the youth. However, the young men involved in the clashes were not politically engaged with these parties. Violence on election day itself led to the postponement of vote tabulation and the announcement of results. However, results for all districts had still not been announced by January 26, 2012, due to persistent violence.²

**History of Electoral Fraud**

Electoral fraud, particularly in 2011 led to significant conflict. A systemic issue of confusion over polling station location as well as voter registration led to frustration and the inability for some to cast votes. Some election observers came across incidents of what looked like ballot stuffing.³ Rumors of fraud at some polling stations in Katanga led to citizens destroying the polling stations to invalidate results. Furthermore, the poor administration of the EMB on a local level led to the invalidation of votes due to irregularities, which led to the loss of 1.2 million votes. Additionally, questionable results were reported in several districts where 99-100 percent of the vote was recorded in favor of incumbent President Joseph Kabila and rates of voter participation were recorded for almost 100 percent. A further 10 districts recorded 95 percent of the vote for Kabila, which added up to nearly 1.8 million of his 8.8 million votes overall. The rate of blank and spoiled ballots for these districts was below the national average, which is concerning. However, those small numbers of blank and spoiled ballots were greater than the number of valid votes recorded for all 10 of the other presidential candidates combined, which is a highly dubious result. Because CENI signed off on these results, the credibility of the tabulation is questionable.⁴

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Institutional Practices

Decentralization of Power
The recent decentralization process in Congo increased the number of regional provinces from 11 to 26. The aim of decentralization is to provide increased efficiency, effectiveness of public service, state legitimacy, stability and support. Decentralization produced 19 new governors, 14 of whom were from the ruling party, PPRD. These new interim governors will remain in office until permanent governors are voted in by the new provincial assemblies, though the scheduling of those elections has been postponed. The opposition argues that the delay of the gubernatorial elections is party of the AMP’s overall strategy to stall national elections to allow President Kabila to remain in power after his term has expired. In this sense, decentralization might contribute to election violence in that it could delay the national elections, prompting protests which have a history of turning violent.

Voter Registration
One of they key issues in the upcoming election is the lack of an updated voter registry. The last time the register was updated was prior to the 2011 presidential elections, and now there are over 7 million new voters between the ages of 18 and 22 who need to be registered. Additionally, it is estimated that there are as many as 1.6 million deceased voters that need to be removed. Earlier this year, in mid-January, the CENI announced that it would need up to 18 months in order to update the voter roll. Otherwise CENI would have to abide by the 2011 voter registration list. With the elections less than 8 months away, CENI remains unprepared to include the 7 million new voters.

The UN renewed MONUSCO’s mandate (Security Council Resolution 2277) through March 2017 and called on the CENI to publish a revised comprehensive electoral calendar for the full electoral cycle. The resolution also called upon the government to put in place an adequate electoral budget, electoral code of conduct, and begin without delay a credible update of the electoral register to ensure that the presidential and legislative elections take place in November, per the Congolese constitutions. The issue of the voter registry is a significant risk for violence because the exclusion of 7 million voters is a strong grievance. This disenfranchisement could lead excluded citizens to find another way to express their voices - through violence.

Electoral Management Body
The competence and perception of the independence of CENI is an important component of the electoral process. CENI is responsible for organizing and managing the pre-electoral process, identification and enrollment of voters, publication of the voter register, and transmission of provisional results. The president of CENI, Corneille Nangaa Yobeluo spoke at the National Endowment for Democracy on March 16th, 2016 and

said that according to the plans of his technical team, any viable electoral process, in particular the presidential elections, can only take place in March of next year.

II. TRIGGERS FOR VIOLENCE
This section identifies the phases within the election window as well as common procedural issues, threats, patterns of violence, and triggers inherent to each phase. The subsequent analysis will allow us to understand how and when and when violence might transpire.

Pre-Election
From the interviews conducted, the possibility that elections will be delayed would lead to the strongest chance of violence. According to several of those interviewed, Kabila proposed a comprehensive census that would have significantly delayed the election. Citizens responded by protesting, which the government violently put down. However, this changed the government’s policy, and they did not end up implementing the census.

