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The Congo as a Case Study: The Making of Unipolarity

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The Making of Unipolarity: The Congo as a Case Study

By Justin Tepper

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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Abstract

The Making of Unipolarity: The Congo as a Case Study

By Justin Tepper

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The current international system has been described by some as unipolar. After World War II, the United States was able to develop and solidify a liberal international order built upon multilateralist principles but founded upon American military and economic supremacy. As a result of the order's success, it has become global. The Cold War is generally understood as the conflict between the liberal capitalistic American-led order and the Marxist-Leninist Soviet-centered bloc. To fully understand the making of unipolarity, however, scholars must shift their focus to the process of decolonization and the intra-NATO tensions that developed. This paper will use the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a case study. While the USSR posed a threat to Congolese Free World alignment during the Congo's first few months of independence, the Congo Crisis ultimately became a clash between the United States and the former colonial metropole, Belgium.

Preface

During the course of my studies on the Cold War, I became particularly interested not in the conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States but in America's relationship with decolonization. As a result of nineteenth-century geopolitical struggles, most of the decolonized world had colonial ties to members of the Free World. As a result, intra-NATO tensions developed in several instances. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United States vied for Congolese allegiance against Belgium. Once the U.S found a local collaborator in Joseph Mobutu, it was able to solidify its position in the African country.

While trying to understand America's actions in response to decolonization, I came to the conclusion that my studies were pertinent to explaining unipolarity. The United States was able to replace former colonial powers, like Belgium in the Congo; this was how America's influence was able to expand to global proportions. When a former colonial powers rule was no longer tenable, the United States was able to fill the vacuum left by the moribund metropole.

Through U.S State Department documents, I attempted to explain the United States' struggle in finding a policy pertaining to African decolonization. The problem was that the vital economic ties between former colonies and the Free World needed to be maintained. Thus the United States was caught in a vice between supporting former colonial powers which were now NATO allies and aligning itself with the decolonizing world to the detriment of its allies. In the Congo, as in many other decolonized countries, the United States was able to find a local collaborator who was willing to be aligned with the Free World. The former colonial powers influence, however, would diminish as America's sphere of influence expanded. This is how unipolarity was able to develop.

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Introduction

The Cold War is commonly understood as a forty-six (1945-1991) year struggle for systemic global supremacy between the United States and the Soviet Union. The former considered itself the leader of the Free World and espoused a liberal capitalist system. The latter ran a centrally planned economy serving Marxist-Leninist revolutionary objectives though prioritizing Soviet state security. The important NSC-68, which globalized American anti-communist ‘containment’ doctrines, interpreted in 1950 that Soviet actions were determined by “a new fanatic faith, antithetical to our own” and that they were trying to “impose [Soviet] absolute authority over the rest of the world.”¹ These fears were heightened by a successful test of a Soviet atomic bomb and the victory of Mao Zedong’s communist army in China. Furthermore, the United States’ belief that Stalin wanted to expand the USSR’s influence by supporting political activity in the West meant that America could not abandon Europe as it had after World War I but had to remain on the continent and help rebuild its war torn economies.

What followed the U.S’ decision, in the words of John G. Ikenberry, was “an unprecedented burst of global institution building - establishing the United Nations, IMF, World Bank, NATO, and an array of other institutions and regimes.”² During World War II, the Roosevelt administration envisioned a global system based on free trade that would largely run itself; albeit, with limited support from multilateral institutions. By the Truman administration, the vision of a one-world system was giving way to one where ideological and geopolitical

¹ NSC-68, “A Report to the President Pursuant to the President’s Directive of January 31, 1950,” April 7, 1950, FRUS 1950, Vol. I: National Security Affairs; Foreign Economic Policy (Washington, DC: GPO, 1977), 237.

² John G. Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 80.

clashes divided the globe.³ Though not the original plan, “the United States took command of organizing and running the system” because of the inabilities of America’s post-war allies coupled with America’s preponderance of resources and faced by evidently existential Soviet challenges, with increasing vigor in the global periphery.⁴

Early confrontations had of course centered on Europe, where the USSR imposed its system in the east. After the U.S announcement of the Marshall Plan the Allied Council of Foreign Ministers convened to try and clarify the terms of an agreement. Vyacheslav Molotov, the USSR’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, attended with eighty-nine economic advisors.⁵ After a few days of negotiations, he proposed each country devise its own recovery program. The British and French rejected these measures and would continue to participate in America’s plan. Molotov angrily walked out and declared that if the proposals were carried out it would divide “Europe into two groups of states.” Czechoslovakia and Poland were invited to the Paris conference but refused on the grounds that it might be perceived as an action against the Soviet Union. Within a week of Molotov’s return to Moscow, the USSR announced its own blueprint for recovery – the Molotov Plan.

The reason why the Soviets were against the Marshall Plan was that its terms treated “all the recipient states as part of an economic bloc.”⁶ A central aspect of America’s liberal institution building was creating an integrated world market. This would mean Western inspectors would have to investigate the strength of the Soviet economy. The Soviets opposed

³ Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, 197.

⁴ Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, 20.

⁵ Stephen E. Ambrose and Douglas G. Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy since 1938*, 9th Ed. (New York: Penguin, 2011), 87.

⁶ Rhiannon Vickers, *Manipulating Hegemony: State Power, Labor and the Marshall Plan in Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 30.

such measures because their weakness was not yet known to the West. The end result was the division of the global core into a bipolar capitalist versus communist framework.

In the military sphere, the Russian counterpart to NATO was the Warsaw Pact, which the USSR established in 1955 as a reaction to West Germany's rearmament and integration into the Western military complex. The governments of Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Eastern Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the Soviet Union "established a unified command" and "specified the size of the forces each of the signatories pledged to contribute."⁷ The organization's founding document was modeled on the Washington Treaty of April 4, 1949, which established NATO. The documents were very similar in that both groups of "signatories" professed intent to refrain from the use or threat of force...[and] the almost identical description of the consultations they pledged to mutually enter into in case of an enemy attack."⁸

While the world was divided along military and economic lines, an arms race ensued. Once the Soviet's tested their first fission bomb in August of 1949, Truman became determined to build the first hydrogen bomb and the military one-upmanship began. The American nuclear arsenal expanded from under 400 weapons in 1950 to over 20,000 in 1960. Soviet reserves increased as well from 5 weapons in 1950 to roughly 1,600 in 1960.⁹ The growth in nuclear armaments is just one aspect of the arms race. Conventional weaponry continued to increase in technological capabilities and quantity.

The arms race and the division of the world into bipolar spheres of influence are the defined prevailing characteristics of the Cold War. This paper will argue that there is an alternative way to understanding the conflict. The 1991 dissolution of the USSR, rather than just

⁷ Vojtech Mastny, *Cardboard Castle?: An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 3.

⁸ Ibid. 4.

⁹ Joseph Cirincione, *Bomb Scare: The History, Theory and Future of Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 21.

the end of a half century long struggle against the Free World, was really the culmination of a process that began in the nineteenth century. When a number of countries around the world began to subjugate peoples from other lands and create empires. Britain had her substantial territorial holdings all over the globe. France had Indochina and French West Africa in addition to other miscellaneous relationships. Tsarist Russia, unlike the European powers, established a land based empire that stretched from Poland to Manchuria. Japan and Germany were two rising powers which made fatal attempts to displace the status quo. In addition to these traditional powers, the Netherlands held the Dutch East Indies, Belgium controlled the Congo, and Portugal held substantial colonial holdings. These great powers continued to compete against one another for influence in order to grow their economies, prestige, and for corresponding strategic security.

After World War II, the United States envisaged the decolonization of European empires as vital to its objectives for a multilateral liberal capitalist world system. While American power began to expand in unprecedented ways, the USSR's influence around the world did not develop to the same degree. As Dominic Lieven noted, "The most obvious comparison between the Soviet Union and other great empires is with the empire of the tsars, to which in territorial terms the USSR was the successor."¹⁰ To this extent it could significantly impede and in certain respects go on to challenge the universality of American desiderata. The U.S, therefore, tried to encircle the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China with bilateral and regional security pacts. By the mid-1960s, the U.S had 375 military bases and 3,000 other facilities surrounding the Soviet Union and its allies.¹¹ While United States capabilities were unprecedentedly global, the USSR was still primarily contained in Eastern Europe just as its Tsarist predecessors had been. The unevenness of this process of polar co-option, with the U.S geopolitically expanding

¹⁰ Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and its Rivals* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 293.

¹¹ David Painter, *The Cold War: An International History* (London: Routledge, 1999), 41.

faster than the USSR, in the name of defending against it, ultimately led to the fall of the latter and to the ascension of the unipolar liberal capitalist system we live in today.

The concept of unipolarity is difficult to define because it has only occurred once in history. As a result, it is impossible to distinguish the term from America's unipolar moment. Stephen Walt, however, tentatively captured the nature of the concept when he wrote, "A unipolar system is one in which a single state controls a disproportional share of the political relevant resources of the system. Unipolarity implies that the single superpower faces no ideological rival of equal status or influence."¹² Given this definition there are two aspects to unipolarity. The first deals with capabilities and resources. Currently, the United States is the only country that can deploy its military anywhere on earth and occupy a given territory indefinitely— even if an armed opposition is present.¹³ Secondly an ideological system needs to be espoused and promulgated. The liberal international order that America built after World War II "has been – in contrast to past international orders – relatively easy to join. It is an international order that has – in contrast to past international orders – spread wealth and economic growth relatively widely."¹⁴ As a result, it still persists today.

What this paper will attempt to add to the scholarship of unipolarity is an explanation, in geopolitical terms, of how the present situation was able to develop. It will look at the formation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and how it was transferred from the Belgian sphere of influence to the American orbit. While the Cold War is generally understood as a clash between the U.S and USSR, the Congo became the battleground for an intra-NATO dispute. The United States, at first, was a pragmatic reluctant power which tried to use the Belgians and the United

¹² Stephen Walt, "Alliances in a Unipolar World," *World Politics* Vol. 61, no. 1 (January 2009), 91-92.

¹³ *Ibid.* 93.

¹⁴ John G. Ikenberry, "China and the Rest are only Joining the American-Built Order," *New Perspective Quarterly* Iss. 3 Vol. 25 (Summer, 2008), 20.

Nations to maintain stability in the Congo during the tumultuous 1960s. America's greatest fear was Soviet penetration in the Congo, a country rich in copper, cobalt, diamonds, and uranium. There were indications this might occur when the country descended into chaos after gaining its independence on June 30, 1960. Once there were signs that the USSR was indeed trying to establish influence in the African country, the United States was willing to take drastic measures to prevent further encroachment; even disposing of the fervent left-leaning prime minister, Patrice Lumumba in favor of Joseph Mobutu's arbitrary authoritarian dictatorship.¹⁵

While the Soviet Union threatened to compromise the Congo's alignment to the Free World during the latter's first few months of independence, the clash between the NATO allies, Belgium and the United States, would prove to be a more critical problematic. The former metropole wanted to guarantee that its assets would be protected, especially in the most profitable provinces of Katanga and South Kasai. Therefore, they backed two secessionist movements. The first was in Katanga and led by Moise Tshombe. The second was organized around Albert Kalonji in the diamond rich province of South Kasai.¹⁶ The United States, while not wholly opposed to the plan, preferred to keep the Congo intact. In any eventuality, the Eisenhower administration was determined to keep U.S troops out of the African country and looked towards the United Nations to reinstitute stability. A UN peacekeeping force was sent in the summer of 1960 and a Security Council resolution was passed calling for the Belgians to withdraw from the Congo.

The former metropole, however, remained and continued to be a destabilizing factor. The USSR, while not playing a large role on the ground in the Congo, was a very vocal opponent on the international stage. The Soviets criticized the Belgians, United States, and United Nations by

¹⁵ Peter J. Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis and Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 58.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 53.

accusing them of upholding old-style colonialism. As the crisis continued, their charges were seconded by the Afro-Asian bloc. By the time John F. Kennedy became president in January 1961, the United States was prepared to pressure its Western ally in order to bring the conflict to a resolution. This intra-Western dispute stemmed from the two country's statures in the international community. Belgium, being a small power had parochial views and wanted to retain the economically vital Congo. The United States, on the other hand, had global concerns and was engaged in a geopolitical battle for the allegiance of the Third World with the Soviet Union. As a result, the U.S could not publicly align itself too closely with the Belgian's attempt to fracture the Congo. Furthermore, Belgium's actions undermined the U.S broad principle that ex-colonies enter the Free World as functioning nation-states.

