

# Gado's Editorial Cartoons: A Reflection of the Political Turmoil in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

*Eileen M. Angelini*

SUNY Empire State College

**Abstract:** After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union, many believed that other dictatorships around the world would subsequently fall. Unfortunately, dictators have remained in power. It is in part thanks to the efforts and courage of political and editorial cartoonists that we are better-informed world-citizens. One such cartoonist is Tanzanian Godfrey Mwampembwa, born in Kenya in 1969, who bears the pen name Gado and is the most syndicated political and editorial cartoonist in East and Central Africa. The sophisticated manner in which he depicts and exposes corrupt dictators is unequalled and unrivalled. The aim of this article is to bring well-deserved attention to Gado's work by analyzing and providing the appropriate context for some of his most recent cartoons, which depict the current turmoil in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to promote understanding of what Gado has undergone and sacrificed on a personal level to ensure that the truth be told.

**Keywords:** Gado - Joseph Kabila - Joseph Mobutu – political cartoons – humor - cultural stereotypes.

The founders of the United States' constitution were fortunately well-aware of the need for governmental checks and balances. As a result, the United States – though its history is certainly not perfect – has thus far not suffered from the perils of a dictator. In sharp contrast, in the francophone Democratic Republic of the Congo, decisions were often made too hastily when its independent government was formed in 1960. These decisions hinged particularly on the date when the former Belgian colony would officially become independent and on the selection of its national leaders. These decisions led to the assassination of its first prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, in January 1961 and eventually to the long military-dictatorial rule of Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Banga (born Joseph-Désiré Mobutu) from 1965 until his death in 1997. Whereas many rightly contend that the Democratic Republic of the Congo has remained unstable because its tribal leaders hold more power than its

central government, one must also question the strategies used to transfer power from the Belgians to the Congolese.<sup>1</sup>

A short outline of the dictatorial rule in the Democratic Republic of the Congo<sup>2</sup> will prove useful for understanding the current political climate. This climate provides a fertile context for Tanzanian cartoonist Godfrey Mwampembwa, born in Kenya in 1969, who bears the pen name Gado and is the most syndicated political and editorial cartoonist in East and Central Africa.<sup>3</sup> Since its independence in 1960, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has not had peaceful, democratic transfers of power. It has also had a very short list of presidents: President Joseph Kasa Vubu (July 1, 1960 – November 24, 1965), who represented the ABAKO party, served five years and 146 days; Mobutu (November 24, 1965 – May 16, 1997), who represented the Military and the Popular Movement of the Revolution, served thirty-one years and 173 days; Laurent Désiré Kabila (May 17, 1997 – January 16, 2001) was an independent who served three years and 245 days, until his assassination; and Joseph Kabila, son of Laurent, served from January 26, 2001 to January 24, 2019. Joseph Kabila initially proclaimed that he would step down at the end of his second presidential term in December 2016 but did not because he claimed he wanted to be sure that a fair election was conducted. The fact that he did not step down as he said he would created tremendous controversy but eventually Joseph Kabila did step down when the fifth president was sworn into office. He served eighteen years as an independent and as a representative of the People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy. Also of note is the disputed term of Antoine Gizenga from March 31, 1961 to August 5, 1961 as it overlaps with that of Kasa-Vubu. Gizenga was the leader of the Parti Solidaire Africain. In comparison, in this same timeframe, the United States has had eleven presidents in which only one, Nixon, resigned before an impeachment process was completed. A second U.S. president, William J. Clinton, was impeached by the U.S. House of Representatives but was later acquitted by the U.S. Senate on February 12, 1999. Most recently, a third U.S. President, Donald J. Trump, after being impeached by the U.S. House of Representatives, was acquitted by the U.S. Senate on February 6, 2020. More

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<sup>1</sup> For a compelling argument on the political and economic challenges that former European colonies in Africa face since gaining independence, see the interview conducted in 2007 by *Un Monde Libre* with Mamadou Koulibaly, former president of the National Ivorian Assembly at [www.unmondelibre.org](http://www.unmondelibre.org), a site dedicated to the defense of individual rights, economic freedom, and peace..

