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Cold War Battleground in Africa: American Foreign Policy and the Congo Crisis, January 1959 - January 1961

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COLD WAR BATTLEGROUND IN AFRICA: AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE
CONGO CRISIS, JANUARY 1959 - JANUARY 1961

COLD WAR BATTLEGROUND IN AFRICA: AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE
CONGO CRISIS, JANUARY 1959 - JANUARY 1961

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in History

By

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ABSTRACT

In the late 1950s, the Cold War competition between the United States and the Soviet Union turned the Congo as one of the most volatile regions of the Third World. Because of Belgium's failure to effectively decolonize the Congo, and because of the secession of two of the richest provinces of the Congo, the country would quickly fall into chaos and a civil war that would force its former colonial power to maintain its economic and military influence in the region. This neocolonial attitude induced Congo's Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, to request a military assistance from the Soviet Union. In response to this situation, Washington was determined to prevent the expansion of Moscow's influence in this part of Central Africa, a region that not only represented ideological and strategic interests, but also considerable economic assets. This study demonstrates the main factors that motivated the United States and the Soviet Union to intervene in the first phase of the Congolese crisis, and the circumstances in which the United Nations, Belgium, and the two superpowers influenced the events of the crisis, which eventually led to the downfall of Lumumba's government.

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to the Graduate Council.

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of unique and memorable moments at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, in the most beautiful natural state of Arkansas. Once again, thank you very much all of you.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of Senator James William Fulbright and Patrice Emery Lumumba, two people who had greatly contributed and sacrificed their lives for the cause of human progress, the first to establish friendship, understanding, love and peace between the American people and the peoples of the world, and the former to preserve justice, freedom and independence for Africa and for the world.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABAKO Alliance des Bakongo

CIA Central Intelligence Agency

MNC Mouvement National Congolais

NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NSC National Security Council

ONUC Operations des Nations Unies au Congo

UN United Nations

UNSC United Nations Security Council

UNGA United Nations General Assembly

U.S United States (of America)

U.S.S.R Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Introduction

On June 30, 1960, the Belgian colony of the Congo declared its independence. In the next seven months, the leaders of the new republic, President Joseph Kasavubu and Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba were to experience the most dramatic tribulations of their government. With the secession of Katanga in July 1960, and the Belgians' hegemony still over the Congo after the independence, the country would soon go through a bloody civil war that would quickly compel the United Nations to intervene. Caught in the middle of the Cold War confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, the Congo would become not only the epicenter of the East-West competition in Africa, but also one of the most dangerous battlegrounds in the world.

The United States started to intervene in the Congo only after the Congo acquired its independence. Before that period, the foreign policy of the Eisenhower administration focused primarily on Western Europe and Asia, before it radically shifted to the Caribbean where a Communist government led by Fidel Castro took power in Cuba in 1959. In Africa, most of the colonies were still under European colonial rule, and the decolonization process had already begun with the first independence of a sub-Saharan colony, the Gold Coast (Ghana), in 1957. From the 1950s to the end of the Cold War¹, many scholars have widely written on the Congo crisis, but few have investigated on the real motives behind the U.S. intervention in the Congo.

¹ Scholars debate on whether the Cold War has really ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union, or still alive between the West and Russia. See Michael J. Hogan, *The End of the Cold War: Its Meaning and Implications* (Cambridge University Press, 1992); Artemy Kalinovsky and Sergey Rarchenko, *The End of the Cold War and the Third: New perspectives on Regional Conflict*, 1st ed. (Oxon: Routledge, 2011); George H. W. Bush: "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," January 28, 1992, Ed. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, in *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=20544> (accessed September 5, 2012).

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the opening of new archives both in Washington and in Moscow, thousands of declassified documents became available to the public, these new findings allowed the publication of a new set of complementary, if not challenging, literature on the Congo crisis. Despite the vast literature addressing the U.S. intervention in the Congo, both from U.S. and Soviet perspectives, few scholars investigated the motives of the U.S. intervention in the Congo from an international perspective. Any historical conclusion made on the motives of the United States and/or the Soviet involvement in the Congo crisis without putting those motives within the framework of an international perspective would not permit us to comprehend the complexity of the two superpowers' ambitions in the Congo. This study does not pretend to completely fill that gap, but it does at least provide more insights on what drove the main U.S. decisions on this highly debated Cold War event. Because of the limited access to primary documentations and archival sources, this study is mostly based on a number of sources including journal articles, books, reviews, the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) volumes, as well as other academic online sources. But while staying limited to the U.S. side of this story, an analysis through the published primary sources can still shed light on the two superpowers' interactions, and, if nothing else, at least clarify how Washington may have interpreted or misunderstood political, strategic, and diplomatic choices in both Moscow and the newly independent Congo.

Historian Madeleine Kalb has argued that the U.S. intervention in the Congo crisis began only when the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev sent military equipments and airplanes to enable the Government of Lumumba to quell the rebellion in the secessionist region of Katanga, which was backed by Belgium. The Soviet involvement into the Congo was considered by the

Eisenhower administration as an “unprecedented step, one which threatened to alter the balance between the two superpowers.”² Despite growing anxiety in Washington and in Moscow to about venturing unilaterally in Africa, Kalb argued that the foreign policy ambitions of the two superpowers greatly determined their Cold War intervention in the Congo. Kalb added that unlike the United States which was “approaching [the Congo] in a blissful ignorance” and relied mostly on its European colonial Allies to conduct its African policies, the Soviet Union, conversely, followed an independent foreign policy in Africa and intervened in the Congo “on the basis of an ideologically based geopolitical strategy”.³ Although this may be true, it seems clear from the evidence that both Washington and Moscow followed different agendas for Africa, but their determination to limit each other’s expansion motivated their involvement in the Congo crisis.

To understand the reasons why the United States got involved in the Congo crisis, one should start looking at the evolution of the U.S. Cold War policy in Africa. Throughout the 1960, Washington’s intervention in the Congo crisis was nothing but the peak of its foreign policy toward the Sub-Saharan Africa, which aimed at curtailing Communism and Soviet influence in Africa. In his review entitled “Africa and America”, James S. Coleman argued that the decolonization of Africa not only expanded the national security interests of the United States but also encouraged a new format of its foreign policy objectives in order to attain permanent

² Madeleine G. Kalb, *The Congo Cables: the Cold War in Africa--from Eisenhower to Kennedy* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1982), pp. xiii-7.

³ Kalb, *The Congo Cables*, Ibid. The “ideology” here refers to “Communism”.

presence in the region.⁴ Coleman also noted that Eisenhower's Vice-President Richard Nixon, Chester Bowles, and Adlai Stevenson were the vanguards of the U.S. Cold War policies toward Africa.⁵ Reviewing Bowles's book, Coleman contended that the Soviet Union started to launch its "Communist offensive" in the colonial areas of Africa as early as 1955. As Coleman reminds us, the Soviet Union was not committed to any colonial obligation with particular European powers in Africa, while the United States was not only pressing its European allies to liberate their colonies but also committed to prevent the Soviet Union from replacing the colonial powers in Africa. Following this policy, the United States saw no exception to intervene in the Congo to protect Belgium when U.S. officials perceived the Soviet involvement in the Congo as a "disproportionate threat" on Belgian vital interests. For these reasons, Coleman concluded that the defense of Belgium, as a key NATO ally of Washington, became one of the key motives for the United States to intervene in the Congo.

According to foreign policy experts Emmet V. Mittlebeeler, George Edmund Haynes, and Rupert Emerson, the United States had other commitments beyond protecting strategic interests of its European allies in Africa, and was not fighting Communism or any Soviet threat in the Congo.⁶ They all indicated that when the decolonization of African colonies began in the 1950s,

⁴ James S. Coleman, "Africa and America", review of *Africa's Challenge to America*, by Chester Bowles, *World Politics*, 9, no. 4 (July 1957), pp. 593-597.

⁵ Coleman, p. 593. Ambassador Chester Bowles served as U.S. ambassador to India, and Adlai Stevenson as U.S. Representative at the UN. Both served under the Eisenhower administration. For Bowles' policies, see Schaffer, Howard B. *Chester Bowles: New Dealer in the Cold War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993)

⁶ Emmet V. Mittlebeeler, "Africa and the Defense of America", *World Affairs*, 121, no. 3 (Fall 1958); George Edmund Haynes, "Americans look at Africa", *the Journal of Negro Education*,

the Eisenhower administration followed an ambitious African foreign policy that exceeded the Cold War motives, “rooted in its own doctrinal experiences and beliefs directed to achieve world freedom and leadership”. Those doctrinal experiences and values were nothing other than a combination of U.S. global policies that encouraged independence of African colonies, spreading democracy, Capitalism, international trade, imperialism, anti-Communism, and the elimination of Soviet Cold War ambitions in Africa.⁷ Similarly, in his address to the Chatam House in June 1961, Arnold Rivkin examined U.S. foreign policy in the Congo from a decolonization and ideological perspective.⁸ He declared that the Cold War competition between the East and the West brought fear among many leaders in the newly independent African countries, forcing them to adapt their own policy toward Washington or Moscow. Determined to keep themselves out of the Cold War, most African states under the leadership of Ghana and Egypt followed a neutral foreign policy that completely rejected the political and economic models of the United States and the Soviet Union. However, Rivkin argued that the Eisenhower administration mistrusted most leaders of the newly independent states of Africa and considered their political neutralism as a “fiction”.⁹ In addition, U.S. policy-makers believed that Communists were “infiltrating African states’ independent policies by encouraging them to be neutrals” and, by doing so, they were succeeding to “turn Africa against the West”. For this reason, officials in Washington

27, no. 1 (Winter 1958); Rupert Emerson, “American Policy in Africa”, *Foreign Affairs*, 40, no. 2 (January 1962)

⁷ Mittlebeeler, pp.81-82; Haynes, pp. 95-96; Emerson, p. 306

⁸ Arnold Rivkin, “Principal Elements of United States Policy toward Under-developed Countries”, *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, 37, no. 4 (October 1961).

⁹ Rivkin, “Principal Elements,” pp. 461-64

concluded that if the United States and its European colonial allies did not curb Communist infiltration in Africa, it would destroy the political and economic influence of the West in Africa.

According to Sylvanus E. Olympio¹⁰, the U.S. Cold War policy in Africa, particularly in the Congo, was the result of a political excess caused by African leaders of the time.¹¹ Although he played a major role in the decolonization of Africa, and was accused by most of African leaders as a pro-westerner, Mr. Olympio rejected the Pan-Africanist ideas encouraged by Ghana's leader Kwame Nkrumah and the Guinea's president Sekou Toure. He believed that after most African colonies had achieved independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s, most African leaders failed to follow a moderate policy of "cooperation" with the former European colonial powers, the United States, and with countries of the Communist bloc. Instead, they chose to develop an anti-colonial policy through Pan-Africanism that ultimately increased their nationalism and "encouraged radicalism" within countries like Egypt, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Algeria and the Congo. Although he distanced Togo's foreign policy away from the radicalism of its neighboring Ghana, Olympio declared that Pan-Africanism would inevitably "push African leaders toward the West or the East", a prospect that they should avoid "if Africa wanted to stay neutral and develop itself" while keeping Africa out of the Cold War.¹² Moreover, Olympio encouraged the Western powers to keep African states out of their ongoing global competition against the Soviet

¹⁰ First Prime Minister and President of Togo

¹¹ Sylvanus E. Olympio, "African Problems and the Cold War", *Foreign Affairs*, 40, no. 1 (October 1961). He accused Nkrumah, Sekou Toure and Lumumba's Pan-Africanist policies as dangerous to Africa's neutralism.