Instead, the United States would support the United Nations, which had its own prerogatives, before being forced by UN failures to find an indigenous collaborator who could hold the country together. The man who would emerge was the Army Chief of Staff, Joseph-Desire Mobutu (later Mobutu Sese Seko). The U.S's ability to find their own strong man would have drastic effects on the country's alignment in the future.

By 1964, the secessions had ended but the discontent continued. During the mid-1960s, local rebellions persisted in the Congo. Once again, the United States was reluctant to get involved directly. In extremis they now urged Belgium to suppress the insurgency. This resulted in the installation of Tshombe as Congolese national prime minister. The belief was that Tshombe, who retained an army of mercenaries, would be able to suppress the rebellion.¹⁷

Tshombe was ultimately unsuccessful and the U.S and Belgium had to hire more mercenaries. Once the rebellions were crushed, Tshombe was quickly dismissed by the president of the Congo, Joseph Kasavubu. While the United States was willing to let the Belgians take the

¹⁷ Ibid, 69.

lead in suppressing the rebellions of the mid-1960s, the CIA would help Joseph Mobutu take control of the country on November 25, 1965.¹⁸ From this point on, the Congo would drift further and further into America's sphere of influence. This is how unipolarity was able to develop. Former metropolises, like Belgium, could no longer maintain stability in their overseas territories. As a result, the United States would step in to keep the former colony within the Western camp. In the case of the Congo, America would install Joseph Mobutu to rule the country, which he did from 1965 to 1997. While the Cold War is generally understood as a clash between the U.S and USSR, the Congo Crisis was primarily a contest between two NATO allies. The United States competed against the Belgians for Congolese alignment – and won.

World War I and the breakup of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires are integral aspects to my proposed theory of polar co-option. These two multinational empires were broken apart and consolidated into the spheres of influence of other great powers before, during, and after World War II. This process of polar co-option would unfold a second time after World War II. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was ultimately contested between Nazi Germany and the USSR. On the other hand, the Western powers of France and Britain divided the former Ottoman Empire. Under the guise of mandates and working through local actors like the Hashemites, the Middle East was reconstructed and divided. Britain administered the mandates for Iraq and Palestine. The former being a completely new state created to include the three Ottoman provinces of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul. Trans-Jordan was also invented and administered by the British. The French received the mandate for Syria and created Lebanon in much the same way Britain created Trans-Jordan.¹⁹

¹⁸ David N. Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Interventions: Mines, Money, and U.S. Policy in the Congo Crisis*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 163.

¹⁹ William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder, CO; Westview Press, 2009), 164.

Just as a large part of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire eventually fell into the sphere of the USSR, the dismantled Ottoman Empire ultimately passed from the British and French to the Americans. While the British retained a military presence in the Middle East after World War II, the United States knew that the former colonial power could not contain perceived Soviet penetrations on its own, especially as the Cold War progressed. As Douglas Little points out, during the early years of the conflict “the Truman administration fully expected the Royal Navy to promote stability and to project Western seapower from Gibraltar to the Persian Gulf. But increasingly heavy-handed Soviet pressure on Turkey to grant the Red Navy free passage through the Dardanelles and disturbing indications that Britain lacked both the financial resources and the political will to fulfill its military obligation in the Eastern Mediterranean soon prompted U.S policymakers to rethink their low-profile tactics in the region.”²⁰

While I have made overarching statements about polar co-option, the point needs to be made that there were numerous turning points and alternative pathways encountered along the way to America’s hegemony. It was by no means a systematic inevitability; Egypt is a perfect example of this. In 1936 Egypt was firmly in the hands of the British. They had just reached an agreement that gave the Egyptians their independence while Britain retained a military presence in the Suez Canal Zone. Britain also retained the right to militarily intervene if a foreign power attacked Egypt.²¹ The situation swung in the other direction in 1952 when the Egyptian monarch, King Faruq was deposed by a military coup. The leaders of the coup, the strongest being a young colonel named Gamal Abdel Nasser, called themselves the Free Officers Movement. The first

²⁰ Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945*, 3rd Ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2008), 233.

²¹ Cleveland and Bunton, 197.

objective of this new regime was to firmly establish Egyptian independence from foreign exploitation and end the British occupation of the Suez Canal Zone.²²

Nasser would continue to be a destabilizing force until his death in 1970. He actively vied for control of the Middle East and pushed Egypt deeper into the Soviet sphere. The man who succeeded him, Anwar Sadat, reversed course and returned Egypt into the Western camp. Sadat's expelling of Soviet advisors and his willingness to make peace with Israel after the October War were so popular with U.S officials that America quickly resumed aid to Egypt on a scale unparalleled since the Marshall Plan in Europe. America's massive aid program was to assure Sadat's position in Egyptian politics. He had promised his compatriots that a close association with the West would produce a "peace dividend" in the form of social and material progress.²³ American officials understood that if these improvements did not materialize Sadat, along with his pro-Western stance, would not last and the U.S position in the Middle East would suffer a setback. Therefore, they decided to "underwrite" Sadat's pledges.

There are a number of lessons we can discern from the example of Egypt. The first is that a country's allegiance is not static but is subject to change. The second is that Egypt went through a long process which involved shifting alignments more than once but eventually ended up being allied with the United States. Though Nasser had tried to build up his military through Soviet auspices his humiliating defeat in the 1967 war against Israel made it clear to Sadat and other Egyptians that the U.S could offer more than the Russians with fewer stipulations. This is an important point because eventually the USSR could no longer compete with the United States as it had been in Egypt, confirming inevitable dominance to the latter. This process has been carried out on a global scale. It ought to be said, however, that Egypt took its particular path

²² William J. Burns, *Economic Aid and American Policy Toward Egypt 1955-1981* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 9.

²³ *Ibid*, 174-175.

towards U.S alignment. Other countries traveled down different routes but the majority of them eventually became part of the American sphere of influence.

This paper has argued that the “collapse of the Soviet Union, while closely bound up with the Cold War, was also the long-delayed result of a process of disintegration of multinational empires that was one of the key legacies of World War I ... [Though] that war destroyed other empires, the Tsarist empire had continued under ‘new management’ as the Soviet Union.”²⁴ The United States, on the other hand, absorbed into its military and economic orbit the majority of the possessions of the former multinational empires that were previously in existence. This co-option process legitimized and grew the liberal international order that the United States wanted to establish. As a result, unipolarity came into existence. It was not just the mere collapse of the Soviet Union but the culmination of a process of geopolitical consolidation that began almost two centuries ago. At this present moment, however, I will not undertake the task of describing the totality of this process. Instead, this paper will focus on the integral aspect of polar co-option of previously held Western possessions; specifically the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

After World War II, the United States found itself as the most powerful country in the world. The international system, on the other hand, was in disarray. The former multinational empires that had characterized the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were beginning to collapse and a process of decolonization was starting to develop. This process would unfold throughout a number of decades because it occurred in waves. U.S leadership wanted stability so Europe and Japan could be rebuilt within their respective home regions of the Free World and Soviet penetrations countered. By contrast, the United States stepped in to replace moribund colonial powers in the global periphery. This led to conflicts between the burgeoning superpower and its weaker NATO allies. In the Congo, United States policymakers were ready and able to

²⁴ Painter, *The Cold War*, 111.

back Joseph Mobutu rather than allow the country to remain in Belgian hands. They were willing to do this because they felt Mobutu gave them a better chance of maintaining stability in a country plagued by internal dissension.

Rather than the United States being imperial, however, it was rather reluctant to assume colonialist burdens. In terms of its commitments to Western Europe, Geir Lundestad has written extensively about the concept of “Empire by Invitation.” He has concluded, “the invitations clearly had an effect. Obviously there would not have been any economic assistance had the Europeans not wanted it. Considering Washington’s initially lukewarm response to Bevin’s pleas for an Atlantic security system, it seems likely the setting up of NATO would at least have been substantially delayed had it not been for the European invitations.”²⁵

In the Third World, the United States for the most part was reluctant as well. This created some interesting paradoxes in Africa South of the Sahara, where the first objective, according to a 1950 State Department planning paper, was to “cooperate with the responsible governments in the political, economic and social advancement of the people of Africa at the maximum practicable rate. This meant that at first, despite overall American anti-colonialism, “in the orderly and progressive development of their African dependent territories and in maintaining the present political stability in those areas.” Furthermore, the U.S government tried to “make every effort to dispel whatever suspicions the Metropolitan Governments might have [had] that [their] actions [were] designed to bring about indiscriminate self-government in the African dependent areas.”²⁶ With regards to the Belgian Congo, the American policy was to “urge the Belgians, whenever the opportunity arises, to promote the political, economic, social and

²⁵ Geir Lundestad, “‘Empire by Invitation’ in the American Century,” *Diplomatic History* Vol. 23 No. 2 (Spring 1999), 198.

²⁶ “Paper Prepared in the Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs,” December 29, 1950, FRUS 1951, Vol. V: The Near East and Africa (Washington, DC: GPO, 1982), 1202-1203.

educational advancement of the native inhabitants with a view to advancing them along the road to self-government.”²⁷ There was no explicit desire on the part of the Americans to replace the Belgians as the purveyor of stability. The goal was to have the Belgians develop institutions in the Congo that would integrate into the American-led international liberal order.

The Congo Crisis was not the only instance when the United States clashed with a NATO ally. During the 1950s oil nationalization crisis in Iran, the Truman administration tried to mediate a settlement and felt the British were being too obstinate. Furthermore, they regarded military intervention unacceptable except only under extreme circumstances. These scenarios involved evacuating British citizens whose lives were in danger and in the case of a Soviet attack. While the United States had “grave misgivings” about an intervention in Iran, the British ambassador had already floated the idea to U.S policy makers.²⁸

In Vietnam the Truman administration began to underwrite the French struggle against Ho Chi Minh, pledging \$60 million dollars in 1952. Eisenhower, on the other hand, urged the French to grant independence to Vietnam if hostilities were to cease. The French did not acquiesce but began to concentrate their troops within the northern garrison of Dien Bien Phu. When the outpost was about to be overrun, the Eisenhower administration approached congressional leaders to gage their support for a resolution authorizing American troops into the fight. The Congressmen were aghast at Eisenhower’s request. Furthermore, when Vice-President Richard Nixon made a speech calling for U.S entry into the war, the public’s reaction was so vehemently against the idea that it was never mentioned again. While the U.S was reluctant to get directly involved in the conflict, it was still underwriting 75 percent of the cost of the war.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Acheson, Dean G., “The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Iran,” May 11, 1951, FRUS 1952-1954, Vol. X: Iran (Washington DC: GPO, 1989), 52.

²⁹ Stephen E. Ambrose and Douglas G. Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism*, 135-137.

In all three cases, Iran, Vietnam, and the Congo, the United States clashed with their NATO allies and eventually had to become deeply involved in countries that were previously not in its sphere of influence. At first American officials urged the colonial metropolises to resolve their differences with the indigenous population so stability could be maintained. Once it became clear that the European powers were no longer able to prevail, the U.S. sought new formulae. This was the option of last resort though with the U.S. even willing to foot the bill, in some instances, if the former colonial power was willing to send their own men or even mercenaries to do the fighting. American politicians were not bellicose about sending troops and more often than not they wanted the former colonial powers to handle the affairs within what had been their spheres of influence.

This pattern of trying to maintain stability was repeated in a number of locations throughout the world and is an integral aspect of my theory of polar co-option. While I have briefly sketched this process, the remainder of this paper will examine how the Congo was transferred from the Belgian sphere of influence to the American. I will try to demonstrate that the United States' chief objective was to maintain stability in order to prevent communist inroads. Rather than take the lead, the U.S. tried to push the former colonial power, in this case Belgium, to fulfill its responsibilities, albeit disinterestedly, on behalf of Free World desiderata. Only when this option failed was the U.S. willing to take on the task of maintaining stability. Nevertheless, because of America's position in the international arena, more often than not the former colonial possession found itself within America's orbit so it could be retained by the Free World. This is how unipolarity developed. The United States' endless quests for stability in combination with its global struggle against the USSR for Third World allegiance led them to rectify discontent within the international system and maintain the status quo. As a result, the

world characterized by multinational empires became consolidated into one sphere of influence - that of the United States.