<sup>2</sup> An excellent timeline of the Democratic Republic of the Congo profile done by BBC News can be found at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13286306>. In addition, a chronology of the Democratic Republic of the Congo created by Human Rights Watch is available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/08/21/dr-congo-chronology#>.

<sup>3</sup> Announced on his website on December 19, 2018, Gado is currently the editorial cartoonist for *The East African Standard* in Nairobi. For over two decades, Gado has been a contributor for the *Daily Nation* (Kenya, fired in March 2016), *New African* (United Kingdom), *Courrier International* (France) and *Business Day* (South Africa), and *Sunday Tribune* (South Africa). He has also created cartoons for *Le Monde*, *The Washington Times*, *Der Standard*, and *Japan Times*.

significant is the fact that Nixon was the only president ever to resign since the institution of the presidency was established in the United States in 1781.

Before delving into an analysis of some of Gado's politically-charged editorial cartoons, which "provide a graphic mirror of the political reality of nation building" (Repetti 22), a brief examination of his words in an interview with the non-profit online media outlet IRIN will show how he views his work. Gado granted this interview, titled "The Job of an Editorial Cartoonist is to Talk Truth to Power," on February 19, 2013, when he was working for the *Daily Nation*. In it, he provides wonderful insights into what he strives to achieve with his satirical cartoons:

The job of the editorial cartoonist is to inform, educate, and entertain, act as a mirror of society, to say things that other mediums would be afraid to say. It is the craft which truly allows, has the license to offend, as an editorial cartoonist, you talk truth to power, incorporating a bit of humor in it. [...] Political leadership has always used violence as a means to ascend to power, as a means to con their way to political leadership. And this to a great extent has always called people to fight against each other, one tribe against another, one black against the other. My view is the political class has failed in this country. [...] I am optimistic that we won't have the repeat of 2008. I am optimistic that we will have peaceful elections. The press is more prepared this time around. The government is more prepared this time. And Kenyans are more prepared this time. [...] People are afraid about this election and all that. There is danger but you know, trying to stay optimistic about it. Whoever wins, I mean they should be Kenyans after the election. ("Job of an Editorial Cartoonist")

Gado is indeed aware of how his political cartoons have been able to accelerate change in the media and perhaps for this one reason alone, he is considered by many to be the most important cartoonist in all of Africa. In a 2006 interview that appeared in the *New Internationalist*, he stated:

I get a lot of complaints about my depiction of Robert Mugabe as a gorilla, some calling me a racist. But it's Mugabe's actions that make him like a gorilla, not his colour. And sometimes I get complaints when I do cartoons condemning Ariel Sharon. They aren't anti-Semitic but they wouldn't get published in America, for example, where people are over-sensitive to criticisms of Israel. (Mwampembwa)

Gado is deeply admired for how for over twenty years he has utilized his talent to draw much-needed attention to the political unrest in several African countries,<sup>4</sup> emphasizing in particular the “dwindling state of free expression in countries like Kenya” (McCabe). His work has stood the test of time, though he has been fired from jobs for expressing his opinion, as he was from the *Daily Nation* in March 2016 for mocking the Kenyan president. So highly regarded is Gado that at the time of this incident, such notable organizations as PEN International and the Cartoonists Rights Network International rallied behind him and demanded his reinstatement:

It seems clear from the sequence of events that the termination of Gado's contract with the Daily Nation has more to do with his unsparing political commentary through his cartoons,' said Salil Tripathi, Chair of the Writers-in-Prison Committee for PEN International. 'And as such, is intended to undermine his right to express his views freely, than for any other reason. This is distressing and wrong; it undermines Kenya's own tradition of satire. (McCabe)

