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Management of the ambitions in political parties: A determining factor of electoral success and organizational stability

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Abstract

The management of individual and collective ambitions constitutes a critical yet insufficiently examined challenge within political parties, both in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and in other democratic contexts. Political parties provide a legitimate institutional framework in which members may express their ambitions; however, the effective regulation of these aspirations is essential to organizational coherence. When properly managed, political ambitions can contribute to electoral success, organizational stability, and internal cohesion, while mitigating frustration, conflict, and factional fragmentation. Party leadership bears the responsibility of upholding democratic principles and core party values, ensuring that collective institutional objectives prevail over individual interests.

In many emerging democracies, particularly in the DRC, poorly regulated ambitions frequently fuel internal conflicts, factionalism, and organizational disintegration, thereby undermining electoral performance. Drawing on a mixed-methods approach that combines documentary analysis, this study demonstrates that the institutional regulation of political ambitions significantly strengthens party cohesion, organizational stability, and electoral outcomes. The findings underscore that ambition management is not merely an internal administrative concern but a strategic determinant of democratic consolidation.

Furthermore, the study proposes a typology of party members based on their ambitions, visions, and political motivations. It argues that the development of strong, stable political parties with effective leadership requires the implementation of institutional mechanisms designed to channel ambitions constructively. Political maturity, in this regard, entails the formulation of ambitions that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART), as well as the capacity to manage them in alignment with collective goals.

Keywords: Ambition Management; Political Parties; Strategic Planning; Political Mentorship; Electoral Success; Organizational Stability; Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

1. Introduction

Democracy not only expands the political community but also liberates citizens' ambitions that are often constrained under authoritarian systems, where political participation remains restricted to a closed elite. By opening both society at large and the political arena in particular, democratic governance enables citizens to join political parties of their choice or to establish new ones in accordance with existing legal frameworks, with the aim of pursuing the traditional objectives of political parties.

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Political parties thus function as privileged platforms for the expression and realization of individual ambitions. However, because any mass-based or elite-driven party requires a substantial number of members both quantitatively and qualitatively, it inevitably brings together a plurality of personal ambitions. These ambitions must be effectively managed by party leaders, who themselves often harbor personal political aspirations. Failure to regulate these competing ambitions frequently generates internal tensions, schismes, and the proliferation of new political parties.

No political system democratic or otherwise can function without political parties. In authoritarian contexts, where power is monopolized by a closed ruling class, access to public office is determined by the discretion of the autocrat or their delegates. In contrast, democratic governance rests on popular sovereignty, whereby citizens select their representatives through direct or indirect elections. Within this framework, political parties serve as the primary vehicles for political representation, candidate recruitment, and access to elective and non-elective public offices.

While independent candidacies may appear procedurally straightforward, candidate nomination within political parties constitutes a major challenge, particularly in many African countries. Beyond ideological orientation and electoral strategy, the internal organization of political parties especially the management of political ambitions plays a decisive role in their electoral performance and institutional durability. Effective ambition management contributes to party cohesion, electoral success, and organizational stability, even in contexts where party membership remains voluntary.

In many African states, electoral periods and government formation are critical moments marked by intense internal disputes within political parties. Dissatisfied party elites who are excluded from candidate lists or leadership positions often defect to rival parties or create new formations, positioning themselves to capitalize on future political opportunities. These dynamics significantly undermine party unity and weaken electoral credibility.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) exemplifies these challenges. Congolese political parties are frequently characterized by personalized leadership, weak institutionalization, opaque candidate selection processes, and recurrent internal crises. These factors contribute to persistent party fragmentation, defections, and declining public trust. Following candidate selection processes and cabinet formation, numerous party departures are observed, often leading to the creation of new political parties sometimes shortly before elections. The existence of more than 900 officially registered political parties in the DRC as of December 2023 reflects this structural dysfunction.

This study examines how political ambitions are managed within Congolese political parties, how candidates are selected for elections, and how leadership positions and responsibilities are distributed. It seeks to identify the underlying causes of party fragmentation, electoral failure, and organizational instability. The central argument is that sustainable political stability and democratic development depend on the existence of well-organized, institutionalized, and stable political parties.

Accordingly, this article analyzes three categories of party members in terms of ambition structures, as well as the functions, missions, objectives, and mechanisms governing candidate selection for both elective and non-elective public offices. Electoral success depends on multiple interrelated factors; however, candidate selection remains one of the most critical challenges, and it is intrinsically linked to the effective management of internal political ambitions.

The central research question guiding this study is: To what extent does the management of political ambitions within political parties influence electoral success and organizational stability in the Democratic Republic of Congo?