The Congo: Transition in Alignment

The United States' association with the Congo dates back to the nineteenth century. In 1878, the Belgian monarch, King Leopold II, hired the famed American explorer, Henry Morton Stanley, "to establish trading posts in the Congo area, to forge alliances with local chieftains, and overall to create a sphere of influence."³⁰ In a secondary capacity, Stanley would act as a representative of Leopold in America. Stanley's lobbying on behalf of Leopold was successful in 1884, when the United States, along with Germany, was the first to recognize Leopold's Association Internationale du Congo as the sovereign power in the Congo basin. The United States signed a "Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation" with the Congo Free State on January 24, 1891.³¹

Despite this early contact, the United States' experience with the Congo at the outbreak of World War II was limited. American officials had always viewed Africa as within the European sphere of influence and therefore altered their policies to suit the Europeans. This would change only slightly during the war because the Belgians remained stringent against U.S penetration into their colony. On June 16, 1942, the Belgian government in exile in London and the United States signed a preliminary agreement that brought the former into Lend-Lease. Since the Nazis were occupying Belgium, the latter's reciprocal contributions to the Allied cause had

³⁰ Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Interventions*, 40.

³¹ Robert Lansing, "The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium to the Secretary of State," December 31, 1916, United States Department of State Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States with the Address of the President to Congress, December 5, 1916 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1925), 35-36.

to come from the Congo.³² A number of difficulties would arise as a result. The European country estimated that it “furnished the Allied armies the equivalent of some \$400,000,000 in supplies and services.”³³ Rations became particularly scarce in the colony since Belgian officials procured “the most needed items of food in the Belgian Congo, namely fats.”³⁴

The Belgians also insisted that all American contact with the Congo should go through metropolitan officials. The Colonial Minister, Baron Albert de Vleeschauwer, was not happy with the agreement. Under the guidelines the Congo would have to finance the training and maintenance of American troops in the colony. There were over twelve hundred by August 1941 and their numbers would increase.³⁵

In response, de Vleeschauwer argued that the June 16 agreement did not include the Congo. Traditionally, a treaty signed with Belgium only pertained to the metropole unless the Congo was specifically mentioned. Under the circumstances of World War II, however, precedent would be eschewed for expediency. Furthermore, the Free French had set a wartime example by involving their colonies in Lend-Lease. If the Belgians did not follow the French, it could be interpreted as the former serving opportunistic self-advantage instead of the Allied cause. Thus from the very beginning the Congo became the focal point of Belgian-American consternation.

Another problem arose over compensation. The United States could offer more money for Congolese products than the United Kingdom. A U.S cable complained, “Congo producers have received offers from the United States for example for palm oil and rubber at prices of

³² Jonathan E. Helmreich, *United States Relations with Belgium and the Congo, 1940-1960*, Cranbury, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 1998, 24.

³³ H. Freeman Matthews, “Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of European Affairs (Matthews),” March 29, 1945, FRUS 1945, Vol. IV: Europe (Washington, DC: GPO, 1968), 95.

³⁴ “Memorandum for the United States Government,” FRUS 1945, Vol. IV, 83.

³⁵ Helmreich, *United States Relations with Belgium and the Congo*, 25.

pounds 40 to pounds 50 and 14 pence, respectively, as against United Kingdom prices of pounds 18 and 8 ½ pence, the Belgian Government finds itself in a difficult position.”³⁶ In the same document it was stated “the Belgians would rather have dollars than pounds.” In order to mitigate the discrepancy in resources, the British successfully approached the Americans, who agreed to sign a tripartite agreement instead of a bilateral one. Difficulties would persist until the three parties agreed to end the talks in 1943.

Rather than reach a new agreement, the participants decided that the Board of Economic Warfare (later renamed the Office of Economic Warfare) could assume responsibility for American operations in the colony. The agency would send a mission to the Congo in 1943. While the United States’ knowledge of the Congolese peoples was not sophisticated, extensive business ties were maintained. The United States was the colony’s second largest trading partner.³⁷ These connections would come into play when the Office of Economic Warfare’s mission bypassed thorny diplomatic issues and directly established relations with private Belgian interests inside the Congo. Though the Belgian government protested, the board continued its operations, making further contact with local European businessmen.

In addition to the problem of resource allocation, the Congo’s uranium deposits brought America closer to Belgian commercial interests in the Congo. The United States’ atomic energy research was slow to get under way in comparison to Germany and the U.K. The situation would change, when the Manhattan Engineer District was formed and the Brigadier General, Leslie Groves was put in charge. The first concern for Groves was the insufficient amount of uranium in the United States.³⁸

³⁶ H. Freeman Matthews, “The Charge in the United Kingdom (Matthews) to the Secretary of State,” March 24, 1942, FRUS 1942, Vol. II: Europe (Washington, DC: GPO, 1962), 3.

³⁷ Helmreich, *United States Relations with Belgium and the Congo*, 34.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 43.

Luckily for Groves, during the late 1930s the managing director, Edgar Sengier, of the Belgian mining company Union Minière du Haut Katanga was a prescient businessman who understood the growing demand for uranium. Previously, the ore had been primarily used to color ceramics. Sengier had heard about the new destructive application of the raw material and made arrangements to have 1,139 tons of his company's surplus uranium sent from its Shinkolobwe mines in the Congo to Staten Island. Leslie Groves started to buy from Sengier directly in 1942.

This direct contact between the American government and Belgian businessmen in the Congo was exactly what the Belgian government in exile had wanted to avoid. They would be brought into the picture, however, when Sengier and the United States could no longer agree on a price for future ore deliveries. Previously, the Belgian government had been unaware that "Sengier had already sold ores containing over four thousand tons of uranium oxide" to the U.S. With the Belgian government now involved negotiations stalled.

Notions of prestige would play heavily into the discussions, with Belgium trying to use their uranium deposits to enter into the Anglo-American alliance on atomic energy, which was established on August 19, 1943. The two most problematic issues were control over the uranium deposits and sharing of research. The Belgian government wanted to retain the ability to use ore not required for military purposes in their own industries. Furthermore, any commercial research regarding uranium would have to be shared. The Belgians wanted to restore their position in the international community after the war and felt their ores could assure this. The United States, on

the other hand, believed “the deposits in the Belgian Congo should be exploited as rapidly as possible and the material, both high grade and low grade, removed to safe territory.”³⁹

The agreement the four parties drew up accounted for 3,440,000 pounds of uranium oxide.⁴⁰ The U.S and U.K pledged to “facilitate the delivery to the producing company (Union Minière du Haut Katanga) of such materials...necessary for the reopening and development” of the Shinkolobwe mines. The two aforementioned countries would also gain the right of first refusal to all the ore produced in the Belgian Congo for ten years. There was a stipulation, however, to the last provision. The Belgian government insisted that they should retain the right “to reserve such reasonable quantities of the said ores as may be required for her own scientific research and for her own industrial purposes.”

In addition to safeguarding its own endeavors, the Belgians insisted on cooperation in terms of sharing scientific research. If the U.S and U.K began to utilize uranium for commercial purposes the two governments were required to “admit the Belgian Government to participation in such utilization on equitable terms.” The ultimate authority, however, remained with the two great powers. Belgium was not allowed to use its own ore for commercial purposes without “consultation and in agreement with” the U.S and U.K. The last stipulation would be particularly painful to the Belgians, who had desired to use their uranium as a bargaining chip to bring themselves closer to the great powers and in turn elevate their status in the international community.

³⁹ Harvey H. Bundy, William L. Webster, D.H.F. Rickett, “Minutes of a Meeting of the Combined Policy Committee,” March 8, 1945, FRUS 1945, Vol. II: General: Political and Economic Matters (Washington, DC: GPO, 1967), 8.

⁴⁰ “Memorandum of Agreement Between the United States, the United Kingdom, and Belgium Regarding Control of Uranium,” September 26, 1944, FRUS 1944, Vol. II: General: Economic and Social Matters (Washington, DC: GPO, 1967), 1029.

Prior to World War II, United States contact with the Belgian Congo was primarily through Belgian companies within the colony. This would prove to be of some benefit during the war, when the U.S bypassed the Belgian government on two occasions and signed agreements with private actors. When it came to procurement of raw materials and uranium the U.S found it easier to come to an agreement with private interests than with the Belgian government; the latter being more concerned with notions of prestige and insecure about their small power status. Furthermore, the Belgian government was wary of American designs on the Congo and tried to distance the former from the latter whenever possible. The historian Jonathan Helmreich described the situation in these terms: “Though only one among many issues at the time, the matter of United States relations – economic but more importantly political – with the colony would become a more serious problem for both Brussels and Washington as years passed.”⁴¹

During World War II, President Franklin Roosevelt espoused Wilsonian notions of self-determination. He opposed old-style colonialism and wanted the British to grant India its independence, the Dutch to relinquish the N.E.I., and the French to get out of Indochina.⁴² He attempted to articulate his beliefs in the Atlantic Charter, which he signed along with the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, on August 14, 1941. Though its interpretation was disputed by Roosevelt and Churchill, the two leaders pledged to “respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.”⁴³ In

⁴¹ Helmreich, *United States Relations with Belgium and the Congo*, 61.

⁴² Stephen E. Ambrose and Douglas G. Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism*, 36.

⁴³ Franklin D Roosevelt and Winston S. Churchill, “The Atlantic Charter,” The Avalon project – Yale University, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/atlantic.asp>.

order to work towards this goal, Roosevelt proposed that Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam be placed under a four-power trusteeship after the war.⁴⁴

Roosevelt's idealism would give way to Truman's pragmatism as World War II came to a close and the Cold War began. In ways often misunderstood by Cold War historians, Roosevelt anticipated a post-war world framed by spheres of influence within a multilateral United Nations framework maintained by the so-called Four Policemen: the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and China. In FDR's mind, the USSR would feel secure in such an arrangement and act cooperatively.⁴⁵ Truman redefined this notion and was determined to be firm with the Soviets, especially in regards to Poland. Truman would have very heated conversations with the USSR's Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, when the latter visited the White House in April of 1945. "Molotov's repeated attempts to gain the advantage by applying the Yugoslavian 'model' to Poland, thus essentially acquiring another sphere of influence," was met with sharp rebukes from the American president.

As Roosevelt's vision of a post-war world gave way to the new realities of geopolitical divisions and outright opposition between the U.S and USSR, America's position on colonialism also shifted. "American interest in dependent areas ha[d] traditionally been based on a broad humanitarian concern for the welfare of the inhabitants of th[ose] areas and a desire not to see th[ose] areas exploited for the benefit of a single power."⁴⁶ In terms of territory that was formally under a mandate, on the other hand, "prior historical claims of the mandatory powers will lead, it is assumed, to their being designated as administering authorities in the same territories over which they formally controlled."

⁴⁴ Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism*, 42-43.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Edwards Spalding, *The First Cold Warrior: Harry Truman, Containment, and the Remaking of Liberal Internationalism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 22.

⁴⁶ "Memorandum on United States Participation in Administration of Trust Territories," December 20, 1945, FRUS 1946, Vol. I: General: The United Nations (Washington, DC: GPO, 1972), 544-545.

As the Cold War progressed, these two competing views would continue to plague U.S. policy makers. Should they adhere to their tradition and champion self-determination or support the former European powers maintain their spheres of influence? During the early Cold War years, America's top priority was reconstructing the European economy. United States policies pertaining to the underdeveloped world evolved slowly with the 1940s being a period of transition.⁴⁷ By 1949, the Truman administration was beginning to be pulled in the direction of supporting the former colonial powers, who were now NATO allies. The Cold War had just reached new heights with the Soviet Union successfully testing a nuclear device on August 29, 1949 and Mao's victory in China later that year. But this had to be balanced against the significance of the nationalist leaders who emerged during and after World War II and who were beginning to gain more prominence in the international arena. These figures included but were not limited to India's Nehru, Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh, and Indonesia's Sukarno.

Prior to the events in China and Russia, Truman had outlined his desire to implement a technical assistance program to underdeveloped countries. It called for "technical cooperation and fostering of capital investment, which would aid underdeveloped countries in their efforts to improve their living standards."⁴⁸ It was also an attempt to try and combat Soviet propaganda that painted the United States as a supporter of colonialism. Secretary of State Dean Acheson framed the program in these terms, the "objective was to make clear in our own country and to all the world the purpose of American life and the purpose of the American system. That purpose

⁴⁷ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 111.

