BLACK POWER, RED LIMITS:

KWAME NKRUMAH AND AMERICAN COLD WAR RESPONSES TO BLACK

EMPOWERMENT STRUGGLES

by

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Scholars of American history have chronicled ways in which federal level response to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States was influenced by the ideological and strategic conflict between Western and Soviet Bloc countries. This thesis explores the hypothesis that the same Cold War dynamics shown to shape domestic policy toward black liberation were also influential in shaping foreign policy decisions regarding U.S. relations with recently decolonized African countries. To be more specific, the United States was under pressure to demonstrate an agenda of freedom and equality on the world stage, but its tolerance of independent black action was stringently limited when such action included sympathetic association with "radical" factions. The case of the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations' relationship with the popular and highly visible leader Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana during the time of the Congo crisis is the primary case used in the exploration of this hypothesis.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This project explores the hypothesis that the dynamics of the Cold War, shown by modern historians and political scientists to have shaped domestic policy toward black liberation in America, were also influential in shaping foreign policy decisions regarding U.S. relations with the recently decolonized African country of Ghana. I will argue that despite the geographic, political and economic distance between these two countries, the stories of black American liberation and Sub-Saharan decolonization were similarly influenced by two powerful dynamics that grew out of Cold War liberalism: one, the federal government was under enormous pressure to demonstrate an agenda of freedom and equality on the world stage by appearing to support these respective movements; and two, independent black action was perceived as threatening to American interests, especially when such action included sympathetic association with "radical" factions and willingness to act publicly in opposition to Western agendas. I will frame this argument around the following premise: The limits of Cold War liberalism were applied to both foreign and domestic policy decisions related to emerging racial empowerment, defining the ideological boundaries beyond which the United States would actively oppress any actor perceived as a threat to the country's already vulnerable international reputation. That the plight of black people in both parts of the world are connected is not a new idea, but the dimension of this reality has yet to be fully explored or understood, especially by scholars of International Relations whom, historians of the discipline observe, tend to

suffer from a case of collective amnesia regarding the relevance of race during the Cold War.

The legacy of white supremacy in the United States is linked both culturally and historically to European enslavement and colonization of indigenous populations throughout the Sub-Saharan African continent. Although the process of "racial formation" has not followed an identical path in each area where native black Africans have been forcibly subjugated, scholars like Michael Omi and Howard Winant (who dubbed the term), Penny Von Eschen, and Brenda Gayle Plummer chronicle efforts to draw parallels and comparisons between such areas for the purpose of better understanding current racial dynamics and prescribing normative solutions to problems originating from a white supremacist history recorded primarily by scholars who have ignored it. Omi and Winant argue for applying what they call a nation-based analysis to this history. "In the nation-based paradigm," they state, "racial dynamics are understood as products of colonialism and, therefore, as outcomes of relationships which are global and epochal in character." For Omi and Winant, "Pan-Africanism, cultural nationalism, and Marxist debates" are included in the nation-based analysis.

> What these approaches share is their reliance on elements derived from the dynamics of colonialism to demonstrate the continuity of *racial* oppression from its heyday. Chief among these is the use of racial categories to distinguish members of the oppressor and the oppressed "nations" – the colonizers and the colonized (1985, p. 39-40).

Denying the "global and epochal" character of racial dynamics has resulted in the development of a discipline that has gone startlingly color-blind in the last thirty years, a state of affairs that leaves Omi and Winant, Von Eschen, Plummer and other scholars (myself included) to reinterpret a history that has purged itself of one of its most relevant

variables. "To be a professional IR [International Relations] scholar in the United States today," asserts Robert Vitalis, "means adopting a particular disciplinary identity constructed in the 1950s and '60s that rests on a certain willful forgetting….Contemporary writing about IR turns out to share along with all other domains of American culture the powerful tendency toward 'silence and evasion' about the four-hundred-year presence of Africans and African Americans in the United States," (2005, p. 160).

If IR scholarship is failing to effectively address race currently, a glance at the history of development theory reveals an affinity for racial-evolutionary thinking that hardly set the stage for an accurate account of the ways in which colonial institutions have continually shaped racial dynamics. As early as 1910, *The Journal of Race Development*, a precursor to *Foreign Affairs*, institutionalized the concept of racial hierarchy in academia, using scientific language to legitimate the image of America "lifting" backward people upward and shepherding them along a trajectory of development. This scholarly trend lay the foundation for what Jessica Blatt calls a "research tradition with a long and probably unbroken history up to today [that], to put it crudely, offers diagnosis and prescription for 'sick' groups and societies," (Blatt, 2004, p. 707). Black activists like George Padmore, Franz Fanon, and Stokley Carmichael have been able to record far more accurate accounts of this history, but, as we shall see, their conclusions were systematically excluded from the mainstream academy by virtue of the very exclusionary dynamics they identified.

This thesis project will attempt to add to this incomplete body of scholarship by examining the cases of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and the West African country of

Ghana under its first post-colonial black leader, Kwame Nkrumah. This comparison is theoretically grounded in the nation-based approach endorsed above by Omi and Winant, and moves beyond it with the following assertions: 1) Not only are the origins of white supremacy and activist responses to its oppressive legacy linked over time and space as a result of colonialism, but 2) the cases I explore will demonstrate that hegemonic *counter-responses* to black independence (i.e. the reaction of the United States to both the civil rights movement and Pan-Africanism) share similar patterns, and that this similarity is based in the black racial identity of the activists in question. My research question focuses specifically on the shift in relationship between the U.S. and Ghana after Kwame Nkrumah declared support for Patrice Lumumba during the onset of the Congo Crisis of 1960. This assertion of independence on the part of a newly enfranchised black leader was followed by a distance from and distrust for Ghana on the part of the state department (Nwaubani, 2001). Was there a causal relationship between these two events? If so, is there evidence to suggest the causality could be reasonably attributed to dynamics similar to the forces which prompted federal level subversion of domestic black activism?

Exploring a hypothesis that addresses the answer to this question will, I hope, help to illuminate the interaction between race and Cold War liberalism. In order to offer a succinct hypothesis, it is necessary to specifically identify some characteristics of the time period under examination. Ghana became independent in 1957 and, as the first black West African country to gain independence from colonial rule, became an inspiring symbol for anti-oppression struggles throughout the world-wide African diaspora, including the in the United States (Plummer, 1996). Domestically, the U.S. during the

late 1950s was not only experiencing mounting racial tensions, but was engaged in a bi-polar military standoff with the Soviet Union. The racially charged domestic landscape, exacerbated by the heightened security tensions of the Cold War, contributed to an atmosphere in which, at the federal level, the boundaries of tolerance for independent action on the part of black leaders were narrowly drawn and closely guarded. As the authors in the upcoming literature review attest, Civil Rights activists were cautiously supported by the U.S. government until the point where they crossed these boundaries by a) taking actions or forming alliances that could be perceived as sympathetic to communist efforts and b) demonstrating a commitment to black independent action that led the individual to act outside of the expressed political wishes of the State Department.

My hypothesis is that these boundaries applied not only to activists within the United States but also to actors on the highly visible stage of an increasingly independent African continent. In Kwame Nkrumah's case, the symbolism inherent in the achievement of his black African leadership combined with the widening sphere of his influence identified him as a relevant actor *and* a potential casualty of an escalating race war being fought thousands of miles away by a world hegemon claiming to be a bastion of liberal democratic freedom. American liberalism during this time period took on a unique rigidity, determined as it was to undermine "ideology" wherever it lurked in the world, while at the same time imposing its own ideological framework on any nation, social movement, or individual who happened to find itself exposed under the State Department's communist-seeking spotlight. Thus, the presence of the Cold War as a variable interacting with both the American liberal construction of foreign policy and

domestic relations concerns is, I suggest, a force which similarly shaped the response of the U.S. to seemingly independent assertions of leadership.

The evidence I will evaluate in pursuit of this hypothesis will be drawn primarily from historical accounts of these time periods and from U.S. State Department and National Security Council documents generated prior to, during and after the Congo Crisis of 1960. Studying these primary documents in combination with scholarly histories will enable me to map the events surrounding the Congo Crisis, Kwame Nkrumah's interface with the stages of the unfolding crisis and the United States' reaction to this interface. To paraphrase Stephen Van Evera, unwrapping the hypothesized cause and effect linkages of these events and dividing them into smaller steps will enable me to look for observable evidence at each step (Van Evera, 1997, p. 64). Examples of documents relevant to this project are memos and telegrams between the state department and the U.S. Embassy in Ghana, available through the *Foreign Relations of the United States* archives. Because the U.S. State Department declassifies its formerly private correspondence thirty years after its initial release, these archives provide the opportunity to compare the public and private foreign policy rhetoric surrounding each step of Nkrumah's involvement with the Congo crisis, pinpointing discrepancies that may or may not support my hypothesis. These documents can also be compared chronologically, tracing any shifts in rhetoric over time. *Papers of the President* provides the complete assembled documents from the Eisenhower and Kennedy years, and offers a basis for comparison across both time and administrations.

In addition to tracing U.S. response to Ghana's position on the Congo Crisis, this thesis will highlight comparisons between the treatment of American nationals persecuted

for violating the boundaries of Cold War liberalism and the ultimate disintegration of the Eisenhower and Kennedy administration's relationship with Kwame Nkrumah. Relying on prior research conducted by scholars studying American political history, I will pinpoint moments I have termed "crossover," when the perceived advantages of supporting a black leader (improving international reputation for promoting equality) became outweighed by the perceived risk of that leader's independent action (speaking out against Southern apartheid, promoting communist ideology, etc). These moments can inform the study of the Nkrumah case, providing guidelines for identifying cautionary rhetoric, preliminary action, and internal discussion on the part of the state department that correspond with the patterns identified prior to "crossover" moments in the domestic cases outlined by the authors discussed in the literature review.

Finally, in order to make the claim that Kwame Nkrumah symbolized black independent action to an extent that U.S. officials were comparably alarmed by his lack of cooperation as they were to that of certain black American leaders, it is necessary to build a case for the ideological connections between the Ghanaian independence movement and the American Civil Rights Movement. A historical analysis of the ideals of Pan Africanism, the correspondence and visitation that occurred cross nationally as both countries were mounting more focused attacks on their respective oppressors, and written evidence of the symbolic significance of Nkrumah's leadership will all contribute to the argument that these struggles were linked in the minds not only of those participating in them, but in the minds of white U.S. federal leaders as well.

This project offers a synthesis of two areas of political observation that are typically held distinct. The theories explored contribute to the body of literature

addressing Cold War liberalism by providing a racial account of what was happening to liberal boundaries both domestically and internationally during this period. The racial imagination of the U.S. State Department during the 1950s and 60s was paternal at best and authoritarian at worst. Invested in a version of liberalism that was not particularly trusting of its citizens to begin with, it was not surprising that a fear of subversion on the part of blacks "converted conflicts of interest in race-relations into all-encompassing, psychologically based dangers to personal and national identity," (Rogin, 1987, p. 55). As both Blatt and Vitalis point out, the foundation for racial discourse in the social sciences did little to challenge this fear of subversion, relying instead on what Blatt calls "racial-evolutionary thought," (2004, p. 693). This understanding of race equated the "absence of development" or "backwardness" with limitations in evolutionary progress, a condition that, theoretically, could be remedied by Western intervention. Even as the twentieth century progressed and "evolutionism came to be seen not only as empirically flawed, but ethnocentric as well" (Ferguson, 1997, p. 154–5), more relativist scholars like Franz Boas continued to rely on a distinction between "primitive" and "modern" societies, with those belonging to the former category perceived as somehow existing in a world that existed prior to the achievement of belonging to the latter. While these "pre-modern" cultures were theoretically valued at the same level as their more developed counterparts, the fact that they remained the primary focus of modern anthropology while political science developed as a discipline in conversation with more developed western states does not support the assertions of mid-century thinkers that binary distinctions based on degrees of modernity were not value-laden (Ferguson, 1997, p. 155). The framework of racial evolutionary thought shifted and bowed under progressive criticism,

but ultimately endured as a tool for assessing black populations, undermining the possibility that the American political leaders who grew out of such social scientific traditions could truly develop egalitarian dialogue between themselves and black leaders of any nationality.

One point that should be emphasized prior to the examination of the evidence: It is not the purpose of this project to make a case for the fact the Kwame Nkrumah was a communist or that his support of Patrice Lumumba during the Congo Crisis of 1960 resulted in a significant threat to the balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union. Rather, the hypothesis suggests that his racial identity and his connection to the increasingly high-stakes black emancipatory activity in the Untied States were the primary motivating factors that led to such stringent surveillance of his activities within a Cold War context. Nkrumah was not just another world leader; he was a black African man, and one who had vocally called for the united struggle of Africans living all over the world, including the United States. Through his influence, both explicit and implicit, Nkrumah elaborated on the concept that black Americans were, in reality, Africans. Having lived in the United States as an impoverished student, he identified with the oppressed and marginalized black population, debatably to a greater degree than he did with his white colleagues in government. It is not reasonable to consider that policy makers in the United States formed their beliefs and attitudes regarding Kwame Nkrumah with no reference to the influence he was known to have on some of black America's most controversial and troubling activists or to the prevailing cultural and intellectual rhetoric of racial formation existing within their own nation. This political tradition is one that Michael Rogin describes as "fearful of primitivism and disorder," that

"developed in response to peoples of color," and "defines itself against alien threats to the American way of life and sanctions violent and exclusionary responses to them," (1987, p. 45). While fear of communism may have been the publicly expressed reason for Nkrumah's disenfranchisement, an exercise of independent action crossing liberal boundaries through expressions of African nationalism may have contributed to his fate equally if not more so.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In preparation to research this topic, it was necessary to review literature within the following three categories: U.S. foreign policy toward post-colonial Ghana, domestic responses to the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, and Cold War liberalism. A working knowledge of the prevailing institutional assumptions and convictions surrounding the United States' relationship with Ghana, and specifically with Kwame Nkrumah is, obviously, central to a thorough exploration of the topic. In order to determine whether foreign policy response to Nkrumah's assertions of independent leadership can be reasonable compared to the domestic response to self-determined actors within the Civil Rights Movement, a detailed understanding of how and when the U.S. supported, ignored or impeded this movement is fundamental to the discussion. Lastly, familiarity with Cold War liberalism is necessary in order to accurately and comprehensively discuss the limits this thesis wishes to explore; the origins and advocates of this brand of liberalism, and the fundamental contradictions that lie within liberal ideology. This project will attempt to address the most common assertions in each category of literature related to the topic, and contribute additional insights based on the relationships between the arguments of these authors and evidence unearthed throughout the research process.

My interest in exploring this topic was originally piqued after reading an article written by University of Massachusetts Dartmouth history professor Ebere Nwaubani entitled "Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis" (2001). Nwaubani summarizes

the history of the diplomatic relationship between Nkrumah and Dwight D. Eisenhower and provides evidence of the official U.S. observation that, despite Nkrumah's appreciation for elements of socialism, Ghana did not appear vulnerable to incorporation into the Soviet bloc as of 1959. Nwaubani also mentions irritation on the part of certain U.S. officials regarding Nkrumah insistence on furthering a foreign policy agenda inclusive of African leaders considered "fringe elements" by the state department, Lumumba included (2001, p. 606). The remainder of the article goes on to detail the U.S.'s negative response to Nkrumah's actions in the Congo and the process by which the diplomatic rift occurred. Nwaubani emphasizes Nkrumah's steadfastness in his support of Lumumba, but also his surprise and dismay at the dissolution of his positive relationship with Eisenhower and the U.S. ambassador, Wilson Flake, who had long been a staunch his staunch defender.