The study advances the hypothesis that political parties capable of institutionalizing mechanisms for managing internal ambitions are more likely to achieve electoral success and sustain long-term organizational stability.

Methodologically, the research relies on an analytical approach, employing direct and participant observation as its primary data collection techniques.

2. Conceptual elucidation and theories

We will briefly clarify several essential concepts that underpin and guide this analysis.

2.1. Notions of the political Parties

It is pressing for us to elucidate some notions of the political parties, in time and space.

2.1.1. Definitions and theories

The concept of political parties has been defined and theorized in diverse ways within the scholarly literature. For the purposes of this study, only the most relevant approaches are retained.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Law of 15 March 2004 defines a political party as an association of Congolese citizens united by a shared ideology and societal project, aiming to democratically and peacefully attain and exercise state power. The law further assigns parties the roles of articulating electoral choice, fostering national consciousness, and promoting civic education, while requiring adherence to constitutional order, pluralist democracy, national unity, and sovereignty. This legal framework guarantees citizens the freedom to join, participate in, or leave political parties, thereby legitimizing the expression of political ambitions within partisan structures.

Comparatively, in France, political parties are legally recognized as non-profit associations (Law of 1901) organized around a political program intended to influence governmental power, either through support or opposition. Their constitutional recognition and public financing reflect their central role in democratic governance.

Historically, as noted by Sartori (1998), political parties emerged in their modern form in the early nineteenth century, evolving from earlier political factions that competed for power without institutionalized electoral mechanisms. Edmund Burke's (1770) seminal distinction between parties and factions remains analytically central: while parties pursue the national interest through shared principles and constitutional means, factions are driven by narrow, self-interested struggles for office and material gain. Building on this distinction, Niamba (2017) emphasizes that free, transparent, and competitive elections constitute the defining boundary between political parties and factions. Where parties abandon democratic norms, they risk degenerating into factions a phenomenon historically evident in Africa, particularly under single-party systems.

In this study, a political party is understood as a non-state politico-social institution that mobilizes citizens around an ideology or governance project to access and exercise political power through electoral legitimacy. This conception presupposes a democratic context with credible electoral processes, in which political authority is sustained by governmental performance and popular evaluation.

2.1.2. Missions and objectives of a partisan organization

The political formations continue primarily legal missions for thus achieving their goals lath and not. The missions of the political parties are very significant in a democratic context.

2.1.3. Functions and roles of a political formation

In carrying out the functions outlined below, political parties perform multiple roles within political life and society at large. According to an article published on *vie-publique.fr*, the primary role of political parties is to animate and structure political life. Article 4 of the French Constitution explicitly states that "political parties and groups contribute to the expression of the vote." More specifically, political parties fulfill two fundamental functions:

- Political parties act as intermediaries between citizens and public authorities. They formulate political programs that present policy proposals which, if endorsed through elections, are incorporated into governmental action. Opposition parties, for their part, offer alternative policy options and perform a *tribunitian* function, in George Lavau's sense, by articulating popular dissatisfaction and giving voice to segments of the electorate that feel marginalized. In recent years, however, growing public disillusionment with political parties has weakened this intermediary role, a trend reflected in increasing electoral abstention in many democracies.
- Political parties perform an administrative and governing function. They seek to gain and exercise power in order to implement their policy agendas. In pluralist systems, although executive authority is formally expected to act in the national interest beyond partisan considerations, political parties play a decisive role in shaping, supporting, and overseeing public policy through their presence in government and parliamentary majorities. In this way, parties contribute to the legitimacy, stability, and effective functioning of democratic regimes, while also structuring political debate and public opinion.
- With the growing professionalization of political life, parties have assumed a crucial role in the selection and recruitment of political elites. They identify, train, and designate individuals called upon to govern and to occupy positions of public responsibility. In light of these functions, this study focuses particularly on the role of political parties in the selection of leaders and electoral candidates. Candidate nomination constitutes a central dimension of ambition management within parties and may either foster organizational stability or

generate internal tensions, depending on how members' aspirations are regulated and how access to positions of authority is allocated.

Another crucial stake in sound leadership selection is the credibility of the political party in the eyes of public opinion. When a political organization nominates competent individuals of proven integrity, it enhances its legitimacy and public trust. Conversely, the selection of unqualified or morally questionable candidates undermines the party's credibility and often leads to popular sanction through electoral defeat. Indeed, a political party devoid of elected representatives risks political irrelevance.