¹² Olympio, "African Problems", pp. 51-53. Although he was an ardent Pan-Africanist, Mr. Olympio stressed cooperation between the newly independent African nations while keeping friendly ties with the rest of the world to develop their infrastructures.

Union. “The European and American Powers who promise to see progress in Africa”, he declared, “should thus accept the desires of African States to remain neutral. Their offers to help should be without strings. Otherwise, the African continent will soon be divided into the familiar East and West groupings with a resulting intensification in the Cold War.”¹³

Sylvanius Olympio believed that the Congo crisis was the consequence of Lumumba’s Pan-Africanist policies. Lumumba’s efforts to unite the Congolese peoples while simultaneously preaching an anti-colonial discourse against the Belgians undermined his politics of neutralism. As a result, when the province of Katanga declared independence with Belgian support in July 1960, Lumumba had no other choice than to side with one of the two “Blocs”, and finally brought the Soviets into the Congo. When that happened, Mr. Olympio declared that the United States would not “stay idly aside” while one of its closest NATO Allies, Belgium, was facing the threat of an indirect Soviet confrontation in the Congo. In sum, Olympio blamed Pan-Africanism as the cause that undermined Africa’s genuine neutralism. Tragically and paradoxically, the Pan-Africanist policies of Lumumba would aggravate the Congo crisis and eventually cause his death in January 1961.

For all the scholarly accounts that have been written about the Congolese crisis, the role of the United States in the assassination of Lumumba still remains unanswered for the most part. Even the reasons behind Lumumba’s death remained puzzling and unknown to the public until a decade after the end of the Cold War. It was at that time that questions emerged about the role

¹³ Olympio, “African Problems”, p. 55. The most interesting example of economic cooperation between an African leader and the West, see Douglas G. Anglin, “Ghana, the West, and the Soviet Union”, *the Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 24, no. 2 (May 1958). The Search of financial assistance moved Nkrumah to the Soviets.

that the U.S. and the Belgian governments played in the assassination. In his well-researched book, Ludo De Witte revealed the tenacity of the Belgian government, which was determined to violate the Congolese independence in order to maintain Belgian hegemony in the country.¹⁴ De Witte demonstrated how both U.S. and Belgian policy-makers acted out of fear that the Soviet Union was trying to turn the Congo into an “African Cuba”. More thoroughly than previous accounts, his book, *The Assassination of Patrice Lumumba* argues that the primary objective of the United States and Belgium during the crisis was to prevent the Congo from falling under “Communist hands”. If that happened, Moscow would have exploited its natural resources and made it an African stronghold for its ideological and strategic ambitions in the world. De Witte seems to suggest that American and Belgian fears of this prospect were founded. But, in fact, the record shows that, while Lumumba gave few reasons for the West to trust him, the United States did tend to exaggerate the possibility of a Soviet takeover, much as it had done already in other Third World regions.

The aim of this study is not to present a “Cold War History” of Africa or a “history of Africa” during the Cold War. It is neither a history of the Congo, nor a history of the entire Congolese crisis. It is a specific analysis to investigate the role played by the United States and the Soviet Union in the first stage of the Congo crisis. It examines the impact of the Cold War competition between the United States and the Soviet Union on the Congo crisis through the

¹⁴ De Witte, Ludo, *The Assassination of Patrice Lumumba*. trans. Ann Wright and Renée Fenby (Verso: London & New York, 2001), p. 5. The Belgian hegemony was reflected in the words of General E. Janssens, the Belgian colonial General who remained head of the Congolese Army (former Colonial *Force Publique*) even shortly after Congo independence. In response to a group of angry Congolese soldiers demanding leadership in the army, General Janssens replied: “Before independence equals after independence”, meaning no change in the army leadership.

lenses of a broader African Policy.¹⁵ Although many scholars have significantly contributed on the history of the Cold War in Africa, few have investigated how specifically U.S. diplomats and leaders perceived and responded to the growing Soviet influence in Africa during this early phase. This study explores the key factors that motivated the Eisenhower administration to intervene in the Congo crisis. The factors consist of a number of Cold War objectives, primarily U.S. reactions to Congo's decolonization, the Eisenhower administration's views of Pan-Africanism, Nationalism and Communism in the Congo, the American fascination with the emerging Modernization theories in academia and foreign policy circles, and Washington's commitment to protect Belgium. U.S. actions also most determinedly affected the evolution of the Congolese political instability and civil war, which subsequently ended Lumumba's government and led to his assassination in January 1961.

The first chapter analyzes the significance of Decolonization, Modernization Theories, and Pan-Africanism on the African Policy of the Eisenhower administration during the Cold War. It also examines how Pan-Africanism, as an ideology and movement, influenced Lumumba and motivated the United States to intervene in the Congo crisis. The chapter ends with an analysis of the U.S. approach to the Belgian economic and military influence in the Congo. The second chapter examines the impact of the Cold War on the Congo crisis. It particularly addresses the U.S.-Soviet confrontation in the Congo as well as the U.S. perceptions of Lumumba's nationalism. The chapter concludes with an examination of how the Eisenhower administration and Belgium teamed up and succeeded to undermine Soviet influence in the Congo. The final

¹⁵ The Congo crisis started in June 1960 and lasted until the end of 1965. This research will stay focused on its first phase until early 1961, and on the events leading to the full crisis that started with the Belgian decolonization plans of the Congo in January 1959.

chapter discusses the intervention of the United Nations in the Congo crisis. It examines the U.S. policies and objectives through the United Nations, and their significance on the Congo crisis. Finally, the chapter compares U.S. perceptions of Soviet objectives with what we know so far about the actual choices made in the Kremlin, and of how Soviet policies too tried to exploit the UN intervention in the Congo. My narrative ends with some suggestions on the role Washington played in the downfall of Lumumba's government.

CHAPTER I: Decolonization, Modernization, and Pan-Africanism: Challenges of the United States' Intervention in the Congo Crisis

1. Modernization and Decolonization: The U.S. Approach to the Congo Crisis

For many historians, social scientists and economists of the Cold War, “Modernization Theories”, by the late 1950s, became the pivotal guideline for both the U.S. and Soviet policies of the Third World nations. In this study, we will refer to “Modernization” as a constituent part of U.S. foreign policy, interpreting its aspects and motivation as they were at the time, as a “weapon” for the United States to confront Soviet Communism and influence in the Third World. Although “Modernization theories” may have affected the foreign policies of the various U.S. administrations that came to power after World War II, not all U.S. interventions in the Third World nations were driven by those theoretical principles.

In his well-researched book, Michael Latham defines “Modernization” as an ideology.¹⁶ He declares that the Cold War created an ideological “bipolar world” dictated by two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, with the first determined to spread liberal-capitalist “Democracy” and the second “Communism”. Next to this bipolarism, Latham argues a third system, the “Non-Aligned Movement”, while being the main focus of those very Modernization theories conceived in the academic halls of Paris, Boston, or emulated by Moscow, strove to maintain its independence path to modernity and to fully emancipate itself from any form of European colonial control while staying clear of the Cold War competition between the two superpowers. Many factors encouraged the emergence of that movement to become the vanguard

¹⁶ Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and “Nation Building” in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

of the Third World political aspirations: anticolonialism, nationalism, self-determination, fear of neocolonialism, neutralism, and the desire to pursue an independent political system.¹⁷ The decolonization in Africa, Asia, and Latin America offered a global opportunity to both the U.S. and the Soviet Union to “export” their ideologies. The Soviet Union, free of any association with the Western colonial powers, saw an opportunity to conquer the “hearts and minds” of the Third World nations and to bring them into its own sphere of influence. Latham defines Modernization as a "conceptual framework that articulated a common set of assumptions about the nature of American society and its ability to transform a world perceived as both materially and culturally deficient". After World War II, the United States followed “Modernization” as a means to “enhance America’s ability to win the Cold War” in the developing nations.¹⁸ While Washington provided large economic and military assistance to most countries of Europe threatened by Communism, Africa came tardily on the list to benefit from the U.S. Modernization policies. “There was no Marshall Plan”, historian Odd Arne Westad argues, “for the countries that emerged from colonialism, and American support for independence was increasingly tempered by its fear of Communism.”¹⁹ In fact, it was the very decolonization of Africa and Asia in the 1950s that prompted U.S. foreign policy-makers to refine those very theories and to overlap them with theories of dependency or development in underdeveloped nations. Nevertheless, the U.S. government’s absorption of those theories took time to fully mature.

¹⁷ Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, pp. 26-27

¹⁸ Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, p. 7

¹⁹ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 110.

The Eisenhower administration did not prioritize Modernization as a key foreign policy instrument to counter Lumumba's nationalism and contain Soviet influence in Central Africa. However, Modernization became the "spearhead" of the U.S. Congo-policy when Kennedy's administration came to power in January 1961. During the Congo crisis, the Eisenhower administration followed a hard-line foreign policy to counter the Soviet Cold War ambitions in the Congo. Through the Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A), Washington privileged covert anti-Communist operations against the left-leaning government of Lumumba.²⁰ In the last months of his second presidential term, the Eisenhower administration collaborated with Belgium and the United Nations to overthrow Lumumba's nationalist government. Although proven effective in many other Third World nations, Modernization, at first, was not considered sufficient to resolve the Congo crisis, nor did it seem a suitable foreign policy to fight the growing Soviet influence, which by 1960, seemed as strong there as it was in Cuba or Indochina. Furthermore, by the time the liberal advisers of Kennedy's administration started developing *their* Modernization policies to deal with the ongoing Congolese crisis, the Eisenhower administration had already succeeded to overthrow Lumumba's government, and the Soviet influence in the Congo was considerably undermined. Late in 1960, Washington and Brussels were successful in putting a new regime in the Congo, when they assisted the Congolese military to topple Lumumba's government.²¹ Thus, the Kennedy administration encouraged Modernization policies and dealt more systematically and with less urgency with the second phase of the Congo crisis.

²⁰ Kalb, *The Congo Cables*, p. 102; De Witte, *The Assassination*, pp. 16-17.

²¹ Kalb, *The Congo Cables* pp. 161-63; by the time Kennedy took office, Lumumba's government was already overthrown.

Although Modernization had taken different “forms of manifestations” the U.S. foreign policy, as Latham noted,²² one cannot but deduct that Kennedy’s decision to test the theory in areas like the Congo was meant to avert a scenario like the one that seemed all too real in 1960, when Soviet influence grew rapidly thanks to the prevailing political and social disarray in the newly independent African country. After the elimination of Lumumba, Soviet influence in the Congo seemed shattered, but there was no guarantee that, at the first sign of instability, or radicalism, it might not reemerge. Therefore, Modernization forces helped seal that possibility.

Like Michael Latham, Odd Arne Westad also addressed the U.S.-Soviet ideological confrontation in the Congo in a similar context. Although he contends that the Cold War competition between the United States and the Soviet Union was “neither military nor strategic, nor Europe-centered but connected to the political and social development in the Third World”, Westad addressed the Congo crisis through the lenses of U.S. “Modernization theories” only tangentially.²³ After describing the Cold War as a global form of U.S.-Soviet “ideological domination” comparable to the European colonization of the Third World in the twentieth century, Westad argues that both the United States and the Soviet Union privileged “high modernism” as an essential foreign policy of their Cold War ambitions in the developing nations.²⁴ During the decolonization era, starting in the 1950s, “the revolutions that followed”,

²² Here the term is defined as a “means” to develop a nation to achieve a level of improvement, growth, and stability, which in turn would guarantee the “national security”, and the interests of the United States. This is an extended definition of the term. See also its literal definition in *Ibid.* pp. 23-30, 55-58, 166-69, 212-15.