Nwaubani is also the author of a book called *The United States and Decolonization in West Africa, 1950-1960* (2001). This work addresses two underlying premises relevant to the subject matter: one, Nwaubani assumes a neo-colonial position on the part of the United States rather than one genuinely supportive of decolonization; two, he concludes that the Cold War concerns popularly believed to motivate U.S. involvement with Ghana were exaggerated to minimize focus on the first premise. The entire book is useful to this project, but the chapters entitled "Minimalism as a Policy" and "Ghana: Honeymoon and Estrangement" are especially so (2001, p. 86–118 & p. 119–163). The first chapter addresses the Truman and Eisenhower administrations' belief that West African development was malleable to external influence and that policy objectives should focus on securing American economic interests and "retaining Africa

as a Western sphere of influence," (p. 86). The second chapter outlines the history of

the relationship between Nkrumah and United States, and provides additional examples

of unilateral action on Nkrumah's part that was irksome to the U.S., namely visits to

China and hosting of Eastern bloc trade scouts interested in forming relations with the

mineral rich country (p.140). Nwaubani describes how the U.S. was able to work

through these events and focus on Ghanaian displays of loyalty and diplomacy that

alleviated their perception of genuine threat. However, he concludes the chapter with a

section titled "The Congo—The Last Straw," in which he covers much of the same

material discussed in the above article. As described by Nwaubani, the visibility of

Nkrumah's actions during the Congo crisis sets this case apart from previous incidents in

which he strayed beyond the boundaries of U.S. foreign policy preference, specifically in

prescriptive speeches made at the UN General Assembly emphasizing Ghana's own

perspective on the crisis, a perspective perceived by the United States as "antithetical to

the Western interpretation" (2001, p. 155).

Jitendra Mohan's article entitled "Ghana, the Congo, and the United Nations"

(1969) provides a very detailed account of the history leading up to and including the

Congo crisis, and investigates Nkrumah's perception that the destinies of Ghana and the

Congo were inherently linked. Mohan was a lecturer in the political science department

at the University of Ghana when he wrote this paper, and went on to co-edit the *Review of*

African Political Economy until his death in 1985. The article also includes a great deal

of background regarding the UN and the enormous cost the organization absorbed as a

result of intervening in the Congo. It is primarily a historical account with no specific

mention of the American Civil Rights Movement, but provides significant level of detail

regarding the back-story to the conflict and Nkrumah's attempts to engage the UN while showing solidarity with Lumumba as an individual, an understanding of which is necessary to the analysis of State Department response regarding problematic interface between Nkrumah and the UN.

Although the interface between Nkrumah and the Congo has been covered extensively in Ghanaian history books (and, of course in Nkrumah's own writing), Mohan (writing in the late '60s) and Nwaubani, a contemporary scholar, are the only peer-reviewed authors who both address the subject matter and include a narrative of Western institutional reactions. To be sure, many of the authors who write about the Cold War era mention Africa and the radical changes that occurred within the African continent during the 1950s and '60s; indeed, much is made of the fact that, as H.W. Brands asserts, "the most important developments of the last four decades have taken place on the margins of the super power systems," (1989, p. 1). However, remarkably few offer accounts that explore foreign policy toward African beyond U.S. strategic interests and investment in maintaining access to natural resources. Kwame Nkrumah is not a figure who features prominently in contemporary writing about Cold War liberalism, which is interesting considering that the following authors who write about African American experience during the Cold War are clearly quite aware that Africa was on the minds of both black activists and policy makers as more than just a source of aluminum and favorable international press.

Scholarship regarding the Cold War impact on American civil rights comes primarily from six authors: Thomas Borstelmann, Mary Dudziak, Philip Klinkner, Rogers Smith, Nikhil Singh and Penny Von Eschen. Klinkner and Smith's book, *The Unsteady*

March: The Rise and Decline of Racial Equality in America (1999) addresses the ways in which the emancipatory efforts of black Americans have achieved sporadic moments of success often followed by periods of intervention by those with an interest in preserving a white supremacist state. They specifically address the Cold War, describing it as a pivotal moment that satisfies the criteria for civil rights progress, but also as one of many historical examples in which the federal response to civil rights activism was carefully manipulated to the advantage of the government (1999, p. 3-4). They also introduce the concept of "racial orders" which applies nicely to this project and which I discuss in Chapter III (1999, p. 75).

Dudziak and Borstelmann have a narrower scope than Klinkner and Smith, as the titles of their books imply. Dudziak's *Cold War Civil Rights* (2000) and Borstelmann's *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (2001) both address the post-World War II period and the mounting pressure placed on the government by domestic and international forces to dismantle the infrastructure of racial oppression bolstered for decades by Jim Crow laws. These authors also discuss how both security concerns internationally and increased civil rights activities at home shaped the United States' foreign policy in the developing world. Both juxtapose the successes achieved during this time with the grim reality of the restrictions placed upon ideological freedoms and active persecution of actors perceived as too "radical" to safely operate within this carefully constructed story of improvements to race relations.

One of the most recent books to critique the failures of liberalism in the Cold War era is Nikhil Singh's *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (2004). Singh acknowledges many of the truths unearthed by the authors

mentioned above, but goes beyond the Cold War discussion to address the uniquely

American dilemmas facing black activists in the early 20th century. Confronted with a

stubbornly unself-conscious national identity founded simultaneously on liberal ideals

and the lifeblood of African slaves, black leaders who chose to challenge the limits of

American post-war liberalism in pursuit of "more worldly and expansive political

conceptions" at best experienced the suppression of their ideas and at worst the loss of

their citizenship (2004, p. 54). Never wholly American to begin with, the choice of

figures like Paul Robeson and Richard Wright to identify with oppressed population

outside their own country challenged the parameters of "acceptable" activist behavior to

an extent which stripped away the freedoms liberalism claimed to guarantee them by

virtue of their births. Singh's work provides a useful context for discussing the

oppressive political atmosphere underlying a period of apparent progress within the Civil

Rights Movement.

   Finally, Penny Von Eschen's book *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and

Anti-Colonialism 1937-1957* (1997) and article "Challenging Cold War Habits: African

Americans, Race, and Foreign Policy" (1996) address the involvement of black

Americans in international anti-colonial struggles and the barriers they faced as a result.

Von Eschen contributes a detailed discussion of left-leaning activists who resisted the

Untied States' efforts to keep a domestic focus within the Civil Rights Movement. She

outlines the origins of the Council on African Affairs and traces how Pan-Africanism

rose in popularity among black scholars and activists in the 1930s and '40s, and then was

systematically squeezed out of the movement by Cold War liberal leadership in the '50s.

Her work compliments the work of Singh, Dudziak and Borstelmann in her specific

exploration of African American interest in world events and foreign policy and how this interest was ultimately thwarted by the government as it become increasingly nervous about perceived dangers of identity politics.

The final category of relevant literature relates to Cold War liberalism and is divided into roughly three additional categories: authors who discuss the origins of Cold War liberal ideology as an intellectual trend, authors who normatively defend the actions of Cold War liberals, and authors who describe these actions as motivated by a deep-seeded irrationality or paranoia. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. is a figure who pops up in works spanning all three categories, and thus a survey of his intellectual life seems like an appropriate place to begin. So influential was Schlesinger's work to the study of post-war liberal thought that communications professor Stephen P. Depoe utilized his work as the framework for an entire book on the subject; *Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and the Ideological History of American Liberalism.* He describes the historian's youthful grappling with the unwelcome truths that fascism taught the world about the ugly limits of humanity, and his deep concern that Western man was "tense, uncertain, adrift," with stable, familiar institutions disappearing before his very eyes (1995, p. 5). Depoe examines Schlesinger's discomfort with the tension between freedom and order, and notes ways in which such interpretations of history can inform ideological conclusions that in turn affect the course of history itself. He discusses Schlesinger's "symbolic choices" at certain points in history and traces how these choices "constrain[ed] subsequent symbolic actions," (1994, xiii). This book is very useful to a discursive theoretical grounding of liberalism's weaknesses and limitations during the Cold War era, how these weaknesses

and limitations came to exist, and how, under certain circumstances, they actually perpetuated themselves.

Another author who puts Schlesinger's work into perspective relative to other liberal thinkers of the post-war era is Robert Booth Fowler in his book *Believing Skeptics: American Political Intellectuals, 1945–1964* (1978). Fowler discusses how a resistance to "ideology" of any kind developed in reaction to the totalitarian disasters of the first half of the 20th century, leaving liberalism itself vulnerable to manipulation in a political environment where it was *not* considered ideological because it was accepted to be based on natural law. While he does not address foreign policy in any depth, Fowler's analysis is useful background in the examination of U.S. reaction to Kwame Nkrumah, a relatively unknown new leader whose ideological ambiguity intensified the anxiety surrounding his public declarations and alliances.

John Lewis Gaddis is one of the best known scholars writing about the Cold War era, and another name that appears frequently throughout the literature (as historical commentator than ideological architect). His 1982 book *Strategies of Containment* provides a bridge between scholarly work that illuminates Cold War dynamics and writing that defends certain of its elements based on retrospective analysis (although, given its original publication date, it could really only be retrospective regarding certain decades of the Cold War). Gaddis discusses the Second World War origins of containment (a term coined by State Department advisor and Soviet expert George Kennan to describe a policy that would in essence prevent the domino effect) and how this strategy manifested itself from the Truman through the Nixon administrations. The most useful chapters to this project address the foreign policy of Eisenhower and John

Foster Dulles, which Gaddis sees as largely motivated by commitments to preserving Western economic interests. Gaddis ultimately supports a realist foreign policy position, asserting near the end of the book, "There has been a perennial and probably unresolvable debate over the extent to which foreign policy should reflect moral principles," (1982, p. 342). Like many of the intellectuals discussed by Fowler, he is fearful of ideological commitments, arguing that they can lead to "misperceptions of one's own or an adversary's power," (1982, p. 343).

Kevin Mattson's book, *When American Was Great: The Fighting Faith of Postwar Liberalism* is a work that not only defends Cold War liberalism, but laments what Mattson's sees as its demise. While Gaddis focuses on the programmatic elements of the liberal agenda throughout the Cold War, Mattson addresses an organization called Americans for Democratic Action and four of its most famous members: John Kenneth Galbraith, Reinhold Niebuhr, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., and James Wechsler. Mattson's primary complaint is that these men have been unfairly characterized by critics, especially when they are accused on complicity with the actions of Joseph McCarthy. He asserts that they were right to put anti-communism at the center of the country's agenda, and that their pragmatism in doing so is obscured by narratives that paint them as paternalistic agents of repression. Mattson's belief in the value of Cold War liberalism's "fighting faith" is revisited throughout the book. Although he is not entirely uncritical, he is clearly committed to this self-preservationist worldview that believes in protecting citizens from themselves at what critics might consider to be too great a cost.

Finally, a very different perspective of Cold War liberalism emerges from the work of Robert H. Johnson and Michael Rogin. Johnson agrees with Schlesinger's

assertion that anxiety has permeated our international consciousness, but feels the origin is actually internal. In his 1994 book, *Improbable Dangers: U.S. Conceptions of Threat in the Cold War and After*, the former State Department and National Security Council staff member theorizes that the Soviet threat during the Cold War was exaggerated and that this exaggeration has its roots in American exceptionalism. Exaggerated threats, according to Johnson, lead to exaggerated reactions, human nature being inclined to want to quickly establish order and control when faced with fear and chaos. That paranoid fantasies can give rise to perceptions of threat (and, in turn, become exacerbated by them) is a view also shared by Michael Rogin. In several chapters of his 1987 book, *Ronald Reagan: The Movie,* Rogin writes about how both "subversive" threats to life, liberty and property and the countersubversive responses have permeated American political culture. While Rogin's theory extends well beyond just the Cold War (he also write about race as a "subversive" category), he addresses communism as an especially frightening category of subversion because the enemy is not distinguished by recognizable physical characteristics. Countersubversion, in Rogin's estimation, often takes the form of political repression, motivated as is by irrational, fear-based thinking.

Finally, *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History* is an edited volume assembled by Martin Mendhurst and H.W. Brands from papers delivered at a 1998 conference attended by historians, political scientists and communications scholars. While not a systematic examination of Cold War liberalism itself, selected chapters of *Critical Reflections* detail the deliberate cultivation of a nation-sized paranoia (affecting branches of government as well as the public mindset as a whole), defended by its architects both in the name of national security *and* liberalism. This theory departs

from Johnson and Rogin in that several authors charge political leaders with injecting fear into the public mind as a means of frightening the American people into supporting potentially unpopular foreign and domestic policies. The chapter most relevant to a discussion of the state of liberalism after World War II is called "The Science of Cold War Strategy," by J. Michael Hogan in which he discusses the work of George Horace Gallup, one of the most famous social scientists of the time and an advocate for the use of "ideological warfare" in pursuit of winning the "struggle for the minds of men" (2000, p. 135). This chapter provides a behind-the-scenes look at the decision to utilize peace-time propaganda and its implications with regard to the domestic and international presentation of a singular way of life as not only desirable but imperative. The paper illuminates the work of Fowler, providing a shining example of how a liberal democracy unquestioningly bent its own rules in the name of protecting itself from the dangerous ideologies of "others." It also overlaps both Dudziak and Rogin. Dudziak discuss the use of propaganda techniques described by Hogan through the United States Information Agency (USIA) to perpetuate beliefs regarding the mitigation of racial disparity in the Untied States, in opposition to the assertions of outspokenly critical Civil Rights activists at home and abroad (2000). Rogin, as discussed above, gives a considerably broader, more theoretical account of the countersubversive dynamic the Gallup case illustrates (1987).

My own perceptions of Cold War liberalism tend to align with Johnson's in that my hypothesis rests on the assumption that the threat of communism in the Nkrumah case was exaggerated. How deliberate this exaggeration was, or whether it was more or less exaggerated than the threat of communism as it appeared in every other realm of the

political landscape is yet to be seen. I also believe that a culture of paranoia did undercut the political decision making of the late 1950s, and that this paranoia had acute racial dimensions. How visible these dimensions were will be revealed by looking critically at the evidence gleaned from primary sources.

CHAPTER III

THE COLD WAR AND THE COLOR LINE

In order to complete a comprehensive exploration of the U.S. State Department's relationship with Kwame Nkrumah and understand the reasons federal authority would pursue a supportive relationship with him in the first place, it is necessary to address what have become common criticisms of Nkrumah's leadership, criticisms often put forward as justification for the 1966 *coup de tat* that many scholars believe was fully supported by the United States. The shortcomings deemed dangerous enough contribute to Nkrumah's overthrow are generally grouped into three categories: authoritarian action (including military mismanagement), fiscal irresponsibility, and blind commitment to Pan-Africanism without regard for his country's more immediate political and developmental needs. It is this last category that would, arguably, set Nkrumah apart from other non-aligned states deemed vulnerable to Soviet influence, states which violated democratic ideals at similar or greater levels than Ghana, and yet enjoyed support and protection from the United States long after positive regard for Nkrumah had withered and died.