This led many that we interviewed to conclude that the postponement of elections, which seems likely due to the lack of preparation and allocation of resources on the part of the government, would also lead to violent responses from citizens. The government delayed their invitation in 2011 to the UN for help in holding the elections, and this led to a less free and fair election because the UN did not have the time to collaborate with the government for all steps of the electoral process.

One major factor in particular is the lack of an updated voter registry. The CENI has not been allocated adequate resources by the government to conduct this process. One expert interviewed had spoken with a high-level official in the CENI who explained that this process would take until at least March of 2017 to adequately update the voter registry. Others estimate that it will take 14-16 months to update from this point. If elections proceeded as planned in November 2016, CENI would have to adhere to the 2011 voter registration list, disenfranchising the 7 million Congolese that had reached voting age since the last election. The substantial number of voters who would not be eligible to vote would be a significant trigger to violence should they be disenfranchised.

Another contributing factor is the concerted effort on the part of Kabila and the ruling PPRD to shut down peaceful demonstrations. The government does not have a history of being tolerant of protests. Several experts interviewed explained that severe violence will only break out if government-backed forces initiate it. The wider population does not have access to arms like the government does. While peaceful protest should be encouraged, and many CSO and religious groups are pushing for this peaceful expressions of discontent with the regime, some see calls for peace in general as compliance with the regime. The government, on the other hand, has little to lose by engaging in isolated violent incidents, particularly in response to demonstrations. The cynical view taken by some experts is that the government has little interest in preventing violence that does not immediately threaten its position.

The ruling party, PPRD, has yet to announce who the party will nominate for its candidacy in the event that President Kabila does not seek a third term, or try to extend his current one by default. Some potential contenders within the party are the Prime Minister, Augustin Matata Ponyo, and President of the National Assembly, Aubin Minaku.
In September 2015, a group of seven (G7) politicians were expelled from the Presidential Majority ruling coalition for signing a letter urging President Kabila not to stay in power after his term ends in November 2016. The G7 recently nominated Moises Katumbi as their official presidential candidate, though Katumbi has not yet accepted the nomination.

**Election Day**

Violence related to perceived election fraud on election day has proved the most problematic sources of violence during this period. While these have been isolated incidents, some polling stations had to invalidate results or were unable to collect the votes in past elections. This seems to be the lowest threat in the electoral timeline at this time.

**Post-Election**

In the past, claims of fraud and opposition candidate refusal to concede election loses have contributed the most to violence in the post-election period. Armed groups associated with the ruling party clashed with an opposition militia for days after the announcement of election results in 2006. The 2011 elections saw less violence after the announcement of election results, though opposition candidate Tshisekedi believed he had won despite CENI’s announcement to the contrary. Supporters of the losing candidates in the upcoming election could use fraud as a grievance to mobilize other supporters to violence to protest the results. However, this also is a lower threat than pre-election violence.

**III. KEY ACTORS**

*This section identifies key actors who can mobilize people toward or away from conflict.*

**Non-Incumbent Political Parties and Candidates**

Moise Katumbi is the former governor of mineral-rich Katanga, the owner of a highly successful football club who enjoys a strong political following in several provinces. In January 2015, after President Kabila announced the possible delay of the Presidential elections, Katumbi made a public statement urging Congolese citizens to pursue peaceful methods of protest, “I continue to believe that the only and best way to share our displeasure is through peaceful, non-violent means... If others choose to protest, I ask that they do so peacefully.” His status as a prominent public figure and wealthy businessman will allow him to mobilize his followers against President Kabila’s attempts to delay the election in a peaceful manner. While it is unlikely that Katumbi would actively promote violently reacting to election delay, his followers may feel cheated if their candidate does not have the chance to run and resort to violence.

Another key opposition leader is Etienne Tshisekedi who is the head of Congo’s largest opposition party, Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS). At 82 years old, Tshisekedi has acted as the primarily opposition leader for decades and he is widely respected for being one of only a few politicians who took a stand against Mobutu during his dictatorial reign. Based in Kinshasa, the UDPS has a very strong following in the capital and a history of violent clashes with ruling party supporters, the FARDC and the Republican Guard.