2.2. Political ambition

2.2.1. Definition of the concept political ambition

The concept of *ambition* is commonly defined as a strong or ardent desire to achieve a goal or attain success. According to *Larousse*, ambition denotes both the intense desire to accomplish something and the pursuit of glory, honor, or social advancement. Similarly, the *French Academy* defines ambition as the keen desire to rise and fully realize one's potential, as well as the passionate quest for power, prestige, and social recognition.

Michel Leclercq emphasizes the inherently dynamic nature of ambition, arguing that it entails a form of constructive disproportion between present reality and projected goals. This tension, he suggests, serves as a catalyst for action and transformation. Paradoxically, Leclercq maintains that the most ambitious visions are often the most realistic, insofar as they mobilize energy, resources, and commitment. In this perspective, ambition functions as a guiding force, comparable to a star that orients the traveler, while ambitious objectives when supported by adequate conditions and resources become powerful drivers of success.

Within the context of political parties, ambition can be understood as the strong and structured desire of party members to achieve personal political objectives while simultaneously contributing to the realization of the party's vision, missions, and strategic goals. This form of ambition operates within the framework of party ideology, statutes, internal regulations, and the prevailing legal order. While individual aspirations are inherent to partisan engagement, they must be aligned with collective ambitions to ensure organizational cohesion and effectiveness. Indeed, party visions are often realized through the commitment and drive of their most ambitious members.

In political science, political ambition specifically refers to the structured pursuit of positions of power with the objective of influencing public decision-making and governance outcomes (Schlesinger, 1966). When effectively regulated within party structures, political ambition becomes a central resource for leadership renewal, institutional stability, and electoral success.

2.2.2. Political Ambition: A Driving Force or a Source of Crisis?

Analytical illustration:

- Regulated political ambition fosters innovation, strengthens internal mobilization, and enhances electoral performance.
- Unregulated political ambition, by contrast, generates internal conflicts, party fragmentation, and heightened partisan volatility.
- Consequently, political ambition is not inherently problematic; it becomes destabilizing only in the absence of effective institutional mechanisms for its regulation.

2.2.3. Importance to have the ambition in the life

To have ambitions in life, and particularly as a member of a political party, raises the question of their impact. Ambition can generate significant benefits for individuals, both at the personal and professional levels. When properly oriented, ambition serves as a powerful driver of engagement, performance, and leadership development. Below are seven elements through which ambition can prove beneficial for those who embody it:

Motivation and Growth

Ambition drives individuals to set high-reaching goals, motivating them to work diligently, acquire new skills, and foster personal and professional development. Ambition serves as a catalyst for continuous growth and self-improvement.

Achievement of Objectives

Ambitious individuals are more resilient in the face of obstacles. Their determination and persistence enable them to achieve their goals, turning dreams and aspirations into tangible accomplishments.

Self-Confidence

Ambition strengthens self-confidence. Successfully reaching one's objectives enhances feelings of competence and capability, reinforcing a positive self-perception and belief in one's abilities.

Leadership and Influence

Ambitious individuals often emerge as leaders. Their determination, vision, and drive inspire others, enabling them to exert a positive influence on their peers and communities, fostering collective progress.

Professional Opportunities

Ambition opens doors to career advancement. Individuals who actively seek professional growth are more likely to be promoted, receive better compensation, and secure positions of responsibility within their organizations.

Financial Success

Ambition is often linked to financial success. Ambitious entrepreneurs create thriving businesses, professionals invest in their education and career development, and investors take calculated risks to build wealth.

Positive Impact on Society

Ambitious individuals often aim to effect positive change in society. Their commitment to philanthropic, political, or social initiatives enhances the well-being of others and contributes to societal progress.

Having ambition is undoubtedly beneficial, both in personal life and within a political organization. However, the key challenge lies in managing ambition effectively. This article aims to offer insights into the importance of managing ambition, a critical task for both individuals and organizations.

3. Classification of political party members by level and nature of personal ambition

This study identifies three principal categories of ambition among members of a political party. Party membership generally entails that individuals position themselves at a given moment within one of these categories, defined according to the nature of their dominant motivations:

- Category 1 (C1): Members primarily seeking employment and material benefits
- Category 2 (C2): Members seeking protection and new political or socio-economic opportunities
- Category 3 (C3): Members motivated by predominantly political ambitions

Prior to a detailed examination of the defining characteristics of each category, it is essential to note that political ambitions are neither fixed nor immutable. Rather, they are dynamic and subject to evolution over time, shaped by changing political contexts, personal circumstances, and institutional environments. Consequently, individuals may transition from one category to another in response to shifting opportunities, career trajectories, and structural conditions within the political system.