Critiques of Kwame Nkrumah's Leadership

Criticisms surrounding Nkrumah's authoritarian tendencies emerged as early as 1958 when the Ghanaian government legalized imprisonment without trial for citizens considered security risks, as well as imposed restriction on freedom of expression (Afrifa, 1966). The president's 1964 ban on any political party that opposed his own, as well as his declaration of himself as the lifetime leader of the Convention People's Party (and

therefore the country) is a glaring example of illiberal political action that would logically elicit concern from a country ostensibly committed to democratic ideals (Botchway, 1972, p. 103–106). Nkrumah's financial reliance on foreign loans to seed the establishment of state-owned factories and public authorities, as well as his rejection of IMF and World Bank recommendations to reduce government spending and dependence on inflationary borrowing, alienated him not only from the international banking community but from the farming sector who saw the price of Ghanaian cocoa sink steadily during the tenure of his leadership (Fitch & Oppenheimer, 1966, p. 82–84).

Rigidly protected political powers and misguided financial endeavors were not, however, mutually exclusive with American support for a developing nation at this time. American allies were not always "paragons of democracy;" Arthur Schlesinger even noted privately that the "free world" included Paraguay, Nicaragua, and Spain, an observation he followed with the comment, "Who do we think we're fooling?" (Gaddis, 1982, p. 209–210). During the Cold War (and after) the United States also offered financial and infrastructural assistance to countries like Pakistan and Ethiopia, states where decidedly illiberal leadership ideologies were obscured by the strategic benefits of keeping these states close to the American political fold (Schlesinger, 1973). In some cases, the degree of U.S. "assistance" offered to countries experiencing shifts in power looked startlingly like encroaching neocolonialism, a scenario to which Nkrumah was fundamentally opposed. According to Brenda Gayle Plummer, while Ghana followed a reformist trajectory that appealed to foreign investors, it never-the-less "rejected undue interference in its internal affairs and projects it considered exploitative," (1996, p. 282–3). Nkrumah was never secretive about his opposition to neocolonialism or his belief in a

pan-African ideology; however, my hypothesis rests on the identification of evidence linking the timing of his fall from favor to a marked and public *demonstration* of these values in opposition to the desires of his benefactor state.

Having established that Nkrumah's shortcoming as a leader would not necessarily have *excluded* him from the United States' sphere of assistance, a thorough examination also necessitates a pointed look at why he was ever actively *included*. As stated above, Nkrumah's pan-African agenda was never a secret; if his ideology seemed to conflict with the ideals of American liberalism at the time, why did the state department *ever* pursue him as an ally and beneficiary? The response to this inquiry includes a domestic story with several black American protagonists.

Cold War Civil Rights

Shortly after the end of World War II, the United States unexpectedly found itself engaged in an ideological and military standoff with the Soviet Union known as the Cold War. The degree to which this bi-polar race for international allies affected American political culture beginning in the 1950s cannot be underestimated. Fears regarding the spread of communism and onset of nuclear holocaust at the hands of communist countries permeated the thoughts and actions of politicians, filmmakers, educators, law enforcement and the business community, not to mention American citizens still recovering from the devastation of the depression and an extended military engagement. The result was a strictly "zero-sum" foreign policy assessment of international relations. Eisenhower's Secretary of State John Foster Dulles summarized the prevailing fears of the times when he declared, "If Soviet communism is permitted to gobble up other parts

of the world one by one, the day will come when the Soviet world will be so powerful that no corner of the world will be safe," (Gaddis, 1982, p. 137)

It was within this atmosphere of uncertainty and hyper-vigilance that the specter of racially motivated brutality and discrimination in the Jim Crow south found a new and purportedly outraged audience; the Soviet Union. Suddenly, a unwritten American institution of pointedly neglectful law enforcement that left millions of black citizens unprotected from terrorism and without civil liberties was being exposed not only in the media but in the speeches, letters and political artwork of communist propaganda experts eager to illuminate the fraudulent foundations of U.S. claims to a democratic political system. As early as 1946 the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* reminded its readers that "the Constitution of the U.S. guarantees to all its citizens equal rights before the law; however, the Negro population, consisting of 13,000,000 people, actually does not have these rights," (Klinkner & Smith, 1999, p. 208). Incidents of racial violence were reported with similarly disapproving tones in the city newspapers of nation states aligned with both the East and the West. This development was especially damning in the wake of World War II which "most Americans saw as a struggle against tyranny and prejudice," but which did not significantly improve the conditions black G.I.s returning to a country which at best ignored the sacrifices of their service and at worst subjected them to horrific acts of terrorism (Klinkner & Smith, 1999, p. 207).

The hypocrisy of fighting first a hot, then a cold war under freedom's battle cry while continuing to ignore the oppression of black citizens was lost neither on Harry S. Truman nor on African American leaders appalled by post-war disappointments. In late 1946, with the pressure of international scrutiny bearing down upon him, Truman and his

foreign policy advisors agreed to separate meetings with Walter White of the NAACP and Paul Robeson, an entertainer and activist who led an anti-lynching initiative called the American Crusade (von Eschen, 1997). While both men approached Truman with the message that the government "could not afford to ignore" the issues they were raising about the connection between civil rights and international reputation, White's distinctively anti-communist message and willingness to accept a bureaucratic approach to the problem won him Truman's favor and a place on the President's Committee on Civil Rights (von Eschen, 1997, p. 110). Robeson, on the other hand, was not content with White's assertion that "discrimination at home must be abolished so that America would not be discredited in the eyes of the world," (von Eschen, 1997, p. 111–12). For him and the other delegates of the American Crusade, neglecting the lynching problem was tantamount to a violation of the Nuremberg Resolution, and reflected a flawed American position toward its place in the international community, one that refused to recognize the link between domestic racism and the legacy of colonialism (von Eschen, 1997). In other words, White and other members of the NAACP chose to focus their efforts on the benefits that could be reaped by working with Truman and the President's Committee on Civil Rights to help both their own cause and the international reputation of the country. For the purposes of this paper, this strategic model is called the "Everybody Wins" position; with the cooperation of all involved, increased federal support for *domestic* civil rights improvement would ostensibly lead to increased credibility for the U.S. on the world stage. The more left-leaning Robeson, on the other hand, was convinced of a deeper undercurrent of white supremacy running throughout the world, one that could not be disrupted by making compromises that kept black

activism purely domestic. His commitment to an international approach to activism would, as we shall see later, cast him in a light that would ultimately appear more threatening than useful to the state department.

The President's Committee on Civil Rights was charged with the task of reporting realities of black oppression within a political atmosphere that saw the Democratic Party struggling to reconcile its disparate factions. As described by Congressional expert Nelson W. Polsby:

> Virtually all of the South was run by Democratic politicians, not by the party of Lincoln. So the struggle over civil rights, when it was eventually joined, pitted national against southern regional Democrats, with Republicans mostly in secondary roles and frequently content to seize local partisan advantage from the intra-party warfare of the Democrats," (2004, p. 57).

Southern Democrats in Congress found themselves under pressure not only from the Executive but from the Judicial branch as well. According to Thomas Borstelmann, "No institution in American life loomed larger in the changing race relations of the 1940s than the federal judiciary," (2001, p. 57). Indeed, the 1940s was a decade that saw Supreme Court decisions abolishing the white primary, ruling against segregation on public interstate transport, and banning property covenants designed to undermine minority home ownership. "Truman's Justice Department," Borstelmann adds, "consistently intervened in civil rights cases in an effort to convince the country's highest court of the negative impact of officially sanctioned racial discrimination on American foreign relations," (2001, p. 57).

Rogers Smith and Desmond S. King discuss the analysis of race in political science in terms of "racial orders," comprised of a "white supremacist" order and an

"egalitarian transformative" order, concluding that, "…meaningful 'development' occurs when one predominant order gives way to another, or when the prevailing order's leading concepts of racial goals, rules, roles and boundaries are substantially revised," (2005, p. 75 & 79). The beginning of the Cold War era was, in their estimation, a period of such transformation. The powerful congressional politicians whose constituent loyalties had allowed the Jim Crow south to exists as a "racially divided caste system," in which "coercive power of the state was enlisted in preventing a substantial part of its population from…exercising the elementary rights of citizenship," were faced with a competing, transformative order fueled in part by fears of communist takeover and nuclear weaponry. While ultimately *To Secure These Rights* (the 1947 report produced by the Committee on Civil Rights) would identify national security as only one category of justification for urging radical change in civil rights legislation (moral and economic being the other two) it is worth noting that black intellectuals and activists had been pressing transformative agendas based in ethical and economic arguments for decades. It was not until all three arguments were projected into the national spotlight by a significant threat to national security that opposition to housing discrimination, anti-miscegenation laws and even lynching garnered enough "egalitarian transformative power" to compete with the existing white supremacist racial order. It is therefore not surprising that although Walter White and the Committee on Civil Rights were able to gain some ground in the fight for racial equality, there remained a vocal faction of the black community who were unsatisfied by the limitations of these gains and distrustful of the motives behind Truman's and the Supreme Court's willingness to grant them.

The Symbolic Power of Kwame Nkrumah

In 1950, while power dynamics in the U.S. government were being renegotiated and the country prepared for a new decade of Cold War participation, Kwame Nkrumah was sitting in jail, arrested by British colonial authorities for his incisive behavior and calls for "Positive Action" as leader of the newly formed Convention People's Party (Marable, 1987, p. 102). During Nkrumah's well-publicized imprisonment, his colleague Komla Gbedemah directed the CPP, emphasizing Nkrumah's increasing martyr status and stabilizing an unsettled constituency. Less than a year later, the CPP "won a series of stunning electoral victories," claiming such large majorities of both the urban and rural votes that "the governor had no choice except to call the CPP leader 'Party Leader' from his jail cell to form the new government," (Marable, 1987, p. 106-7). The impact beyond the Gold Coast was immediately felt. Manning Marable quotes British historian Basil Davidson:

> He had done what few thought possible, and opened a breach into the fortress of power where fewer still had looked for any great success. The news of this went out through Africa in electrifying ripples of encouragement to all who hoped for anti-colonial change (1987, p. 107).

Nkrumah and his mentor George Padmore strategized their next step toward full independence, although they differed as to how to proceed. Aware that the British would grudgingly accept these new developments due to the CPP's massive command of public support, the colonial power was none-the-less inextricably entwined with the economy and bureaucratic infrastructure of the Gold Coast; only a slow unraveling could temper the inevitable damage to British interests. While not the dramatic, revolutionary overthrow Padmore had dreamed of, a pragmatic Nkrumah felt strongly that "It was of

prime importance to us…and the freedom movements in other parts of Africa, that we should be able to effect a smooth take-over of power, free from serious administrative shocks," (Marable, 1987, p. 108).

This gradualist, cooperative approach to independence would effect Nkrumah's reputation in three ways: One, it allowed his ultimate success to shine even brighter next to the potentially blood-soaked outcome that existed in the minds of many who watched more contentious independence movements unfold around the world (including in Algeria which had already been raging for three years a this point); Two, the wide geo-political scope that advised Nkrumah's decision set the tone for his leadership, alerting international activists of his anti-colonial, Pan-African agenda; Three, it endeared Nkrumah to fearful Western leaders who viewed his measured, cooperative approach with the British as an indication that he was a "reasonable" man.

It was not long before the symbolic power of what Nkrumah had accomplished became clear in the United States. The presence of both Martin Luther King Jr. and Richard Nixon at the 1957 independence ceremonies in Accra indicated that the eyes of both the Executive branch and the black American community were turned toward the country known formerly as the Gold Coast. His second year in office Nkrumah organized the All-African People's Conference, a non-governmental gathering of leaders (including Patrice Lumumba) and activists convened with the intention of coordinating efforts to reach members of the African diaspora world-wide; dozens of black American journalists, academics, and organizers attended, including Paul Robeson. Brenda Gayle Plummer writes of the event:

This African conference has direct bearing on black Americans for two reasons. First, the decision of the All-African People's Conference to establish an African Freedom Day, April 15, created a vehicle through which to rally opinion on the African continent and beyond. Almost three thousand New Yorkers celebrated the first African Freedom Day in the United States in 1959 with numerous celebrities and politicians in attendance. Chicagoans mounted an African Freedom Week on the city's South Side. Civil rights activists, Democrats hopeful of victory in 1960, and such fixtures of the liberal establishment as the AFL-CIO, sent greetings or made speeches. The event thus became an instrument through which dissent, aimed at the racial status quo in the United States and Africa, made itself heard with the help of pageantry and…music…Second, discussions at the All-Africans People's Conference of the relative merits of armed force or non-violence as ways of eliminating colonialism influenced the American dialog on the civil rights movement…Sub-Saharan countries in which Europeans had a lesser stake were more likely to accept gradual and peaceful transitions (1996, p. 280).

While black American delegates to the All-African People's Conference were not

invited to participate in every aspect of the event (nor were they given decision making

authority at the same level as participants who lived and worked within the African

continent) the take-away message for U.S. leaders was clear; their host considered their

problems his problems. The challenges of black individuals world-wide unequivocally

fell under the umbrella of the Pan-African concern and call to action. For Robeson, this

message dovetailed squarely with the activist ideology he had been pursuing (at great

personal loss, ultimately, as we shall see) for the last decade. Americans weren't the only

participants deeply moved by the conference. French-Caribbean anti-colonialist

intellectuals (Franz Fanon was also in attendance at the AAPC) found an accessible and

visible platform through the Pan-Africanism being preached in Ghana, Nkrumah's fame

allowing his message to transcend the limits imposed upon Négritude by geography, by

the passage of time since the peak of its fervor, and by the social curtains surrounding

academia. While simultaneously working to design a new system of government and

keep the Ghanaian economy from collapsing, Nrkumah held himself accountable for the same "positive action" he demanded of his followers, organizing more conferences, traveling within the African continent as well as abroad, writing prolifically on the subject of Pan-Africanism, and working feverishly toward bringing the elusive concept to life. He had been granted a rare moment of awe-struck international intention, and he intended to take advantage of it.

The U.S. Observes

Not every gaze turned in Nkrumah's direction was decidedly admiring, however. Members of the U.S. State Department watched the events of 1957 with both interest and trepidation, as they did the liberation struggles of most post-colonial states, especially those with primarily non-white populations. Just as supporting improvements in the lives of black Americans had been identified as strategic by the State Department in the struggle against Communist encroachment, so too had developing allegiances with struggling former European colonies. As summarized by historian Thomas Borstelmann:

> From 1955, with Stalin dead and post-war Europe mostly stabilized, the Soviet government...sought to expand its contacts with the new governments of Asia and the Middle East and the emerging nations of Africa. Mao Tse-tung's similar intentions provoked American fears that China's history as the largest nonwhite nation exploited by the West might position it to provide leadership to other similarly exploited countries in the Third World. Just as the FBI and other elements of the U.S. government assumed that African Americans in the South were naturally docile and could be organized only through subversive and usually white outsiders, Eisenhower and his advisers believed that dark-skinned child-like leaders of non-European nations were vulnerable to the pernicious influences of subversive outsiders like the Soviets and the Chinese (2001, p. 112–3).