⁴⁸ James E. Webb, "The Under Secretary of State (Webb) to the Chairman of the National Advisory Council (Snyder)," March 1, 1949, FRUS 1949, Vol. I: National Security Affairs, Foreign Economic Policy (Washington, DC: GPO, 1976), 773.

is to enable the individual to attain the freedom and dignity, the fullness of life which should be the purpose of all government and of all life on this earth.”⁴⁹

As a result of America’s reorientation in regards to the underdeveloped regions of the world, a reexamination of its African policy was in order. In 1950, the State Department gathered “prominent experts in the academic field; representatives of commercial, philanthropic and religious interests in Africa; and experts on UN affairs.”⁵⁰ Their report stressed America’s problem in regards to the African colonies: “Our representatives referred to the dual approach which the nature of our African problem imposes up us, because of our desire to utilize our assistance to further the aspirations of the African peoples towards economic betterment and development, and our desire to assist in the development of mutually profitable economic relationships between the European countries and the African colonies.” While American tradition was to espouse self-determination, the Truman administration’s “important interest in seeing that developments in the area take place in an orderly and stable manner because of [their] deep interest in the metropolitan powers and their interest in Africa” would take precedence.

Nevertheless, the group of advisors “called attention to the administrative difficulties confronting colonialism in the twentieth century, referring to the inadequacies in numbers and in technical skills among the Africans if governments are to deal competently with the many problems which arise in a developing society.”⁵¹ The advisors also brought up the burgeoning nationalist movements: the document states, “A further factor is that of the developing nationalist movements and aspirations in the African territories...which is capable only of being retarded

⁴⁹ “Transcript of Extemporaneous Remarks by Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Concerning Point 4 of the President’s Inaugural Address, at His Press Conference, January 26, 1949.” January 26, 1949, FRUS 1949, Vol. 1, 758.

⁵⁰ “Report Prepared in the Department of State” undated, FRUS 1950, Vol. V: The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Washington, DC: 1978), 1503.

⁵¹ Ibid 1505.

but not checked. Although the African peoples are lacking in resources and skills, the leaders of such movements are in no sense deterred by these deficiencies.”⁵²

Ultimately, the consultants believed the United States could play a decisive role in the development of Africa. Aid should be given to countries that were developing towards self-determination and the U.S should support such goals. On the other hand, it was urged upon the Truman administration “that a society must be equipped with a measure of certain skills among the indigenous population to warrant independence under modern conditions, and that therefore it will be necessary to cooperate with the metropolitan powers rather than to put our weight behind the independence movements until the societies have become richer in skills.”⁵³

Between February 27 and March 2, 1950, U.S diplomats and consular officers from all over Africa met for a West and East African Regional Conference in Lourenco Marques, Mozambique to coordinate policy. They concluded that while “American foreign policies are determined primarily by the attitudes of European metropolitan powers...[they should] be depicted in Africa in terms of African interests...Policy presentations keyed to European interests and levels of sophistication have only a limited appeal.”⁵⁴ There was also an agreement that development needed to take place in Africa, but it was still decidedly within the European sphere of influence. As a State Department policy paper clearly states, “The United States has recently demonstrated interest in the development of Africa through aid...In general, we believe that our economic goals in Africa should be achieved through coordination and cooperation with

⁵² Ibid 1507.

⁵³ Ibid 1509.

⁵⁴ Ibid 1519.

the colonial powers. We do not desire to initiate programs in those areas which might cause friction among the United States, metropolitan powers, and the colonial peoples.”⁵⁵

Moreover, “Belgium as a colonial power present[ed] no major political problems to the U.S.”⁵⁶ The main objective was keeping raw material exports maintained, especially uranium. However, the second concern was the perceived constant “Communist efforts to obtain the allegiance of colonial peoples.” As a result, the State Department concluded “constructive colonial policies on the part of the administering authorities are essential to the welfare of the entire free world.” Even though Belgium was considered a stable colonial power, they were “highly sensitive to any criticism of her colonial administration, or any action which she considers an infringement of her responsibilities as administering authority.”

Just as 1949 was a seminal year in American foreign policy, 1953 can be seen as a turning point in USSR-Third World relations. That year the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, died and Nikita Khrushchev ascended to First Secretary. The former was a doctrinaire Marxist who adhered to a strict interpretation of Lenin’s stages of development and believed the lack of an established labor class in most Third World countries precluded them from ever reaching true socialism. As a result, he came to the conclusion that self-proclaimed Third World communist movements should be used to further Soviet aims in the global Cold War. Stalin believed even under the best political circumstances the ability for Third World communist countries to transform their societies successfully was so narrow to be almost nonexistent.⁵⁷

Khrushchev wanted to soften the competition of the Cold War. Rather than armed excursions like the Korean War, the new Soviet leader would vie for influence in the Third

⁵⁵ “Policy Paper Prepared by the Bureau of New Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs,” April 18, 1950, FRUS 1950, Vol. 5, 1527.

⁵⁶ “Policy Statement Prepared in the Department of State,” May 8, 1950, FRUS 1950, Vol. III: Western Europe (Washington, DC: GPO, 1977), 1348.

⁵⁷ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 66.

World. The historian Odd Arne Westad described Khrushchev's policies in these terms: the Soviet leader "emphasized the government-to-government links that could be built not only with self-declared socialist regimes – such as China – but also the radical bourgeois regimes...such as Sukarno's Indonesia, Nasser's Egypt, or Nehru's India."⁵⁸ As the United States and the USSR contended to gain the allegiance of burgeoning Third World nationalists, the non-aligned leaders began to develop an identity of their own in the political space this competition created.

The first wave of nationalist leaders was concerned more with domestic issues than foreign policy. Their chief objectives were generally to stabilize their countries and to create functioning governments. As the superpower competition started to heat up, Third World leaders began to understand their importance in the international system. Their growing sense of identity culminated in the 1955 Asian-African conference in Bandung, Indonesia. While there the leaders tried to formulate a consensus on how to play, while not as important in comparative terms – but a uniquely a newly influential bloc. The importance of the Bandung conference was partly a result of its timing several African countries were vying for independence and the French had just withdrawn from Indochina.⁵⁹

While the United States and Britain feared the conference would provoke greater anti-colonial sentiment, the five sponsoring countries (India, Indonesia, Burma, Pakistan, and Ceylon) attempted to cultivate a moderate tone.⁶⁰ The most significant outcome might have been the conference's call for economic changes; for example, increased freight rates, collective bargaining to raise commodity prices, and exchange of information on oil prices. In terms of

⁵⁸ Ibid, 67.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 99.

⁶⁰ Amitav Acharya, *Asia Rising: Who is Leading?* (River Edge, NJ: World Scientific, 2008), 46.

Africa, the conference was an inspiration to the Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah, who used Bandung to justify his pan-African aspirations.⁶¹

The year 1955 also marked a slow shift in American foreign policy in regards to Africa. During the Truman and early Eisenhower years, the United States publicly supported African nationalists' calls for self-determination, while U.S. "policies [were] determined primarily by the attitudes of European metropolitan powers." In a very candid letter to Mason Sears, President of the UN Trusteeship Council and an advocate for African independence, the U.S Consul in Nairobi described the U.S.'s position: "Is self-determination a right that is axiomatic, automatic and divinely bestowed? Or is it a right that one must earn?...I think that upon reflection nearly all of us would agree that the latter is closer to the truth. Does a child have an 'unalienable right' to self-determination?...Could an all-African government in East Africa, the Belgian Congo or French Equatorial Africa, presently meet its international obligations?...Whether one calls it 'colonialism' or 'paternalism' or what have you, some form of foreign protection to the African territories is likely to be necessary for quite some time to come."⁶²

Despite this clear support for the European powers, the Deputy Director of the African affairs division within the State Department, Fred L. Hadsel, advocated in 1955 that the U.S start to formulate its own policy agendas in Africa rather than rely on the colonial powers. While Secretary of State John Foster Dulles would not immediately act upon Hadsel's suggestions, he would in time. "A year later a new position of deputy assistant secretary of state for African affairs was created in the Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs. The Office

⁶¹ Ibid, 49.

⁶² John R. Barrow, "Letter from the Consul at Nairobi (Barrow) to the Representative at the Trusteeship Council (Sears)," July 28, 1955. FRUS 1955-1957, Vol. XVIII: Africa (Washington, DC: GPO, 1989), 10.

of African Affairs was divided, and Hadsel himself became director of the Office of Southern African Affairs.”⁶³ Embassy and consulate staffs were also increased.

Even with these changes, the Eisenhower administration reported: “As a result of the deadlock on policy in regard to the relationship of the metropolises to the newly developing countries, there were no fully agreed basic NSC or OCB papers providing authoritative guidance for African affairs.”⁶⁴ From a policy stand point this was where America was when the Congo Crisis began. It was caught in the vice of supporting nationalist leaders while alienating their NATO allies or having to back the colonial powers with the fear that the Soviet Union would become the champion of self-determination. While privately, the U.S wanted the colonial powers to retain their spheres of influence in Africa, publicly it was untenable for them to state such a position.

In the Belgian Congo, the Eisenhower administration believed its “defense and economic arrangements with the Western European countries as well as [their] interest in seeing the dependent African peoples progress in an orderly fashion toward self-government [could] both be served in the Congo by acting through the metropolitan government.”⁶⁵ But if the Belgians were not able to meet their obligations in the future, “the importance of the Congo...as a prime source of critical raw materials, United States aid, if a need for it developed, would have a fairly high priority.”⁶⁶ The United States should act tactfully, however, because of the “rather unusual sensitivities of the Belgians which [were] motivated by fears of losing the Congo and their

⁶³ Helmreich, *United States Relations with Belgium and the Congo*, 161.

⁶⁴ “Memorandum from the Deputy Operations Coordinator (Rogers) to the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Satterthwaite)” December 7, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV (Washington, DC: GPO, 1992), 171.

⁶⁵ Frederick M. Alger Jr., “Despatch from the Embassy in Belgium to the Department of State,” March 21, 1956, FRUS 1955-1957 Vol. XVIII, 303.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 304.

suspicion that anti-colonialist tendencies might lead the United States to take positions undercutting them there.”

Though the United States felt the Belgians were able to maintain stability in the Congo, cracks began to present themselves in the late 1950s. On October 6, 1957, a State Department official was sent on a ten week tour of Africa. He came to the conclusion that the “virus of self-government has reached the Congo and there appeared to be a rather recent realization on the part of the Belgian officials of its potential strength... There was substantial evidence of African self-assertion which will increase in volume and power in spite of anything the authorities may do.”⁶⁷

There were a number of reasons why the Congolese began to agitate for self-determination. An economic boom during the 1950s precipitated urbanization. By 1955, the urban population made up twenty two percent of the country.⁶⁸ A new social class would emerge, the évolués. The new industries that developed in the Congo needed skilled African laborers. These individuals spoke French, practiced Christianity, and were generally more westernized and therefore more evolved than their “primitive” countrymen. These évolués furthered their political aspirations by forming clubs. Three hundred and seventeen separate clubs, with a total membership of fifteen thousand, existed in 1956.⁶⁹ Some of these organizations developed into full-fledged political institutions. The most influential was the Alliance des Bakongos (ABAKO) led by the future president, Joseph Kasavubu. Most of these clubs were organized around ethnic lines and would thus contribute to the country’s fragmentation.

⁶⁷ Julius Holmes, “Memorandum from the Secretary of State’s Special Assistant (Holmes) to Secretary of State Dulles,” February 6, 1958-1960, FRUS Vol. XIV, 5.

⁶⁸ Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention*, 70.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 71.

Possibly more important than the internal changes were the international ones.

Throughout Africa the pre-World War II status quo was being challenged. The Sudan gained its independence in 1956, Ghana in 1957, and the British were fighting the Mau Mau nationalists in Kenya. French possessions were also going through a turbulent time. Tunisia and Morocco gained their independence in 1956. In Algeria, the French were trying to suppress a guerrilla insurgency.

In an effort to quell the growing nationalism within French West Africa, the French President, Charles de Gaulle, offered independence to the remaining African colonies in 1958. Only one accepted, Guinea, under the leadership of Sékou Touré. De Gaulle became determined to make an example out of Guinea and recalled all French personnel and resources from the African country. France's policy was undermined when the USSR and the newly independent Ghana began to assist Guinea. Rather than check African nationalism, the Guinean experience sped up the process.⁷⁰ It also became an example to US policy makers, who now understood that the USSR was prepared to fill vacuums vacated by former metropolises in Africa.