²³ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, p. 396

²⁴ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, pp. 397-399

Westad declared, “were often inspired by either the Soviet or the American form of high modernism”.²⁵ For Westad, the revolutions in the Third World nations including those in Africa were inspired by the “high modernism” systems of the two superpowers, but still a vaguely defined one. Although this argument was valid, it is important to note that most revolutions that emerged during the decolonization era were motivated by the fortitude of the colonized world to liberate itself from the bondage of European colonialism and to find ways to modernize alternative to the West or at least to their most direct sponsor and former dominator. Even the American Revolution was inspired by a rebellion against the political and social system imposed by the British rulers. Self-determination and freedom drove the political and even economic features of the early American republic. Most other revolutions in the world were fought for the same reasons; they were not primarily *motivated* or even inspired by the modernist systems of the European colonial empires. Regarding the revolutionary movements of the post-Second World War era, it would seem inconsistent if not irrelevant with these trends in self-determination to proclaim that they were inspired, if not by all, by some “modernism” or “high modernism” of the West and the Communist Bloc. Therefore, Westad’s analysis, for all its caution, should be taken with a grain of salt, like all such generalizations. Although most newly decolonized African countries did embrace modern Capitalism and Socialism as their national political and economic systems, the primary objective of African independence movements was to end European colonialism when the global situation, reshaped by the Cold War, offered them the opportunities to achieve that goal. While “modernism” became the principal national policy of their governments after they had achieved independence, most revolutionary leaders in the Third World and in Africa in particular continued to fight the neocolonial legacy of their former

²⁵ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, pp. 397-399

colonial powers. Sponsorship from either one of the superpowers was, for these independence movements, largely instrumental and meant to be short-lived. Such was the case in the Congo.

When the country declared its independence and Lumumba became head of its government, the new leader prioritized the unification of the inherited country and its people. Lumumba's vision to liberate the Congolese people from the shackles of a century-long forceful occupation and exploitation by Belgium undoubtedly gave him a powerful popular appeal.²⁶ Like most independent movement leaders of the Third World, Lumumba and his supporters also believed that after achieving independence, Belgium would leave the Congo and transfer the authority to the Congolese leaders to govern the new country. That was not what happened. As De Witte pointed out, Belgium refused to leave the Congo even after the colony had declared independence.²⁷ Lumumba requested help from the Soviet Union to enable his government fight the technologically advanced Belgian military that supported the secessionist Katanga. Soviet assistance was supposed to be merely military, with no prospect of an enduring social-economic influence over the country.

The "Modernist" and "Modernization" paradigms however still help explain how the United States and the Soviet Union conceived their interventions in the Congo crisis to achieve their respective Cold War goals. The Soviet Union became successful when Khrushchev responded to Lumumba's appeal for military aid. But during the 'second phase' of the Congo crisis, the United States rather succeeded in getting the Congolese military Commander Joseph Mobutu to

²⁶ Before he was killed, Lumumba wrote the political agenda of his MNC party and his vision for a united Congo. See Lumumba, Patrice. *Congo, my Country* (New York: Praeger, 1962).

²⁷ De Witte, *The Assassination*, p. 63.

follow a westernizing form of modernization in the Congo. Washington even managed to have the new leader expel the Soviet representatives in the country.²⁸ With the U.S. influence growing quickly, Mobutu himself would himself take control of the Congo a few years later, and U.S. modernization programs were fully implemented in the country when the crisis ended in 1965.

2. Movement or Ideology: How Pan-Africanism affected U.S. Foreign Policies in the Congo

“Pan-Africanism” was perhaps the immediate cause for U.S. intervention in the Congo crisis. Before addressing the impact of Pan-Africanism on Lumumba and his government, it is important to understand the background of the political situation of the decolonization process in Africa first. At the end of World War II, many European colonies in the world, most of which were in Africa, became independent. The Congo was no exception. When Ghana gained its independence in 1957 from Britain, France was already about to offer large autonomy to its colonies in the French Equatorial and West Africa. In the early 1950s, several liberation groups and independence movements were actively engaged in revolutions against the colonial administrations. The most important and brutal ones were certainly the National Liberation Front (FNL) in Algeria and the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya.²⁹ As Ho Chi Minh had done in French Indochina, the Algerian FLN was fighting a bitter war against France since 1954. Meanwhile in Egypt, President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal in July 1956 causing the

²⁸ Kalb, *The Congo Cables*, pp. 377-78 ; Mobutu expelled Soviet and other Communist states’ diplomats to justify Lumumba’s arrest. He also wanted to show the West that he was fighting Communist forces and later obtained U.S. full support.

²⁹ Lefever, Ernest W. *Crisis in the Congo; a United Nations Force in Action* (Washington, Brookings Institution, 1965), p. 16.

British and French to invade,³⁰ but then to surrender their claims. In the same year, other African colonies gained their independence, notably in Morocco, Tunisia and Sudan relatively peacefully. In West Africa, however, the course of decolonization did not take place without radicalism, particularly in the French colony of Guinea. In early 1958, when the new French President Charles de Gaulle toured the French colonies in Africa to propose a referendum on whether they would join the French Union, its nationalist leader Ahmed Sekou Toure overwhelmingly rejected the plan and immediately declared independence in October 1958.³¹ The effects of de Gaulle's decolonization tour had a considerable impact on the Belgian Congo. Few miles across the Congo River, the French colony of Congo-Brazzaville voted in favor of the French union and became an autonomous state the same year. In the Belgian Congo, however, although decolonization was already taking place in almost every corner of the continent, the colonial government had considered no serious steps for a possible near future independence of their colony.

Lumumba embraced "Pan-Africanism" before he was elected prime Minister of Congo. When Kwame Nkrumah organized the first All-African Peoples Conference in Accra in December 1958, Lumumba was the only Congolese party leader to attend the meeting. As the President of the 'Mouvement National Congolais' (MNC) party, he led the Congolese delegation

³⁰ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War: the Inside Story of an American Adversary* (New York: Norton, c2006), pp. 84-9; Guinea was the first French colony in Africa to refuse the proposal of De Gaulle granting a transitional autonomy under French rule prior to access to independence.

³¹ In the decolonization process, Guinea was the only French colony in Africa that refused to enter the community of French territories keeping ties with France and offered by De Gaulle as a choice of their peoples to decide on their fate. Most Western and Central African colonies approved De Gaulle's proposal and entered the community.

and was welcomed as an important figure representing the Congolese people. Several leaders of African liberation movements and labor unions also participated in the Conference; they included Sekou Toure of Guinea and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, among others.³² The main objectives of the Conference were to support ‘politically and economically’ the African liberation movements. The meeting also aimed at strengthening relations between African independence movements, and fighting against the influence of the former colonial powers within the colonies that had already acquired their freedom. In addition, the representatives at the conference decided to establish a permanent Secretariat headquarters in Accra to implement the decisions taken at the meeting. Lumumba made a short speech at the conference asserting his party’s goals as “the liberation of the Congolese people from the colonial regime and their accession to independence”.³³ Upon his return to the Congo, Lumumba had already an emancipation plan to use in order to liberate his country. He not only found friends at the conference, Lumumba also forged various alliances with heads of delegations, including Nkrumah and Sekou Toure.³⁴ Lumumba drafted a political agenda for his party indicating:

The Mouvement National Congolais, of completely African origin, has for its fundamental aim the liberation of the Congolese people from the colonial regime and the accession to independence.

We base our action on the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man --rights guaranteed to all the citizens of the world by the Charter of the United Nations-- and consider that the Congo, as a human society, has the right to accede to the ranks of free people.

We wish to bid farewell to the old regime, this subjugating regime which deprives our nationals of the enjoyment of political rights granted to all humans and to all free citizens.

³² Merriam, Alan P. *Congo, Background of Conflict* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1961), pp. 82-3. Also see Nzongola-Ntalaja, Georges, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: a People's History* (London; New York: Zed Books, 2002), p. 84.

³³ Merriam, *Congo, Background of Conflict*, p. 83.

³⁴ Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila* p. 84.

We want our country, our fine country, to reflect another face, the face of happy people released from anxiety, fear and all colonial domination.

It would be a great shame for the inhabitants of this country-and above all, for the Belgian administration- if in this time when the universal conscience condemns the domination of one people by another, the Congo were to remain under the regime of a colonial empire.

The work of colonization undertaken by Belgium in the Congo must be limited in time and space. In our view, these limits have been largely realized...

We do not exclude the possibility that after having obtained our independence, a confident fruitful and durable collaboration can be established between the Congo and Belgium and between the black and white inhabitants of this country. The Belgians like all other foreign inhabitants of this country, will continue to reside in the Congo...³⁵

Lumumba was deeply encouraged by the optimism of his peer leaders, who were energetically determined to continue the struggle for the full liberation of Africa and to end European colonization. Moreover, the Accra Conference became a catalyst for pursuit of national independence. First, the Conference gave Lumumba and to members of his party a sense of pride and adherence to a larger circle of a Pan-African movement joined in fighting a common cause. Second, Lumumba gained additional confidence from a perceived sense of solidarity: he became persuaded that the Congo was not 'isolated' from the rest of Africa when it came to its struggle for freedom against a powerful Belgium, and that the emerging nation could always count on this international support. That feeling of optimism nourished the nationalistic beliefs of Lumumba as the leader of the MNC at the time when the Congo declared its independence.³⁶ For Lumumba, the unity of the Congolese people from within was as equally crucial as the unity of the liberation leaders whom he met at the Conference in Accra in order to fight for independence. On the other hand, internal problems seemed more daunting as Lumumba's party confronted other national and regional parties big enough to challenge his predominance in the

³⁵ Merriam, *Congo, Background of Conflict*, p. 140.

³⁶ Kanza, Thomas, *Conflict in the Congo: the Rise and Fall of Lumumba* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972), pp. 45-59.

national Parliament. The very weakness of his party prompted Lumumba to shift from parliamentary tactics to an emphasis on nationalism: By becoming a nationalist icon, he hoped to overcome the country's internal division.

How did Lumumba's Pan-Africanist beliefs affect the U.S. intervention in the Congo crisis then? How did the U.S. perceive Lumumba's close relationship with other African leaders of Communist affiliations particularly with Nkrumah? And how did Lumumba's nationalism threaten U.S. interests in the Congo? The following lines would attempt to respond these fundamental questions.

According to most scholars of African Political History, "Pan-Africanism" was defined as an "ideology" that aims at the unity and solidarity of African peoples and peoples of African descent worldwide to fight against racial injustice, colonialism, and neocolonialism.³⁷ Although these scholars' views diverge on the relevance of the other forms of Pan-Africanism, they almost all agree on the fact that Pan-Africanism was originally a religious, cultural, intellectual, ideological and political movement. For the specific purpose of this study, we will focus on the political aspect of Pan-Africanism, which we use as a background to explain the influence of Nkrumah on Lumumba. The *political* origins of Pan-Africanism date from the 1920s and some scholars trace it back to the last decades of the 19th century. For example, according to Robert S.

³⁷ Historians provide different definitions of Pan-Africanism. See Minkah Makalani, "Pan-Africanism" in *African Age, African and African Diasporan Transformations in the 20th Century* (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture: The New York Public Library online <http://exhibitions.nypl.org/africanaage/essay-pan-africanism.html>) accessed October 10, 2012; Esedebe, P. Olanwushe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1991* (Washington, D.C: Howard University, 1994); Abdul-Raheem, Tajudeen , *Pan-Africanism: Politics, Economy, and Social Change in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: NYU Press, 1996); Ronald W. Walters, *Pan Africanism in the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Political Movements(African American Life)* (Detroit:Wayne State University Press, 1997).