Of the many awards Gado has received for his work, the most noteworthy is perhaps the 2007 Prince Claus Laureate, established in 1996 to honor Prince Claus of the Netherlands, and for which a prime consideration is the positive effect of the awardee's work on a wider cultural or social field. The jury for this award praised Gado for “his courageous cartoons in which he humorously shows aspects of social and political conflicts, and an inspiration to the struggle of free expression.”<sup>5</sup> Gado, whose work is syndicated worldwide, is also the recipient of the 2005 and 2007 Kenya National Human Rights Commission Award in Journalism as well as the 1999 Kenyan Cartoonist of the Year. Sammy G. Gachigua explains: “Of all the cartoonists in Kenya, Gado's cartoons have received the most scholarly attention. Gado's work has been categorized by Musila as employing humour that ‘tends to highbrow laughter,’ which is marshalled for social criticism with the intention of creating a positive change in society” (196).

When analyzing political cartoons, it is helpful to keep in mind the disposition theory of humor. Developed in the 1970s, the disposition theory of humor:

posits that the intensity of the response to humorous presentations crucially depends upon the respondent's affective

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<sup>4</sup> Currently there are no full academic studies on Gado. However, in the following list of sources, Gado is mentioned: Eko, “Art”; Eko, “It's a Political Jungle”; Mulanda and Khasandi-Telewa; Omanga; Pilling; Fackler and Obonyo; Ricard.

<sup>5</sup> <https://princeclausfund.org> and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gado\\_\(comics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gado_(comics)). Accessed 20 January 2019.

disposition toward the protagonist involved. Specifically, it is proposed that humour appreciation is facilitated when the respondent feels antipathy or resentment toward disparaged protagonists and impaired when he feels sympathy or liking for these protagonists. (Becker 138)

Amy B. Becker's approach to using the disposition theory of humor to analyze attitudes towards political candidates is ideal for understanding Gado's approach. In line with the theory put forth by Zillman and Cantor, she explains:

Humor appreciation varies inversely with the favourableness of the disposition toward the agent or entity being disparaged, and varies directly with the favourableness of the disposition toward the agent or entity disparaging it. Appreciation should be maximal when our friends humiliate our enemies, and minimal when our enemies manage to get the upper hand over our friends. (Becker 139)

Thus, in the case of Gado's political cartoons, particularly in the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the reader finds vindication in the creative manner in which Gado brings international attention to the corrupt behavior of African dictators and ageing politicians who cling desperately to their eroding power. At the same time, the disreputable individuals depicted in Gado's cartoons and those that support them are angered by the truth that is reflected in Gado's creative genius. Gado is a self-described "modern-day court jester, dedicated to depicting 'why and how the political class has failed'" (Manson).

Also important to keep in mind when examining Gado's risk-taking satirical cartoons is social responsibility. In today's environment of a rapidly changing media industry too often marred by the scars of fake news, using an analytical framework based in professionalism, social responsibility, and watchdog journalism works especially well in the case of Gado. Herman Wasserman proffers insight into the type of framework that will be used in this article's analysis of Gado's cartoons concerning the political climate in the Democratic Republic of the Congo:

The realization that networks of meaning and social identities in African societies are experiencing rapid transitions as a result of global cultural flows and counter-flows (Tomaselli, 2009, p. 16) has led to calls for more dynamic ways of thinking about media ethics in the African context. Under the influence of global narrative of media freedom, journalistic professionalism and democratic participation – central values for media ethics in

contemporary Africa – are being linked to the importance of critique as a feature of robust democracy, the opening up of spaces for debate, the inclusion of a plurality of voices, and participation in a global dialogue (p. 17). (Wasserman 792)

Further context for understanding this analytical framework is provided by P. Mark Fackler and Levi Obonyo in their book chapter “Play Theory and Public Media: A Case Study in Kenya Editorial Cartoons”:

The cartoonists' mature contributions to the public sphere are being accomplished in a different work setting. The impact of their work on public opinion is arguably greater, but less studied than the impact of word-based news or of the work of editorial writers. (727)

Even more telling is their interview with Victor Ndulo as Ndulo pays homage to Gado:

Victor knows that his freedom to challenge authority and political leaders is a gift from a long line of divergent speakers, writers, and cartoonists. He referred appreciatively to his own two mentors, Maddo and Gado, the two top celebrities in Kenyan cartooning. “They mentored me a lot,” Victor said, remembering his effort to break into newspapers in Nairobi. It was difficult, but they realized there was a need for more cartoonists. It’s good for the industry, good for the newspapers. Otherwise cartoonists may be snobbish, if they are few.