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**State-Sponsored Coercive Actors**
There are three different coercive entities under the control of the state. The National Police or CPN is not armed. In the last few months, they have already used violence on protesters and arrested student groups. However, because they are unarmed and ill-equipped, they pose more of a threat to spark violence rather than perpetuate it long term.

The FARDC is another security force that is deliberately ill-equipped by the government in order to protect their position. The FARDC has been working in eastern Congo with MONUSCO, the UN force, to combat rebel militia groups. FARDC is directed to step in when the unarmed National Police cannot handle a situation. They have been perpetrators of violence as well in the major cities such as Goma, Lubumbashi and Kinshasa. Because of the lack of support they have received from the government, it is less clear if they will remain loyal as a whole should Kabila try to run for a third term; however, military elites appointed to their positions of privilege are likely to direct their troops to employ violence to protect their position should Kabila’s hold on power be threatened.

The Republican Guard is essentially Kabila’s private security force. The Republican Guard has more weapons than the National Police and the FARDC combined. Kabila deploys this security force to hot spots. Some of our sources indicated that the deployment of the Republican Guard indicates particular concern on the part of the government. Kabila and the PPRD have systematically kept resources from the other security forces to protect themselves. It is likely that because the Republican Guard has been privileged, its members will remain loyal to the Kabila government to maintain their position of privilege.

Rebel groups could use the elections as a way to expand their territory using violence. With MONUSCO and state coercive entities focused on the election, they could bet on a reduced focus on their activities. However, this increase in violence would not be specific to the politics of the election itself but may be an indirect result.

**Non-State Actors**
There are several CSO groups working in Congo. While CSO groups may have some reach regionally, no group has a truly national presence that can be utilized to affect peace on that scale. LUCHA is one youth CSO group active in eastern Congo that has protested peacefully, yet has been targeted by the government. Several members have been jailed and sentenced to lengthy prison sentences for their work. FILIMBI is another activist group, more active in Kinshasa, that has also advocated peaceful protest, yet has had many activists arrested.

Consistently, experts indicated that the Catholic Church is the only entity with nationwide networks that has the capacity to mobilize people toward peace. 60% of Congo is Catholic, and while the influence of the Catholic Church is substantial, there are concerns. Earlier this year, activists organized a national peaceful protest in conjunction with Congolese Catholic leaders. However, the Vatican was concerned about the potential for such large crowds to deteriorate into violence despite peaceful intentions. As a result, people were encouraged to stay home for a day of prayer and to protest by means of “Villes Mortes” or “Dead Cities,” by shutting down the capital and other major cities through their absence. This difference on the part of the Vatican and national Catholic leaders could lead to problems in achieving a comprehensive approach to mobilizing people for peace.
International Actors

The United Nations Organization and Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) has three priorities: protecting civilians, stabilizing the country, and supporting implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. The renewed mandate also includes provisions from the Security Council to allow MONUSCO to “provide logistical support, as appropriate and in coordination with Congolese authorities and the UNCT, to facilitate the electoral cycle and decides that this support will be continually assessed and reviewed according to the progress made by the Congolese authorities in the steering of the electoral process.”

IV. GRIEVANCES AND RELATED SOCIAL GROUPS

This next section determines and evaluates the core grievances key actors can leverage to mobilize social groups toward or away from violence.

Fraud and Malfeasance

In January 2015, President Kabila proposed an electoral reform bill which would require a national census to be completed prior to the presidential elections. The announcement of the contents of the bill resulted in large-scale protests, led by University of Kinshasa students. As the protests came to an end, it is estimated that the Congolese police were responsible for killing over 40 people throughout the protest period.

Opposition parties have much to lose with this election. The regime has systematically tilted the electoral playing field to disadvantage opposition parties through failing to update the voter registry and implementing decentralization in particular. While the most prominent opposition groups have proceeded peacefully thus far in the election, opposition candidates and those who support them may see a ruling party regime win as fraud whether fraud truly is committed or not.