The United States had a confusing set of messages to sift through in its assessment of Nkrumah and what his leadership might mean to the preservation or compromise of the nation's security. In a tense global atmosphere where "European

colonialism remained a far more clear and present danger than Communism" for newly

independent countries, Nkrumah appeared trusting of the U.S. and amenable to

cooperating with Eisenhower (Borstelmann, 2001, p. 113; Nwaubani, 2001). He was

clearly motivated by the aid packages that were beginning to materialize as the decade

drew to a close, and remained carefully neutral on contentious international issues

(Nwaubani, 2001). At the same time, Nkrumah's actions fell short of the full Western

alignment. While Secretary of State Foster Dulles urgently advocated the need for states

to declare their Cold War allegiance, Nkrumah reiterated his commitment to a

"nationalist rather than neutralist" stance, a "policy of noninvolvement and nonalignment

in the East-West confrontation," protecting Ghana's independence and "resisting

domination from any quarter," (Nwaubani, 2001, p. 126). While Nkrumah had ardently

declared himself to be a "friend of Britain" and "no communist" upon his 1951 release

from prison, advisers with Marxist backgrounds survived the "purge" of communism

from the CPP in the mid 1950s, and Nkrumah made no secret of his intentions to develop

specific state-owned sectors of the economy (Nwaubani, 2001, p. 121 & 123). Most

troubling to the U.S. was the Soviet delegation that attended the Ghanaian independence

ceremonies, followed by a sustained campaign for Soviet diplomatic presence in Accra;

both developments were observed closely by the U.S. Consulate, the State Department,

and the British Foreign Office. Assessment of the level of threat and personal

intervention with Nkrumah occurred most frequently through ambassador William Flake,

who attempted to derail or at least postpone the exchange of diplomatic missions until a

"series of inoculations" could be given to Ghana to "make it resistant to activities of

USSR mission when it eventually arrives," (Nwaubani, 2001, p. 126–7). Flake's ultimate

assessment was that Nkrumah had been bullied into the missions and could not refuse

the Soviets without losing credibility, but that his true allegiance was to the United States,

or at least, to what the United Sates could offer his country.

Despite strong pressure from the Soviets and a less than convincing display of

Nkrumah's power to resist such pressure, the first three years of Ghanaian independence

found the Eisenhower administration situated in a cautiously pro-Nkrumah position. He

was the darling of the black developing world and a hero to a large population of

American citizens as well. His leadership symbolized "the turning point that would

decide whether Africa's rapport with the West, a rapport instituted by colonial rule, could

be sustained in the postcolonial era," (Nwaubani, 2001, p. 119). He was a strategic ally

who, so far, had listened willingly when the U.S. attempted to dissuade him from making

alliances with the East. By all appearances, at the end of the 1950s, Kwame Nkrumah

had found himself in an "Everybody Wins" arrangement with the United States.

The Liability of Symbolism

While Nkrumah's nationalism kept him free to avoid the stickiness of "alignment"

and ostensibly seek assistance for Ghana wherever he saw fit, his choice to remain

officially neutral during the Cold War made him vulnerable in two primary ways. One, it

highlighted the true relationship the United States wanted with him and with other non-

aligned leaders. Just a year prior to Ghanaian independence, Dulles called neutrality an

"obsolete" and "immoral and shortsighted conception," while members of the National

Security Council referred to leaders with such convictions as "still immature and

unsophisticated with respect to…the issues that divide the world today," (Borstelmann,

2001, 113-4). Members of Eisenhower's administration did not consider Nkrumah a

political equal and viewed their investment in his leadership untapped in its potential

as long as he remained merely "friendly" and not fully "aligned" with the West. This led

to the second source of his vulnerability; as long as Nkrumah remained neutral and

unaligned, his claim to aid from the United States had no teeth, based as it was on the

absence of undesirable action rather than a demonstrated commitment of loyalty. The

Volta River Project, upon which he rested so much of Ghana's developmental future,

hung in the balance of a small-scale standoff between a weak state determined to remain

independent and a strong state with resources to offer but an unclear amount of

international credibility to lose (Nwaubani, 2001, 176). That lack of clarity would grow

increasingly uncomfortable for the State Department as time passed. Even after

committing to the Volta River project, a 1961 senate report on the subject of "Aid and

Politics in Africa" identified the problem of having to "put up with a certain amount of

blackmail" to maintain influence in non-aligned states, granting aid requests in order that

they not be met by the Soviets (Schlesinger, 1972, p. 650).

Kwame Nkrumah's adherence to a nationalist, Pan-African ideology was a

liability beyond just the uneasiness his non-alignment caused the State Department. Cold

War liberalism grew out of an era which had tainted the term "ideology" for political

intellectuals. According to Robert Booth Fowler, post-war theorists had become highly

skeptical of any political order which depended on absolute claims or the achievement of

a utopian future (1978, p. 3). While Nazism and Communism were the most frequently

attacked categories, the criteria used by thinkers like Daniel Bell, Richard Hofstadter and

Arthur Schlesinger Jr. in their discussion of ideology's evils included "nationalists" who

"acted as if their beliefs were utterly certain," causing states "like people, to slip into the

dogma of 'universalistic' principles," (Fowler, 1978, p. 12). Ideology built on

nationalism and utopian visions were *not* based in reality, according to these men, and

could blind actors to the true consequences of actions motivated by unquestioned faith in

fundamentalist principles. Such actors became irrational (or less rational) and dangerous,

unable to be reasoned with and deluded about the destruction left in their wakes (Fowler,

1978, p. 12–3). This mentality among prominent theorists and political intellectuals

would eventually come to apply to Kwame Nkrumah, as his devotion to the ideals of Pan-

Africanism slowly became more apparent over time, as discussed in Chapter Four. Even

prior to his role as the first president of Ghana, Nkrumah led from a platform built on

black nationalism, the normative value of relationships inherent between human beings of

a certain skin color, and belief in the emancipatory triumphs of a united diaspora. While

not yet accused of wading into fascist waters, Nkrumah's position was indefensible from

a Cold War liberal perspective.

Even as the United States was actively working to downplay it racist image,

Nkrumah's activism on behalf of black Americans seemed to work against the country's

goal to minimize international attention and scrutiny and keep domestic focus on anti-

Communist efforts. Brenda Gayle Plummer quotes the observations of Alphaeus Hunton,

a protégé of DuBois:

> It was characteristic of Nkrumah's political acumen to take time out from the
> round of official receptions and exclusive by-invitation-only gatherings to greet
> the ordinary working people of Harlem and other Negro centers, and to
> strengthen, as he did, Ghana's dedication to not only to the winning of freedom
> for *all* Africa…but also to the achievement of full rights and dignity for people of
> African descent where they may be. All this was a welcome antidote to the
> prevailing point of view in the United States and even among a certain strata of
> Negro leaders to the effect the struggle for school integration and for the vote in

the South, for example, should be regarded and conducted as *isolated from* the great forward surge of Asian and African peoples in our time (1996, p. 282).

Any message that gave black Americans permission to identify more with their African identity than with their (partially recognized) U.S. citizenship ran counter to the platform from which Truman, Walter White and the President's Committee on Civil Rights were operating. In a statement that solidified an ideological break with Robeson, DuBois and other Pan-African sympathizers, White declared, "Negroes are American," and "in the event of any conflict that our nation has with any other nation, we will regard ourselves as Americans and meet the responsibilities imposed on Americans," (von Eschen, 1997, 112). With the respective activist philosophies growing increasingly mutually exclusive, state-sponsored "Everybody Wins" arrangements were beginning to unravel. There was no room in these Cold War liberal love stories for characters operating on a belief system that expanded black identity and loyalty beyond the role simply of "citizen." By the late 1950s, black Americans who stepped off the path of "citizen first" activism found they had crossed over into a scenario in which their own basic liberal freedoms were taken hostage by the state department. Projecting America's "negro problems" onto the world stage was a violation of national security; those who would not accept the extremely limited rules of engagement (ostensibly promising to improve both the fate of black Americans and the country's international reputation) became enemies of the state.

Crossing Over

There is no shortage of stories which help illustrate the limit between scenarios of American black activism that fell along acceptable, discreet, anti-Communist lines

("Everybody Wins") and those in which the benefits of supporting an activist figure

were outweighed by his or her violation of what Mary Dudziak calls "unwritten rules of

Cold War civil rights activism," (2000, p. 66). The message to blacks with access to an

international audience was clear: If you're not for us, you're against us. The stories of

Paul Robeson, W.E.B, DuBois, William Patterson, Robert Williams and Josephine Baker

help to define this point of "crossing over," and move us into position to apply this

definition to the Nkrumah case where we can look for similarities or differences.

Robeson and Baker

Paul Robeson and Josephine Baker were both African American singers who had

achieved international success, but while Robeson continued to live in and work out of

the United States, Baker moved to France prior to World War II where she preferred the

cultural and artistic climates (Dudziak, 2000, p. 61-2 & 67). Both entertainers used their

celebrity to gain attention for their critical messages aimed at race policy in the United

States. As discussed earlier, Robeson made attempts to work with national leaders to

improve the lives of black Americans, but his international scope and anti-colonial focus

cast him into disfavor with the president. Baker, on the other hand, had given up her

citizenship entirely, and moved through the world telling her own story of opportunities

limited by racism and public humiliation when visiting and performing in the United

Sates (Dudziak, 2000). Not surprisingly, the actions of both performers raised alarms

within the state department. Robeson's activities had been monitored since his founding

work with the Council on African Affairs in the late thirties, and, after delivering a

speech at the Congress of World Partisans in which he allegedly compared U.S. policy on

race to that of Hitler and Goebbles, the highly publicized backlash further antagonized

Truman's administration (Von Eschen, 1997; Dudziak, 2000). One year later,

Robeson's prediction that military action in Korea would lead to similar interference in

Africa sealed his fate. After refusing a request from J. Edgar Hoover to surrender his

passport willingly, "the State Department…inform[ed] the Immigration and

Naturalization Service that Robeson's passport was invalid and that he should not be

allowed to leave the country" (Dudziak, 2000, p. 62). Without an international audience,

Robeson's livelihood was severely compromised and his "fame, wealth, and health

declined precipitously," (Singh, 2004, p. 164).

Interestingly, it was a statement comparing American racism to the Holocaust that

proved a breaking point for the State Department in the case of Josephine Baker as well.

Although Baker was not particularly sympathetic to communism (Robeson was clear in

his leftist ideological preferences), she was doggedly committed to speaking out against

anti-black violence and discrimination she had experienced herself and continued to hear

about as an ex-patriot. In 1952, in a speech to an Argentinean audience, she stated,

"Negroes throughout the world entirely rightly are looking upon the United States in the

same way the Jewish people pointed a short time ago to the land where they had been

sentenced to extinction" (quoted by Dudziak, 2000, p. 69). The statement sent

Washington into a frenzy of damage control planning. While the USIA began

assembling a tour of "outstanding negro intellectuals" to counter Baker's assertions, the

State Department set to work preemptively contacting embassies in every country where

Baker was scheduled to perform. Using a variety of rhetorical tactics, department

officials, including Secretary of State Dulles, communicated with the governments of

Peru, Colombia, Cuba and Haiti, convincing each that Baker's anti-American comments

were embarrassingly exaggerated and that offering her their nation's ear would only be a hindrance to their own interests. Efforts were also made to paint Baker as a communist. Only in Cuba was she actually able to appear, although she was detained and interrogated about her intentions to use her appearances to instigate left-wing political upheaval. Her performances there were underpublicized and poorly attended (Dudziak, 2000).

Unable to work internationally and unable to return to the United States, Baker's voice was silenced in parts of the world where her message of American apartheid was perceived to be most damaging. In her case, it was not a legitimate accusation of communist affiliation that made her a target, but her insistence on traveling to countries where high-stakes efforts to paint a picture of American progress and racial harmony were undermined by her message. This is an important distinction to draw in an effort to identify a combination of circumstances which would cause the State Department take action against a black individual who displayed willingness to act explicitly outside the expressed interests of the administration. Demonstrated communist ideology itself does not appear to be necessary prerequisite for crossing over; however, any action deemed a weakening agent to the country's credibility in the area of race relations would be denounced in the same breath as a decidedly pro-communist agenda.

Williams and DuBois

Adequately summarizing the events leading up to W.E.B. DuBois' exile from the United States would require significantly more space than this project allows. However, his life's journey is so inextricably woven into the Cold War era stories of both the U.S. and Ghana that it would be impossible to exclude him, especially since the circumstances

of his ex-patriotism exemplify many of the themes surrounding the hypothesis of this thesis.

In the years leading up to the time period under examination, DuBois worked tirelessly both as a scholar and an unflinching critic of American white supremacy and the legacy of colonialism (Singh, 2004). In academic papers, essays, editorials, petitions, conference schedules, meeting rosters and in history books, his name appears alongside the names of almost every major figure central to the activist movements of black America throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Although he had already resigned once from the NAACP in 1934, he returned as an active affiliate over the next dozen years despite a tense and, at times, hostile relationship with Walter White (Horne, 1986). Their interactions became increasingly strained in part over a series of events in which DuBois' internationally focused human rights agenda cast the NAACP in a potentially Soviet-friendly light. One such event occurred in 1947 when DuBois sought to address the Human Rights Commission of the Untied Nations regarding a co-authored petition entitled "An Appeal to the World: A Statement on the Denial of Human Rights to Minorities in the Case of Citizens of Negro Descent in the Unites States of America and an Appeal to the United Nations for Redress." After being tabled, remitted to sub-committees and ultimately ignored, the petition was eventually formally introduced to the Committee by none other the Soviet Union, a tremendous source of embarrassment to Truman his administration (Plummer, 1996, p. 180–183). While DuBois viewed "An Appeal to the World" and its introduction to the UN as a means of gaining leverage with the federal government, Walter White "increasingly dissociated himself from the document and tried to prevent its further dissemination," according to Brenda Gayle

Plummer (1996, p. 183). Linking the NAACP with any known communists (much less the Soviet Union) was dangerous in White's view, and DuBois' difference of opinion on the matter was becoming an increasing liability. In 1948 the sitting board of the NAACP fired DuBois (Horne, 1986).

Being ousted by a mainstream civil rights organization left DuBois in a rather ambiguous position regarding his own activism. By the 1950s he was undeniably an elder statesmen in the civil rights arena, but that did not mean his outspoken nature or the left-leaning economic questions he insisted upon asking were tolerated to a greater degree than if he had been a younger man. In fact, many scholars comment that the last decades of DuBois' life are often written about in vague tones, neglecting the content of his work, and rather describing him as a formerly great man fading from a movement that was heading in a direction he stubbornly resisted. His affiliations became muddier and more estranged. He was indicted by the federal government for being an "'unregistered agent' of a foreign power," an experience throughout which he was unsupported by prominent black leadership (Singh, 2004, p. 164). His passport was revoked for eight years and when he was able to travel again and went to Ghana in 1961, his request for renewal was denied, effectively barring him from ever returning to the United States.

W.E.B. DuBois spent his remaining years in Ghana working on the *Encyclopedia Africana* (Plummer, 1996). His interests remained firmly focused on Pan-Africanism but his refusal to deny his communist affiliations (he became an official party member two years before his death) relegated a lifetime of work to the history books; the Cold War made his global, anti-colonial perspective too dangerously ideological to remain at the center of mainstream activism, and even made it impossible for him to remain in the

country that had been his home for 93 years. As described by Brandon Kendhammer, DuBois was "an African-American concerned with the worldwide problem of race, but as a Western-trained intellectual attempting to construct a discourse of anti-colonial nationalism from within the same classically liberal tradition that had generated colonial ideology in the first place," (2007, p. 52). Although DuBois was reportedly happy in Ghana, the involuntary nature of his exile was a great loss for him as well as for generations of scholars and activists who would maintain only a tenuous hold on the true legacy of his work.