3.1. Category 1: Members in search of employment and money

Category 1 (C1) members join political parties primarily for instrumental reasons, notably to secure employment or material benefits, often through access to public office or party elites. Generally unemployed or underemployed, they view party affiliation as a pathway to professional integration rather than as an expression of ideological or political commitment. Once their objective of obtaining a first job is achieved, many disengage from party activities.

In contexts such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, where unemployment is widespread, this behavior is largely understandable, as political parties frequently serve as key channels for access to public-sector employment. When expected benefits are delayed or unmet, C1 members tend to defect to other parties, contributing to high levels of partisan volatility. Despite their instability, they constitute an essential grassroots base, particularly for mobilization, and therefore require careful management by party leadership.

3.2. Category 2: Members in the search of protection and promotions or new opportunities

The second category of members, as observed in practice, is generally composed of executives and professionals who already hold positions or engage in activities across various socio-professional sectors. These individuals join political parties with the primary ambition of safeguarding the positions they currently occupy, while also seeking promotion within their respective professions or access to new opportunities and prospects through political engagement. In return, they often constitute significant contributors to party activities and resources.

This category includes the three traditional types of party members: active members, sympathizers, and honorary members. Among the C2 personalities whom political parties must manage carefully are:

- Senior state officials;
- Executives of public, semi-public, and private enterprises;
- Teachers and researchers (academic, scientific, and administrative);
- Entrepreneurs and economic operators in various sectors;
- Public servants;
- Members of the diaspora;
- Actors from civil society, and others.

Some members of this category remain discreet or non-visible. They do not openly present themselves as party members and often avoid occupying statutory party positions, either due to legal or regulatory constraints, professional discipline, or personal choice. Nevertheless, they continue to support party activities in various ways. For many of these actors, particularly technocrats, political ambition, ideological conviction, and sustained political engagement remain limited, as they do not necessarily envision a political career.

Consequently, when political circumstances change, such members may easily shift their party allegiance for the reasons outlined above. It is important to note, however, that this category also includes individuals who actively support political parties, including those in opposition, although the majority tend to align with parties in power. Finally, C2 also encompasses members who harbor medium- and long-term political ambitions. These individuals often prepare their political future discreetly within party structures, positioning themselves strategically for eventual political engagement.

3.3. C3: Members with purely political ambitions

The third and final category comprises members motivated by strong political convictions, sustained engagement, and explicit political ambition. This group includes senior party executives, high-level cadres pursuing long-term political careers, as well as committed grassroots militants. It is within this category that the leadership and organizational core of political parties is found.

Members of Category 3 (C3) bear primary responsibility for structuring party organizations and regulating the ambitions of all member categories identified in this study, while simultaneously managing their own political aspirations. They generally display open and explicit partisan affiliation and form the strategic nucleus of party life, including the following types of personalities:

- organizers of the Institutions of the executive power (president of the Republic, head of the State and Prime Minister, head of the Government) and their collaborators;
- members of the government and their collaborators;
- organizers of the Institutions of the legislative power (presidents of the French National Assembly, provincial and of the Senate, as well as the members of their respective cabinets);
- Deputies national, provincial, senators and advisers with their collaborators
- Senior officials of the State;
- Heads of companies and publicly-owned establishments and mixed, like their collaborators;
- Teachers, researchers (academic, scientific and administrative);
- Contractors or operators in various sectors;
- Public agents;
- Members of the Diaspora;
- Personalities of all the horizons;
- Citizens;
- Members of the civil company;
- etc.

This non-exhaustive list includes individuals who join political parties with the explicit intention of engaging in sustained political activism and building political careers aimed at realizing their visions and ambitions. Within Category 3, however, two broad tendencies can be distinguished among ambitious actors: kleptocratic actors, whose ambitions are primarily driven by personal enrichment and predatory access to state resources, and patriotic or reformist actors, whose ambitions are oriented toward public service, national interest, and transformative governance.

3.3.1. *Kleptocrats*

Within Category 3, a subgroup of members claims to possess political vision and ambition but is in fact primarily driven by personal enrichment or the consolidation of narrow elite interests, forming oligarchic or kleptocratic networks under the guise of political action. Although their public discourse is often persuasive and framed around national development, their actual governance outcomes remain largely symbolic and disproportionately insignificant when compared to the private gains they extract from public office. In practice, the pursuit of the general interest is not their central concern.

These actors, who constitute a dominant segment of this category, frequently occupy senior political positions and enjoy strong popular visibility. A profound gap exists between their rhetoric, their tangible results, and objective performance assessments. Through populist and seductive narratives, they succeed in cultivating devoted supporters, despite the limited benefits their leadership delivers to the broader community.