The youth seem to comprise most activist civil society organizations that advocate peaceful protest against regime abuses. This segment of the population would be particularly upset should the regime engage in fraud or a third term run, particularly since so many of them are not yet on the voter registry due to regime inaction. On both the ruling party and opposition sides, youth have been mobilized and have often sparked conflict in the country.

Third Term Run or Term Extension

The ruling party has yet to nominate any candidate who would run in the election. As a result, the perception in-country is that Kabila is planning on running for a third term despite the fact that this would be unconstitutional. This third term run was a repeated concern among each expert interviewed. It is likely that Kabila is concerned about the violence that erupted as a result of the census bill postponing the election combined with the violent reaction to his proposal to amend the Constitution in 2014 to allow a third term run. It is likely that violence across the border as a response to Nkurunziza’s third term run in Burundi has

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11 Ibid.
increased his reticence. As a result of these violent reactions, Kabila is biding his time before announcing a run or, potentially for CENI or another entity to announce the impossibility of holding elections in November. This would result in a special “transitional” government, outlined in the Constitution, that Kabila would likely continue to head, until elections could be held at a revised date. However, these could be put off indefinitely.

This extension is a stated grievance of both youth groups and opposition party leaders as an extension would eliminate the possibility of competition in elections. A third term run would also be a grievance for these groups as the ruling party has access to significant resources and can increase their chance of winning and disadvantage opposition groups as a result. However, this could also motivate disaffected members of the ruling party. This is less likely since some have already defected and formed the G7. However, depending on how long Kabila holds on to power and the cohesion of the ruling party, elites in the ruling party who anticipated the chance to run in the upcoming election could defect, leading to splits in the party that could lead to violence.

V. SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHS

This section identifies strengths that can be leveraged to move people toward peaceful electoral participation and away from violence. Strengths or resiliencies are social patterns and institutional practices that help key actors mobilize people and resources against violence. They may help reduce or limit grievances, prevent or slow escalation, solve problems constructively, correct misinformation, and/or connect people in positive relationships across conflict lines. These patterns and practices may include relations among identity groups, networks, information flows, values, other cultural properties, and the performance of state or informal institutions. They include institutional practices to prevent or mitigate violence throughout any phase of the electoral cycle.

**EMB Independence**

While the experts interviewed had differing views on CENI’s independence, there was a consensus that CENI has become more independent since the appointment of the new President of CENI, Yobeluo. While CENI still is at the mercy of the regime, as the government is in charge of disbursing resources to allow CENI to conduct its mandate, the new leadership seems more committed on some level to holding fair elections than the previous leadership. The EMB’s increased independence could help mitigate violence by guarding against fraud, which is one of the main grievances that opposition parties might exploit to mobilize supporters to the streets.

**Religious Networks**

Congo is strongly Catholic. As mentioned before, Catholic networks have proved willing in the past to mobilize adherents to protest regime abuses peacefully. This commitment on the part of religious leaders to express their frustration in a peaceful manner bodes well for maintaining peace independent of the regime’s actions. Additionally, the call by religious leaders to stay home for a day of prayer during the Ville Morte and the citizens’ widespread compliance indicates strong influence that could be leveraged. Faith can be one of the most important influences for people’s actions, and having religious leaders emphasize Catholic teachings on peace could deter violent behavior.

**International Pressure**

In 2006, opposition leader Jean Pierre Bemba initially refused to step down upon announcement of results. Violent gangs attributed to both Kabila and Bemba fought throughout the city. In order to resolve the dispute, diplomats from North America, Europe, and Africa went to Bemba’s compound to encourage him to
concede. This diplomatic pressure was instrumental in ending the violence and ensuring an acceptable transfer of power and could be used in the future. In collaboration with other African leaders who have successfully stepped down, such as Goodluck Jonathan and Rupiah Banda, key USG officials can encourage Kabila to refrain from delaying the election and in turn reduce the need for anti-Kabila protests which are likely to turn violent.