Robert Williams' story is very different from that of DuBois, but contains elements that demonstrate similar points of "crossing over." Williams was an NAACP leader in Monroe, North Carolina, a town that exemplified the terrifying extremes of white supremacy during the Jim Crow era (Tyson, 1999, p. 21–22). Segregation was stringent and lynchings were frequent (60 recorded lynchings occurred in North Carolina between 1900 and 1943; the actual number was probably much higher [Tyson, 1999, p. 22]). Law enforcement officials were not only unsympathetic to the plight of black citizens in Monroe, but they categorically ignored appeals for protection against violence perpetrated by local Ku Klux Klan members. For example, when Williams and other demonstrators were repeatedly shot at while peacefully protesting in front of the local swimming pool, the officer on duty refused all requests for intervention, glibly stating, "Oh, I don't hear anything. I don't hear anything at all," (Williams, 1962, p. 42).

Williams had lived outside the South and was an avid radio listener; he was keenly aware that "because of the international situation, the Federal Government [did] not want racial incidents which draw the attention of the world to the situation in the

South," (Tyson, 1999, p. 104). After the shooting incident during the pool protest, Williams and other NAACP members appealed to the governor of North Carolina and even directly to Washington, but received only dismissive responses or no response at all (Williams, 1962). With no hope of protection from authorities in sight, Williams exercised his rights as a WW II veteran and began a local chapter of the NRA in Monroe (Williams, 1962). Several recent court cases (including 1958 "The Kissing Case" in which two young black boys were sentenced to years of reform school after a white childhood friend kissed one of them, and multiple assault cases in which white men attacked black women and were universally acquitted [Williams, 1962, p. 58–62]) led Williams to the conclusion that "the Negro in the South cannot expect justice from the courts. He must convict his attackers on the spot. He must meet violence with violence, lynching with lynching," (1962, p. 63).

Williams' words were picked up and circulated in newspapers throughout the United States. The inflammatory rhetoric of his statement reported without clear reference to the context in which it was spoken resulted in widespread alarm about the dangerous black radicalism brewing in Monroe (Williams, 1962). Williams had already been the subject of an espionage investigation while in the Marine Corps due to his frequent and bitter complaints to Washington about the treatment he and other black soldiers endured (Tyson, 1999). Although he called for nothing more than self-defense in the face of a literal angry lynch mob, his uncompromising tone ignited deeply held racial fears in many Southern whites and made him unpalatable to state and federal authorities (and even, ultimately, to the NAACP [Willaims, 1962]). In spite of the fact that the Ku Klux Klan violently dehumanized its victims as a means of controlling blacks and

maintaining a white supremacist status quo, authorities and the press cast Williams'
self-defense philosophy as Communist-inspired agitation rather than as a natural, logical
response to living under perpetual threat of bodily injury or death (Williams, 1962). "The
Kissing Case" had propelled Monroe into the international spotlight two years earlier,
thanks to Williams' activist efforts, causing endless embarrassment to North Carolina
Governor Luther Hodges (Tyson, 1999, p. 108). After the discovery that Williams was
responsible for arming the black citizens of Monroe, national scrutiny of his actions
intensified, as did the rhetoric linking armed black resistance with the Communist Party.

The circumstances leading up to Robert Williams' departure from Monroe and
from the United States are far too complex to render in adequate detail, but they can be
broken down into three key events. First, Williams was suspended from his leadership
position within the NAACP (Tyson, 1999). In the wake of his inflammatory public
statements, executive secretary Roy Wilkins scrambled to clarify NAACP positions on
the use of violence and the support of communism (opposed to both, of course),
executing as much damage control as possible before accusations of Williams' violent
radicalism spilled over and left a stain of incredibility on his organization (Tyson, 1999).
Second, a group of Freedom Riders came to Monroe to participate in a protest regarding
access to basic educational, medical and employment benefits (Williams, 1962). Their
presence unleashed an unprecedented torrent of violence from local white racists over the
next several days (emboldened, in Williams' mind, by their pledge to remain non-violent
[1962]). It was within this context of mayhem and bloodshed that the third event
occurred, the appearance of Mabel and Bruce Stegall in the neighborhood where
Williams lived.

The precise reason for the Stegall's presence in the neighborhood is unclear to scholars, but the white couple exited their car in the midst of a crowd of angry black citizens, at which point it was obvious their safety was in danger. Williams attempted to disperse the crowd, but refused to escort the Stegalls to "safety," at which point they followed him into his home. Williams then learned that the National Guard was sending troops to Monroe. He allowed Bruce Stegall to speak to the chief of police on the phone in an effort to garner assistance while he prepared his family to leave town. At this point his presence was so incendiary to the already explosive situation that he genuinely feared for his life and the lives of countless others who would be caught in the inevitable crossfire once troops arrived. Furthermore, he could no longer anticipate support or intervention on his behalf from the NAACP (Tyson, 1999).

Although the Stegalls eventually left Williams' home unharmed and returned to nearby Marshville, the seed had been planted in the minds of law enforcement that the couple had been kidnapped and kept at the home under threat of violence. The disappearance of Williams exacerbated the story and it was soon widely believed he had fled to avoid kidnapping charges. Within days he was declared "wanted" by the FBI (Tyson, 1999). Williams and his family went to Canada, but law enforcement followed. He secretly relocated to Cuba (the mission expedited by the Cuban government itself) a move that came as "no surprise" to the Justice Department which declared with certainty that Williams was a "Communist sympathizer and an outspoken advocate of Fidel Castro," (Tyson, 1999, p. 285). "The Communist-thing is becoming an old standard," Williams wrote from Cuba a year later (at which time he still denied membership in the Communist party or much of an interest in politics at all):

Anyone who uncompromisingly opposes the racists, anyone who scorns the religious fanatics and the super-duper American conservatives is considered a Communist. That sort of thing gives Communists a lot of credit, because certainly many people in the South don't know what a Communist is…But people aspire to be free. People want to be liberated when they are oppressed…Negroes need not be told by any philosophy or by any political party that racial oppression is wrong. Racial oppression itself inspires the Negro to rebellion (Williams, 1962, p. 117-119)

Conclusion

Paul Robeson, Josephine Baker, W.E.B. DuBois and Robert Williams are four of

the more visible examples of Americans (or former Americans) exercising what would

seem to be rights protected by the basic tenets of democratic liberalism: freedom of

expression, movement, protest, self-defense, intellectual exploration, all advantages of a

Western life according to American rhetoric of the period. However, as their stories

reveal, the bi-polar standoff in which the U.S. was involved combined with mounting

racial tensions and the confusion of the post World War II era resulted *not* in a complete

re-envisioning of liberalism per se, but rather in a revelation of how malleable the

boundaries of liberalism could be, softened as they were by multiple layers of crisis and

the "invisibility" of liberalism itself as an ideology. Returning to Klinkner and Smith's

idea of competing racial orders, these examples could arguably support the statement that

the white supremacist order did *not* ultimately give way to the transformative egalitarian

order as suggested at the beginning of this chapter. Although racial goals were more

solidly "on the table" than ever before (the "solidity" aided by what amounted to

international PR concerns), Nikhil Singh argues that "the moral panic over communist

infiltration was a powerful instrument emboldening white supremacy throughout the

country," forcing the transformative order to either compromise the content of its

demands or face persecution and exile (2004, p. 164). Rather than allowing for the subversion of the existing racial order, liberal boundaries were being stretched in the name of "self-preservation" at a time when "self" had yet to be redefined as inclusive of black America.

To portray American liberalism as perfectly formed balloon of democratic functioning that occasionally must bend to survive a jagged point in political history would be inaccurate and naïve. As expressed by Nikhil Singh, "Black power would expose the limits of contained racial liberalism when confronted with the vicious defense and accumulated history of racial inequality" (Singh, 2004, p. 173). This reflects a sentiment explicitly noted in the writing of both DuBois and Williams; racism is inherently embedded in the raw materials that built the foundations of American democracy. As a result, racist thinking permeates the American psyche; it has become pathological, the default mode of thought during times of crisis. I have called the impetus for slipping into this mode "crossing over" when referring to the time period in question.

In an effort to identify the elements present when this default thinking happens and liberal limits are clearly exposed, it is necessary to search these examples for commonalities. In the cases of Robeson, Baker, DuBois and Williams, the limit seems to be defined at the point action is taken by someone demonstrating the following combination of characteristics and behaviors:

Being black +

Having the potential to engage in an "Everybody Wins" relationship +

Anything short of total denouncement of communism +

Demonstration of willingness to take public, self-determined action motivated by identity politics in opposition to the United States' political or rhetorical desires

I will briefly discuss each characteristic in an effort to illuminate how they interact and why they are being applied to the stories included in this thesis.

Blackness is an integral component of this formula, primarily because the *meaning* of blackness is consistently overlooked in discussions of Cold War liberalism (and much of history, for that matter). Writing during the Cold War, Louis Hartz, in his classic work *The Liberal Tradition in America*, identifies one of the most basic tensions underlying the ideology upon which American politics is ostensibly based. "In order to keep democracy for the whites," he observes, " it was essential to develop a theory of separate races for the blacks, and so the retention of a part of liberalism grounded itself in one of the most vicious and antiliberal doctrines of modern times," (1955, p. 167). This statement provides a jumping-off point for efforts to contextualize the meaning of blackness: At the very least, its use as an indicator of subhuman status was accepted by early colonists, and incorporated over centuries by means of denial, justification, or psychological suppression, all in the name of maintaining the white supremacist status quo in America (and a trajectory of economic development based on an unpaid labor force). Institutions in the United States developed around this racial hierarchy, reflecting different meanings of blackness (and whiteness and brownness for that matter) depending on the time period and political climate. The Cold War era brought to the surface a "countersubversive obsession" that Michael Rogin describes as a political response to the demonization of marginalized groups, resulting (in the case of the demonization of blacks) in powerful whites developing extreme paranoid fantasies about people of color

(1987, p. 277–278). Rogin notes that during periods in history in which the center is perceived to be "under attack" then "a choice must be made between tolerance…and political repression; under those circumstances, pluralists can metamorphose into countersubversives," (1987, p. 280). Put simply, liberalism contains within it the potential for repressive action, the catalyst for which can be a high-pressure conflict of interests with marginal actors about whom the more powerful actors hold exaggerated, fear-based perceptions. The inclusion of "blackness" as a component of crossing over is meant to evoke both the undercurrent of racism in all American institutions and the scholarly links that have been made between the presence of this undercurrent and the repressive actions of powerful actors during times of threat or crisis.

The ability to engage in an "Everybody Wins" relationship was covered fairly extensively in the earlier sections of this chapter, but it is worth noting how the dynamics of this arrangement interact with the other necessary components of crossing over. For example, politicians and policy makers in an EW relationship were categorically more powerful actors than black activists. However, by virtue of the Soviet interest in exposing American racial inequity and brutality, they found themselves in a position which compromised their power. Suddenly, these statesmen needed cooperation from black leaders, a radically unfamiliar position and one that may very well have exacerbated the type of fear and paranoia that characterizes the countersubversive, as discussed above. Add to this a black actor who also maintains an ambiguous (or, even worse, supportive) relationship with communism. As many of the authors reviewed in Chapter II discuss, communism existed in the minds of Cold War liberals as a catastrophically dangerous ideology, an enemy state, and an unrelentingly greedy force

gobbling (to use Dulles' imagery) up the world country by country. Rogin includes communism as a marginal category about which countersubversive thinkers generate fantasies that are then used to justify repressive state action. This applied to both individuals and countries. Dulles' distain for neutralism is a good example of this phenomenon. Even if a state did not empower a communist regime or actively ally with the Soviets, a refusal to denounce communism was enough to pull a veil of suspicion over that state's leadership. This assessment was not based on evidence, but on the internal logic of a highly dramatic and provocative individual. This is why proven communist affiliation is *not* a necessary element of crossing over. Operating with litmus test for communism so broad that it included pretty much any non-aligned state as a potential enemy gave the Eisenhower administration enormous freedom to act in response to offenses so minor they would have been unable to stand alone as justification for invasive action. Similarly, a single actor such as Josephine Baker who was not politically aligned with the communist party but traveled to Cuba to spread her message of American racial intolerance was, as a result, branded as a leftist radical and subjected to the same consequences of crossing over as if she had been a card carrying member of the communist party.

Finally, the addition of self-determination based on identity in opposition to state mandate touches on the fundamental conflicts between liberalism versus nationalism or identity politics: The former is based on the rights of the individual who becomes a member of a state; The latter is based on a collective identity that transcends state boundaries (or even continental boundaries, in the case of the African diaspora). As outlined in the discussion of Kwame Nkrumah's symbolic power, this is yet another

tension underlying the liberal response to the political upheavals of the Cold War era. While the Untied States was unwilling to extend full citizenship to blacks, it certainly wasn't comfortable with black leaders claiming to be part of a larger, world-wide community of similarly oppressed people. When black leaders publicly engaged as members of activist communities fighting a racist nation, it exposed American racism to an even greater degree. To the federal government, this read as forming an alliance based on identity rather than citizenship, a choice that was mutually exclusive with full participation in American liberalism.

CHAPTER IV

NKRUMAH AND THE CONGO CRISIS

That race relations and fears of Soviet domination were intertwined in the minds of the state department is clearly illustrated by the cases discussed in the previous chapter. What is not clear, however, is how genuinely the Truman or Eisenhower administrations feared that the independent actions of Robeson, Baker, DuBois, and Williams would jeopardize the United States in its fight to maintain a balance of power by opening doors to communist influence. Of the four, only two (Robeson and DuBois) were at all officially affiliated with the Communist Party, and both men were clearly more focused on issues of Pan-African importance; black power, not Marxism, was their principle call to battle. At the point when each of these individuals came under the spotlight and was targeted for his or her actions, the charges levied against them all carry similar punishing quality. They had spoiled the "Everybody Wins" arrangement the United States was trying to negotiate with black leaders at home. This lack of complicity would result in losses of both freedom and stability for all four.

By contrast, Kwame Nkrumah's presidential relationship with the United States began, as discussed in Chapter III, with the emerging leader taking an outwardly deferential stance with regard to the emerging superpower (Nwaubani, 2001). Fully aware that his ideological relationships were under scrutiny even prior to independence, Nkrumah did his best to reassure skeptics at public appearances, including a speech at the United Nations Student Association in 1954 where he acknowledged "confusion in the

minds of some people…regarding where I and my Party stand in the present struggle between the Eastern and Western democracies…we regard country our as being wedded to the democracies that are friendly to us," (Nwaubani, 2001, p. 122). After watching Nkrumah purge several communist cabinet members from the party and subdue the local trade union movement in an effort to soothe American anxieties, political scientist David Apter observed, "The general conduct of the present Nkrumah government would make it difficult to see what efforts toward socialism are being made, other than broad state entrepreneurial functions similar to those of the colonial government before the present constitution," (Apter, 1954, p. 421). According to Jitendra Mohan:

> At that time Ghana was seen by many in the west, and presumably also by the Belgians, as a fairly stable and successful experiment in African self-government, which had been kept on an even keel with a fair admixture of 'multi-racial co-operation' in several vital fields and which had, at least until the end of the 50s, had no unduly injurious effect on western interests (1969, p. 372).

It was within this atmosphere of mutual regard that the Untied States and Ghana became embroiled in the events surrounding the independence struggles of the Belgian Congo Republic, events which, I will argue, set the stage for a revealing look at the true nature of the relationship between the U.S. State Department and Kwame Nkrumah.