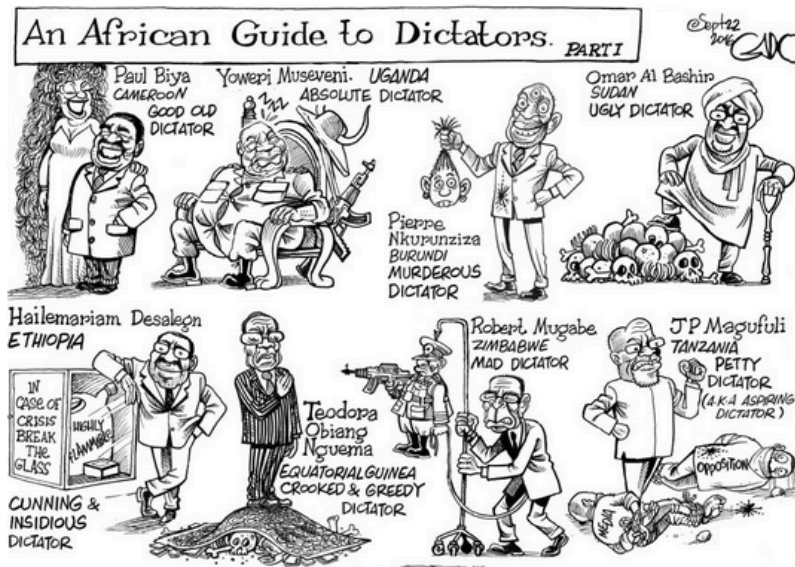
I learned one valuable lesson from Gado. He told me never to let editors set the agenda. Here’s what happens. Some editor will get a brilliant idea and say, “let’s get the cartoonist to draw it.” So they come to me, “Victor, we have this brilliant idea.” I tell them, “No, I won’t do it.” They get upset and say, “Why not? It’s brilliant.” I say, “It appears brilliant to you but, unless I feel the cartoon, unless I understand where you are coming from ... you know, the cartoonist will come from here [points to heart] ... so I can’t draw this cartoon for you. If you think it’s a brilliant cartoon, draw it yourself.” This is the only way to be a cartoonist. You always set your agenda. (730)

Thus, in keeping with the aim of this article to focus on Gado’s editorial cartoons about political turmoil in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and how Gado has always

striven to set his own agenda, an excellent starting point is Gado's "An African Guide to Dictators, Part I" and "An African Guide to Dictators, Part II."<sup>6</sup>

