

Tshisekedi, the unacknowledged son of Africa

A certain idea affirms that the development of Africa can only be envisaged if a sleeping giant wakes up. And this would be giant is the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Strategically located at the heart of the continent, an intersection between two “Africas” which so far interact little or not at all, neighbors with nine countries, endowed with a rich and diverse culture whose music has long dominated the continent, blessed with a population of more than 80 million souls and an immense land with unimaginable resources, rivers, lakes and an ocean at his disposal, this giant with feet of clay has everything it needs.

Yet the short-lived African dragon is struggling to take off. The dream expressed in the idea that conditions the development of Africa to that of the DRC remains just that: a dream.

Yet recently, a change has occurred. The controversial election of Felix Antoine Tshisekedi unexpectedly opened up the possibility of making the dream a reality. In this endeavor, many obstacles stand in the way of the ill-elected President. They are internal, regional and most likely international.

A quest for legitimacy

Forced to coexist with the outgoing president's coalition that takes every opportunity to curb the long-awaited reforms and faced with calls for revolt from the coalition of Fayulu who considers himself the president-elect, Felix Tshisekedi faces two allies of convenience who strive to sabotage his political actions. If the first group intends to regain control after this forced transition into which the unpopularity of the

outgoing government has led them, the second group speculates that an unnatural alliance which gave birth to a dysfunctional government will not be able to survive the inevitable general discontent of the population stemming from the impossibility of implementing the much-desired reforms.

A multifaceted confrontation in which the absurdity of the strategic, albeit temporary, alliance between Fayulu and those whom he threatened to prosecute during his aggressive electoral campaign will not escape an experienced eye. A multifaceted confrontation where partisan interests take precedence over the aspirations of the people. It is often the absurdity that characterizes those who pretend to fight for principles but who in reality have ambitions to serve their interests and those of the little clique around them.

It is in this context that President Tshisekedi multiplied initiatives and trips within the country, in Africa and elsewhere to convince the Congolese, African leaders and others of the merits of his policy and his vision. For now, his government's response to the Coronavirus pandemic might be undermined by these internal division; however, the emergence of the situation offers a unique opportunity for Tshisekedi to unite the people of the Congo behind a common national purpose and to build on that momentum when the pandemic is defeated.

A difficult regional context

Surprisingly, it is the difficult regional context with tensions between Rwanda on one side and Burundi and Uganda on the other that have allowed Felix Tshisekedi to show his qualities as a statesman and to display his firmness and the clarity of his vision on certain delicate subjects. With an undeniable success, he launched military offensives against armed groups which operate in the Eastern part of the country. The President of DRC understands how vital it is for his country to neutralize these groups, some of which are launching attacks against neighboring countries. They

constitute an important aspect of the heated regional tensions and a challenge to the success of his mandate.

Felix Tshisekedi also resumed and strengthened economic, security and health cooperation with neighboring Rwanda. He is currently leading alongside the Angolan President, a mediation between Uganda and Rwanda. ***The Congolese President has been as busy as Abiy Ahmed in Ethiopia without obtaining similar credit for his actions.*** Worse, his actions have been described by his internal opponents as the preparation of a plan for the Balkanization of the Congo. Among them are undoubtedly some who have applauded Abiy Ahmed's Nobel Prize for his peace efforts with neighboring Eritrea. But with some Congolese politicians, we are not near a contradiction. ***They will applaud peace efforts in the Horn of Africa and curse those who try to bring peace to their own country.***

Western pressures

On January 25th, 2020, US Senator Jim Rish, who chairs the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee, recalled in a tweet the controversial context of the elections that brought Felix Tshisekedi to power. He added that it was important for the president to deliver on his promises to bring to justice those who had committed crimes against the Congolese people, a barely veiled allusion against the outgoing president and some of his collaborators.

It is surprising that an American senator who should be aware of the difficult cohabitation which resulted from these controversial elections would think that the time has come to dismantle the fragile edifice and to pursue a quest for justice which would not fail, given the forces at play, to plunge the country into chaos, possibly another war. And knowing that the quest for justice has never been a priority for the United States, it is imperative for Africans who still cherish this famous dream of a prosperous and peaceful Africa with and through the Congo to ask the question as to what the

US Government really expects from the new Congolese president. It is imperative not to lose sight of the particular context of this country where Chinese companies have been established for a long time and where the interests between the two economic and military giants are called upon to clash.

The intervention of the African Union

If the African Union seemed to ponder its options at the announcement of the election results, the procrastination would not have lasted. Very quickly the concern of the Pan-African organization was to avoid blowing on the embers, calling its partners such as the European Union to restraint. In the midst of the turmoil, Felix Antoine Tshisekedi was appointed in February 2019 second vice-president of the African Union and a year later vice-president of the pan-African organization. He is expected to take over the chairmanship of the AU next year.

The message of the AU is certainly a symbolic and strong one. The Congolese president enjoys a solid support on the continent and will be able to use it to consolidate his hold on power internally so as to carry out the long-awaited reforms that the Congolese people demand. From a regional perspective, the plan to integrate the DRC into the East African community seems to have received the approval of the heads of state of the member countries.

In other words, there are many signs that evidence the support accorded to President Tshisekedi by some powerful continental and regional powers that value his peace efforts and encourage him to persevere while warning those trying to undermine his presidency. Provided a revolution takes place, that support is worth much more, or it should be worth more, than a Nobel Prize in the eyes of the Congolese and Africans. That is, a mental revolution that must precede the emergence of a Congo and, by extension, of an Africa that resembles this dream of a prosperous continent in which the Democratic Republic of Congo

will take the central stage.