Crisis in the Congo

Before chronicling the State Department's shift in political regard toward Nkrumah, it is necessary to briefly outline some history leading up to the Congo Crisis (the complexity of these historical events makes it impossible to provide anything but the most basic details necessary to understand the questions under analysis) and the nature of the pre-existing relationship that existed between Nkrumah and Patrice Lumumba. The

two met in 1958 at the All-African People's Conference, although Lumumba had

undoubtedly followed Nkrumah's career closely for a number of years (Thompson,

1969). The leaders of all eight independent African states (Morocco, Tunisia, Libya,

Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Liberia and Ghana) had met six weeks earlier and, having

achieved independence under a variety of circumstances in relative isolation from one

another, "adopted resolutions which defined a new positive approach to the African

problem and the colonial question," (Nkrumah, 1967, p. xv). Nkrumah hoped to harness

the momentum of their individual successes and equip the freedom movements and

emerging political parties of Africa with the strategic tools they would need to forge

ahead, unified in their respective struggles for independence (Nkrumah, 1967).

The Pan-African ideology Nkrumah preached greatly inspired Lumumba, and the

conference "marked his transformation from a liberal to a radical nationalist,"

(Musambachime, 1967). At the time Lumumba's rival, Joseph Kasavubu of the ABAKO

Party, was the premiere Congolese nationalist on Nkrumah's radar and his initial choice

for leadership once independence was achieved (Thompson, 1969). Lumumba, however,

intentionally modeled his leadership after Nkrumah's and injected healthy doses of Pan-

African rhetoric into his MNC (*Mouvement National Congolais* or Congolese National

Movement) Party leadership (Thompson, 1969). The two maintained close contact

throughout the following year, during which time Belgium was gradually losing its

foothold in many regions of the Congo. January 1959 saw the outbreak of rioting in the

Congolese capital, Léopoldville, events which forced independence negotiations with an

unpleasantly surprised Belgian colonial government. ("By the end of 1958, Belgium still

envisaged that independence for the Congo belonged to an infinite future," according to

Ebere Nwaubani, "This meant that there was as yet no shift in the essence of its colonial policy, which was to ensure that Africans remained hewers of wood and drawers of water," [2001, 146-7]).

Chaos ensued over the following eighteen months: Belgian officials fruitlessly scrambled to maintain order with offers of greater Congolese representation and military reorganization, scores of new political parties sprang up, many organized around tribal associations, and both Kasavubu and Lumumba were arrested separately, accused of instigating riots. Accounts of this period are mixed with regard to Belgian willingness to grant independence but, whether forced or conceded, the outcome seemed inevitable. By May of 1960 the stage was set for general elections and Lumumba emerged the clear winner, solidifying Nkrumah's role in his camp (Thompson, 1969). On June 30th of that year, the Congo officially gained its independence from Belgium with (temporarily) reconciled rivals Joseph Kasavubu installed as president and Patrice Lumumba as prime minister (Nwaubani, 2001).

The "official" dawn of independence was quickly overshadowed by what is now considered the "official" onset of the Congo Crisis. Days after Lumumba and Kasavubu rose to power, riots erupted again within the ranks of the Congolese armed forces, fueled this time by poor conditions and low pay. European nationals panicked and began to leave the country en masse; Belgain troops intervened, securing the major airports in violation of the freshly inked Belgian-Congolese "treaty of friendship," (Nkrumah, 1967, p. 19). On July 11th, the Congo's wealthiest province, Katanga, announced its succession under the leadership of Moise Tshombe, prompting the arrival of even more Belgian troops, ostensibly there to protect Katangan property and interests (Nwaubani,

2001). "We accuse the Belgian Government of having carefully prepared the secession of Katanga with a view to maintaining a hold of our country," Kasavubu and Lumumba wrote jointly the following day, "The overwhelming majority of the Katangan population is opposed to secession, which means the disguised perpetuation of the colonialist regime," (Armah, 2004, p. 52).

Although real agreements had been made between the colonial government and the new Congolese leadership, the high-pressure conditions under which they had been drafted and ratified clearly undermined the likelihood of success. The alliance between Kasavubu and Lumumba was similarly artificial, encouraged as it was by Nkrumah acting on what he believed would be most palatable to the British, the Americans and the Belgians themselves (the Belgian ambassador hoped Nkrumah might have a "moderating and stabilizing influence on Lumumba," [Mohan, 1969, p. 372]). "My job…was to insure a smooth independence, like ours," remarked Nkrumah's representative after visiting Léopoldville, "I had to convince them that they were on a stage, and that if their independence didn't go well, it would set back the fate of all Africa," (Thompson, 1969, p. 122 & 122–3).

But it didn't go well. Congolese independence and unity were the ultimate objectives of Lumumba's ambition, and within days of his election both were crumbling before his eyes. Appeals were made to the United States, the UN, to Nikita Khrushchev and, of course, to Kwame Nkrumah for assistance in enforcing the terms of an independence agreement that had been completely disregarded by the more powerful state (Nwaubani, 2001). The U.S. was non responsive, and the UN's actions will be discussed later in this chapter. The reactions of Ghana and the Soviet Union are of

crucial relevance to the analysis of this event. Nkrumah was finally in a position to truly influence foreign policy and contribute to the independence of another African nation in tangible rather than intellectual or aspirational terms. It was, wrote W. Scott Thompson, "the most exciting period of Ghana's first nine years. Probably no new nation ever brought so much help to a brother state so quickly…Foreign policy was no longer merely proclamatory. Ghana was a principal supplier of troops to the Congo and was on terms of special friendship with the government," (1969, p. 123 & 125). The interdependent nature of African destinies had been a primary theme of Nkrumah's speeches and writings for a decade; the Congo Crisis was an opportunity to tangibly realize the ideals of Pan-Africanism (Mohan, 1969). Even within this context of realized ideology, however, Nkrumah was careful to act in accordance with the orders of the United Nations (Armah, 2004).

But at this point it was Khrushchev's aid to the Congo that elicited notice from the international community. "The arrival of ten Soviet planes, sixty trucks, weapons, and military advisers to help Lumumba" sent ripples of indignation throughout the Eisenhower administration (Nwaubani, 2001, p. 148). To their knowledge, it was the first time Khrushchev had provided military intervention in a conflict so far from his native soil (Nwaubani, 2001). Tshombe had consistently painted a caricature of Lumumba as a Communist living deep in Khrushchev's pocket; as the Congolese politician currently most endeared to Western Europe due to his cooperation with the Belgians, Tshombe's foreshadowing made it easy to cast Lumumba as an agent for the "Soviet penetration" in Africa, fueling the argument that "his elimination as a political factor was the first essential step towards a 'satisfactory' solution in the Congo," (Mohan,

1969, p. 386.) Even Kasavubu was alarmed by Lumumba's unilateral decision to accept Soviet aid. Although he shared the goal of removing Belgian troops from the Congo once and for all, his swiftly formed "alliance" with Lumumba was not so strong that he could overlook what was at best an unsavvy political move and, at worst, a suicidal one (Mohan, 1969, p. 387). On September 5, 1960 Kasabubu announced his revocation of Lumumba's appointment as prime minister; within 24 hours, Lumumba issued a denial of Kasavubu's authority to take such action and, in turn, declared his own revocation of the president's appointment (Nkrumah, 1967).

The United Nations and United States React

Before discussing the details of the UN reaction to Lumumba and Kasavubu's (initially united) appeal for assistance in protecting the independent status of the Congo, it is worth noting the significance of this event in what was, at the time, a relatively brief history of the UN. Jitendra Mohan writes that by the time the crisis subsided some five years later, "The operation was the biggest and costliest by far in the life of the UN; and its course was marked by political as well as financial ruin," (1969, p. 369). Barely 15 years old at the time the Congo Crisis broke out, the assembly had never attempted peacekeeping in African prior to 1960. "Africa has been a giant laboratory for UN peacekeeping," assert Adekeye Adebajo and Chris Landberg, "and has repeatedly tested the capacity and political resolve of an often dysfunctional 15-member UN Security Council," (2000, p. 161). Four year after this initial experiment, "the UN's reputation suffered tremendous damage as a result of the mission," and the cry for "'No more Congos!'…rang out unmistakably across the African continent," (Adebajo & Landberg, 2000, p. 165).

In July of 1960, however, the Security Council seemed well-enough prepared to respond to Congolese appeals for help under the leadership of Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld, unaware that what seemed like a straightforward mobilization of troops for the protection of a vulnerable state would ultimately spiral into an extended mission of such dramatic proportions (Armah, 2004). Kwame Nkrumah contacted Hammarskjöld within days of Kasavubu and Lumumba, offering to send Ghanaian troops on behalf of the Congolese leadership and urging the UN to make the operation a primarily African-supported one (Armah, 2004; Baynham, 1988). Little over a month later, over 2300 Ghanaians were dispatched to the Congo as part of the UN operation (over the course of the crisis, Ghana would mobilize a higher percentage of its military manpower to the Congo than any other state [Baynham, 1988]). This arrangement, however, generated some immediate complications. After the disintegration of Lumumba's leadership relationship with Kasavubu, Nkrumah continued to support the former. Although he hoped for reconciliation and considered both leaders part of the legitimate government, he remained firm in his belief that Lumumba's Pan-African philosophy gave him a special place in the broader anti-colonial effort, an effort that united the destinies of every African nation (Nkrumah, 1967; Mohan, 1969). But Nkrumah did not have command over the troops he dispatched to the Congo. In adhering to international expectations he sacrificed the ability to exercise his exclusive support of Lumumba through military action. This fact became problematic when Ghanaian soldiers were dispatched to block Lumumba's access to his radio station, while French and Belgian-controlled stations freely broadcast anti-Lumumba programming (Armah, 2004). Lumumba was furious. Nkrumah immediately wrote to Hammarskjöld:

When the United Nations went to the Congo on Lumumba's invitation, Ghana agreed to place her troops under United Nations command. The whole development has since perverted the real objective and seriously undermines Ghana's position in the eyes of the legitimate Government of the Congo Republic…In the circumstances, if Lumumba is not allowed to use his own radio station at Leopoldville for keeping the Congolese populace informed of the critical situation and thus mobilizing support…Ghana would withdraw her troops forthwith from the United Nations Command and reserves the right to place her troops in the Congo Republic entirely at the disposal of the legitimate Lumumba Government of the Congo Republic (Nkrumah, 1967, p. 42).

Ghana, who had previously supported the UN as the appropriate international body to intervene on behalf of the independent Government of the Congo, was now entering a tenuous phase in this relationship, generating tensions that would soon put a strain on U.S.–Ghanaian relations as well.

As mentioned in Chapter III, US foreign policy toward Africa generally was largely driven by a) a desire to maintain positive relationships with European allies and protect their economic interests in Africa's natural resources, and b) and interest in containing Soviet influence (Nwaubani, 200). These motives also underscored America's budding relationship with Nkrumah, although realistically any leverage he had in his position relative to the superpower stemmed from the novelty of his position as one of the only highly visible black leaders in Africa (and was undermined by his dedication the development of the Volta Project, for which the United States had offered a vague promise of an undetermined amount of money [Nwaubani, 2001,187]). Shortly after the split between Lumumba and Kasavubu, the U.S. (a watchful but unengaged actor in the events leading up to the Congo crisis) fell into step with Belgium, France and Great Britain, who had voiced support of Kasavubu (although the CIA would eventually find a willing ear in military leader Joseph Mobutu who, with $1 million dollars of American

support money, emerged the ultimate winner in the Congolese power play) (Armah, 2004; Collins, 1992). The expressed reasons for supporting the disputed president rather than the disputed prime minister were based on three primary factors, all of which spoke more to their lack of regard for one leader rather than their positive opinion of the other. First, Lumumba had accepted Soviet transportation and weaponry as a means of equipping the under-trained *Armée Nationale Congolaise* (ANC) to resist Belgian forces and restore order (Nwaubani, 2001). Although acutely aware of the intensity of the East–West power struggle and of how his actions might be perceived by Western allies, Lumumba had received no aid from the U.S. and a delayed response to his appeals from the UN. The mounting crisis motivated him to embrace a Soviet offer which, under the circumstances, amounted to seeking "any port in a storm." However, in a political environment where even strict non-alignment was considered problematic, rationalizations based on necessity could not exempt Lumumba from guilt by association. Second, Lumumba's goals in the Congo were not the same as those the United Nations (or its principal source financial support, the Untied States) (Mohan, 1969, p. 376). Lumumba sought absolute independence and national cohesion; Hammarskjöld sought stability by any means, seeing a swift resolution as "the only way in which the Congo could be spared the horrors of anarchy, Africa the horrors of the cold war, and the world at large the horrors of destruction" (Mohan, 1969, p. 376). Finally, reports of his erratic and often volatile behavior led to the acceptance of set of derogatory Western beliefs about Lumumba as an individual, beliefs that cast him, in the words of Ralph Bunche (representative of the Secretary-General to the Congo) as an "utterly maniacal child,"

and, according to Hammarskjöld, "an ignorant pawn" with an "utter lack of experience

of the big political currents, balances and pressures" (Nwaubani, 2001, p. 610–611).

Nkrumah Reacts

In his 1967 book *Challenge of the Congo*, Nkrumah references the specific event

that cemented the Western allies' support of Kasavubu in the opening lines of a chapter

entitled "The Final Betrayal:"

> Early in November 1960 the struggle for power between Kasavubu and Lumumba turned strongly in favour of Kasavubu when he flew to America to address the UN General Assembly. There were then two Congolese delegations in New York, one accredited by Kasavubu and the other by Lumumba. The Credentials Committee…recommended the seating of the Kasavubu delegation and…their recommendation was accepted by the General Assembly by 53 votes to 24 with 19 abstentions. Not surprisingly, Belgium, France, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the U.S.A. were among those who voted in favour of the Kasavubu delegation (p. 84).

For Nkrumah, the split between Lumumba and Kasavubu was a symptom of

imperialist meddling in the Congo; public acknowledgment of one as the "legitimate"

leader at the expense of the other was a fundamental denial of the collective political will

of the Congolese people and an abandonment of the goal to restore the Congolese

Parliament (Nkrumah, 1967). Having considered himself a key protagonist in the saga of

the Congo since before independence, Nkrumah made no secret of his unhappiness with

the unfolding of events, releasing statements to this effect to the other involved states as

well as to the press. Just a month earlier, he had addressed the General Assembly

himself, conveying a message that, although internally consistent with his prior

statements on the subject, none-the-less generated uneasy reactions among Western

delegates. He began by rebuking the UN for its failure "to distinguish legal and illegal

authorities which had led to the most ludicrous results embarrassing both to the Ghanaian

forces...and to the United Nations itself which was exhibited in a ridiculous light,"

(Nkrumah, 1967, p. 70). Nkrumah went on deliver a speech composed of messages that

fell into three categories. First, he emphasized his belief that the crisis in the Congo was

an African problem:

> I have on more than one occasion suggested that the United Nations should delegate its functions in the Congo to the Independent African States, especially those...whose contributions in men and material make the United Nations effort in the Congo possible. The forces of these African States should be under a unified African Command with responsibility to the Security Council under which the United Nations troops entered the Congo Republic (1967, p. 71).

Second, he reiterated his insistence that a unified Congo under the original, post-

colonial governmental structure was the only acceptable goal for the United Nations.

That Tshombe was still actively governing in Katanga was evidence to Nkrumah that the

UN did not adequately prioritize unity and was unwilling to act against Belgian interests

(1967, p. 71–72). This led to the third theme, accusations of "imperialist intrigue."