# An African Guide to Dictators Part 1

SEPTEMBER 22, 2016



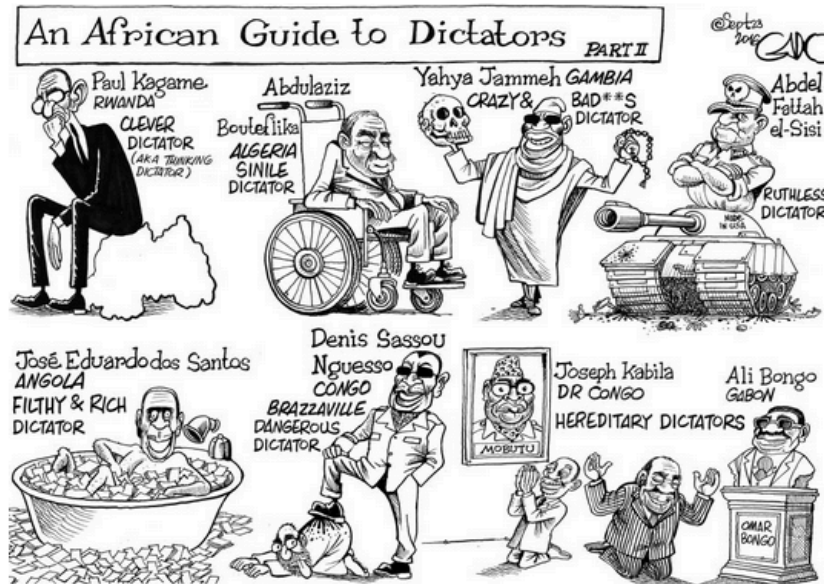
Filed Under: **AFRICA**

Tagged: **BASHIR, HARLEMARIAM DESALEGH, JP MAGUFULI, PAUL BIYA, ROBERT MUGABE, TEODOKA ABIDING NGUEMA, YOWERI MUSEVENI**

<sup>6</sup> Extremely important to note here is that Gado generously granted permission to the author to reprint his cartoons in this article as this article is for educational purposes.

# A guide to African Dictators Part II

SEPTEMBER 22, 2016



Filed Under: AFRICA

Tagged: ABDEL FATAH, ABDULAZIZ, ALI BONGO, DENIS SASSOU, JOSEPH KABILA, PAUL KAGAME, SANTOS, YAHOO JAMEH

In this two-part cartoon, we see sixteen current African dictators and how Gado depicts their individual characteristics. In Part II, he critiques the hereditary dictatorships of the Democratic Republic of the Congo by featuring Joseph Kabila, son of Laurent (Joseph's immediate predecessor), bowing in homage to a portrait of Mobutu. The harsh realities seen in this two-part cartoon are what African readers have come to expect: the real truth. Massimo Repetti explains succinctly:

A generation of comics artists has seen this form of violence in ordinary life and the deconstruction of civil life as a political subject and pointed the finger at those bearing political responsibility. They exercise moral and political resistance against



manipulated and denied human rights, against the word that is sacrificed in disinformation, propaganda, and invention and turned into rhetorical dust by autocrats who brook no dissent. (25-26)

This theme of Joseph Kabila paying homage to Mobutu is replicated in the next cartoon. However, the act of homage is deepened, and one is to infer that Joseph Kabila believes his actions are justified by an implied approval from Mobutu.

## Joseph Mobutu to Joseph Kabila

AUGUST 14, 2016



Filed Under: **AFRICA**

Tagged: **KABILA, MOBUTU**

The key to understanding this cartoon is to explore the reasons why Joseph Kabila did not step down as president at the end of his second term in December 2016, when he had reached his constitutional term limit. The Democratic Republic of the Congo's

constitution stipulates that a president must leave office after two consecutive terms but may seek a third term at a future date (BBC, "DR Congo's Kabila"). Vava Tampa, in his April 17, 2017 article "Congo: A Dictator's Dilemma," asked the very salient questions: "Why has the man who organized Democratic Republic of Congo's only two multiparty elections since independence chosen to sow chaos and instability just when the country needs peace and stability the most? Why did he not proudly allow Congo's first ever peaceful transfer of power to take place, which could have been his greatest legacy?" Tampa provides a thorough analysis of the possible reasons for Joseph Kabila's decision, chief among them being that Bernabe Kikaya, a top Kabila lieutenant, dubiously offered that "Kabila can only cede power once a new president has been elected – and election for this new president can only be organized by an electoral commission he controls, once Congo's constitution has been changed to allow him to stand again because only he can be president." However, Tampa was extremely fearful of a more significant reason for Kabila's actions: If Kabila were to step down as president, many in his government would be held responsible for "aiding and abetting wars and conflicts that killed over 5.4 million Congolese people between 1998 and 2008" (Tampe). Given the bloodshed during Mobutu's long presidency, it is easy to understand why Gado would draw a parallel between these two men's presidencies and portray a smiling Kabila under the proud gaze of Mobutu.