Such kleptocratic actors are prepared to neutralize or marginalize any individual perceived as an obstacle to their political vision or personal interests. Their conception of politics instrumentalizes the state for private accumulation, often at the expense of collective welfare. Although commonly portrayed as “statesmen” or “stateswomen,” they do not meet the normative standards associated with responsible state leadership, regardless of the offices they occupy. Rather, their practices resemble organized forms of state predation, sometimes described metaphorically as *criminalized governance*.

These actors favor the manipulation and depoliticization of citizens over civic empowerment, as an informed and politically conscious population represents a direct threat to their dominance. Consequently, kleptocratic elites tend to fear patriotic or reformist awakening, which carries the potential to challenge, delegitimize, and ultimately overturns their control over political and state institutions.

3.3.2. *Patriots/Heroes*

Within Category 3, a first tendency is composed of kleptocratic actors whose political ambitions are driven primarily by personal enrichment or the consolidation of narrow elite interests. Although they often deploy persuasive and populist rhetoric in the name of public service, a significant gap exists between their discourse and their actual governance outcomes. The general interest is not their primary concern; rather, they instrumentalize state institutions for private gain. Despite occupying senior political positions and enjoying popular visibility, their leadership is characterized by predatory practices, manipulation of public opinion, and resistance to civic awakening, which they perceive as a threat to their dominance.

In contrast, the second tendency within Category 3 consists of patriotic and development-oriented actors whose political engagement is grounded in ethical commitment and the pursuit of the common good. These individuals prioritize national development, social justice, and institutional integrity over personal benefit. They resist corruption, promote civic education, and seek to empower citizens to take ownership of their collective destiny. Although they represent a minority and are frequently marginalized or betrayed by dominant kleptocratic elites, their leadership, marked by vision, discipline, and sacrifice embodies the normative ideal of genuine statesmanship and serves as a source of inspiration for future generations.

Beyond these two contrasting tendencies, Category 3 also includes a third, adaptive subgroup of actors whose behavior is shaped by prevailing political environments rather than firm ideological conviction. These individuals possess leadership potential but tend to align themselves with dominant practices in order to survive politically. In kleptocratic settings, they may conform to predatory norms, whereas in reformist or patriotic contexts, they are more likely to demonstrate ethical conduct and effective leadership. Their situational adaptability places them at the intersection of the two primary tendencies, highlighting the decisive role of institutional context in shaping political behavior.

4. Management of the ambitions, participation of a political party in the polls and the governance

This section examines and discusses the democratic management of individual ambitions by party members, as well as the strategic planning and regulation of ambitions by party leaders and organizational structures responsible for coordinating and advancing collective ambitions.

4.1. Management of the personal ambitions and political mentorship

It should be emphasized that political parties constitute the primary arenas in which citizens and militants are entitled to hold and express legal and legitimate political ambitions. Such ambitions are both reasonable and necessary within the framework of a party's fundamental objectives, namely the conquest (or reconquest), exercise, and retention of political power. However, in order to prevent internal conflicts and maintain organizational order, each member of a political party must be capable of responsibly managing their own ambitions, particularly when entrusted with positions of responsibility.

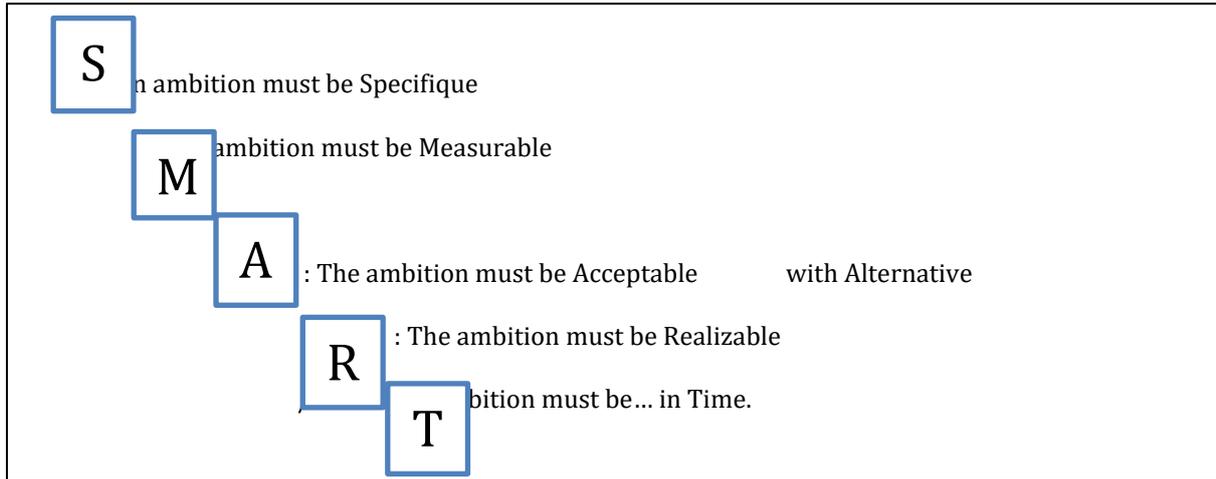
In this regard, the management of collective ambitions cannot be meaningfully addressed without first considering the management of individual ambitions. Personal ambition management, supported by political mentoring, plays a crucial role in guiding ambitious actors throughout their political careers and in aligning individual aspirations with the broader strategic objectives of the party.