Browne and John Henrik Clarke, African-American intellectuals W.E.B Dubois and Marcus Garvey were among the pioneers of the political movement of Pan-Africanism.³⁸ Browne and Clarke explain that Dubois in particular argued the necessity of maintaining strong cultural and spiritual relationships with the peoples of the African continent.³⁹ Dubois saw the correlation between racial discrimination against African Americans in the United States, and the colonial occupation of Africa by the European powers. Browne and Clarke argue that despite the lack of shared political organizations among Black Americans and African peoples who were both struggling against racial injustice and colonial exploitation, Dubois believed that a strong intellectual relationship between the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean could accelerate their path to freedom.⁴⁰ Marcus Garvey provided an alternative radical option. As Browne and Clarke noted, Garvey advocated a return of black American people to the African continent.⁴¹ Given the scale of the racial discrimination that was prevalent against the black American population in the 1920s, Garvey encouraged most African Americans to return to Africa where he believed they would enjoy freedom but also help the Africans to get rid of the European colonial rule.

Paul Robeson's literary and academic works greatly contributed to the expansion of Pan-Africanism. In the 1930s, although black Americans lacked political and economic power to solve their own problems, Robeson succeeded in alerting them on the problems faced by the peoples of the African continent. Through his Council of African Affairs, which was then "the

³⁸ Robert S. Browne and John Henrik Clarke, "The American Negro's Impact", *Africa Today*, Vol.14, no. 1, (1967).

³⁹ Browne and Clarke, "the American Negro's Impact," p. 16

⁴⁰ Browne and Clarke, "The American Negro's Impact," p. 17

⁴¹ Browne and Clarke, "The American Negro's Impact," Ibid.

lone U.S. voice being raised on behalf of the political and economic integrity of the black Africans”, Robeson increased the desire of black American intellectuals to help those who were struggling for liberation in Africa. Robeson also brought to the black American population the “awareness that Africa was inhabited by dignified and intelligent human beings, many of whom were looking toward their black brothers in America for aid to breaking them free from colonial subjection”.⁴² By raising the level of Pan-African awareness among the black population in the United States, the efforts of Dubois, Garvey and Robeson soon had an impact on the political awakening of the African people that was already taking place in every corner of the African continent during the decolonization era.

Although Pan-Africanism was believed to have originated from the intellectual efforts of black scholars from the Western world, it quickly became the political “spearhead” of leaders of African independence movements in the early 1950s.⁴³ Kwame Nkrumah, who was schooled in the United States, was probably the most influential African political figure of Pan-Africanism during the Cold War. According to George Bennett, Pan-Africanism was more than a political movement, and several economic and social aspects constituted its ideological dimension.⁴⁴ Bennett argues that Nkrumah affected a “chord among Africans brought up on Lenin’s ideas...socialism is felt by most, if not all African leaders, from Senghor to Nyerere, to be the

⁴² Browne and Clarke, “The American Negro’s Impact,” p. 17. Also note that the mutual desires of the “oppressed” black Americans and the “oppressed” Africans to fight racial injustice and political emancipation were so strong particularly in the post-WWII era.

⁴³ African leaders like Sedar Senghor and Houphouet Boigny tolerated neocolonialism, while others like Nkrumah, Sekou Toure, Lumumba were extremely anti-colonialists. Thus, all of them shared Pan-Africanist ideas.

⁴⁴ George Bennett “Pan-Africanism”, *International Organization*, Vol.18, no. 1 (Winter 1962/1963), p.94.

natural form of economic organization, a view which appears to spring largely from the strong communal feeling still existing among African peoples.”⁴⁵ Bennett reminds us that most African leaders during the decolonization era believed that economic exploitation was a “major motivating force in African nationalism....and this does make of Communism more than an ally for Pan-Africanism”.⁴⁶ Nkrumah did embrace Marxism in turning Ghana into a hub of the African anti-colonial movements. Bennett also illustrates the correctness of another historian of Congo, Colin Legum, regarding the influence of Nkrumah on Lumumba. Acknowledging racial injustice as a major motive in Pan-Africanism, Bennett validates Legum’s argument that the “fundamental root of Pan-Africanism is the search for dignity, the demand for equality and the treatment for respect when Africans have been so long despised.”⁴⁷ As for Nkrumah and Lumumba, the force of their Pan-Africanism was also driven by racial motivations. They were convinced that only Pan-Africanism could help them achieve “independence” which in turn could bring the “colonizers” to acknowledge the dignity of the “colonized”. Here again, Pan-Africanism was a key aspect in the radicalization of Lumumba’s political character. Through Pan-Africanism, Lumumba sought to eliminate the racial inequality and structure that the Belgian colonial administration had imposed for decades between the Congolese and European populations in the Congo. These feelings were connected to a hope of economic emancipation as well. As Bennett shows, the industrial hegemony of the British in the region of Rhodesia and partly in the Congo’s province of Katanga was “the focus of the clash between the southward

⁴⁵ Bennett, “Pan-Africanism,” p.94

⁴⁶ Bennett, “Pan-Africanism,” Ibid.

⁴⁷ Bennett, “Pan-Africanism”, p. 95

drive of African nationalism and the resistance of white power”.⁴⁸ Likewise, Katanga was the “northern bastion” of the European economic domination of Central Africa. Here again, Katanga, the richest copper-province of the Congo, was at the center of Lumumba’s national agenda. As prime minister, Lumumba thought he had the legitimate powers and the popular support to liberate Katanga from Belgian economic and neo-colonial domination. On this point, Bennett acknowledges the ideological impact of Nkrumah’s influence on Lumumba, who was more than determined to fight the Belgian-British racial and economic domination in Katanga. Thus, when Lumumba was assassinated in 1961, he turned into a “martyr in the African struggle against economic imperialism and neo-colonialism”.⁴⁹

Although Lumumba developed his political reputation based on nationalism and Pan-Africanism, he also combined them as means to achieve economic and social liberation. Lumumba however failed to measure the impact of his political views on the ideological perception of the conservative Eisenhower’s administration. He thus caused doubts if not fears in the hearts of foreign policy-makers in Washington. As a result, Eisenhower refused to remain indifferent to the perceived “threat” that Lumumba was posing to Belgian interests in the Congo. Therefore, Washington felt compelled to intervene on behalf of its allies (Belgian-British-French) and defend their economic interests in Central Africa from enemy forces (Lumumba-Nkrumah-Khrushchev) as well as from anti-colonial ideologies (Pan-Africanism-Nationalism-Communism). To sum up, Cold War hostilities in the Third World blurred the perception of U.S. policy-makers and their ability to discern nationalism from Communism. They perceived Lumumba’s nationalism as an ideology similar to Communism. By assimilating Pan-

⁴⁸ Bennett “Pan-Africanism,” p. 96.

⁴⁹ Bennett “Pan-Africanism,” Ibid.

Africanism, nationalism and anti-colonialism as basis for his political agenda, Lumumba became a threat to Western interests in the Congo, and for that reason, he was removed from power before these “interests” fell under Soviet control.

CHAPTER 2: U.S.-Soviet Competition in the Congo

1. The United States' Response to Lumumba's Nationalism

Although the Eisenhower administration viewed Lumumba's nationalism as a lesser threat than Communism in the Congo, it did however perceive it as an important element that could undermine the regional stability and western political and economic dominance in Central Africa. In this section, I will focus mainly on the causes of Lumumba's nationalism and their impact on the U.S. policies in the Congo.

Most literature⁵⁰ written on the Congo crisis has painted Lumumba as a radical nationalist and an "anti-western" leader. Before analyzing the U.S. perceptions of Lumumba's nationalism and their impact on the U.S. policies in the Congo crisis, it is important to understand the background of Lumumba's political emergence and the circumstances in which he fostered his nationalism. In the early days of the European decolonization in Sub-Saharan Africa, there was practically no nationwide organization or political movement in the Belgian Congo that was officially claiming independence. However, there existed various cultural groups and academic organizations based on ethnic and regional lines, such as the ABAKO party of Kasavubu, that were seeking political emancipation and social justice in the Congo.⁵¹ In October 1958, Lumumba and his colleagues established the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC) as a

⁵⁰ Mahoney, Richard D. *JFK : ordeal in Africa* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1983); Weissman, Stephen R. *American Foreign Policy in the Congo, 1960-1964* (Ithaca [N.Y.] Cornell University Press, 1974); Fursenko, Aleksandr & Naftali, Timothy. *Khrushchev's Cold War: the Inside Story of an American Adversary* (New York: Norton, 2006); Gibbs, David N. *The Political Economy of the Third World Intervention: Mines, Money, and the US. Politics in the Congo Crisis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Dunn, Kevin C. *Imagining the Congo: The International Relations of Identity* (New York, N.Y., 2003).

⁵¹ Merriam, *Congo, Background of Conflict*, pp.70-77; ABAKO was an acronym of the Congolese president Kasavubu's party "Alliance des Bakongo".

national political entity to “unite and organize the Congolese masses in the struggle for the amelioration of their lot, the liquidation of the colonial regime and its exploitation of man by man.”⁵²

Catherine Hoskyns⁵³ stated that after Lumumba returned from the All-African Conference of Accra where he attended in December 1958, Lumumba’s nationalism grew sharply. “The Congolese independence is not a gift from Belgium”, declared Lumumba, “it was a fundamental right of the Congolese people.”⁵⁴ It is important to note however, that while attending the Accra Conference, Lumumba made a short speech in which he personified radical nationalism. He declared that the aim of his party was “the liberation of the Congolese people from the colonial regime and their accession to independence” and accused Belgium for “injustices and abuses” before concluding with “Down with colonization and imperialism! Down with racism and tribalism! Long live the Congolese nation; long live independent Africa!”⁵⁵

At this point of his political career, it became clear that Lumumba was becoming more radical than any other Congolese leader. In the weeks prior to the Congo’s independence, Lumumba campaigned across the country during the parliamentary elections of May 1960, urging the Congolese people to vote for his MNC party.⁵⁶ Although his speeches attracted all

⁵² Merriam, *Congo, Background of Conflict*, p.141

⁵³ Merriam, *Congo, Background of Conflict*, Ibid.

⁵⁴ Hoskyns, Catherine, *The Congo since Independence, January 1960-December, 1961* (London, New York, Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 2

⁵⁵ Merriam, *Congo, Background of Conflict*, p.83

⁵⁶ Merriam, *Congo, Background of Conflict*, Ibid. For the list of all the other Congolese political parties, their members, constituencies and their platforms, see Ibid., pp. 114-178

categories of people inside and outside the country, Lumumba managed to impose himself as the only Congolese leader whose party called for a “centralized unitary” Congo without relying on any particular ethnic group.⁵⁷ When his party won the May elections, he not only became prime minister but also formed a coalition government that included members from the opposition parties, while Kasavubu became Congo’s President.