**Opposition Coalition**

While the opposition has much to lose, the G7’s willingness to cooperate and nominate a common candidate shows the prioritization of the country’s good over individual leaders’ goals. While a coalition has fewer binding ties than religion, this network also shows a level of unity among the opposition which could also indicate a willingness to work together with other actors to agree upon a peaceful resolution of violence. Including language in coalition agreements that prioritizes peaceful engagement will strengthen this norm as part of the identity of what it means to be an opposition member.

**VI. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this final section, we aggregate and synthesize analysis from the previous five sections into priority electoral violence dynamics and risks. We also provide recommendations for how to address each of the identified priority electoral conflict dynamics.

**Negative Dynamics**

1. **The Congolese National Police is likely to use intimidation to deter protests.** Excessive use of force by the Congolese National Police in response to post-election protests could cause violence to escalate. The Congolese National Police are ill-equipped and insufficiently trained to deal with large scale protests in places such as Lubumbashi and Kinshasa and in order to curtail pre-election mass demonstrations, they will use their limited means to intimidate people into refraining from public protest.

2. **Delaying elections will spark violent protests.** Opposition and civil society leaders will reach out to their network of followers to hold demonstrations against President Kabila if he announces that he will postpone the election and remain in power. Based on the January 2015 protests, it is likely that anti-Kabila demonstrations will turn violent as protestors feel they have no voice in the political process.

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**Positive Dynamics**

4. **Catholic leaders can use their influence to encourage parishioners to protest peacefully.** Cardinal Monsengwo Pasinya, the head of The Catholic Church, can encourage his followers to
hold peaceful protests during the election period to call on President Kabila to respect the constitutional term limits. However, he only endorses non-violent demonstrations and reminds Congolese Catholics of the importance of peace and solidarity.

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**Recommendations**

1. **Provide the Congolese National Police with non-lethal anti-riot equipment and training.** As the largest financial contributor to MONUSCO and a provider of security assistance to professionalize the DRC armed forces, the USG should provide short-term programming to ramp up PNC training and provide non-lethal equipment specifically addressing how to manage large-scale protests.

2. **The international community should target Kabila with sanctions to press him to step aside.** The USG in collaboration with other EU stakeholders such as Belgium, France and the United Kingdom should impose targeted sanctions on President Kabila and key officials in his inner circle until he publicly announces unequivocally that he will not seek to extend his rule either by “glissement” (the extension of his term) or a constitutional amendment. The sanctions should include targeted visa denials and asset freezes and they should be implemented immediately to be lifted only after the announcement is made. This will eliminate the grievance of an illegal extension of the Presidential mandate that drives many of the protests.

3. **The USG should utilize democratic African leaders to push Kabila to refrain from coercion.** The USG in collaboration with African leaders like Nigeria’s Goodluck Jonathan and Zambia’s Rupiah Banda should press Kabila to hold elections according to schedule and to allow space for peaceful demonstrations. These African leaders who stepped down in the face of electoral defeat rather than resorting to coercion could influence Kabila to refrain from deploying his Republican Guard against protesters.

4. **The USG should facilitate dialogue among religious leaders to promote peaceful demonstrations in their communities.** The USG should encourage Catholic leadership to access their networks to encourage peaceful participation. This would strengthen influential leaders’ priorities in fostering norms of peaceful demonstrations, leading to a decrease in the incidence of ostensibly peaceful protests deteriorating into violence.

5. **The USG should support civil society groups and the EMB in the effort to update the voter registry.** The USG should spearhead a multilateral effort to provide financial and technical assistance to CENI, specifically supporting the process of updating the national voter registry to include the 7 million new youth voters and to civil society groups to aid in education on the voter registration process in order to eliminate this grievance.
Appendix 1

Experts Interviewed

Africa Democracy Specialist, USAID
Matthew Cohen, Africa Program Officer, IFES
David Peyton, Political Science PhD Candidate, Northwestern University
Rudy Massamba, Central Africa Program Officer, NED
Alyssa Rickard, Africa Program Officer, Freedom House
Laura Say, Ph.D, Assistant Professor of Government, Colby Colby College
Grant Godfrey, Senior Program Manager Great Lakes & Post Conflict Countries, NDI