4.1.1. Management of the personal ambitions (MPA)

The management of personal ambitions (MPA) constitutes a form of individual discipline that requires each party member whether activist or officeholder to define ambitions that are well-delimited, carefully considered, context-sensitive, and realistically attainable. Ambition should therefore be proportionate to personal capacities, institutional constraints, and socio-political realities. When ambition becomes excessive or obsessive, it ceases to be constructive and turns into a destabilizing force. Obsessive ambition is characterized by intolerance, emotional rigidity, and a willingness to override ethical, institutional, or collective considerations, often with harmful consequences for both the individual and the organization.

Effective MPA presupposes discipline, intelligence, wisdom, and political maturity, enabling actors to remain flexible, realistic, and pragmatic. Notably, even senior political leaders struggle to manage their personal ambitions appropriately, particularly when they conflate individual aspirations with the strategic orientations of the party. This confusion is especially prevalent in personalized or leader-centered parties, as opposed to institutionalized political parties a distinction that is particularly salient in many African political systems. In such contexts, insufficient regulation of personal ambition often undermines party coherence and institutional credibility.

Ultimately, sound management of political ambition can positively shape political careers and democratic outcomes, whereas poor management can distort governance and political life. As in any professional trajectory, political ambition benefits from guidance and mentorship. Political mentoring is therefore highly recommended, especially in developing democracies where institutional safeguards are weaker and access to experienced mentors remains limited. A politically mature actor should thus cultivate ambitions that are SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound to align personal goals with collective political objectives.



A strategist ambitious must take account of the elements smart Ci-high, that requires a good reading and appreciation of the facts and environment policies. Because, the idealism is legal, whereas realism is political.

4.1.2. Political Mentorship and management of the personal ambitions

Generally, a mentor may be defined as an experienced and competent individual who provides guidance, advice, and support to a less experienced person in their personal and professional development (Kram, 1985; Clutterbuck, 2014). Mentorship plays a crucial role in helping individuals clarify their goals, develop realistic career strategies, and regulate their personal ambitions within institutional and ethical boundaries.

In the political sphere, mentorship can significantly contribute to the effective management of personal ambitions by fostering self-awareness, strategic thinking, and long-term perspective. Through mentoring relationships, aspiring political actors learn to align their individual aspirations with collective objectives, institutional norms, and contextual constraints, thereby reducing the risks associated with uncontrolled or misdirected ambition (Allen et al., 2004; Schlesinger, 1966).

4.2. Strategic planning and Management of the ambitions in the political parties

The management of ambitions by party leadership constitutes a natural extension of strategic planning within a political party that functions as a genuine institution rather than as a personalized or leader-centered organization. From this perspective, ambition management cannot be treated as a marginal issue; it is a structural necessity for party coherence and sustainability. Strategic planning provides the framework through which individual aspirations are articulated, regulated, and aligned with collective objectives, thereby transforming personal ambitions into institutional resources rather than sources of conflict.

Ambition management and strategic planning are therefore two interdependent dimensions of party organization and governance. Effective strategic planning enables party leaders to anticipate internal competition, regulate career pathways, and ensure transparent mechanisms for leadership renewal and candidate selection. Conversely, the absence of structured ambition management often results in internal fragmentation, factionalism, and organizational instability, particularly in weakly institutionalized party systems (Panebianco, 1988; Randall & Svåsand, 2002).

In well-institutionalized political parties, ambition management contributes to organizational resilience, electoral performance, and democratic credibility by balancing individual career incentives with collective party goals. As Sartori (1976) and Schlesinger (1966) emphasize, political ambition is an inherent feature of party life; its democratic value depends on the extent to which it is regulated by formal rules, strategic vision, and institutional discipline rather than personalized authority.

4.2.1. Mode of nomination leaders of the party

Effective management of ambitions within political parties is closely linked to the mode of leadership selection and the internal democratic functioning of party structures. When party leaders are designated through transparent and democratic procedures, parties are better equipped to regulate individual ambitions, strengthen collective discipline, and enhance organizational coherence. In this regard, leadership selection is not merely a procedural matter but a decisive factor shaping party governance and ambition management.

