Improving the Political Culture of Congo
Comment améliorer la culture politique au Congo
What is political culture?
Qu’est que c’est la culture politique?

- Political values and morals of the population
- Values include levels of tolerance, trust, and belief in rights of others
- E.g., democratic culture means accepting losses gracefully
  (Examples: USA elections in 2000; Ghana elections in 2008: 49.8% to 50.2%!)
- Mosaic of cultures: cultures of classes and ethnies
- Perhaps the culture of the elite and the mass is not the same
Why does political culture matter?

- Political culture is the key to civility (Botswana, Tanzania, Zambia)
- Political culture is key to democracy (Benin, Ghana, and India)
- Political culture matters more than institutions
  (If the United States had a parliamentary system, it would still function)
Can political culture change?

(Consider Germany and Japan after World War II; Benin after 1990)

Yes, but it is usually a process, not a moment in time

Does culture change from the bottom up, or top down? (Both)

Economics matter, but it is not everything

Leadership, the power of example, also matters
How could Political Culture be changed in Congo–Brazzaville?

1. Reinforce the rule of law (l’état de droit)

2. Empower women at multiple levels

3. Allow an *independent* bourgeoisie to emerge

4. Encourage a trans-ethnic civil society

5. Promote literacy and a free press
Un état de droit: prerequisite for progress in Congo
Reinforcing the rule of law

- Presidential example is a key, as is behavior of the political class
- Washington, Nyerere, and Senghor
- Prosecution of some security personnel would set a good example
- (U.S. has done this with American personnel in Iraq; fight culture of impunity)
- Permit democracy at the local levels
- Tolerate independent judiciary
Empower women at multiple levels
Women’s participation improves the political culture

- Women care about education, health, children
- Presidential appointments symbolically important (non–traditional posts)
- Quotas for women in parliament valuable (Examples of Uganda and Rwanda are impressive)
- Prosecute cases of violence against women—and use appropriate punishments
- Make a commitment to equal education for girls and women, including quotas
Civil Society Groups are the training groups grounds for democratic participation
Nurture *independent*, trans-ethnic civil society organizations

- CS organizations do not have to be created
- Encouragement of trans-ethnic organization is a key (professional, human rights, women, etc.)
- Require democracy at the local level and in CS organization
- Even in Church organizations and hierarchical organizations
- Resist the corporatist temptation
Both a bourgeoisie and industrial working class would improve Congo’s Political Culture
Allow the emergence of an independent bourgeoisie

- A middle class is not necessarily a bourgeoisie
- Independence of this class is crucial
- Such a class will demand good governance (and it will be critical of government)
- Oil money would provide the loans
- What would they manufacture? (Cement, soap, tobacco, canned fruit and juices)
Literacy, a free press, and information: antidotes to disorder
Free Press and Literacy

- Congo used to have an exemplary record on literacy
- Policies to require universal primary education are valuable
- A free press is not likely to be very responsible…. But that is okay.
- A lively press gives the Congolese government an opportunity to demonstrate its self-confidence