Congolese political agitation eventually took the form of rioting and disturbances, the largest of which broke out in Leopoldville in January 1959. When the colonial army, the Force Publique, was brought in to restore order, forty-nine Congolese lost their lives. Even though the Belgians claimed the cause of the riots were unemployment and tribal tensions, they did begin to reorient their colonial policies to advance quickly towards independence.⁷¹ After the January riots, Belgian King Baudouin announced major changes in colonial policy. The most immediate change was the termination of racial discrimination.⁷² The Belgian parliament also appointed a

⁷⁰ Richard J. Reid, *A History of Modern Africa: 1800 to the Present* (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 278.

⁷¹ "Memorandum of Conversation" May 13, 1959, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 254.

⁷² Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Interventions*, 74.

commission to study colonial policy. Eventually, a plan was laid out that called for elections and a gradual buildup towards self-government that would take place in 1964.

These measures were not enough because the majority of the Congolese believed the Belgians would fix the elections. Kasavubu expressed such a belief to the United States. In a conversation with Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Joseph Satterthwaite, Kasavubu indicated “he had no faith in these proposed elections since he believed the Belgian authorities would rig them in their favor. In this connection, he protested against the nomination by Belgian officials of one-third of the members to be sent to the territorial and provincial councils.”⁷³

Further rioting and the lack of voter turnout forced the Belgians to rethink their policies. They became “much more ready to consult with US, if not to solicit [American] advice or assistance.”⁷⁴ On January 20, 1960, a Round Table Conference was convened between the Belgian government and representatives from the major Congolese parties. On January 27, it was decided that the Congo would be granted full independence on June 30, 1960. The Belgian Ambassador, Louis Scheyven, sat down with U.S Secretary of State Christian Herter to solicit his opinion on February 12, 1960. Herter said the Belgian government was handling the situation with “great wisdom and flexibility. He added that from over-all point of view it would have been better if there had been more time to work out complicated process of setting up new independent state, but he realized that this time did not exist because of strength of forces pressing towards independence.”⁷⁵

⁷³ Jerome R. Lavalley, “Despatch from the Consulate General at Leopoldville to the Department of State,” June 23, 1959, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 255.

⁷⁴ Douglas C. Dillon, “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Belgium,” January 8, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 259.

⁷⁵ Christian A. Herter, “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Belgium,” February 12, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 261.

There were three main reasons why the Belgians were willing to grant the Congo independence. Belgium was never an imperial power; it was its king, Leopold II, who wanted colonies. The colonial administration was rather sparse with companies “that often acted as states within the state-colony.”⁷⁶ The Belgian public believed everything was running smoothly until the riots began to break out. Once they became aware of how the Congolese felt they were not “sufficiently attached to the role of colonial masters to be willing to make sacrifices to remain.” The Belgians unwillingness to stay in the Congo was amplified by the recent French attempt to suppress guerilla fighters in Algeria. If France had to spend as much resources as they had to suppress the Algerian nationalists, how much would Belgium have to exert?

There were also indications that the Belgian government was willing to grant the Congo independence because it felt it could still rule the country in a neo-colonial manner. The civil administration was still dominated by Europeans. The Force Publique, while renamed the Armée Nationale Congolaise (ANC), was still officered by Belgians.⁷⁷ Furthermore, the Congolese economy was dependent on Belgian capital and business interests. The three principal enterprises inside the Congo, Union Minière du Haut-Katange, Forminiere, and Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Bas-Congo au Katange, were all funded by one of the largest Belgian holding companies, Société Général. The three companies had been given tracts of land that were part of the Kasai and Katanga regions and acted like governments within the state.⁷⁸ These companies were vital to the Congolese economy.

While Belgium tried to retain its position in the Congo, America’s first concern was communist penetration. It wanted to “avoid a repetition of the Guinean experience when the

⁷⁶ Herbert Weiss, “The Congo’s Independence Struggle Viewed Fifty Years Later,” *African Studies Review*, Volume 55, Number 1 (April 2012), 111.

⁷⁷ Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Interventions*, 78.

⁷⁸ Frans Buelens and Stefaan Marysse, “Returns on Investment during the Colonial Era: The Case of the Belgian Congo,” *Economic History Review* Vol. 62. Series 1 (2009), 141. (135-166)

Soviet Bloc moved into a vacuum after the French left.”⁷⁹ The U.S needed to assign a competent ambassador to the country because it was believed the Soviets would have someone stationed in Leopoldville on July 1.⁸⁰ In terms of reaching the Congolese population, the radio station in Leopoldville needed to be improved. These steps were significant because the “Russians [were] operating the Guinea radio system and Ghana is greatly strengthening its radio set-up.”⁸¹ Furthermore, “Voice of America broadcasts to the Congo... appeared to be quite inadequate from a technical and content point of view. The only stations bringing international news clearly to the Congo [were] Brazzaville...Radio Cairo and Radio Moscow.”

U.S officials’ fear of communist penetration was augmented when the left-leaning Patrice Lumumba emerged as the leading political figure in the country and was named prime minister. A former postal clerk, Lumumba had begun his political career in the late 1950s. He had helped create and later led the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC). The State Department described him as “highly articulate, sophisticated, subtle and unprincipled intelligence...He gives the impression of a man who would probably go far in spite of the fact that almost nobody trusts him.”⁸² Lumumba’s Soviet-bloc ties were disputed with some reports indicating USSR assistance but the “more likely explanation...[was] that Lumumba’s outside financial support [came] largely from Accra and possibly from Conakry and that some of these funds in turn may [have originated] in Soviet sources.” Allen Dulles, the CIA director, stated Lumumba was being

⁷⁹ “Editorial Note,” February 18, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 262.

⁸⁰ William Burden, “Letter from the Ambassador in Belgium (Burden) to the Under Secretary of State (Dillon),” April 7, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 267.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 268.

⁸² “Memorandum of Conversation between the Ambassador in Belgium (Burden) and Patrice Lumumba,” February 25, 1960, FRUS1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 263.

“supported by the Belgian Communists.”⁸³ Either way, the U.S government believed he was “perfectly prepared to betray these supporters to the fullest extent that suits his purpose.”⁸⁴

Two weeks before the Congo was to gain its independence, the U.S consulate gave an assessment of the present state of the country. It was noted that “basic elements [of] political instability and immaturity, lack of qualified or experienced leadership, superficial familiarity with inter-relationships between economic and political problems and role in family of nations, more painfully apparent than ever.”⁸⁵ As a result of the chaos that might unfold in the Congo, the U.S had to rethink its role in the country. It was stated, “we have maintained hands-off policy...As Belgian influence declines and in absence any show of US interest in means of achieving greater political stability, question arises as to whether we should not now attempt exert more positive influence.” Furthermore, it became apparent that Lumumba was the only figure that could keep the country together and that there was “no better alternative on the horizon than a government built around him.”⁸⁶ The United States was willing to accept Lumumba because they viewed him as an opportunist who could be bought to take Western positions but also as the only man who could keep the African country together.

After the Congo gained its independence on June 30, 1960, the country quickly descended into chaos. Though Lumumba and the MNC were able to garner a plurality, with 40 seats out of 137 in the Chamber of Representatives, there were twenty-two other parties in the chamber, none of which held more than thirteen seats.⁸⁷ The country immediately began to fragment as local power prevailed over state institutions. The collapse of the civil administration

⁸³ “Editorial Note,” May 5, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 274.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 264.

⁸⁵ John D. Tomlinson, “Telegram from the Consulate General at Leopoldville to the Department of State,” June 14, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 275.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 276.

⁸⁷ Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Interventions*, 81.

was partly the result of Belgian colonial policies. Unlike their British and French counterparts, the Belgians generally prohibited the Congolese from receiving higher education. By 1960, there were no more than sixty university graduates and only one lawyer in the country.⁸⁸ The Congo was also organized under ethnic lines which precluded a sense of national identity. Allen Dulles estimated that there were “some 80-odd political parties” in the Congo.⁸⁹ President Eisenhower “said he did not know that many people in the Congo could read. Mr. Dulles said conflicts between tribes in the Congo would present one difficult problem.”

On July 5, the situation continued to deteriorate when the ANC mutinied and began to terrorize the country, especially Europeans. There were two reasons for the rebellion. The first was “Lumumba promising all government employees a pay raise – all, that is, except the army.”⁹⁰ The situation was exasperated when General Emile Janssens “reportedly told his troops that ‘for the army, independence equals zero.’” The enlisted Congolese resented their European born commanders and their anger finally boiled over.

On July 9, the Belgian government informed the Eisenhower administration that it was sending troops to reestablish order and protect European lives. Though the United States had misgivings about the action, embassy officials were told to make it clear that they were not “asking reversal Belgian decision.”⁹¹ After Belgian troops arrived the next day, rather than stabilize the situation they made matters worse. Even though their mission was supposed to be restrictive and limited to protecting civilians, the Belgian military expanded its efforts. The most egregious act was when the Belgian navy shelled the port of Matadi, killing nineteen

⁸⁸ Ibid, 57.

⁸⁹ “Editorial Note,” May 5, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 274.

⁹⁰ Larry Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo: Fighting the Cold War in a Hot Zone*, (New York: Public Affairs), 8.

⁹¹ William Burden, “Telegram from the Embassy in Belgium to the Department of State,” July 9, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 285.

Congolese.⁹² From July 10 to the end of the month, there were seven parachute operations, three assault-landings, and six airlift deployments.⁹³

To try and defuse the situation, the American Ambassador to the Congo, Clare Timberlake, came up with a plan. He argued a UN force could be put in place to maintain order, like in Egypt in 1956 after the Suez crisis. As the UN moved in the Belgians would gradually withdraw their forces. He believed this “should keep bears out of the Congo caviar” as well as the United States since he assumed the latter “have not yet developed a great taste for it either.”⁹⁴ The State Department agreed with Timberlake’s plan and told him to pursue it. On the same day, Timberlake drove to the Leopoldville airport where Lumumba and Kasavubu had just arrived. They held a one hour meeting in which the American ambassador urged the two leaders to call upon the UN. They heeded his advice and made the request.⁹⁵ Though the United States did not “want to do a single thing...[except] under UN auspices,” it moved the aircraft carrier *Wasp* into the vicinity with marines on board.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the Eisenhower administration would later refuse a request made by the Congolese Vice-Prime Minister, Antoine Gizenga, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Justin Bomboko, and Minister of National Defense, Albert Nyembo, for US troops to be used to restore order. President Eisenhower felt the U.S “would be completely in error to go in unilaterally.”⁹⁷ Furthermore, he believed “Turkish or Pakistani troops [should be

⁹² Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Interventions*, 82.

⁹³ Andrew Hudson, *Congo Unravelling: Military Operations from Independence to the Mercenary Revolt 1960-68*, Helion (Midlands, UK), 17.

⁹⁴ William Burden, “Telegram from the Embassy in Belgium to the Department of State,” July 10, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 287.

⁹⁵ William Burden, “Telegram from the Embassy in Belgium to the Department of State,” July 10, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 289.

⁹⁶ “Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between Secretary of State Herter and Secretary-General Hammarskjöld,” July 12, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 297.

⁹⁷ “Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Herter,” July 12, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 296.

used] if [the UN] can't get African troops." He felt Western soldiers should not be sent to the Congo.

The U.S decision to use the UN to maintain stability in the Congo marks a clear break in Belgian-American relations. Lumumba and Kasavubu framed their request for UN assistance in terms of protecting their country from Belgian aggression. To exasperate the situation, Lumumba stated that if aid was not forthcoming he would appeal to the "Bandung Treaty Powers."⁹⁸ The U.S State Department interpreted Lumumba's remarks as a veiled threat to call in Communist China.⁹⁹ Furthermore, the resolution that passed the UN Security Council on July 14 called upon the Belgian government to withdraw its forces. U.S support for such wording angered the Belgians who felt betrayed. They wished the United States had abstained from voting like the British and French.¹⁰⁰ By now, the Eisenhower administration did not believe the Belgians could maintain stability in the Congo and was hoping they could use the UN to achieve those ends.

The situation continued to escalate when the two most mineral rich provinces in the Congo seceded from the central government. The first was the copper rich region of Katanga on July 11 under the leadership of Moise Tshombe. The United States was not caught off guard. During a May 5, National Security Council meeting, Allen Dulles, remarked, "there is some possibility that a movement might develop in the rich Katanga area for separation from the Congo and union with Rhodesia."¹⁰¹ Tshombe had also approached US officials on June 22 to inquire whether the U.S would recognize an independent Katanga. The response he received was

⁹⁸ "Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Herter," July 13, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 300.