> The policy of divide and rule is still being practiced energetically by the opponents of African independence and unity...It is pertinent here to sound a strong note of warning, namely, that if some people are now thinking in terms of trusteeship over the Congo to carry out the exploitation of her resources and wealth, let those people forever discard that idea, for any such suggestion would be resisted...The Congo is independent and sovereign. The colonialists and imperialists must remember this fact and remember it for all time...(1967, p. 72).

This was not the first time Nkrumah had voiced displeasure in what he perceived

as an undercurrent of Western cronyism influencing UN action (or inaction) in the

Congo. In an August telegram to Eisenhower, he remarked:

> There is a suspicion, which I would like to believe is quite unfounded, that the Untied States of America, France and the United Kingdom are not giving their full support to the United Nations decision that all Belgian troops should be withdrawn from the whole of the Congo. The view which is being taken by some African states is that these powers are deliberately delaying on this issue in the hope that a Katanga state can be created and that the Belgian military occupation

can continue and be ultimately justified on a de facto basis (Schwar & Shaloff, 1992, p. 391).

It should be noted that this passage maintains a rather polite and deferential tone, casting Nkrumah as the reporter rather than the source of the "suspicion." It is also surrounded by several paragraphs of frank and friendly correspondence of a type not unusual between allied leaders. The speech he delivered at the UN General Assembly a month later was considerably more critical and infinitely more public. It would, as we shall see, mark a turning point in the relationship between the United States and Kwame Nkrumah.

At this point, state-level infrastructure in the Congo had fragmented to the point where a third faction was now vying for supremacy. Army Chief of Staff Colonel Mobutu announced September 13th that the ANC would assume power over the Congo, initiating, in the words of Guinea President Sékou Touré, "a reign of terror against the defenseless civil population by day and night: tortures, assassinations, rape and deportation…being constantly perpetrated by these soldiers and bandits disguised as military," (Nkrumah, 1967, p. 55 & 85). Patrice Lumumba and his family were forcibly confined to their home by the ANC (making his own planned appearance before the General Assembly too dangerous to attempt). Nkrumah urged the distressed Ghanaian ambassador N.A. Welbeck to resist the violent expulsion attempts perpetrated by Mobutu, reminding him that "complying with any requests or orders" would qualify as "*de facto* recognition of Mobutu and his cohorts," the equivalent of "accept[ing] defeat at the hands of imperialists and colonialists in the Congo," (1967, p. 85 & 87). Despite Nkrumah's orders, Welbeck returned to Accra fearing for his life, after which Kasavubu

did not permit the installation of another Ghanaian ambassador to replace him. More

alarmingly to Nkrumah, Lumumba was apprehended and jailed by Mobutu's soldiers

after secretly leaving his home to attend the burial of his infant daughter on December 1,

1960 (Nkrumah, 1967). News of his mistreatment while in custody soon surfaced,

prompting an outcry from African delegates to the United Nations. Nkrumah wrote of

the incident:

> The reason given for UN non-interference was, of course, that it could not properly intervene in domestic affairs. Yet who was to determine the limits of what could legitimately be termed "domestic affairs?" Tshombe, Mobutu and Kasavubu always claimed their actions were no concern of the UN since they were purely of an "internal" nature. Katanga's secession was a "domestic" affair, so was the dismissal and arrest of Lumumba, and so also was Mobutu's rule. If these kinds of arguments were to be accepted, then the whole purpose of UN intervention, which was to secure Belgian withdrawal so that the properly elected government of Lumumba could carry out its mandate, was likely to be defeated (1967, p. 93).

It was within this context that Ghana broke off diplomatic relations with Belgium

and Kwame Nkrumah began in earnest to form the African High Command as an

alternative body designated to handle African crises (Nkrumah, 1967, p. 86). Although

he remained hopeful that his relationship with the United States would remain in-tact, it

was very clear that the UN was working in direct opposition to his wishes. What is not

clear is to what extent Nkrumah understood that the actions of the UN were, at this point,

a direct reflection of the will of the State Department and the CIA (a reality facilitated in

large part by Andrew Cordier, the American representative to the Congo and

Hammarksjold's personal secretary), governing bodies who were also funding a large

percentage of the operation [Collins, 1992, 5]). Nkrumah worked tirelessly throughout

the remainder of the fall and early winter to protect Lumumba and make a case for the

man whose legitimately elected status appeared to have vanished from the collective memory of all involved Western countries. By January 1961, however, his efforts would prove to have been in vain. Lumumba's hideously violent death that month at the hands of the Mobutu-led army was, in the estimation of the majority of Congo scholars who contributed to this project, carried out with the explicit knowledge (if not at the urging) of the CIA and most likely Eisenhower also (Brittain, 2006).

Kwame Nkrumah had lost a friend and ally, but he had also lost a very visible battle. He had stood up to a world body he perceived to be acting in neocolonial interests and discovered in the process that his platform was not as sturdy as he had perceived. His performance at the UN General Assembly had soured Eisenhower and especially Herter towards Nkrumah; the eyes of the United States were drawn to Nigeria as a less recalcitrant state whose leadership might now be called upon to exhibit the "moderating influence" on the continent that Nkrumah had been called upon to provide only a few years earlier (Nwaubani, 2001).

Is this a Case of "Crossing Over"?

A collective review of the four cases discussed in Chapter III revealed four indicators that signal the occurrence of this political phenomenon: 1) The agent involved is black; 2), The agent is in a position to potentially engage in a mutually beneficial relationship with the United States because he or she publicly participates in black emancipatory activities at a time when the country is struggling to improve its international reputation with regard to racial oppression; 3) The agent does not definitively distance him or herself from any and all association with communist individuals or the Communist Party; 4) The agent demonstrates willingness to act in

accordance with a racially oriented ideological position and in opposition to the preferences of the United States.

All of the cases discussed in Chapter III were selected because their stories contain pivotal moments where a previously watchful government decided to act out against the individuals; in the eyes of the State Department they had gone "too far." DuBois and Robeson had prior relationships with the federal government and loose affiliations with the Communist Party. Baker and Williams operated more independently and claimed little interest in communism (although both traveled to Cuba, indicting them by association). None of their stories, however, include criteria which, for the purposes of this analysis, would place them outside of the "crossing over" framework. One such criterion would be if any of the four had worked for the federal government and acted in direct opposition to the goals of his or her appointment. Another would be if they had been active Communist Party members working to recruit and train a revolutionary cadre in cooperation with Soviet entities. These circumstances would make the State Department's persecution of these citizens understandable and, within the context of the Cold War, not particularly noteworthy. But these four activists were singularly focused on issues of black freedom; if communism entered their ideological picture, it was as a means to an end, the end being an independent and self-actualized existence for black citizens world-wide. It is this piece of their stories that reveals something interesting about the intersection between race and liberalism during this time. The pursuit of black freedom was viewed as a legitimate and worthwhile activity only insofar as it remained useful to and under the control of the federal government. As a stand-alone pursuit

conducted solely on the terms of independent black leader, it was perceived as dangerous and threatening.

Having looked carefully at Kwame Nkrumah's case, it appears on the surface that his story contains the four elements identified in Chapter III. That he was black is not in question. He appeared to be actively (not just potentially) engaged in a mutually beneficial relationship with the United States. He did not claim membership in the Communist Party but insisted on non-alignment rather than taking a strict pro-Western position. And, as the text of his speech at the UN General Assembly reveals, he did take a rather public stand opposing the will of the Untied States regarding the Congo Crisis. But was it really this *specific* combination of factors that caused the relationship U.S.– Nkrumah relationship to sour? A definitive answer to this question will probably never be found. However, an examination of the correspondence and rhetoric surrounding this relationship may a) illuminate the likelihood that some of the commonly held beliefs about why Nkrumah fell out of favor are, in fact, unfounded and b) identify details supporting the theory that all four elements were present in the minds of powerful key players within the United States. (This will include the element of "blackness," for while it is clearly unnecessary to "prove" that Nkrumah was black, it is useful to identify racial attitudes that underscored the any discussion of the other three elements). This examination includes an awareness of whether or not there exists a "pivotal moment" in this story comparable to those discussed in the previous four stories. Select passages from these primary documents provide context for the shift in relationship based on events that occurred within a relatively brief period of time. They will also allow an analysis of these events with an eye for whether they were motivated by fears related to

communism, to independent action in support of a black activist ideology, to both, or to some other variable not previously discussed in this paper.

Blackness

What did blackness mean to powerful men in Washington during the 1950s and early 60s? The meaning of blackness was covered in a broader, more theoretical discussion in Chapter III, but it is relevant to look at how these underpinnings manifested themselves in the state verbiage at the time leading up to the Congo Crisis. Not surprisingly, documents in which African identity is pointedly discussed in terms of the character and intellect of the people at large (not simply in reference to the behavior of a specific leader) reflect distinctive notes of both paternalism and trepidation. Take, for example, this passage from a memo written by the Secretary of State's assistant Julius Holmes to Dulles in February of 1958 (Holmes had been charged with delivering a report on the general state of Africa, which he opened with the words, "I have done my best to be brief, but Africa is a large place.")

> The black African's attitude toward the white man shades from universal envy through mistrust and fear to burning hate. That is a sweeping statement, but I believe it to be true and of such importance that we should have it constantly in mind as background to our actions and decisions as the evolution of Africa proceeds (Schwar & Shaloff, 1992, p. 8).

Holmes' assessment of the "black African's attitude" (as well as the fact that he was apparently perfectly comfortable "summing up" the African continent in a 10-page memo) speaks volumes about the type of information upon which the State Department based its judgments. The warning tone of this passage, the perception of threat, and the implication of unpredictable, irrational behavior on the part of black Africans falls easily in line with the beliefs to which many Cold War liberals were predisposed.

Another example of fearful thinking captured in State Department rhetoric

comes from a National Security Council memo of discussion based on a meeting in May

of 1958.

> The greatest problem confronting Central Africa was the human problem. The
> Spirit of 1776 was running wild throughout the area. The various states and
> colonies want independence now, whether they are ready for it or not. In some
> respects this phenomenon was rather terrifying, as one deduced from reading the
> biography of Nkrumah (Schwar & Shaloff, 1992, p. 15).

The image this discussion conjured among members of the NSC is surely not one

that garners much respect for the African people, casting those who remain under

colonial rule as impetuous and unable to grasp the reality of their circumstances. The fact

that Kwame Nkrumah's name is evoked in this context is particularly noteworthy.

Potential to Participate in an "Everybody Wins" Relationship

That Kwame Nkrumah's identity as a black African leader was politically useful

to the United States has already been discussed based on the observations of a number of

historians, but how *exactly* were these matters addressed at the highest level? In a 1957

report to Eisenhower, Vice President Richard Nixon juxtaposes a passage entitled

"Appraisal of African Leadership" immediately prior to two others, respectively labeled,

"Attitudes Toward the United States," and "Effects of Discrimination in U.S. on African

Attitudes," (Schlesinger, 1972, p. 576-577). About this last subject, Nixon notes:

> As a result of skillful propaganda primarily inspired by the enemies of freedom, a
> consistently distorted picture of the treatment of minority races in the United
> States is being effectively presented in the countries I visited. Every instance of
> prejudice in this country is blown up in such a manner as to create a completely
> false impression of the attitudes and practices of the great majority of the
> American people. The result is irreparable damage to the cause of freedom which
> is as stake (p. 577).

Nixon mentions a handful of leaders whom he feels are "dedicated to the principles of independence and world responsibility," (Nkrumah among them) and goes on to recommend that:

> The United States must come to know these leaders better, to understand their hopes and aspirations and to support them in their plans and programs for strengthening their own nations and contributing to world peace and stability. To this end, we must encourage the greatest possible interchange of persons and ideas with the leaders and peoples of these countries. We must assure the strongest possible diplomatic and consular representation to those countries and stand ready to consult those countries on all matters affecting their interests and ours (p. 576).

While Nixon's words are steeped in the rhetoric of international goodwill, the final sentence contains a message that is consistently echoed throughout national security documents related to Africa generally and Ghana specifically. A later National Security Council report entitled "U.S. Policy Toward West Africa" frames Nixon's sentiment in considerably more transparent language: "Continued contacts between Ghanaian people and the United States will insure that Western principles of political and social democracy will remain predominating forces in Ghana's evolution," (NSC 6005, 1960, p. 26).

Variations on the term "Western orientation" appear consistently in many documents such as NSC 6005. Although encouraging African leaders to remain "Western oriented" clearly intends to contrast the possibility that they might become "Eastern oriented," its use in the context of recommending frequent and measured diplomatic contact also suggests a paternalistic desire to "socialize" leaders in such a way that during times of crisis, states like Ghana will look westward for political cues. While the NSC cautioned diplomats and statesmen to be "mindful of the natural desires and

intense sensitivities of the Africans, particularly with respect to their newly acquired

independence," it nevertheless gave repeated and explicit instructions regarding methods

for disabusing African leaders of the benefits of Soviet affiliation (NSC 6005, 1960, p.

11).

> Encourage, in independent areas where practicable, a full appreciation of the
> dangers involved in the formal Sino-Soviet Bloc representation, in extensive use
> of Sino-Soviet Bloc technicians and other use of Sino-Soviet Bloc economics and
> cultural contacts. Alert the governments of such nations, without causing false
> suspicions of our own objectives, to the probability that the Sino-Soviet Bloc will
> attempt to utilize trade and assistance programs as a technique for political
> subversion. Nonetheless, maintain a flexible posture that would minimize the
> damage to U.S. prestige in the event that such nations accept diplomatic or
> economic relations with the Sino-Soviet Bloc (NSC 6005, 1960, p. 13-14).

The last line in this passage is very interesting within the context of this project as

it implies that, in fact, accepting aid from or forging relationships with the Soviets would

not necessarily end an African country's relationship with the United States (this makes

sense logically because the U.S. would likely want to maintain as much influence as

possible under such circumstances, but the passage runs counter to the explanation

traditionally given for the cooling of American-Ghanaian relations).

Less than Total Alignment with an Anti-Communist Position

While preventing Soviet influence from spreading and taking root was very much

at the center of U.S. foreign policy in Africa, Nkrumah's particular brand of non-

alignment was not unusual within West Africa, which, while not as desirable as Western

alignment, did not appear to be particularly alarming to the Eisenhower administration.

Nixon's 1957 report notes that:

> …[communist] efforts thus far have not been generally successful and, for the
> present, communist domination in the states of the area is not a present danger.
> All of the African leaders to whom I talked are determined to maintain their

independence against communism or any other form of foreign domination. They have taken steps to bring under control the problem of communist subversion of their political, economic and social life (Schlesinger, 1972, p. 579).

While African non-alignment was not mutually exclusive with positive U.S. relations, it remained a subject of great concern and was monitored vigilantly by the State Department. In the case of Ghana specifically, the state had received positive "check-ups" in the months just prior to the Congo Crisis. The National Security Council reported in February of 1960 that:

> Recently Ghana's neutralism in foreign affairs has become more pronounced. In spite of these overtures on the part of the Soviet Bloc, Ghana remains basically Western in orientation and it is not believed likely that the government will turn to the Bloc for major economic assistance in development unless Western sources fail to assist in the Volta River project (NSC 6005, 1960, p. 25).

In August of the same year (exactly one month prior to the Nkrumah UN speech) U.S. Ambassador to Ghana William Flake registered a vote of confidence that the Nkrumah government remained non-aligned despite rumbles to the contrary after Nkrumah purchased four used airplanes from the Soviets (he made aircraft purchased of similar sizes from Britain and the U.S. as well). Flake asserted in his telegram:

> I would not wish to minimize dangers inherent in this increasing contract with Soviet Bloc but feel we must be careful not to attribute motives to G[overnment] O[f] Ghana that do not exist. The West has always had a dominant position in Ghana and in my opinion this will continue. I believe we would defeat our own purpose if we tried at every turn to thwart contact with Soviet Bloc (Schwar & Shaloff, 1992, p. 659).