Since the formation of the MNC party, the United States had been closely observing Lumumba’s political activities and his growing nationalism. At the Congolese Independence Day celebrations, the Belgian Monarch, King Baudouin, praised Belgian colonialism and the “sacrifices which Belgium had made for the Congo” while warning the Congolese leaders to “beware of the foreign countries which might try to interfere” in the Congo.⁵⁸ After Kasavubu thanked Belgium and the King, Lumumba gave a nationalistic speech in which he condemned Belgian colonialism and denounced the “humiliations which the Congolese had suffered under Belgian rule”. Lumumba concluded his speech praising Pan-Africanism and the role that Congo would play in Africa after its independence. “We shall show the whole world what the black man can do when he is allowed to work in freedom” said Lumumba, and “we shall make of the Congo a shining example for the whole of Africa”.⁵⁹ Despite the presence of Belgian and Western representatives, Lumumba’s extreme criticism of Belgium illustrated his true intentions: his nationalist stance helped him forge a charismatic personality and strengthen his political

⁵⁷ Hoskyns, *The Congo since Independence*, pp. 6-9

⁵⁸ Hoskyns, *The Congo since Independence*, pp.85-86

⁵⁹ Hoskyns, *The Congo since Independence*, Ibid. The Pan-African Conference strengthened Lumumba’s political ideas and made him convinced that the Congo was going to be the “Ghana” of Central Africa and take the leadership of Pan-Africanism in that part of Africa.

leadership and popularity. In sum, he became a national figure outmatching his political opponents in the Congo.⁶⁰ For U.S. observers, Lumumba did not match, for sure, the global reach of leaders such as Fidel Castro and Abdel Nasser, or their openly pro-Marxist and Anti-American rhetoric. Rather, Lumumba's nationalism seemed to have a regional dimension, but one fraught with potential risks for all of Africa. Like any radical nationalist, Lumumba started to develop a strong political agenda aimed at achieving the total independence, territorial integrity, national unity and socio-economic development of the Congo. American perceptions of Lumumba evolved as the Congolese leader gained the country's premiership. As noted, Belgium resisted relinquishing all its rights in the Congo.⁶¹ But for Lumumba, there was no question: the Belgian colonial rule had ended on the night of the Independence Day on June 30. But Belgium was determined to keep under control the vast mineral resources that the 'Union Miniere du Haut Katanga' and other western mining companies were exploiting in Katanga even after the Congo had declared independence.⁶² It was in the middle of this political confrontation between Lumumba and the former colonial power that the southern province of Katanga seceded on July 11, 1960. Some historians have claimed this event would not have been possible without the

⁶⁰ Weissman, Stephen R. *American Foreign Policy in the Congo, 1960-1964* (Ithaca [N.Y.] Cornell University Press, 1974), pp. 54-62

⁶¹ Mahoney, Richard D. *JFK : ordeal in Africa* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 80-89.

⁶² Gibbs, David N. *The Political Economy of the Third World Intervention: Mines, Money, and the US. Politics in the Congo Crisis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 88-90. See also Gerard-Libois, Jules, *Katanga secession*. Trans. Rebecca Young (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), pp. 115-209.

financial and military assistance from the Belgians.⁶³ Lumumba strongly rejected the secession and blamed the Belgians for “Balkanizing” the Congo. Furthermore, Lumumba also believed that the secession of Katanga was a Belgian plot to sabotage his government and the unity of the Congo. His antagonism toward Belgium grew.

The first event that inflamed Lumumba’s nationalism was the “africanization” of the inherited colonial army. When the Congolese soldiers of the Force Publique mutinied against their Belgian military command on July 4 1960, Lumumba intervened in favor of the mutineers. He promoted them to higher military ranks, replaced the Belgian officers with Congolese officers, and finally changed the name of the army from “Force Publique” to ‘Armée Nationale Congolaise’ (Congolese National Army).⁶⁴ With this move, Lumumba not only intended to satisfy the claims of the Congolese soldiers but also wanted to put the Congolese army under the national authority of his government. Appealing to the Congolese people, Lumumba’s decision represented an act of nationalism and pride, which the Belgian government resented. On the other hand, the Congolese army applauded Lumumba and viewed him as a nationalist leader who was determined to liberate the Congo from Belgian neocolonialism.

While Washington prepared for the worst, the relations between Lumumba’s government and Belgium deteriorated further in the same incident. Belgium accused Lumumba to be unable to restore discipline among the enraged mutineers who were by then “threatening” the European

⁶³ See for example O’Brien, Conor Cruise, *To Katanga and Back, a UN Case History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), pp.84-88. O’Brien was serving as UN Representative in Katanga in 1961.

⁶⁴ Hoskyns, Catherine, *The Congo: a Chronology of Events, January 1960-December 1961*(London. Royal Institute of International Affairs: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp.2-3; See also Kalb, p. 5.

settlers of the Congo.⁶⁵ In the middle of the chaos, the unpredictable soldiers “looted and harassed hundreds of European civilians” in the capital Leopoldville and throughout other Congolese big cities.⁶⁶ In response, when Belgium unilaterally sent troops in the cities to “protect lives and property” of the European population, the Eisenhower administration went into action and supported the Belgian military intervention.⁶⁷ To help restore order and back the Belgian intervention, Eisenhower put the 24th Division of the U.S. forces stationed in West Germany on high alert, ready to intervene for a possible evacuation of the European populations out of the Congo.⁶⁸ Despite the pro-Belgian attitude taken by Washington, Lumumba did not ostensibly express any anti-Americanism. Instead, he appealed to the U.S. government to send American troops in the Congo to help his government restore stability while at the same time demanding the Belgian troops to withdraw from the Congo.⁶⁹

There were two reasons why Lumumba was anti-Belgian. First, the Belgians not only ‘violated’ Congo’s sovereignty in sending paratroops in the country without asking permission from the Congolese government, but they also supported the secession of Katanga. Second, Lumumba viewed the Belgian military presence as a violation of Congo’s sovereignty. The Eisenhower administration did not perceive Lumumba’s antagonism toward Belgium in the same way. While nationalism might have motivated Lumumba, humanitarian considerations were even

⁶⁵ Merriam, *Congo, Background of Conflict*, pp. 206-210.

⁶⁶ Hoskyns, *The Congo since independence*, pp.89-95

⁶⁷ Merriam, *Congo, Background of Conflict*, pp. 210-214; See also Weissman, *American Foreign Policy in the Congo*, p. 56.

⁶⁸ Kalb, *The Congo Cables*, p.9.

⁶⁹ Kalb, *The Congo Cables*, pp. 12-15.

more important according to Washington. Congolese rebels attacked European civilians and Washington saw no reason why Belgium should not intervene to protect them. But humanitarian considerations aside, fear of Communism was what rattled Washington. . Washington's policies in this case resembled the policies it took with many other nationalist movements in the Third World that appeared in the post-WWII era. The more radical those movements were, the more they were seen as a worldwide "Communist" conspiracy directed from Moscow and Beijing to destabilize the West. The mistrust produced by the Cold War during the decolonization, which was taking place in Africa, Central America and Asia totally obscured the perceptions of the U.S. policy-makers making them unable to discern "Nationalism" from "Communism". In itself, nationalism could reverse the international order and design that the NATO powers were determined to maintain against the Communist bloc in the Third World. Lumumba represented a threat to that order.

Lumumba's "nationalism" did have a significant impact on the U.S. foreign policy in the Congo during the Eisenhower administration. At a National Security Council (NSC) meeting, CIA director Dulles warned Washington about Lumumba's radicalism and characterized him as a "Castro or worst".⁷⁰ Dulles made his conclusions on Lumumba's personality based on a background check of his past rather than the policies he conducted as Prime minister of the Congolese government. He accused Lumumba to have embezzled \$100,000 Francs in 1956 and jailed several times by the Belgian colonial authorities. Dulles depicted Lumumba's past as "harrowing". For his alleged moral turpitude as well, Lumumba was thus thought to be amenable to Communist corruption. His anti-Belgian attitude was, according to Dulles, a mere reflection of

⁷⁰ Memorandum of Discussion at the 452d Meeting of the National Security Council, 21 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, vol. 14, pp. 338-342.

his anti-Westernism.⁷¹ Despite the mischaracterized image of Lumumba in Washington, the CIA Chief of Station in the Congo Larry Devlin did not perceive Lumumba's nationalism in the same way as Dulles did. Being one of the key actors of the U.S. policies during the Congo crisis and the spearhead of the CIA on the ground, Devlin believed that Lumumba's nationalism, expressed through his speeches, was the backbone of his determination to resist the "Belgian colonialists" rather than an indication of Communist proclivity or anti-Americanism.⁷² Lumumba, Devlin thought, was a nationalist leader who "was born to foment revolution but not to govern once it had succeeded", and he acted like a "Thomas Paine rather than a Thomas Jefferson".⁷³ Despite the retrospective assessments of his personal character, agent Devlin blamed Lumumba's "limited education" to be the roots of his political immaturity but never saw them as indications of his pro-Marxist tendencies. While fighting Communism and nationalism became two of the priorities of the U.S. foreign policies in the Congo, many U.S. officials including Larry Devlin believed that Lumumba represented a major obstacle to Washington's desire to preserve regional stability in Central Africa, as well as to prevent the Congo from falling under the influence of the Soviet Union.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Memorandum of Discussion at the 452d Meeting of the National Security Council, 21 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, vol. 14, Ibid.

⁷² Devlin, Larry. *Chief of Station, Congo: Fighting the Cold War in a Hot Zone* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2007), pp.32-35.

⁷³ Devlin. *Chief of Station*, Ibid. Larry Devlin played a key role in the downfall of Lumumba but he denied having played any direct role in his Assassination in January 1961.

⁷⁴ Devlin. *Chief of Station*, p. 54; See also Memorandum From the Joint Chiefs of Staff to U.S. Secretary of Defense Gates 22 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, pp. 346-349

2. The United States' Response to Soviet Influence in the Congo

Of all the factors that motivated the United States to intervene in the Congo Crisis, containment of “Communism” was the most important. While it was common for Washington to carry out counter-communist operations outside Europe, it is important however to highlight that few such operations took place in Africa. In the height of the Cold War, and after a painful anti-communist experience in the Korean peninsula⁷⁵ that nearly led to a global conflict against Communists, Washington was determined to prevent the Soviet Union from expanding its sphere of influence in Africa. During the 1950s, most African independence movements challenged European powers for liberation, and the Belgian Congo was no exception. After years of struggle and for the first time, Britain and France granted independence to the Gold Coast (Ghana) in 1957 and to Guinea in 1958 respectively. In the Belgian Congo, however, though Brussels did not anticipate decolonization policies, Belgian authorities were under constant pressure both from the Congolese and from Washington to follow suit while Moscow patiently prepared its policies for the Congo to venture in to replace the Belgians after independence.

In the late 1950s, the United States was already pursuing a counter-communist policy in the Congo. In May 1959, U.S. Under-Secretary of State C. Douglas Dillon met with the Belgian Foreign Minister Pierre Wigny in Washington to discuss the danger of a Communist penetration

⁷⁵ The Korean War, 25 June 1950 – 27 July 1953; The historiography of this conflict in its global implications is vast, but for an early assessment of the perils incurred by U.S. strategy in East Asia, see George, Alexander L. *The Chinese Communist Army in Action : the Korean War and its Aftermath* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1967).

in the Congo, as Belgium was considering granting independence.⁷⁶ During their conversation, Mr. Wigny recognized the U.S. commitment to the freedom of Congo while requesting Washington's support to help Belgium to achieve that goal. Subsequently, Wigny declared that Belgium had already begun implementing reform policies in January 1959 aimed at transitioning the Congo to independence.⁷⁷ Furthermore, Mr. Wigny warned Dillon that if Belgium failed its colonial policies and would have to leave the Congo without accomplishing the transition, then Congo would become a suitable opportunity for the Soviet Union to "fill the vacuum".⁷⁸ In response to Mr. Wigny, Secretary Dillon assured that Washington would bring its full support to Belgium and encouraged him to pursue the decolonization efforts in the Congo while emphasizing the necessity for both Belgium and Congo to maintain a relationship of "interdependence" between them. Finally, Mr. Dillon agreed that although Congo would become independent, it should remain under Brussels' influence to prevent it from falling under the influence of the Soviet Union. For Washington, an independent Congo would continue to seek

⁷⁶ Memorandum of Conversation between U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and Belgian Foreign Minister Pierre Wigny, 8 October 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, pp. 251-253

⁷⁷ Memorandum of Conversation between U.S. Under-Secretary of State Douglas C. Dillon and Belgian Foreign Minister Pierre Wigny, 13 May 1959, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, pp. 253-254

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* In fact, both Belgium and Washington knew that the Soviet Union would find the opportunity to fill the "vacuum" in the Congo if the Belgians would leave after independence. Robert S. Litwak demonstrated examples of similar Soviet intrusions in Africa, Asia and South America before 1960, arguing that the death of Stalin in 1953 made such adventures possible giving to Khrushchev the "Soviet political flexibility". "The development of nuclear and conventional forces...permitted the USSR to compete actively with the USA for influence in the Third World". He mentioned the Soviet adventure in Egypt in 1955 and in Iraq in 1958 as well as in North Vietnam and Cuba in 1959. See Robert S. Litwak, "Soviet Policies in the Third World". *Superpower Competition and Crisis Prevention in the Third World*. Ed. Roy Allison and Phil Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) ", pp.29-46.

assistance for its development, and its former colonial power would be the most qualified, if not the most knowledgeable country, to provide such assistance.