In early April 2017, Kabila was still in power and, with the assistance of his new prime minister Bruno Tshibala (at that time, his fourth in two months), attempted to repeal a New Year's Eve power-sharing agreement. In the agreement, Kabila resolved not to seek a third term as president, not to alter the constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to free all political prisoners. Essential to this agreement, from Tampa's viewpoint, is that

the opposition coalition known as the Rassemblement agreed to form a government of national unity, pick a prime minister, and organize elections that were free and fair. As part of this deal, the Rassemblement also agreed to guarantee a smooth, non-violent transfer of power at the end of 2017, by which time it was agreed Kabila, who stayed for a year as a ceremonial president, would cede power. (Tampa)

As reported by the BBC on December 9, 2018, Kabila would finally leave office after the December 2018 election, but had not yet ruled out seeking re-election in the future (BBC, "DR Congo's Kabila"). Kabila supported Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, his former Interior Minister, in Shadary's bid for the presidency. Shadary, however, has a travel ban imposed on him by the European Union for human-rights violations. It was speculated that there would be a tight race among Shadary, opposition leader Felix Tshisekedi (representing UDPS), and businessman Martin Fayulu Madidi (Tampa). The election was

held on Sunday, December 30, 2018 with the *Sunday Times* reporting that Kabila delivered a late-in-the-day congratulations to the public for voting “in peace and dignity” (AFP). While both Shadary and Tshisekedi claimed victory despite pre-election polls indicating that Fayulu Madidi was the clear favorite (Fayulu Madidi = 44%; Tshisekedi = 24%; and, Shadary = 18%), provisional results were slated not to be announced until January 6, 2019, with the final results being presented on January 15, 2019 and the new president being sworn in on January 18, 2019 (AFP).

On January 19, 2019, the constitutional court of the Democratic Republic of the Congo confirmed Tshisekedi as the winner. However, in a statement, runner-up Fayulu Madidi called for a constitutional coup d'état after exposing collusion between Kabila and Tshisekedi and encouraged peaceful demonstrations. Fayulu Madidi declared:

I am now considering myself as the sole legitimate President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As such, I ask the Congolese people not to recognize any individual who would claim this authority illegitimately nor to obey any orders that would emanate from such a person. (Siaw)

Both Kabila and Tshisekedi deny that any private deal took place between them, angering Fayulu Madidi further, who “claims to have won more than 60% of the vote in a ‘landslide victory’ that he said was confirmed by tally sheets and observers” (Siaw). Reaction to the election included, but was not limited to, the African Union expressing “serious doubts” about the election results on January 18, 2019 (Busari and Adebayo) as well as Catholic bishops and the United States demanding on January 4, 2019 a release of accurate election results (Gigova, Abely, and Adebayo). This tense, tenuous situation derailed hopes that the Democratic Republic of the Congo could hold a peaceful election for its fifth president since independence. Its inability to transition into a legitimate democracy provides rich fodder for political cartoons.

Tshisekedi was eventually inaugurated in as president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on January 24, 2019. The day was hailed as historic by some, who claimed that the first peaceful transfer of power had finally taken place (BBC, “Historic Day”). Since taking office, Tshisekedi has definitely had his hands full. For example, on March 21, 2019, he blocked newly named senators from taking office (Bambi) and on April 23, 2019, he pledged to address the crisis created by militia, who killed thirty-six Burundi Rebels in the east of the country (Voice of America).

The next cartoon by Gado, a response to the situation, demonstrates his talent for drawing on cultural stereotypes from other countries and incorporating them seamlessly into his cartoons.