⁹⁹ Christian A. Herter, "Telegram from the Department of State to the Mission at the United Nations," July 13, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 303.

¹⁰⁰ Helmreich, *United States Relations with Belgium and the Congo*, 219.

¹⁰¹ "Editorial Note," May 5, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 274.

not “under present circumstances.” The Eisenhower administration surmised correctly that “Union Minière and local military back[ed] Tshombe.”¹⁰²

The chief American concern was keeping the Congo’s mineral reserves in the possession of the Free World and accessible to NATO in the case of a war. A second reason why the United States did not discourage Tshombe was the belief “that if the assets of Katanga could be retained, the economy of the Congo could be throttled. The Soviets would have to throw a lot of money into the rest of the Congo to keep it viable in such a case. The President [even] suggested that the UN might recognize Katanga.”¹⁰³

In addition to Belgian interests supporting and financing Katanga, the diamond rich region of South Kasai seceded in August of 1960 under the leadership of Albert Kalonji. Though not as lucrative as Katanga, South Kasai had substantial Belgian holdings, including the influential company Forminiere. While on paper South Kasai’s government was African, the Belgians dominated and effectively ran the province.¹⁰⁴

These two secessions and the Belgian presence in the Congo would cause Lumumba’s clash with the United Nations and eventual removal. The first UN peacekeepers began to arrive from Tunisia on July 15. Ultimately, troop levels reached a peak of 20,000 and came from around 30 countries.¹⁰⁵ While the United States did not want to unilaterally get involved in the Congo, it was perfectly comfortable working through UN auspices. There were a number of Americans advising the UN Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjold. Two field directors for the Congo mission, Ralph Bunche and Andrew Cordier, were both Americans and former State

¹⁰² Christian A. Herter, “Telegram from the Department of State to the Consulate General at Leopoldville,” June 23, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 278.

¹⁰³ Robert H. Johnson, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 456th Meeting of the National Security Council,” August 18, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 424.

¹⁰⁴ Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Interventions*, 89.

¹⁰⁵ James Dobbins. et al, *The UN’s Role in Nation-Building: From the Congo to Iraq*, (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation), 11.

Department officials. Furthermore, the United States paid forty two percent of the operating cost.¹⁰⁶

Though the United Nations provided humanitarian efforts and “assumed responsibility for assisting the Congolese government in providing the essential services of an independent state,”¹⁰⁷ its role in the conflict was disputed. Once UN troops began to flood the country, Belgian soldiers were supposed to withdraw to their bases. In most regions this occurred. In Katanga and South Kasai, however, the Belgians remained “despite assurances total withdrawal would, and later, had taken place.”¹⁰⁸ As the days turned into weeks, Lumumba continued to vent his frustration at Belgium’s attempt to divide the Congo. His speeches also served the dual purpose of consolidating his legitimacy inside the country. On August 12, Ambassador Timberlake complained “that Lumumba is moving steadily toward very strong dictatorship...he will establish a dictatorship if he can get away with it.”¹⁰⁹ Five days later, Timberlake indicated that the UN forces were not providing enough stability. He wrote, “I would hate to stand here and watch this gambit played out under the noses of an impotent UN military force.”¹¹⁰

Lumumba also believed the UN forces were not being used properly. On August 9, a second UN Security Council resolution was passed calling for the Belgians to remove their troops. It also “reaffirmed that the United Nations Force in the Congo would ‘not be a party to or in any way intervene in or be used to influence the outcome of any internal conflict,

¹⁰⁶ David N. Gibb, “The United Nations, International Peacekeeping and the Question of ‘Impartiality’: Revisiting the Congo Operation of 1960,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* Vol. 38 No. 3 (Sep. 2000), 365.

¹⁰⁷ James Dobbins, et al, *The UN’s Role in Nation-Building*, 12.

¹⁰⁸ “Telegram from the Mission at the United Nations to the Department of State,” September 5, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 458.

¹⁰⁹ Clare H. Timberlake, “Telegram from the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State,” August 12, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 408.

¹¹⁰ Clare H. Timberlake, “Telegram from the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State,” August 17, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 421.

constitutional or otherwise.”¹¹¹ Lumumba, on the other hand, believed “that in its intervention in the Congo the United Nations is not to act as neutral organization but rather that the Security Council is to place all its resources at the disposal of [his] Government.” He wanted to invade both Katanga and South Kasai with the UN force in combination with a disciplined ANC and restore the provinces to the central government. U.S Under Secretary Douglas Dillon outlined the stakes involved, “Lumumba is in fact challenging authority, prestige and usefulness of United Nations...[If he were to succeed it] might thus greatly retard efforts attain world peace through multinational approach collective security.”¹¹² Thus the Eisenhower administration viewed Lumumba as a threat against the U.S-led approach of collective security which had been in place since 1945 and which it now sought to engage as a successful tool for decolonization, not as Lumumba’s instrument in a civil war.

In late August the situation changed dramatically when the USSR began to supply Lumumba with equipment and technicians. Soviet Ilyushin transport aircraft arrived in Leopoldville carrying trucks that would be used on an assault on South Kasai. Fortunately for the United States, the mercenaries protecting the diamond rich province were able to rout Lumumba’s forces. Unfortunately, the defeated army began to terrorize the population and a massacre ensued. Lumumba’s actions were denounced and on September 5, 1960, Kasavubu dismissed Lumumba as prime minister and subsequently “went home and went to bed.”¹¹³ Given Kasavubu’s weak character it is probable “the U.S. embassy and the UN” directed him.¹¹⁴ To replace Lumumba, Kasavubu named Joseph Ileo prime minister. The same man Ambassador

¹¹¹ “Editorial Note,” FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 412.

¹¹² Douglas C. Dillon, “Telegram from the Department of State to Certain Diplomatic Missions,” August 20, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 433.

¹¹³ “Telegram from the Mission at the United Nations to the Department of State,” September 7, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 464.

¹¹⁴ Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention*, 95.

Timberlake had indicated as the “most likely successor if Lumumba Government unseated by legal means.”¹¹⁵

Nevertheless, Lumumba was able to outmaneuver his rivals by proceeding to the Leopoldville radio station, where he made “an impassioned appeal to the people.” Allen Dulles complained, “it was not easy to run a coup in the Congo. As an indication of the lack of planning, Mr. Dulles pointed out that for a time Kasavubu had controlled the radio in Leopoldville, but that when he left the radio station it was left unguarded... [Furthermore,] Lumumba’s ability to influence the Congolese people, Mr. Dulles observed, was greater than that of Kasavubu.”¹¹⁶

To make matters worse, Lumumba was able to appeal to Congolese members of parliament. On September 7, the Chamber of Deputies voted to reinstate him and two days later the Senate followed suit.¹¹⁷ Kasavubu said “his forces were afraid since Lumumba had control major portion military and police. Senators had been afraid to vote against Lumumba.” The Eisenhower administration had to characterize “these events as Lumumba victory.”¹¹⁸

The nationalist’s reinstatement as prime minister added yet another dimension to the continuing crisis. A rift between the United States and Dag Hammarskjold began to develop as to the constitutionality of Lumumba’s premiership. Hammarskjold still considered Lumumba to be the active prime minister because “only parliamentary action since deposition of Lumumba had

¹¹⁵ Clare H. Timberlake, “Telegram from the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State,” August 17, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 418.

¹¹⁶ Robert H. Johnson, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 458th Meeting of the National Security Council,” September 7, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 199-200.

¹¹⁷ Clare H. Timberlake, “Telegram from the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State,” September 9, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 471.

¹¹⁸ “Telegram from the Mission at the United Nations to the Department of State,” September 7, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 464.

been to re-endorse Lumumba's status as PM."¹¹⁹ The US argued "old [government] loses caretaker status from moment new [government] is named." In addition to these technical matters, countries that were part of the UN effort in the Congo, specifically Ghana, Guinea, and the United Arab Republic, began to complain about Hammarskjold, who appeared "as a puppet of the United States – an image that the secretary-general could not have appreciated."¹²⁰

On September 14, the situation began to stabilize. The Congolese Colonel Joseph-Desire Mobutu, with CIA backing, staged a coup and declared the suspension of parliament and the setting up of a student council that would govern the country. In reality, Mobutu held all the power. Furthermore, Lumumba became a prisoner in the prime minister's residency and thus could not drum up popular discontent as before. The split between the United Nations and the U.S became apparent when Mobutu issued an arrest warrant for Lumumba on September 20, but was unable to carry it out because UN forces blocked him. The Secretary-General's special representative in the Congo, Rajeshwar Dayal, "felt arrest of Lumumba was not proper solution but 'trick' and believed this was bad answer to present problem."¹²¹

On November 27, the frictions between the United Nations and the United States were rendered moot when Lumumba left the prime minister's residency and evaded Mobutu's troops. He attempted to make his way to the city of Stanleyville but was arrested on December 1 by the Congolese army and imprisoned in Thysville. Antoine Gizenga, Lumumba's second-in-command and the man Timberlake indicated "would presumably succeed" Lumumba if the latter was captured, immediately went to Stanleyville and proclaimed the independence of the

¹¹⁹ James Wadsworth, "Telegram from the Mission at the United Nations to the Department of State," October 15, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 529.

¹²⁰ Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Interventions*, 97.

¹²¹ Clare H. Timberlake, "Telegram from the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State," October 11, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 518.

Oriental Province.¹²² At the present moment there were three Congolese provinces which had seceded from the central government. South Kasai, led by Albert Kalonji and Moïse Tshombé's Katanga, both of which were supported by the Belgians and the mining companies Forminère and Union Minière du Haut Katanga. The left leaning leader Antonie Gizenga controlled Oriental Province and was receiving "some support from the Soviet Union and several African countries, but the support was very limited."¹²³

While the Congo Crisis is generally seen as a Cold War conflict, the USSR never played a large role in the country. Khrushchev's ability to denounce the United States and the United Nations in the international community, on the other hand, was very effective. With Belgian mercenaries in Katanga and the Eisenhower administration taking the position that "UN activities should not be directed to undermining Tshombé's or Katanga's position," the Soviet leader could galvanize the Afro-Asian bloc against the US and the UN while seemingly being the champion of self-determination.¹²⁴ This is why Hammarskjöld changed course and began to work against the United States. The USSR and the Afro-Asian bloc's public denunciations against the UN and Belgian policies were too strong to disregard because the UN'S legitimacy was being undermined and Hammarskjöld's leadership questioned. One of Khrushchev's most vehement attacks came on September 23, 1960, at the UN General Assembly. The Soviet leader "delivered a long speech, which demanded among other things the ouster of Secretary-General

¹²² Clare H. Timberlake, "Telegram from the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State," August 17, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 418.

¹²³ Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Interventions*, 98.

¹²⁴ Christian A. Herter, "Telegram from the Department of State to the Mission at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization," September 9, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 473.

Hammaraskjold and suggested his replacement by a three-man body representing the West, Soviet bloc, and neutral nations.”¹²⁵

The U.S position continued to deteriorate as Gizenga’s influence expanded. Small scale riots began to break out but were soon suppressed. In the UN the Afro-Asian bloc along with the USSR argued that a new government should be formed which included Lumumba. On January 10, 1961, the CIA lamented, “In the eyes of the UN Secretary General as well as of many UN members [Lumumba] still has legal basis to his claim for the Premiership. He may return to power.”¹²⁶ On January 17, the CIA took matters into its own hands by having Mobutu deliver Lumumba to the Katanga government; a government that had indicated it would kill him. In a detailed study of the assassination, Stephen Weissman concluded, “that the US Government shared direct responsibility for Lumumba’s murder along with the Congo and Belgium.” Furthermore, the CIA station chief, Larry Devlin, “acted to prevent Washington policymakers from learning about, and possibly blocking Lumumba’s rendition.”¹²⁷

If the Eisenhower administration assassinated Lumumba it was one of its last acts in the Congo. On January 20, 1961, the President-elect, John F. Kennedy, moved into the White House. American policy under Ike had depended on the former colonial powers to maintain stability in their respected spheres of influence. During the Congo’s independence, however, it became apparent that the U.S “could not rely on Belgium.” Though the U.S turned to the UN, it was still the Eisenhower administration’s “objective to get the Belgians back into the Congo.”¹²⁸ As

¹²⁵ “Editorial Note,” FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. X, Part 1: Eastern Europe Region, Soviet Union, Cyprus (Washington, DC: GPO, 1993), 558.