As noted by Mitterrand M., Hugor K., Peter K., and Caleb N., political parties are expected to operate according to democratic principles, given that they are fundamental instruments of political participation and vehicles for the expression of political pluralism. These authors argue that parties contribute to the formation and expression of the popular will and therefore must internalize democratic values within their own structures, particularly through the election of party presidents and senior officials. Internal democracy thus constitutes a prerequisite for legitimacy, accountability, and the effective regulation of competing ambitions within parties.

However, empirical observations in the Democratic Republic of Congo reveal a persistent deviation from these principles. The same authors underline that many Congolese political parties are managed as private property, closely tied to their founders, with individualism prevailing over collectivism. This personalization of party leadership undermines democratic mechanisms, weakens institutionalization, and exacerbates the mismanagement of ambitions. Consequently, the manner in which party leaders are selected has a direct impact on overall party governance and, more specifically, on the ability to channel individual ambitions into coherent collective strategies (Panebianco, 1988; Sartori, 2005).

4.2.2. Strategic planning within the political parties

Strategic planning constitutes a fundamental activity for political parties, as it provides a clear sense of direction and coherence, enabling them to act proactively rather than merely reacting to shifting political circumstances. Through strategic planning, a party defines its long-term vision, objectives, and priorities, thereby serving as an institutional compass that guides collective action and decision-making (Mintzberg, 1994; Bryson, 2018).

Although strategic planning is more commonly observed in large, institutionalized political parties that have evolved over time, the management of political ambitions concerns all party organizations, whether institutionalized or highly personalized. Regardless of their organizational maturity, political parties must effectively regulate internal ambitions to ensure internal cohesion, organizational stability, and, ultimately, electoral success. Poorly managed ambitions frequently lead to internal conflicts, defections, party fragmentation, and political marginalization, thereby undermining the party's longevity on the political scene (Panebianco, 1988; Sartori, 2005).

Consequently, strategic planning and ambition management are inseparable processes. As party leaders implement strategic plans, they must simultaneously regulate individual and collective ambitions to align personal aspirations with institutional goals. A political party that fails to manage internal ambitions whether or not it possesses a formal strategic plan risks losing credibility, coherence, and electoral competitiveness. In this sense, ambition management becomes a core component of party governance and organizational survival in competitive democratic environments (Schlesinger, 1966; Harmel & Janda, 1994).

4.2.3. Management of the ambitions in period of the elections

For Caspar F van den Berg, Kati Piri, Sam van der Staak, Levan Tsutskiridze "the management of the ambitions within a political party is a crucial subject for its development and its effectiveness". Candidate selection represents the most critical moment of ambition crystallization within political parties (International IDEA, 2020).

The selection of electoral candidates constitutes one of the most critical challenges political parties face during election periods. It is a decisive moment in which party members openly express their political ambitions, placing party leadership under the obligation to manage these legitimate aspirations effectively. This management pursues a dual objective: maximizing electoral success while preserving internal stability and preventing factional conflict. Electoral performance is not the product of chance but the outcome of a structured, disciplined, and strategic process in which ambition management plays a central role.

Electoral competition involves multiple actors, including party-affiliated candidates and independents. In this context, political parties resemble competitive teams that must strategically select candidates capable of performing effectively in the final contest. Party leaders who are themselves ambitious political actors must simultaneously regulate their own ambitions, those of party members, and the collective interests of the organization. Failure to do so often leads to internal fragmentation and weakened electoral outcomes.

Legal and institutional constraints, such as admissibility thresholds and representativeness requirements, further complicate this process. Parties must meet minimum standards in terms of the number and conformity of candidates, as well as electoral performance benchmarks at national and subnational levels. In formations where ambition is widespread and candidacies are highly contested, transparent mechanisms such as internal selection committees or primary processes become essential to arbitrate competing aspirations. Ultimately, the ability of a political party to

manage ambitions during elections is a determining factor in both its internal cohesion and its long-term viability on the political scene.

To manage the ambitions of the members of a political party for the period of the elections can be a challenge. Here some suggestions being able to help all and sundry, based on various sources:

Strategic planning

Strategic planning enables political parties to align individual ambitions with collective objectives and adapt to evolving political contexts. According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), strategic planning strengthens organizational capacity and helps parties manage internal competition more effectively by providing clear orientations and priorities.

Training and capacity building of members

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) emphasizes the importance of training programs aimed at helping party members understand internal procedures, roles, and responsibilities. Investing in political education through seminars, workshops, and conferences helps channel ambitions toward constructive participation rather than disruptive competition.