# Joseph Kabila Antoinette

MAY 24, 2018



Filed Under: **AFRICA**

Tagged: **JOSEPH KABILA ANTOINETTE, KABILA**

In this cartoon, Gado depicts a direct parallel between the famous “Let them eat cake” statement wrongly attributed to Marie Antoinette<sup>7</sup> and Kabila’s refusal to step down as president. It is grotesque to impose the bearded head of a man onto the body of a woman, especially one as femininely coded as that of Marie Antoinette with her hourglass figure, emphasized by her corset and pannier dress. Gado is also applying colonial European images to an African leader. In so doing, Gado is connecting the corrupt history of Europe, complete with economic inequalities and political intrigues, with that of a twenty-first-century African nation. Economic and social inequalities contributed,

<sup>7</sup> Richard Covington offers a fascinating analysis of Marie Antoinette with a detailed explanation of the famous quote. See Covington 58.

moreover, to the French Revolution. Are we, as Gado's public, to infer that Gado is fearfully anticipating another revolution in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

Along with addressing Kabila's treatment of his own people, Gado tackles Kabila's indifference to his people and dictatorial stance in the international community and with multinationals:

## Joseph Kabila, MultiNationals, International Community and DRC

JUNE 4, 2018



Filed Under: **AFRICA**

Tagged: **DRC, INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, JOSEPH KABILA, MULTINATIONALS**

Investigations were in fact opened in the International Criminal Court / Cour Pénale Internationale in June 2004: "the ICC's Office of the Prosecutor issued a press release acknowledging that alleged crimes were reported since the 1990's, but that the Court's jurisdiction started on 1 July 2002, and stating: 'States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations have reported thousands of deaths by mass murder and summary execution in the DRC since 2002. The reports allege a pattern of rape,



torture, forced displacement and the illegal use of child soldiers.”<sup>8</sup> Prior to publishing the “Joseph Kabila, Multinationals, International Community and DRC” cartoon on June 4, 2018, Gado did not back down from the challenge of showing how the Democratic Republic of the Congo was viewed by China, the European Union, Uganda, the United Nations, Rwanda, the United States, and Russia:

## Agreeable formula for Congo

DECEMBER 10, 2012



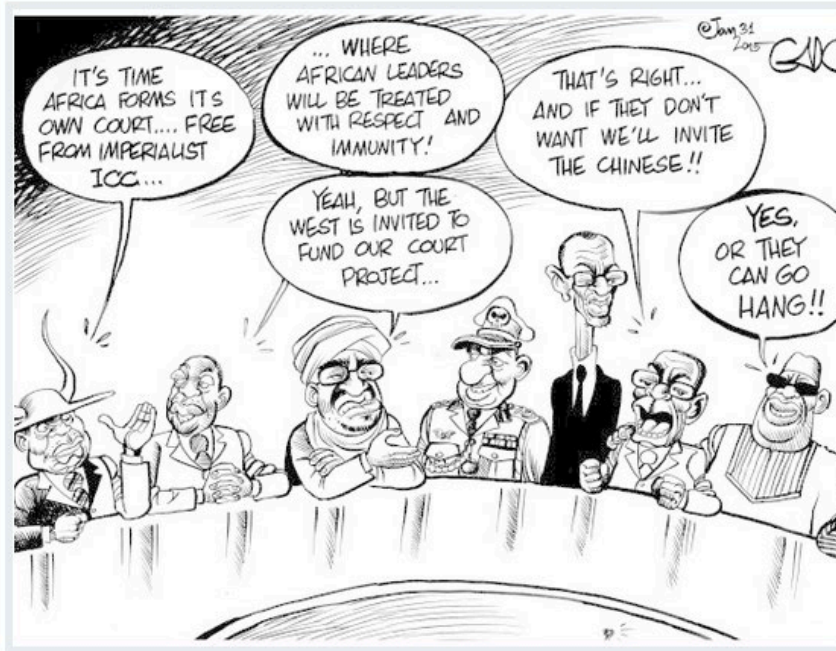
Filed Under: **AFRICA**

Nor did Gado hesitate to make known his position of what he perceived to be the African Union's viewpoint on the ICC and the “African Hague”:

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.icc-cpi.int/drc>. Accessed 20 January 2019.