In June of that same year, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Satterthwaite flew to Leopoldville and met with leaders of Congolese political parties to examine new policies in the Congo. In a meeting with leader of the ABAKO party, Joseph Kasavubu, Secretary Satterthwaite pointed out the U.S. priorities in the Congo. He declared that Washington was committed to the rights of the Congolese people to obtain independence but advised Kasavubu and his party for “patience and moderation” in order to allow Belgium to effectively grant independence. Mr. Satterthwaite warned Kasavubu that the Congo should remain united and any attempt to dislocate the country would bring “dictatorship and Communism” to the country, two scenarios which the United States was determined to oppose.⁷⁹ Despite Washington’s warning, tensions between the Congolese leaders and the Belgian colonial authorities escalated, making any peaceful transition toward independence difficult. Suspicious on the attitudes of the Congolese leaders, U.S. Ambassador to Belgium William Burden urged the State Department to strengthen Washington presence in the Congo as the colony approached independence. Similarly, Mr. Burden called Washington to develop its own strategy instead of relying on Brussels to deal with the evolving situation in the Congo, which, he thought, seriously threatened the long-term objectives to create a “western-oriented” state in the Congo.⁸⁰ While the United States reiterated

⁷⁹ Dispatch From the Consulate General at Leopoldville to the Department of State, 23 June 1959, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, pp.255-257. Interview of Satterthwait with Joseph Kasavubu.

⁸⁰ Telegram from the Department of State to Embassy in Belgium, 8 January 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, pp. 258-260.

its commitment to the self-determination of African colonies, there was a growing suspicion among European colonial allies of Washington. Brussels, in particular, feared that under the justification of anti-Communism, the United States aimed at supplanting Belgian economic interests in Central Africa. For this reason, Belgian authorities adopted a new diplomatic approach to satisfy the economic interests of the United States in an attempt to preserve Belgian hegemony in the Congo. In a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Christian Herter, the Belgian Ambassador to Washington Louis Scheyven suggested that the Congo's vast resources would benefit both Belgian and U.S. economic interests and encouraged Washington to invest in the Congo. Mr. Scheyven promised his government would guarantee the safeguard of U.S. investments in the Congo as long as the country remained under Belgian influence. Secretary Herter promised that the United States would closely work with Belgium but insisted that Washington's priority in the Congo was to fight Communism and "avoid a repetition of the Guinean experience when the Soviet Bloc moved into a vacuum after the French had left".⁸¹

The United States strengthened its policies when the Belgian government and leaders of Congolese political parties met in Brussels to discuss on the colony's independence. At the Round Table Conference, both Belgian and Congolese leaders agreed that the Congo would be independent on June 30, 1960. After the Conference, Ambassador Burden urged the State Department to increase the staff of the U.S. consulate general in Leopoldville to make it function as an embassy. While he recommended more economic aid and reminded that Congo was a "key State in Africa", Burden believed that stability in a future independent Congo was a matter of

⁸¹ Editorial note, Memorandum of Conversation between U.S. Ambassador to Belgium William Burden and Under-Secretary of State Dillon, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, pp. 260-261

“international security and peace”.⁸² On February 25, 1960, while still in Brussels and after attending the Round Table Conference, Patrice Lumumba met with Ambassador Burden to discuss his political agenda and his position toward the United States and Belgium. Lumumba declared that he was determined to continue the political struggle against the Belgians until the Congo achieved independence. He also promised to work in partnership with Belgium as he sought Belgian technical assistance and training of administration personnel, while also emphasizing the leadership of U.S. expertise in the same fields. When asked if the Communists had influenced him and other members of his party, Lumumba acknowledged that Moscow was “actively” seeking to influence him and admitted that Communist agents promised him considerable “financial assistance and economic aid”.⁸³ Furthermore, Lumumba also said that Soviet agents offered economic proposals through members of the Belgian Communist Party, who were part of the Belgian delegations present at the Round Table Conference. Finally, Lumumba assured Mr. Burden that he would not accept any offer from the Communists and hoped that the United States would work closely with the Brussels authorities to help achieve the Congolese independence.

Although Lumumba denied having sympathy for Communism, policy-makers in Washington believed that he might have been receiving money from the Soviet Union through Accra and Conakry. Holding the possibility of such connections, Washington kept constantly Lumumba under surveillance. After a careful assessment of Lumumba’s political attitudes, U.S. officials

⁸² Memorandum of Conversation between U.S. Ambassador to Belgium William Burden and Under-Secretary of State Dillon, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, Ibid

⁸³ Memorandum of Conversation between U.S. Ambassador Burden and Patrice Lumumba, 25 February 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, pp. 262-266

concluded that his statements were accurate but that he was able to “betray his Communist supporters” at any moment at the expense of his own policies.⁸⁴ Aware of an anti-Communist plot in the Congo, Lumumba continued requesting assistance from the Eisenhower administration, trying to exploit its conservative, profoundly anti-communist outlook, and its perception on his political activities. Discussing with U.S. Ambassador Burden, Lumumba declared that he had an admiration for Washington’s political and economic leadership in the world, as well as the U.S. commitment in favor of the Congolese independence. Similarly, Lumumba stated that the majority of the African American population in the United States originated from Central Africa, and that the Congolese people viewed the United States as a friendly nation. Finally, Lumumba announced his intentions to pay a visit to Washington as soon as he could, and insisted that the Congo would emulate the U.S. political and economic system.

Despite Lumumba’s efforts to persuade Washington, Ambassador Burden urged the State Department to take immediate action against the perceived Soviet influence in the Congo. In a cable to Secretary Dillon, Burden declared that the Soviet Union had offered scholarships to thirty Congolese people and continued to fund Lumumba’s MNC party.⁸⁵ He stressed the importance of drawing Congolese support by providing its citizens with the necessary technical and training assistance similar to what the Soviet Union had offered to Guinea. Furthermore, Mr. Burden believed that offering U.S. scholarships to Congolese students would develop sympathy and a pro-American attitude among the Congolese politicians and party leaders. Ambassador

⁸⁴ Memorandum of Conversation between Ambassador Burden and Patrice Lumumba, 25 February 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, vol. 14, Ibid.

⁸⁵ Letter From the Ambassador Burden to Under Secretary of State Dillon, 7 April 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, pp. 266-270.

Burden acknowledged that Soviets were ahead in this game for hearts and minds in part, he insisted, Moscow's advantage derived from its active propaganda through Radio Broadcasts from Ghana and Guinea, an initiative that needed response from Washington.⁸⁶ There was no doubt in the Ambassador's mind that if Washington helped maintain the political stability and restore the deteriorating economy in the Congo, the country's leaders would themselves rid of Soviet influence.

Communism succeeded to penetrate the Congo before the country declared independence. A cable of the State Department described how Washington was relentlessly working to undermine Soviet influence on Lumumba. Although the Eisenhower administration considered Kwame Nkrumah as a *de facto* Communist nationalist and promoter of Pan-Africanism, U.S. officials sought help from his government to eliminate the Soviet influence on Lumumba. On April 28, 1960, two months before Lumumba became Prime Minister, the State Department urged the U.S. Ambassador to Accra, Wilson C. Flake, to contact the Ghanaian leader. Mr. Flake told Nkrumah that the U.S. government was committed to avoid a "repetition of the Guinean experience" in reference to that country's connection with Moscow after the French departure in 1958.⁸⁷ Nkrumah promised to use all his influence on Lumumba to stop Communism while reaffirming his government's principle to remain uninvolved in the internal affairs of the Congo.⁸⁸ The

⁸⁶ Letter From the Ambassador Burden to Under Secretary of State Dillon, 7 April 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, vol. 14, Ibid.

⁸⁷ Telegram From the Department of State to the U.S. Embassy in Ghana, 28 April 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, p. 271

⁸⁸ Telegram From the Department of State to the U.S. Embassy in Ghana, 28 April 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, Ibid.

Ghanaian leader was not convincing enough. Washington feared his ambition of uniting Ghana and the Congo under his Pan-African agenda. U.S. officials concluded that Nkrumah's help would not be as sufficient and helpful as they hoped. Ultimately, they decided to abandon Flake's approach. It was in the middle of this dilemma that the Congo gained independence, prompting the Eisenhower administration to take further steps to counter Moscow's influence.

Indeed, fighting Communism was confirmed as the top priority of the Eisenhower administration throughout the Congo crisis. In a National Security Council memorandum, CIA director Allen Dulles reassessed the profiles of the Congolese political leaders with a particular focus on Communist influence. His verdict was very telling:

“Patrice Lumumba is emerging as the strong man. His government, however, is weak and will have a Leftist tinge with five out of his ten cabinet ministers being inclined toward communism. Lumumba himself appears to be neutralist in attitude, with a Leftist and opportunistic bent. He is reported to have solicited communist funds to help him obtain his present political position. President Kasavubu may check Lumumba's activities to some extent. With its grave economic problems, the Congo will be susceptible to Sino-Soviet offers of economic assistance. The Chinese Communists have already recognized the Congo and the Tass News Agency reported last night that Soviet recognition had been accorded, with an offer to exchange ambassadors.”⁸⁹

At the independence ceremonies, Under-Secretary of States for Political Affairs Robert Murphy, who led the U.S. delegation as the Special Representative, announced Washington's plan to offer three hundred scholarships to Congolese students to pursue degrees in U.S. universities; He also pledged to elevate the U.S. Consulate to Embassy status.⁹⁰ Confirming Washington's commitment to the Congo, Murphy also declared that the U.S. Government was

⁸⁹ Editorial note *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, pp. 279-280.

⁹⁰ Editorial note *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, Ibid.

resolved to keep the unity of the Congo and to maintain economic and technical assistance to Lumumba's government. These were the only rather vague incentives offered by Washington. While doubting Lumumba's neutralism between Washington and Moscow, Murphy and the former U.S. Consul General to Leopoldville John Tomlinson met with the new Congolese leader to discuss the policies of his government and his relationship with the United States.⁹¹ Lumumba reiterated that his government's priorities would focus on national unity and on Congo's neutrality in international affairs. He also insisted that the Congo would defend its independence and territorial sovereignty from any foreign power intrusion, including an American one. While acknowledging United States' role in promoting freedom and democracy in the world, and helped many African colonies to achieve independence including his own country. Lumumba also suggested that without a concrete U.S. investment programs in his Congo, Washington's role would be virtually hollow. This conciliatory attitude did not yield result. Mr. Tomlinson warned Murphy not to trust Lumumba, suspecting the Congolese leader of turning coats "in the same day".⁹² According to Tomlinson, Lumumba would befriend any country in the world that could provide him with aid, whether the United States or the Soviet Union. The consul's advice, however, was to curry Lumumba's favor with more aid, and that was the general conclusion reached in Washington as well. But despite Washington's efforts to monitor Lumumba, Soviet influence on the Congolese leader kept increasing. Soon, the Cold War moved into the Congo.