Development of a coherent party program

A clear and credible political program allows ambitions to be framed around shared goals. By articulating a common vision and policy priorities, parties can reduce personal rivalries and foster collective commitment, even though discrepancies between electoral promises and governance practices remain a recurring challenge.

Transparent communication

Open communication regarding ambitions and expectations is essential in a democratic party. Regular forums where members can express their aspirations help prevent misunderstandings and facilitate guidance and arbitration by party leadership.

Clear definition of roles and responsibilities

Clearly delineating roles within the party structure ensures that personal ambitions do not undermine organizational effectiveness. Institutional clarity contributes to discipline and accountability.

Promotion of collaboration and a climate of peace

Encouraging cooperation and mutual respect among members helps prioritize collective interests over personal gains and reduces frustration and factionalism.

Exemplary leadership

Party leaders must demonstrate exemplary behavior in managing their own ambitions. Leadership should be understood as a service to the party and society, not as a means of personal advancement. Abusive practices such as manipulating candidate selection for personal benefit undermine legitimacy and threaten the party's future.

Mediation and facilitation mechanisms

Given that ambition-related conflicts are inevitable, parties should institutionalize internal mediation and facilitation mechanisms. When necessary, neutral third parties may be involved to ensure peaceful resolution and preserve cohesion.

In sum, the effective management of ambitions during electoral periods is a decisive factor in the durability, credibility, and success of political parties. It requires a combination of strategic planning, institutional discipline, democratic leadership, and conflict-resolution mechanisms

4.2.4. Selection of the members for non-elective stations

Elections do not signify the end of political ambitions; rather, they inaugurate a second, equally sensitive phase marked by post-electoral appointments. Government positions, cabinet posts, leadership roles in public enterprises, and parliamentary responsibilities generate renewed competition, as the number of available positions remains structurally

limited. In this context, transparent, merit-based, and inclusive appointment processes are essential to preserving internal cohesion and preventing long-term conflicts within political parties.

Electoral outcomes reshape the political landscape by clarifying the relative weight of each political formation and its positioning within the political system, whether in government, the parliamentary majority, or the opposition. These results also determine access to non-elective positions, which naturally attract the ambitions of party members. This phase therefore constitutes another critical moment in the management of ambitions, requiring careful regulation to avoid frustration, rivalry, and internal instability.

In presidential systems such as that of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the party winning the presidency gains access to executive power and government formation, often within the framework of coalitions or broad political platforms. Given that no single party can realistically govern alone, collective and individual ambition management becomes even more crucial. Although victory is shared, not all ambitions can be immediately satisfied, and expectations must be aligned with political realities.

Similarly, legislative elections allocate positions within parliamentary offices and committees at both national and provincial levels, followed by the formation of government coalitions. These stages intensify internal competition and may generate tensions, divisions, or defections if ambitions are poorly managed. Consequently, effective ambition management—before, during, and after electoral cycles—remains a decisive condition for party stability, institutional coherence, and sustained political success. Ultimately, the conquest, exercise, and potential preservation of power depend on the capacity of political parties to regulate ambitions in a disciplined, strategic, and democratic manner.

5. Conclusion

This article has examined the management of ambitions within political parties as a critical condition for both electoral success and organizational stability. Political parties constitute the primary arenas in which members are entitled to express legal and legitimate ambitions. However, such ambitions must be effectively regulated to preserve party unity, internal stability, and electoral performance. The analysis highlighted three broad categories of party members based on the nature of their ambitions and proposed key mechanisms for managing ambitions, beginning with individual self-regulation and extending to collective, institutional management.

Ambition in itself is neither abnormal nor undesirable; rather, the real challenge lies in its proper management. Party leaders bear a dual responsibility: first, to regulate their own ambitions, and second, to manage those of party members in accordance with democratic principles, party statutes, and internal regulations. Electoral periods and post-electoral phases particularly government formation represent moments of heightened ambition and competition. When ambitions are well managed, they can strengthen cohesion and enhance electoral outcomes; when mismanaged, they generate frustration, conflict, fragmentation, and long-term destabilization of political organizations.

Whether one is a senior leader, a party official, or an ordinary militant, political ambition is legitimate. Yet the manner in which ambition is managed remains a decisive factor in determining political success or failure. This study therefore advocates for the adoption of SMART ambitions: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound as a guiding framework. In consolidating democracies such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, the institutionalization of political parties, internal democracy, strategic planning, and ethical leadership are essential for transforming individual ambitions into a collective asset rather than a source of organizational instability.

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