## African Union on ICC and “African Hague”

JANUARY 31, 2015



Filed Under: **AFRICA**

In this cartoon, we again see many of the leaders whose style of dictatorship is represented in Gado's September 22, 2016 cartoons "African Guide to Dictators Part I" and "African Guide to Dictators Part II." All three cartoons highlight the political dysfunction pervading many countries on the African continent. Alex Thomson explains succinctly:

Not all inter-African international relations, however, have been positive. [...] Factors such as Somalia's irredentism, Libya's adventurism and apartheid South Africa's destabilization have all brought inter-state conflict to the continent. Additional major outbreaks of violence include the following: both South Africa and Zaire (Congo-Kinshasa) intervening in the Angolan civil war during the mid-1970s; Tanzania's invasion of Uganda in 1979; troops from Rwanda, Uganda, Angola, Namibia, the Sudan, Chad

and Zimbabwe all being active in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC, Congo-Kinshasa) in the late 1990s and beyond; the Eritrean/Ethiopian border war of 1998-2000; and Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia in 2008. (153)

With Gado's efforts to expose the realities of African dictatorships, he contributes tremendously to his reader's understanding of this turbulent situation.

A final cartoon<sup>9</sup>, in which Gado examines the overall fraudulent political landscape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, treats the political maneuvering and jockeying between Kabila and Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo, one of four vice presidents to have served in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's transitional government from July 2003 to December 2006. The leader of the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC), Bemba Gombo was the runner-up to Kabila in the 2006 presidential election.

## Kabila Vs Demba

SEPTEMBER 25, 2006



Filed Under: **AFRICA**



<sup>9</sup> Here there is a typographical error in the title, which should be "Kabila Vs Bemba."



In January 2007, Bemba Gombo was elected to the Senate. However, his political career was interrupted by his arrest in Belgium on May 24, 2008 on an ICC-issued arrest warrant. Although Gombo originally faced three counts of crimes against humanity and five counts of war crimes, the ICC later reduced the charges to two counts of crimes against humanity and three counts of war crimes in October 2010. Six years later, on March 21, 2016, he was convicted and sentenced to eighteen years in prison. After a complicated two-year appeal process, he was nonetheless released from prison in June 2018. Upon his return to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, he intended to run for president but, much to the dismay of his loyal base, was not able to do so because of previous corruption charges (BBC, “DR Congo ex-warlord”).

In conclusion, we are better-informed world-citizens because of Gado’s courageous efforts. The sophisticated manner in which he depicts and exposes corrupt dictators is unequalled and unrivalled. Along with generously allowing me to reprint his cartoons in this article for educational purposes, he graciously answered my questions regarding the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the impact of his cartoons:

EILEEN M. ANGELINI (EMA): What do you think of the current situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

GADO: I think the Democratic Republic of the Congo has not come out of the woods yet. This is because of its history but more so because the elections were not free and fair and were manipulated in favor of certain candidates. It appears too that Mr. Tshisekedi is a puppet president beholden to the former president Mr. Kabila. It’s hard to say what will happen next.

EMA: How do you think your cartoons are received in the Democratic Republic of the Congo? How are they received in the rest of Africa?

GADO: I do not know how my cartoons are received in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since I’ve not been in there. Moreover, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a French-speaking country and it makes it a bit difficult to follow and judge. As for the rest of Africa, I’m aware that my drawings draw the same controversy as here in East Africa but the scale is smaller, I would say. I follow that of course, through the social media. I do follow big African news and discussions.

It is my sincere hope that this short analysis of some of his pieces depicting the ongoing political crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will inspire readers to stay abreast of Gado’s current work, published in newspapers around the world, and visit his official website, <http://gadocartoons.com>, on a regular basis. When searching for the truth in the context of media literacy, may we all take inspiration from the words of Gado when he

reference one of his favorite cartoons of an emperor with no clothes: "One of the things that always brings a bit of joy is when the powerful are actually left naked" (Manson).

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