⁹¹ Telegram From the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State, 4 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, pp. 280-281.

⁹² Telegram From the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State, 4 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, pp. 280-281.

Washington's policies in the Congo changed when riots broke out in Leopoldville on July 9, 1960.⁹³ The newly appointed U.S. Ambassador to the Congo Clare H. Timberlake pressed the State Department to take urgent steps while anarchy expanded in every city of the Congo. Angry Congolese soldiers of La Force Publique ignored orders from Lumumba's government, while Belgians sent paratroops to "protect" the thousands of European civilians who found themselves trapped in the violence.⁹⁴ While tensions between Lumumba and the Belgians escalated, the Soviets took advantage of the crisis accusing the Belgians of using disproportionate military aggression and announced that they would help Lumumba's government. Although Washington doubted that the Soviets would go beyond mere propaganda and take the risk to embark in the Congo, it could not help detecting the increasing interests of the Soviet Union for the Congo.

The Eisenhower administration was seriously concerned not only about the Congo but also about a new incident that took place earlier on July 1, when the Red Army shot down a U.S. RB-47 airplane allegedly flying over Soviet airspace.⁹⁵ This incident further aggravated the tensions between the United States and the Soviets who became more resolved to support Lumumba's government. At the United Nations, both superpowers constantly referred to the Congolese crisis as a confirmation of the other's responsibility in mounting tensions between them. When the UN

⁹³ After independence, Belgian officers refused to transfer command of the colonial army to Congolese soldiers. For more details on the riots, see Kalb, Madeleine G. *The Congo Cables: the Cold War in Africa--from Eisenhower to Kennedy* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1982), pp. xix-17.

⁹⁴ Telegram From the Embassy in Belgium to the Department of State, 10 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, vol. 14, pp. 286-288. See also Kalb, *The Congo Cables*, pp. 5-26.

⁹⁵ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Herter, 13 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, p. 302.

Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold considered sending UN peacekeeping forces in the Congo to solve the crisis that was taking place between the Congolese government and the Belgians, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev furiously protested and accused Washington and its NATO allies of using the international community as a means to protect Belgium.

While they pursued different objectives, both the United States and the Soviet Union agreed on the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces in the Congo to resolve the crisis. In July 1960, after Lumumba requested a UN intervention, the organization's Security Council passed several resolutions authorizing the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces in the Congo while calling for the withdrawal of Belgian troops from the Congo. Pledging their commitment to defend Lumumba, Soviet leaders found insufficient the actions taken by the United Nations and urged the Belgian troops to "leave the Congo immediately".⁹⁶ While Washington reiterated its commitment to a UN intervention, the Soviet Union conversely sought to exploit the Congolese crisis through the United Nations in order to win diplomatic support from the Afro-Asian nations, which had just become a major force in the UN General Assembly. For this reason, Khrushchev constantly tried to undermine Washington's efforts at the United Nations and threatened to use Soviet veto to prevent the U.S. Government from backing the Belgians in the Congo.⁹⁷

Despite their appeal to the United Nations, Lumumba and Kasavubu still hoped for an intervention from the Soviet Union. They believed that the Soviet Union was a world

⁹⁶ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Herter, 13 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, Ibid.

⁹⁷ Memorandum of Discussion at the 451st Meeting of the National Security Council, 15 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, pp. 309-312.

superpower like the United States, and continued to believe that the only effective way to *force* the Belgian military out of the Congo would be a military intervention from Moscow.⁹⁸ Lumumba in particular trusted the Soviets and believed that they would intervene to help his government. There were several reasons to explain Lumumba's reliance on the Soviets. First, Soviet leaders were constantly making public declarations restating their commitment to defend Lumumba's government while they strongly denounced the Belgian military presence in the Congo. Secondly, on several occasions, Moscow accused the Western bloc and particularly Washington of refusing to take a stance against Belgium. Thirdly, Soviet leaders evoked the US-Belgian NATO alliance as evidence of Washington's favor for Belgian intervention in the Congo. The reality on the ground and the general assumptions about U.S.-European relations gave credit to those statements, convincing Lumumba on the reliability of the Soviets. Overall, Soviet leaders sought to turn the Afro-Asian states at the United Nations against the West, with a clear intention of damaging the credibility of the United States in the Third World. Moscow thus accused the West of sponsoring imperialism and neocolonialism in the Third World and portrayed the Belgian military intervention as an example of Western domination. The Soviet tactics reached their most tangible success in Lumumba's Congo.

U.S. officials in Washington understood Soviet propaganda strategy, and denied the possibility of any Soviet military intervention in the Congo. President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Christian discussed the matter, as mainly a propaganda battle. Seen under those lenses,

⁹⁸ Memorandum of Discussion at the 451st Meeting of the National Security Council, 15 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, Ibid.

the situation in the Congo seemed to depend all on Lumumba's attitude.⁹⁹ Eisenhower and Herter also recognized that despite their diplomatic "blackmail" at the United Nations, the Soviets would not have the means to control the evolution of the crisis on the ground, and that Washington, in cooperation with Belgium and through the UN Mission in Congo, could influence internal actors to remove Lumumba from office. To attain that vital goal, Washington tolerated the presence of the Belgian military in the Congo. But at some point, the two U.S. leaders also concurred that Belgium should leave the Congo. Nevertheless, before their withdrawal, the Belgian military had facilitated Washington's efforts in mobilizing the United Nations, which could work as a proxy for the U.S. interests, while also denying the Soviets the right to intervene.

While Washington held out the Soviets, Lumumba faced a severe government crisis. On July 11, the rich province of Katanga seceded from the Congo and exacerbated Lumumba's relationship with the Belgians, whom he suspected of being responsible for the secession. The next day, Lumumba and Kasavubu flew to the capital of Katanga, Elisabethville, to persuade the Katangese authorities to renounce the secession but were refused to land and returned to Leopoldville. Rejecting the secession, Lumumba blamed the Belgians of dividing the Congo and called for the United Nations to end the secession. When both UN Forces (and Washington) refused to help his government, Lumumba asked for Soviet help.¹⁰⁰ The Soviets knew that Lumumba had no other option besides them and renewed their commitment to rescue him. On

⁹⁹ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Herter, 13 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, pp. 302.

¹⁰⁰ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Herter, 15 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, *Ibid*.

July 15, Khrushchev declared: “the hands of the aggressors had been raised over the African people and [that] if the aggressors continued in their present actions, the Soviet government would find it necessary to consider more serious countermeasures”.¹⁰¹ In fact, the Soviet declarations would continue to affect U.S. efforts at the UN level, but they could no longer reverse the course of actions on the ground, which was already favorable to the West. Confident of having the upper hand in the Congo, Washington and Belgium upped the ante. Belgium tried to manipulate the U.S. government to advance its own neocolonial interests in the Congo. Not surprisingly, U.S. officials endorsed the Belgian neocolonial policy that favored the Katanga independence. In one report, CIA director Dulles reminded Washington that Katanga was home of the “largest Belgian investments” while Ambassador Timberlake demanded the State department to adopt policies that would recognize an autonomous state in Katanga. But, Timberlake warned that Lumumba would never accept the legitimacy of the Katanga independence. Ultimately, he decided to pressure the already weakened Lumumba government to recognize a “federation” in which Katanga would govern itself, an arrangement that would also help preserve Belgium’s there, and possibly serve U.S. investments as well. Although the Eisenhower administration refused to recognize Katanga, Timberlake’s approach was evidence that Brussels held considerable leverage over U.S. officials.

Belgium played a major role in hardening U.S. anti-Communist policies in the Congo. Belgian authorities constantly told U.S. officials that Lumumba was in fact a Communist and that Soviet intervention in the Congo was imminent. That was how the Belgian Ambassador to

¹⁰¹ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Herter, 15 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, *Ibid*.

Washington Louis Scheyven pleaded his case to U.S. officials. Secretary Herter assured Mr. Scheyven that Washington would not tolerate any Soviet aggression on Belgium and promised that the United States would defend Belgian interests in the Congo. The same day, Secretary Herter urged the UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold to send UN troops in the Congo and recommended to work closely with the Belgians to prevent any Soviet intervention.¹⁰² While Hammarskjold relied mostly on Washington's supplies to conduct UN operations, he also insisted that both superpowers should respect the UN resolutions and refrain from any military intervention in the Congo.¹⁰³ However, Washington used the United Nations as an international umbrella to deny any ground to the Soviets while covert actions were underway to eliminate Lumumba's government. Furthermore, the UN troops in the Congo also restricted Lumumba's government while UN technicians and personnel ran most government institutions in the country. Hammarskjold distrusted Lumumba and ignored any of his government's intentions. The UN Secretary believed that Lumumba was the one who mainly wanted to manipulate the United Nations to justify the "Soviets bloc to move in with technicians" to run the Congo under Soviet terms.¹⁰⁴ When Lumumba insisted that UN troops should help his government end the secession in Katanga, Hammarskjold rejected his request and ordered UN troops not to intervene. In reality, Hammarskjold was pursuing policies drafted by Washington that prioritized political stability and the prevention of Communism in the Congo. Ultimately, in using the

¹⁰² Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Herter, 15 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, pp. 314-317.

¹⁰³ Telegram from the Mission at the United Nations to the Department of State, 18 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, pp. 320-322.

¹⁰⁴ Telegram from the Mission at the United Nations to the Department of State, 18 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, *Ibid.*

United Nations, Washington managed to achieve its objectives by keeping the Soviets out of the Congo while planning to replace Lumumba were being underway.

With Lumumba's power reduced, the United States shifted to the next stage: the overthrow of the outspoken Congolese leader. Ambassador Burden prepared a plan for the coup. In a cable to the State department, he accused Lumumba of threatening "US vital interests in Congo and Africa generally".¹⁰⁵ While examining all possibilities on the ground, Ambassador Burden recommended that Washington work actively to replace Lumumba's government with a pro-western regime. "A principal objective of our political and diplomatic action", he noted, "must therefore be to destroy Lumumba government as now constituted, but at [the] same time we must find or develop another horse to back which would be acceptable in rest of Africa and defensible against Soviet political attack."¹⁰⁶ The Soviet Union did succeed to influence Lumumba but failed to win the battle to control the Congo against the United States. Driven by similar objectives to dominate the world, both Washington and Moscow sought to expand their spheres of influence in the Third World; the Congo had suddenly become the perfect battleground for their Cold War competition. But the scale was tipped in Washington's favor from the start, with tragic consequences for Lumumba and his movement.

¹⁰⁵ Telegram from the Embassy in Belgium to the Department of State, 19 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, pp. 330-332.

¹⁰⁶ Telegram from the Embassy in Belgium to the Department of State, 19 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, Ibid.