¹²⁶ “Special National Intelligence Estimate,” January 10, 1961, FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. XX: Congo Crisis (Washington, DC: GPO, 1994).

¹²⁷ Stephen R. Weissman, “An Extraordinary Rendition,” *Intelligence and National Security* Vol. 25, No. 2 April 2010, 200.

¹²⁸ Robert H. Johnson, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 456th Meeting of the National Security Council,” August 18, 1960, FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XIV, 149.

events unfolded this goal became unattainable with the Afro-Asian bloc and the USSR publicly stating that nineteenth century colonialism was being propped up in the Congo.

By the time the Kennedy administration took office the Afro-Asian bloc was too strong to go against. Therefore, the main objective of the U.S was to get the Belgians to fully withdraw and to reunify the Congo with a civilian government. In mid-February, the US supported a Security Council resolution proposed by the UAR, Liberia, and Ceylon which called for the removal of Belgian forces from the Congo and authorized the United Nations to use force against the mercenaries if necessary. The resolution also called for Mobutu to step down as the head of the Congolese government and the reinstatement of civilian control under Joseph Ileo.

A series of negotiations then took place between the secessionist leaders. On February 28, Ileo, Tshombe, and Kalonji agreed to combine their military resources in an effort to defeat the leftist Gizenga. In early March the first meeting took place in Tananarive, Madagascar and was dominated by Tshombe, who garnered an agreement for a decentralized government. In April, a second meeting convened in the Northern Congolese city of Coquilhatville. Central government officials now demanded more authority. Previously, Tshombe had violated the Tananarive agreement by establishing “an economic agreement with the government of Congo-Brazzaville.”¹²⁹ When talks broke down and Tshombe tried to leave he was arrested by the central government and put in prison for two months. He was released after promising that he would cease his secession and reintegrate Katanga; of course, the moment Tshombe got back to the province he recommitted himself to independence. His defiance only brought the Congolese government closer to the UN and the U.S.

The U.S was able to reach a temporary resolution with Gizenga in July 1961. The Congolese parliament convened for the first time since September 1960, in order to form a new

¹²⁹ Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Interventions*, 127.

government. Tshombe did not attend because he was officially “ill.”¹³⁰ Even though Gizenga was able to garner support at the beginning of the conference, the CIA and the UN worked to undermine his position. The Kennedy administration believed if Gizenga was named PM there would be an “unfortunate reaction at home and damage to [their] prestige abroad.”¹³¹ Eventually, Ileo was replaced as prime minister by the U.S favored Cyrille Adoula and Gizenga was named deputy prime minister. It was a success for the Kennedy administration since the Orientale secession ended and Gizenga was reincorporated into the central government.

In South Kasai, the situation began to stabilize as well with Albert Kalonji “playing ball” and appearing as a “compromiser.”¹³² As a result, all of the focus was put on Tshombe. Through August the United Nations, United States, and the Katanga government tried to reach a diplomatic solution. On August 20, however, Tshombe indicated to the Kennedy administration that “Katanga [was] determined to defend by force of arms its rights [and] its accomplishments of the past year.”¹³³ Six days later Adoula sent a letter to Tshombe ordering him to come to Leopoldville. Adoula was able to take such measures because the UN representative, now Conor Cruise O’Brien, had promised to back Adoula militarily (it ought to be noted that Lumumba had asked for such assistance a year earlier and was rejected).

United Nations forces began Operation Rumpunch in Katanga on August 28, 1961. Although numerous mercenaries were arrested and expelled, the UN could not break the secession. One important factor was the presence of a single French-made Fouga Magister

¹³⁰ McMurtrie G. Godley II., “Telegram from the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State,” July 20, 1961, FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. XX.

¹³¹ McMurtrie G. Godley II., “Telegram from the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State,” July 28, 1961, FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. XX.

¹³² McMurtrie G. Godley II., “Telegram from the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State,” August 11, 1961, FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. XX.

¹³³ William C. Canup, “Telegram from the Consulate in Elizabethville to the Department of State,” August 20, 1961, FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. XX.

aircraft which “inflicted enough damage and disruption to prevent the deployment of UN forces.”¹³⁴ In addition to the military successes of Katanga’s hired mercenaries, European newspapers denounced the UN.¹³⁵ On September 17 the situation changed dramatically when Dag Hammarskjold was killed in a plane crash en route to the Northern Rhodesian city of Ndola to negotiate a ceasefire with Tshombe.

There are a number of theories as to what actually occurred. They range from a mercenary being brought on board and crashing the plane to Katanga mercenaries accidentally shooting it down while trying to intimidate the Secretary-General. More benign explanations are mechanical failure or the pilot accidentally grabbing the flight chart for the city of Ndolo in the Congo rather than Ndola. “Aviation experts agree that the most likely explanation is what is know [sic] as Controlled Flight Into Terrain (C.F.I.T.). In the years following the crash at Ndola it has been found that pilots not infrequently make judgment errors as to altitude due to sensory/optical illusions.”¹³⁶ Nevertheless, a formal ceasefire was announced between Katanga and the UN forces on September 20. U Thant was named Hammarskjold’s replacement in November.

While the UN-Katanga problem was thereafter in abeyance, Gizenga reemerged as a destabilizing factor. In October he left the central government and reestablished his independence in Orientale Province. He was crushed, however, when UN forces arrested him on January 15, 1962. He would remain in prison for the duration of the conflict. South Kasai was

¹³⁴ Andrew Hudson, *Congo Unravalled*, 27.

¹³⁵ Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Interventions*, 130.

¹³⁶ Bengt Rosio, “The Ndola Crash and the Death of Dag Hammarskjold,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*,” Vol. 31 No. 4 (Dec, 1993), 665.

also reintegrated into the central government, when Albert Kalonji was arrested and placed in protective custody only two months later.¹³⁷

Now that Gizenga and Kalonji were eliminated as challenges to central Congolese authority, the US and UN worked exclusively towards finding a solution to the Katanga secession. A two prong approach was developed to induce Tshombe back into the federal government. The first was to build up an “adequate UN military presence in Katanga.” While this was taking place the US government would try to put pressure on him “through the [Union Minière du Haut Katanga] and the Belgian government which should make clear that payment of export proceeds and taxed solely to Katanga government cannot be continued.” Thus the Kennedy administration tried to defund Tshombe while expanding UN military operations.”¹³⁸

The September 20 ceasefire began to break down with small skirmishes. By the end of October the State Department acknowledged that “pressures in Leopoldville and in New York for more energetic UN actions to put an end to Katanga’s secession are building up dangerously.”¹³⁹ The new Secretary-General was determined to restore order. The UN was now in possession of an adequate military force, which included a number of U.S Globemaster transport aircraft to ferry UN troops to Katanga. Fighter-bombers were also acquired but from Ethiopia, Sweden, and India.¹⁴⁰ Operation Unokat was launched by the UN on December 14 and was a success. “After a week of combat, [UN troops] had suffered 10 dead and 34 wounded; the Katangans endured 141 dead and 401 wounded.”¹⁴¹ Furthermore, the capital of the province, Elisabethville, was now isolated from the country and northern Katanga was occupied.

¹³⁷ Hudson, *Congo Unravelling*, 28.

¹³⁸ “Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State,” February 8, 1962, FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. XX.

¹³⁹ Dean Rusk, “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Belgium,” October 21, 1961, FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. XX.

¹⁴⁰ Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Interventions*, 132.

¹⁴¹ James Dobbins, et al, *The UN’s Role in Nation-Building*, 17.

The UN victory was so decisive that Tshombe agreed to fly to the city of Kitona and meet with Prime Minister Adoula. A ceasefire was called, but once again, when Tshombe returned to Katanga he resumed his claims of independence. The Kennedy administration, rather than support another military effort decided to pursue a diplomatic route. They continued to pressure Union Minière Haut du Katanga to stop funding Tshombe and his mercenaries. The administration was now aided by the Belgian Foreign Minister, Paul-Henri Spaak, a long time American ally.

As a result of the pressure, the Belgian business community began to fracture in 1962.¹⁴² Union Minière, however, continued to support Tshombe. Eventually the United States decided to back one more plan and then resort to UN military action as well as economic sanctions. Between July 31 and August 2 meetings were held in Washington which included representatives from the UK, France, and Belgium. The point of these discussions was to come up with a unified plan. In an August 3 memorandum Under Secretary of State George Ball outlined the West's revamped policy. A new Congolese constitution would be written which advocated for a federal government, "the immediate sharing of tax revenues and foreign exchange earnings between the Central Government and the provinces; rapid reunification of currency; integration of armed forces; closing of provincial 'foreign offices' and withdrawal of representatives abroad; a general political amnesty; freedom of movement of UN personnel (including forces) over all the Congo; and representation of the Tshombe party in the National Government."¹⁴³ The vital issue of tax revenue would be solved by a clean 50/50 split of Katanga's mining income between the province and the central government.

¹⁴² Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Interventions*, 134.

¹⁴³ George W. Ball, "Memorandum from the Under Secretary of State (Ball) to President Kennedy," August 3, 1962, FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. XX.

In addition to formulating the agreement, the US would take a number of measures to strengthen the Congolese and UN forces. This included increasing aid as well as sending “a small impact shipment of US military equipment for the Congolese army.” If Tshombe did not comply a boycott of Katangan copper would be organized. This would include the Belgian government; “Belgium import[ed] approximately 75% of Katanga’s copper exports.” If this still did not end the secession “US and Belgium and as many other governments as possible w[ould] consult with regard to supporting the UN in more stringent measures.”

The proposal was announced to the UN Security Council by U Thant and was subsequently known as the “Thant Plan.” Adoula agreed to the settlement but Tshombe remained ambiguous and elusive. The writing was on the wall when the latter’s mercenary army began to expand and acquire more weaponry. Tensions continued to rise as Tshombe’s forces began to harass UN personnel. By December 1962, it was clear that a showdown was inevitable.

The last UN offensive, Operation Grand Slam, began on December 28. Thant’s forces were able to capture Elisabethville and quickly moved to occupy Southern Katanga. The mining regions of Jadotville and Kolwezi were the prime objectives. On January 3, UN forces began to enter Jadotville, where they were met by local inhabitants rather than Katanga troops. The Shinkolobwe mine was occupied on January 13. “The number of mercenary officers in the Katangan gendarmerie had dwindled” as the UN forces advanced on Kolwezi.¹⁴⁴ The secession officially ended on January 17, 1963, over two years after it began. United Nations forces stayed in the Congo until 1964, providing military and administrative assistance. Politically, the

¹⁴⁴ Hudson, *Congo Unravalled*, 30.

Kennedy administration set up a “moderate government with Adoula at head...[but] maintained in power by Mobutu.”¹⁴⁵

Congolese stability rested on two pillars, the UN and Mobutu’s troops. Individuals loyal to Lumumba, or Lumumbists, were purged from the government and many were forced into exile. In 1963, they began to organize in neighboring Brazzaville and founded the Comité National de Libération (CNL). The organization started guerrilla activities in the Congo in 1964, just as the UN was beginning to withdraw its troops. The city of Stanleyville in Orientale Province was occupied in August of 1964 and a “People’s Republic” was declared. A second rebellion broke out in the Western section of the Congo and was led by Lumumba’s former minister for education, Pierre Mulele. It has been “frequently claimed that communist subversion was behind the rebellions. This explanation is doubtful. The Chinese provided some aid, particularly to the Mulele organization, but only in miniscule quantities.”¹⁴⁶ Even though the USSR maintained contact with the rebel leaders, their involvement was not substantial. Support did come from Cuba in 1965, with the famed guerilla leader Ernesto (Che) Guevara training Congolese rebels for several months.

The CNL, or Simbas as they became popularly known, in Orientale Province had more military success than did Mulele. The Congolese army did not want to fight and quickly collapsed because they believed the rebels were using witchcraft. The United States, now under the Lyndon Johnson administration, needed to find a solution since their strong man, Mobutu, was unable to restore order. Inexplicably, they turned to Moïse Tshombe, who became Prime Minister in July 1964, four days before the last UN troops left the country. The hope was Tshombe’s mercenary army would succeed where the Congolese national army had failed.

¹⁴⁵ George W. Ball, “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in the Congo,” December 12, 1962, FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. XX.

¹⁴⁶ Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Interventions*, 150.