A National Security Council report generated in the spring of 1960 also noted that there were no active communist parties in Western Africa at the time (with the exception of the Malagasy Republic) and, like Nixon, observed that "most leaders have indicated a

preference for Western assistance." Interestingly enough, the NSC also acknowledged
the fact that:

> ...some may turn to the Communist Bloc for aid, not only if they feel the West
> has not been sufficiently responsive to their needs, but also as a means of
> emphasizing their neutrality. Many of the new West African nations will
> probably also succumb to the temptation to play off the West against the East
> (NSC 6005/1, 1960, p. 2).

That such a statement would be delivered with a tone of resignation rather than
alarm supports Flake's assessment that Ghana purchasing goods or receiving aid from the
Soviets did not at all imply a loss in the battle for containment. What it did imply is that
African leaders like Nkrumah were using their position to leverage greater support from
the West, a maneuver that was also met with a certain amount of resignation, but not
blanket tolerance as the next section reveals.

Willingness to Demonstrate Commitment to Ideals of Black Activism Over U.S.
Government Desires

In his 1960 telegram to the State Department, William Flake did make a specific
recommendation based on his intimate knowledge of Nkrumah and his motives. "To
match USSR fully in cultivating friendship with Ghana," he states, "we would have to be
more positive in supporting Africa against European NATO powers. We would also
have to oppose 'neo-Colonialism' in Africa," (Schwar & Shaloff, 1992, p. 659). This
reality would seem to be a point of greater antagonism for the U.S. than the purchase of a
few used airplanes. In both its internal correspondence and its recommendations to
Nkrumah, the U.S. had consistently emphasized the need to remain diplomatically
friendly and economically cooperative with Western Europe. Flake's suggestion that to
curtail Soviet influence meant supporting Nkrumah in his pursuit of his Pan-African

agenda would not, based on my assessment of Cold War liberal commitments, have been a welcome recommendation. In fact just a year later in September of 1961, Senators Gore, Hart, and Neuberger submitted a report on "Aid and Politics in Africa" in which they warned:

> …the United States has permitted strictly short-term national security considerations to affect adversely what seem to us are our longer term interests. In some countries we found that our officials took the position that the United States found it necessary to put up with a certain amount of blackmail simply because there were certain installations there that we wished to maintain (Schlesinger, 1972, p. 650-651).

This passage immediately follows a discussion regarding domestic policy concerns in Ghana and the wisdom of following through on funding commitments made to the Volta project.

Nkrumah's staunch support of Patrice Lumumba and public derision of the UN's actions in the Congo collectively represent the pivotal moment in his process of crossing over. Discouraging Ghana's "tendency to support extremist elements in neighboring African countries" had been identified as a policy guideline by the NSC in February of 1960 and again in April (NSC 6005, 1960, p. 19; NSC 6005/1, 1960, p. 10). When Nkrumah took the stage at the UN General Assembly seven months later, his speech so enraged Christian Herter (who had recently ascended from Undersecretary to Secretary of State) that his displeasure found its way into several *New York Times* articles the next following day (one entitled "American Angry" featured a photograph of Herter glowing over a podium as he spoke to the press about his irritation with both Nkrumah's and Khrushchev's speeches [*NYT*, September 24, 1960]). Herter also sent a telegram to Flake in which he communicated his contempt in no uncertain terms:

His performance at UN session made most unfortunate impression in this country because it reflected a complete lack of appreciation for Western position on almost every issue and, while consistently critical of West, failed to find fault with flagrant unilateral Soviet intervention in Congo. By actions as well as words Nkrumah seemed determine abet Soviet cause. Under these circumstances and given adverse reactions many other African states to his performance, we do not wish take action to encourage Nkrumah's role in Africa unless and until he shows greater signs of stability and that his actions are not furthering Soviet objectives in such matters as Congo and UN machinery.

Herter goes on to express his hope that Nkruamh would realize "where his interests lie,"

and that he could be made "aware that he cannot indefinitely take one line in private with

us…and a completely opposite line in public as he did at GA," (Schwar & Shaloff, 1992,

p. 668).

In addition to Herter, Hammarskjold's American secretary Andrew Cordier was a

prominent voice on the Congo Crisis, Lumumba's shortcomings, and the

inappropriateness of Nkrumah's independent actions in supporting him. According to

Carole Collins, Cordier's "world view closely resembled that of official Washington and

he found American assistance, especially financial, essential to the UN's presence in the

Congo," (12). She quotes him from his private correspondence, asserting as a rationale

for continuing financial support of the UN, "It is always necessary to keep the leadership

firmly in our hands," (p. 12). Cordier described Lumumba as "wildly ambitious, lusting

for power," and found Nkrumah's association with such a man inexcusable. Observing

the alliance the two had formed, Cordier characterized Nkrumah as "also a madly

ambitious man" and went onto declare that in his estimation (which was certainly shared

with both the UN and the State Department) "Nkrumah is the Mussolini of Africa while

Lumumba is its little Hitler."

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The case of Kwame Nkrumah contains characteristics of all four Americans (or former Americans) whose stories were discussed in Chapter III. Like Robeson and Baker, he achieved celebrity status in his home continent and abroad. Like DuBois he was a central player in the development and dissemination of a racial philosophy that would both inspire and divide black activists for years to come. Like Robert Williams, he voiced a commitment to an ideal he had always held, but changing circumstances would make it dangerous to demonstrate a real commitment to that ideal. Like all four, he was ultimately persecuted and displaced.

What does the intersection of these stories mean in the context of our Cold War legacy and how we remember this time period? What are the consequences of the reactionary patterns demonstrated by the United States? A primary observation that can be made about the story of Nkrumah is that the United States had the power to decide *very* quickly when an "Everybody Wins" relationship was no longer possible, resulting in an immediate reversal of fortune for the other party with whom the relationship had been negotiated. Is it reasonable or likely that Kwame Nkrumah went from ally to threat in the few months during the onset of the Congo crisis? The evidence examined in Chapter IV would suggest not. Although he did not appear to have acted in a way which confirmed the dominant fears of the era, these fears were none-the-less publicly applied to Nkrumah at the point when he had outlived his political utility. Three years into his leadership, he

was no longer the new kid on the block, nor was he the only newly emerged black leader available upon whom the U.S. could visibly dote. Perhaps this incidence of fickle behavior is one among hundreds of examples of American *realpolitik* in action, no cause for alarm, simply business as usual for a superpower playing a smart game of world domination that would ultimately benefit its citizens and keep them safer. Be that as it may, the consequences of Cold War liberal intervention in the black freedom movements of the 1950s are still felt today. Although often unspoken (the "unspokeness" itself being, arguably, one of the consequences), the necessity of functioning within a strictly pro-Western-democratic framework in order to remain credible and viable meant that black activists and leaders could not operate on their own terms or cooperate with other activists or leaders of their choosing. The constraints of this reality have played out over time in a number of ways.

One important consequence was the active suppression of radical voices from within the American Civil Rights Movement. Penny Von Eschen notes:

> With the silencing of intellectuals and political leader such as DuBois [and] Robeson…the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist critique of the global political economy no longer had powerful and credible advocates within the African American community. Consequently, in the 1960s young activists such as the Black Panther party and SNCC were cut off from an older generation and compelled to reinvent the wheel as they developed their own critiques of American capitalism and imperialism, (1997, p. 187).

So not only was the mainstream movement forced to adopt a narrow, domestic, and strictly democratic scope, but the intellectual growth and progression between generations of leadership was interrupted. While significant gains in racial equality were made during the 1960s, the three-tiered platform (moral imperative, foreign policy concerns, and fears about domestic unrest) set forth by Kennedy to motivate the passing

of civil rights legislation was still built primarily on fears that the injustice perpetrated

against blacks in the Untied States could be used to undermine Western supremacy

(Klinkner & Smith, 1999, p. 268). The government's impulse to quiet and control this

unpredictable population of agitators remained at the heart of the Civil Rights

Movement's power, but it had also shaped the movement into a more palatable opponent

by removing its more dangerous (radical) teeth. This dynamic surrounding the legislative

acquiescence of the early '60s caused it to appear less like a concession than a

compromise between ideologically matched parties, or a logical conclusion to a historical

trajectory. The denial of history involved in the construction of such a platform got

whites off the hook without doing the work necessary to really address the country's deep

racial divisions. Blacks were left to negotiate a system based on centuries of brutal

oppression with the reassurance that *this time* the law really was on their side, so no more

unpleasantness would be necessary.

If the purging of radical—or even globally oriented—activists from the civil

rights movement left an intellectual and ideological gap, what then were the

consequences of the dishonorable end to Kwame Nkrumah's leadership or the brutal

assassination of Patrice Lumumba? How significant an impact could the fates of these

individual men really have? "For anyone who did not live the hopeful, febrile, political

life in and around the African liberation movements of the 1960s, '70s and '80s," offers

journalist Victoria Brittain, "it may be hard to imagine their power then over

imaginations and political and social aspirations far beyond their own continent—

including in Europe and in the U.S.—and the magic of a handful of their leaders." The

murders of Amilcar Cabral of Guinea, Eduardo Mondlane of Mozambique, Felix

Moumie of Cameroon and Patrice Lumumba would crush those aspirations again and again, the aftershocks derailing movements for true independence from colonial control (not unlike the upsets Klinkner and Smith document in their story of American black freedom movements in *The Unsteady March*). The overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah was similarly discouraging to an international cohort of Pan-Africanists who had celebrated the triumph of Ghana's "glorious revolution," only to see their leader deteriorate into an increasingly paranoid state and eventually leave office under military mandate. When it later became clear that former colonial allies (including the U.S.) were involved in both incidents, the supportive lip service these powers had paid to newly independent Africa was harshly revealed as disingenuous rhetoric, spoken as part of an overall plan to maintain economic access to the respective states and territories. In the case of Ghana, a series of coups and turbulent elections left the country vulnerable to British interjection. In the Congo, years of "draining war" would advantage Belgium long after its legitimate claim on the country had expired (Brittain, 2006, p. 73). In order to maintain the status quo for white Europeans, it was necessary to undermine black Africans through acts of violence and political treachery, keeping the population unstable, and perpetuating a narrative that characterized dark skinned people as impulsive, barbaric, childlike, and unsophisticated. To anyone studying race in the United States, this story should sound painfully familiar.

In addition to reminding us of the ways in which white supremacy mimics itself across space and time, this story is also an important reminder to question our collective memory of the Cold War era. To quote Von Eschen again, "The present moment can be liberating for those historians who choose…to widen scrutiny of historical processes that

have been obscured by a Cold War bias toward a bipolar view of global politics,"

(1996, p. 628). Like the Civil Rights movement, the victor's history of this time period

has been stripped of its nuance; if all we remembers is a two-man fight between

communism and liberal democracy, then the Cold War and the supposed dangers of

communism become, as articulated by Thomas Borstelmann, "merely distractions from

the historic opportunity provided by World War II for ending the European colonialism

that had long dominated the lives of most of the world's people," (1993, p. 195) It could

be argued that the threat of communism was *so* encompassing that to render history in a

manner that places any struggle but the "bipolar standoff" at the center of its narrative

would be inaccurate, irresponsible, revisionist (and it is certainly not my suggestion that

any of the events recounted here should be addressed as entirely discreet and unrelated).

However, as discussed in Chapter I, modern IR scholarship is suffering as a result of the

racist legacy of "development theory" and the omissions made by Cold War scholars

such as Gaddis, Johnson, and Mattson. Robert Vitalis asserts:

> Whether one prefers to see America's post-war hegemony as vindication of the
> liberal creed or as a community in defense of a common heritage and civilization,
> the fact remains that it is a hierarchical, exclusionary caste order of superior and
> inferior states. Before World War II it was conceived as a natural order among
> races. Now it is more common to find international inequality explained as a
> natural order among states, where "the strong do what they will, the weak do what
> they must." For others, it is common to write as if hierarchy did not exist (2005,
> p. 164).

Even those who would continue to normatively defend the actions of Cold War liberals

must, at some level, agree that to understand the United States as an international agent

with its hands in every corner of the world, an honest and realistic assessment of how

these nations relate to each other and why is fundamentally necessary in order to do meaningful scholarly work.

Finally, looking back at the events surrounding the particular case of Nkrumah and the Congo crisis, it is relevant to note that even if one insisted on taking a strictly bipolar Cold War perspective, the United States may have in fact created a self-fulfilling prophecy by projecting the identity of communist sympathizer on to Nkrumah. Although his ill-received UN speech in September of 1960 was ostensibly interpreted by Eisenhower and Herter as evidence that the balance of Nkrumah's neutrality had finally tipped toward the Soviets (an interpretation that shocked and offended Nkrumah), a more general assessment of the climaxing conflict was that Nkrumah's unrelenting and outraged support of Lumumba was more likely to have been the final straw. Eisenhower and the UN supported Kasavubu and Mobutu; Nkrumah did not, posing the leaders fundamentally at odds. Lumumba had accepted unilateral support from Khrushchev, offered outside of the UN-structured intervention in the Congo. This, combined with his nationalist ideology, staunch anti-colonialism, and "loose cannon" reputation led Dulles, Herter, Cordier and Timberlake to demonize him as a cause lost to Western interests, speaking of "Lumumba and the Communists" in the same breath as if working perpetually in concert (Schwar & Shaloff, 1992, p. 419). Nkumah's loyalty indicted him by proxy. Although no real evidence of communist gains in Ghana had materialized at this point, after suffering the public rebuke of the Eisenhower administration, a rather nasty article on the cover of the *New York Times* (declaring Nkrumah's leadership to be essentially a cult of personality and accusing him of holding Ghana in his authoritarian grasp [Nwaubani, 2001]), and, most importantly, the death of Lumumba, which satisfied

the agendas of the both the UN and the U.S., Nkrumah's active outreach to the Soviets and to China did increase. It can easily be argued, then, that by using accusations of communism as a veil to mask their true motivations, the United States disenfranchised Nkrumah and actually drove him to deepen his association with international communists.

The chain of events leading up to the Congo Crisis involved so much history, so many agents, and agendas so complex that a crystal clear understanding of exactly what happened and why is an unrealistic scholarly goal. However, this project was conceived during a period when academics in the field of political science are calling for a reexamination of political history with a new sensitivity for the fact that the relevance of Africa and the African diaspora has been grossly minimized, the historical actors given at best supporting roles in the version of history most commonly taught. To this end, any effort to uncover potential new answers to residual puzzles about the intersection of race and the Cold War, or to challenge accepted explanations that seem odd or counter-intuitive are useful for multiple reasons: One, these efforts challenge Eurocentrism in one of its safest hiding places, the academy; Two, they adds layers of nuance to a largely neglected history while chipping away at the ambiguous barriers that exist between the study of domestic and foreign policy; Three, they could result in observations and analyses that might be useful in a modern context. Revisiting and reassessing stories of black leadership is much more than an exercise in nostalgia or an effort to hurriedly correct our primarily racist accounts of the past; it is a step toward realizing the goals of social science collectively. When these stories interact with such enormously troubling period as the Cold War, a scholarly approach that incorporates the many meanings of

blackness can only illuminate this pivotal time in our history, the repercussions of which continue to affect our modern world.

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