Despite American efforts, the Belgian business interests that were only put in check less than two years prior were now running the country. Despite Tshombe's personal charisma and an increase in military aid from the Western powers, the rebellions could not be stymied. "Washington [now] turned to Europe. U.S. officials pressed the Belgian government "to send in their paratroops to reinstitute stability. When they refused a second option had to be formulated."¹⁴⁷ The United States tried to petition other countries to send in troops but to no avail. Eventually, the Johnson administration decided to hire more mercenaries. Most came from South Africa and Rhodesia.¹⁴⁸ By October 1964, the NSC estimated that there were over a thousand mercenaries in the Congo with the US keeping close watch over them through the CIA and military attaches. Cuban refugees were also brought in by the United States to fly American aircraft.

The ground offensive began on November 1, 1964, with the prime objective being Stanleyville. American-sponsored forces encountered little resistance as the rebels ran in fear of their modern weaponry. On November 17, the mercenaries began their advance on the rebel held city and were able to take most of it in less than a week. Intelligence started to surface, however, that the retreating rebels were executing European hostages in retaliation. The confirmation of these reports led to the implementation of the so called Dragon Operations, the most famous of which was Operation Dragon Rouge in Stanleyville. Belgian paratroops were dropped into the city from US planes and overwhelmed the rebels. "Operations Dragon Blanc, Dragon Noir, and

¹⁴⁷ Piero Gleijeses, "'Flee! The White Giants are Coming!': The United States, Mercenaries, and the Congo, 1964-1965," *Empire and Revolution: The United States and the Third World since 1945*, ed. Peter L. Hahn and Mary Ann Heiss, (Columbus, OH, Ohio State Press, 2001), 75.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 78.

Dragon Vert were all airborne operations aimed at rescuing and evacuating hostages in [the cities of] Bunia, Paulis and Watsa respectively.”¹⁴⁹

The Belgian and American operations galvanized the international community. Though reluctant at first, the Soviet Union started to send weapons to the Simbas. Even though the rebels began to receive military aid from the Eastern bloc, it made little difference since the “Simbas did not know how to use them.”¹⁵⁰ Che Guevara entered the Congo through Tanzania with a hundred men in late 1964.¹⁵¹ His hope was to start a popular uprising by organizing the peasantry. He would preach the wrongdoings of Yankee imperialism, which would foster a revolutionary sense in the people. If the Congo could become a second Vietnam, maybe the United States could be defeated.

The Cuban mission was not a success. Guevara’s men were never able to integrate themselves amongst the peasantry as they had hoped but remained isolated because they did not speak any of the Congolese languages. Their diet was also poor and they were plagued by illness. They withdrew from the conflict after seven months. Guevara believed his failure was due to the fact that he tried to incite the Congolese peasantry rather than a labor class. He could not attack capitalistic exploitations because land was abundant and the farmers were relatively self-sufficient. Capitalism had not yet reached the Congolese peasantry let alone exploited them.¹⁵² The Simbas would continue to harass the European population of the Congo but they were never able to gain as much power as they had in 1964. Pierre Mulele would also be a thorn in the side of the Western powers until his execution in 1968.

¹⁴⁹ Hudson, *Congo Unravelling*, 41.

¹⁵⁰ Gleijeses, ““Flee! The White Giants are Coming!”” 81.

¹⁵¹ David Renton and David Seddon, *The Congo: Plunder and Resistance* (New York: Zed Books, 2007), 108.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 109.

When the rebellion broke out in 1964, the United States turned to the Belgians to impose stability. When the latter refused a solution needed to be found. The first move was to place Moise Tshombe back in power as prime minister and hope his mercenary forces could quell the Simbas. When this did not come to fruition the United States and Belgium began to recruit mostly South African and Rhodesian mercenaries. Once the rebellion was finished Tshombe became expendable. On October 13, 1965, the Congolese parliament convened and to “the surprise of most, President Kasavubu declared that the transitional tasks of the Tshombe government had been completed, and named a leading figure of the anti-Tshombe bloc, Evariste Kimba, to form a government in place of Tshombe.”¹⁵³ “The cause of the change in government is not clear. However, internal factors, once again, do not account for the change.”¹⁵⁴ After a little more than month of political wrangling between the parliamentary factions, the CIA staged a coup on November 25, placing Mobutu back in power.

In 1965, Mobutu’s coup was widely approved by the Congolese, who had lost faith in their civilian government and wanted to put an end to the instability that had characterized their country since its independence.¹⁵⁵ The political scientists Crawford Young and Thomas E. Turner characterized the beginning of Mobutu’s regime in these terms: “The early Mobutu years appeared to reflect a progressive implementation of the leviathan state project. The centralized authority of the state was reasserted. Its hegemonical thrust eclipsed not only institutional authority at lower echelons of the state apparatus, but also claimed tutelary control over all spheres of corporate interest.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Crawford Young and Thomas E. Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 50

¹⁵⁴ Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Interventions*, 162.

¹⁵⁵ Michael G. Schatzberg, “Beyond Mobutu: Kabila and the Congo,” *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 8, No. 4 (1997), 72

¹⁵⁶ Crawford Young and Thomas E. Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, 43.

A single-party rule was established in 1967, when Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution (MRP) was founded by Mobutu. All other political organizations were disbanded and prohibited. The central government incorporated civil institutions when it brought trade unions, youth groups, and women's organizations under the MRP's influence.¹⁵⁷ Mobutu's controlled press praised him and a cult of personality began to be developed. In 1971, the Congolese leader's efforts to build a single nation state culminated in his renaming the Democratic Republic of the Congo Zaire and himself Mobutu Sese Seko.

With Mobutu firmly in power, the Congo officially passed from the Belgian sphere of influence to the American. As indicated earlier, there is a possibility Larry Devlin, the man who would become the CIA station chief in the Congo, met Mobutu in 1959 when the two were in Belgium. The CIA had participated in both of Mobutu's coups and used him to funnel money to the Congolese army in order to retain its loyalty. Furthermore, once stability was reinstated in the Congo American business interests began to replace Belgian. The industries that attracted the most foreign investment were turn-key factory projects, commercial bank loans, hydroelectric power, and mineral/oil development.¹⁵⁸ U.S interests were particularly prevalent; for example, by 1977 U.S banks provided 35.5 percent of all loans while Belgian institutions only accounted for 8.3 percent.¹⁵⁹

The copper industry was also affected. When new lucrative copper seams were discovered in the late 1960s in Katanga, Mobutu gave the concession to a U.S led international consortium organized by Maurice Templesman rather than the Belgian Union Minière Haut du Katanga. Templesman's new organization was charted Société Minière de Tenke Fungurume. The loss of its copper monopoly was a severe psychological blow to Belgian commercial

¹⁵⁷ Michael G. Schatzberg, "Beyond Mobutu: Kabila and the Congo," 74.

¹⁵⁸ David Gibbs, "International Influences on Third World development," 19.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 20.

interests inside the Congo. Belgian dominance of the Congo had come to an end. A 1969 State Department policy assessment paper summed up the situation succinctly: “President Mobutu is closely identified with us and we with him. An important key to his unquestionable strength lies in this relationship, and our hope for continued stability rests mainly upon him.”¹⁶⁰

Conclusion

The focus of the Cold War is generally the competition between the USSR and the United States. As David Painter points out though, “almost all of the major violence of the Cold War era took place in the Third World.”¹⁶¹ This would bring the United States into conflict with their NATO allies rather than the Soviet Union. In the Congo during the 1960s, it was primarily the Belgians and Americans who were vying for Congolese allegiance rather than an East-West struggle. Eventually, the U.S committed itself to the military dictatorship of Joseph Mobutu in order to maintain stability in a country plagued by international dissension.

The United States’ ability to replace Belgium as the purveyor of stability in the Congo is how unipolarity was able to develop. During the nineteenth century, multinational empires were created. The Belgian monarch, King Leopold II, gained control over the Congo basin in the 1870s. After World War II, these empires began to collapse as burgeoning nationalist movements threatened colonial rule.

In the Near East, the United States’ greatest concern was alleviating the Great Power competition between the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France. Rather than become the sole authority in the region, U.S policy makers wanted to prevent developments “from taking place in

¹⁶⁰ Edward S. Cohen, “Airgram 201 from the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State, Kinshasa, June 19, 1969,” June 19, 1969, FRUS 1969-1972, Vol. E-5, Part 1: Documents on Sub-Saharan Africa, 1969-1972 (Washington, DC: GPO, 2005), 5.

¹⁶¹ David S. Painter, “Explaining U.S Relations with the Third World,” *Diplomatic History* Vol. 19, No. 3 (Summer, 1995), 525

that area which might make a mockery of the principles on which the United Nations Organization rests, which might lead to the impairment, if not the wrecking, of that organization, and which might eventually give birth to a third World War.”¹⁶² The United States espoused multilateralist principles in order to maintain peace and end Great Power competition.¹⁶³

In the Far East, “during the past four hundred years Western Powers – and more recently Japan - by war, threat of war, and exploitation of ignorance on the part of Oriental Governments, extended Western sovereignty, economic and political control, or exceptional semi-sovereign rights over great areas of Asia and the Pacific.”¹⁶⁴ Prior to World War II, nationalist leaders began to challenge the status quo. Japanese propaganda during the war intensified Asian nationalism and contributed to the collapse of old-style oriental colonialism.

The United States’ primary objectives were “peace and security, and economic welfare.”¹⁶⁵ While U.S policy makers understood their country’s tradition of upholding self-determination, “the largest possible measure of political freedom for the countries of Asia consistent with their ability to assume the responsibility thereof is probably necessary in order to achieve the chief objective of the United States in the Far East and the Pacific: continuing peace and security.” The United States was willing to let the colonial powers preserve their position in the Far East so stability could be maintained.

The United States’ African policy mirrored what it had concluded in the Far East. While self-determination was the ultimate goal, for stability to be preserved the European powers would have to remain and keep their spheres of influence. In the Congo, as well as in many other

¹⁶² Loy Henderson, “Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs (Henderson),” FRUS 1946, Vol. VII: The Near East and Africa (Washington, DC: GPO, 1969) 1.

¹⁶³ Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America’s Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 89.

¹⁶⁴ “Policy Paper in the Department of State,” June 22, 1945, FRUS 1945, Vol. VI: The British Commonwealth, The Far East (Washington, DC: GPO, 1969), 557.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 556.

countries, this option became impossible as nationalistic forces began to galvanize the population. Though the Congolese were granted their independence, Belgium tried to preserve its position in the mineral rich provinces of Katanga and South Kasai by supporting two secessions. The Eisenhower administration nominally supported the Belgians because they did not want the USSR to control resource of the two provinces. The United States was not concerned about African self-determination when a conflict with the Soviet Union was a possibility. Rather than act unilaterally though, the U.S turned to the United Nations.

As the struggle persisted, the Soviet threat on the ground was revealed to be minimal. However, the Belgians were exposed in actuality as the destabilizing factor. This indeed permitted the Soviet Union and the Afro-Asian bloc began declaim that old-style colonialism was being upheld in the Congo by the United States, United Nations, and Belgium. For the U.S, currently in a global struggle for Third World allegiance against the USSR, being charged with supporting a former colonial power was detrimental to its position in the international arena. As a result, by the time John F. Kennedy became president the United States was pressuring the Belgians to withdraw from the Congo.

For the majority of the crisis, the USSR condemned the United States publicly while privately American policymakers tried to pressure their NATO ally. This aspect of the Cold War, intra-NATO conflict, should garner more research and become the focal point in the next generation of Cold War scholarship. Understanding the relationship between the United States, former colonial metropolises, burgeoning nationalist movements, and the international community is integral when trying to explain the unipolar world we live in today.

The United States, along with the United Nations, ultimately forced the Belgians out of the Congo. In 1965, the CIA backed a coup by Joseph Desire Mobutu, who they had been using

to funnel money to the Congolese army in order to retain its allegiance. With Mobutu in power, the Congo shifted from being aligned with Belgium to the U.S. This is how unipolarity was able to develop. The United States replaced former colonial metropolises as purveyors of stability. America, as a superpower with global concerns, positioned itself in opposition to their NATO allies when the latter threatened the U.S.'s position in the international arena. The Truman administration's pressure on the Netherlands to give up the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), Eisenhower's anger towards Britain and France during the Suez Crisis, in addition to the Belgian-American conflict in the Congo were all intra-NATO disputes over questions of neo-colonialism. In all three cases, residual hegemony of the colonial metropolises was superseded by US-indigenous alignment. To truly understand how unipolarity was able to come about, scholars must see the Cold War as a continuation of nineteenth century great power politics, while flushing out the tensions between the United States and the former colonial metropolises.

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