CHAPTER III: Diplomacy and Politics: The Role of the United Nations in the Congo Crisis

1. U.S. Policies and Objectives through the United Nations

At the end of the Second World War and since its inception in San Francisco in April 1945, the aims of the United Nations were to promote peace and maintain security in the world.¹⁰⁷ But the Cold War competition between the United States and the Soviet Union made it difficult and nearly impossible for the Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld to implement those objectives in order to resolve the Congo crisis. While many Cold War crises in the world, such as the Korean War and the Cuban missile crisis, had previously tested the competence of the United Nations, Washington and Moscow sought to use the United Nations as a means to avoid any direct military confrontation between them in the Congo. Similarly, Washington and Moscow used the United Nations as a diplomatic and political instrument to legitimize the expansion of their ideological and geostrategic policies in the developing world. During the Congo crisis, the United Nations faced the enormous challenge of preventing the Congo from political instability and disintegration, while trying to be neutral in keeping both superpowers out of the country. However, despite the political crisis between Lumumba and Belgium on the one hand (because of the Belgian military intervention), and between Lumumba and Tshombe on the other hand (due to the secession of Katanga), Secretary Hammarskjöld managed to play a key role, at least temporarily¹⁰⁸, in bringing together the international community to solve the Congo crisis. Despite the constant pressures from the United States and the Soviet Union who wanted to

¹⁰⁷ Eichelberger, Clark M. *The United Nations Charter: What was done at San Francisco* (New York, American Association for the United Nations, inc, 1945), pp.1-37

¹⁰⁸ In September 1961, Secretary-General Hammarskjöld died in a plane crash while on his way to attend a peace conference with Tshombe in North Rhodesia. See Lefever, *Crisis in the Congo*, p. 82.

influence his actions, Secretary Hammarskjöld was able to undertake in the Congo one of the most difficult peacekeeping operations in the history of the United Nations.¹⁰⁹ Although many historians have written extensively on the political, ideological and legal aspects of the UN intervention in the Congo, few really examined the motives of the United States and the Soviet Union in supporting the UN intervention in the Congo. Few also analyzed the expectations of Washington and Moscow from the UN intervention in the Congo. Based on primary sources and records of officials who carried the UN operation in the Congo, this section will examine the impact of the UN intervention on the Congo crisis and attempt to answer the following questions: What goals did the United States and the Soviet Union respectively achieve in the Congo through the UN intervention? How did the United Nations avoid a US-Soviet military confrontation in the Congo? In responding to these fundamental questions, this section of the study will contribute to understanding why the Congo turned into one of the most dangerous Cold War battlegrounds in the world. It also helps to understand why the United States and the Soviet Union, although they compromised initially through the UN Security Council resolutions, ultimately failed to recognize the impartiality of the United Nations' intervention in the Congo. This section will also put into perspective how Secretary Hammarskjöld succeeded to set up, organize and dispatch the UN peacekeeping forces in the Congo.

Washington supported the UN intervention in the Congo not only to save the country from disaster but also to achieve its strategic objectives while avoiding any direct confrontation with the Soviet Union. The same tactics were undertaken by the Soviet Union, which at this time

¹⁰⁹ Urquhart, Brian, *Hammarskjöld* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), p. 388; Lefever, *Crisis in the Congo*, p. 15; Urquhart served as the Political Advisor for the UN Mission in the Congo from November 1961 to January 1962.

did not have the capacity to project its military power in the African continent yet.¹¹⁰ When the Congolese soldiers rioted in early July, Belgium sent paratroops in the Congo to protect its citizens still living in major cities throughout the Congo, and because of the Katanga secession, Lumumba accused Belgium of disintegrating the Country. These two events were at the origin of the Congo crisis. They became the justifications for Lumumba and Belgium to pull Washington and Moscow into the crisis. As a result, the Congo found itself at the crossroads of the Cold War.

Angry and overwhelmed by the magnitude of the events, Lumumba and Kasavubu desperately sought for external help to restore stability in the country. On July 10, they asked U.S. Ambassador Timberlake for advice. Timberlake believed that it would be impossible for the United States to intervene unilaterally in the Congo to help, and suggested the Congolese leaders to request direct assistance from the United Nations. The same day, Lumumba and Kasavubu asked Ralph Bunche, the UN Special Representative in the Congo, for a military and technical assistance to train the Congolese soldiers and restore order.¹¹¹ Bunche immediately cabled Secretary Hammarskjold to inform him about the Congolese government's request. On July 12, the Congolese Deputy-Prime Minister Antoine Gizenga discussed with Timberlake about the deteriorating situation and gave him a written request to send 3,000 U.S. troops in the Congo.¹¹² Timberlake cabled the request to the State department, which quickly concluded that

¹¹⁰ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, pp. 39-72.

¹¹¹ Lefever, *Crisis in the Congo*, p. 13; Also see Kalb, *The Congo Cables*, p. 8

¹¹² Hoskyns, *The Congo since Independence*, p. 114; Also note that Lumumba and Kasavubu sent to Bunche another request on July 10 asking the United Nations to send military aid "to protect the national territory of the Congo against the present external aggression (Belgium)".

Washington would help the Congolese government but only through the United Nations, and warned that any unilateral foreign assistance to the Congo outside the United Nations would be dangerous and escalate the crisis. Moreover, policy-makers in Washington believed that the Soviet Union would find a justification to send its troops in the Congo if the United States intervened. Although Belgian troops were unilaterally operating in the Congo despite the strong opposition of the Congolese government, U.S. policy-makers were more worried to prevent the Soviets from intervening in the Congo rather than restoring order in the Congolese army. Stability in the Congo became the paramount condition for Washington to deny the Congolese government from turning to the Soviet Union. Timberlake understood well the circumstances and urged the State department to help reestablish the authority of the Congolese government through the United Nations. President Eisenhower and Secretary Herter complied with Timberlake.¹¹³ But withdrawal of the Belgian troops from the Congo and the secession of Katanga would add further difficulties to Washington, which found no other options than to partner with Belgium to deploy peacekeeping forces to resolve the crisis. On July 13, U.S. Secretary of State Christian Herter cabled the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Henry Cabot Lodge, instructing him on the position that Washington had taken in favor of a UN intervention in the Congo. Herter recommended that the United Nations should send a multilateral peacekeeping force “drawn from smaller UN members” and emphasized that

On July 13, while on an emergency trip to South Kasai, they threatened to call neutral countries from the Bandung powers to intervene if the UN did not send troops quickly to stop the Belgian aggression. Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Herter, 13 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, Vol. 14, pp. 300-301. Ralph Bunch served as the UN Representative and Head of the UN Mission in the Congo.

¹¹³ Weissman, *American Foreign Policy in the Congo*, p. 59.

Washington would fully support the efforts of Secretary Hammarskjold in establishing such operation.¹¹⁴ Washington wanted to limit its contribution in providing the necessary logistics and transportation support to the operation, while urging Secretary Hammarskjold to send the UN forces in the Congo immediately; otherwise, Herter believed, the Bandung Group, in which Communist China was a member, would intervene to help Lumumba's government. Since the Eisenhower administration clearly supported the Belgian intervention in the Congo, it had no intention to accept any UN resolution that would condemn Belgian actions. "Belgians obviously have not committed aggression [on the Congo]", Secretary Herter declared, and the United States government "could not support any UN force on this basis." "Given the inability of Congolese Government to maintain law and order", he added, "Belgian actions to protect lives and property and to assist and evacuate its own citizens are clearly justified."¹¹⁵ Secretary Herter concluded that the United Nations should maintain impartiality to solve the Congolese crisis, and in doing so, he hoped that the Soviet Union would also comply.

At the request of the Secretary General, the UN Security Council convened on July 14 and adopted the Resolution 143.¹¹⁶ The document authorized Secretary Hammarskjold to take all "the necessary steps" to help the Congolese government with "such military assistance as may be

¹¹⁴ Telegram from the Department of State to the Mission at the United Nations, 13 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, vol. 14, pp. 303-304.

¹¹⁵ Telegram from the Department of State to the Mission at the United Nations, 13 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, vol. 14, Ibid.

¹¹⁶. Memorandum of telephone conversation between Secretary of State Herter and the Representative at the United Nations Henry Cabot Lodge, 14 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, vol. 14, pp. 306-307. See also the text of the resolution in Hoskyns, *The Congo since Independence*, p. 484

necessary”. The resolution also urged the Secretary General to assist the Congolese government until its “national security forces may be able, in the opinion of the government, to meet fully their tasks”.¹¹⁷ In fact, before completing the paragraphs of the resolution for the Security Council, Hammarskjold worked closely with the Tunisian Representative, Mongi Slim¹¹⁸, to present a carefully drafted resolution that suited both the positions of the United States and the Soviet Union. Hammarskjold was aware that the United States would not support a resolution that would call Belgium to remove its troops from the Congo, while the situation on the ground was still not yet under control. He also believed that the Soviet Union would lend its troops to support if the resolution was not favorable to the request made by Lumumba’s government, which the United Nations was supposed to help. At this point, despite several closed-doors negotiations and disagreements on the modalities to arrange the UN intervention in the Congo, both Washington and Moscow kept working at the UN level, in the belief that the adopted resolution would advance their respective Cold War ambitions and objectives in the Congo. The Secretary General therefore walked the tight rope between the superpowers, obtaining a Resolution vague enough that it would not be met with a veto by either Moscow or Washington.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Lefever, Ernest W. and Wynfred Joshua, *United Nations Peacekeeping in the Congo: 1960-1964, an Analysis of Political, Executive, and Military Control* (Washington, D.C, Brookings Institution, 1966), p. 32; Hoskyns, *The Congo since Independence*, p. 117.

¹¹⁸ Tunisia was the only African non-permanent member state at the UN Security Council and serving the interests of all African states at the UN. Argentina, Ceylon, Ecuador, Italy, Poland formed the rest of the non-permanent members at the UNSC. See Hoskyns, *Ibid.*, p.115.

¹¹⁹ The Resolution, which was sponsored by Tunisia, was finally adopted by eight votes to none including the assent by the USA and the Soviet Union, with three abstentions (China, France, and UK). Hoskyns, *The Congo since Independence*, pp. 484-496.

With the resolution approved, the United Nations prepared to set up the UN peacekeeping force for the Congo. On July 15, Secretary Hammarskjold asked Ralph Bunche to arrange with the Congolese government the deployment of the United Nations Force in the Congo (ONUC).¹²⁰ In order to keep the operation impartial and neutral from the Cold War belligerents, Secretary Hammarskjold asked African states to provide the main battalion troops for the UN force. The same day, Mali, Morocco, Tunisia, Guinea, Ethiopia and Ghana made available troops and Hammarskjold appointed the Swedish general Carl von Horn to serve as the Commander of the UN Forces in the Congo.¹²¹ For the logistics and transportation by air of the troops, Secretary Hammarskjold asked the United States, United Kingdom and the Soviet Union.¹²² He also appointed Sture Linnér as the Chief of the ONUC Civilian Operations to lead the administrative

¹²⁰ Ralph Bunche, who was a U.S. diplomat, attended the independence ceremonies of the Congo in June 1960 to represent the United Nations. He was serving as the UN Under Secretary for Special Political Affairs before Hammarskjold appointed him to lead the UN Force in the Congo (ONUC). See Kalb, *The Congo Cables*, p. 7; Also note that ONUC was the French acronym for Operations des Nations Unies au Congo, which means the UN Operation in the Congo. ONUC remained the name of the UN Peacekeeping mission in Congo until 1963.

¹²¹ Urquhart, *Hammarskjold*, p. 399. Note that general Carl von Horn was serving under similar UN mission in the Middle East as Chief of Staff of UNTSO (UN Truce Supervision Organization) before he was sent to the Congo.

¹²² Ibid. Hoping to influence the operation, Washington and Moscow alone provided nearly all the logistics and transportation support to airlift the UN troops in the Congo. In fact, their massive participation in this operation would soon influence the whole crisis.

and technical personnel for the Congo.¹²³ In less than a week, almost all the administrative and military personnel of the ONUC were ready to be deployed in the Congo.¹²⁴

In Washington, U.S. policy-makers hoped that the deployment of ONUC troops would deter the Soviets from unilaterally intervening in the Congo. However, the situation on the ground would quickly erode this optimism. On July 14, while arrangements for ONUC deployment were under way, Lumumba and Kasavubu sent a join telegram to the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev declaring that the Congo “is being occupied by Belgian troops and the lives of the Republic’s President and Premier are in danger”, and urging Moscow to “watch hourly over the situation”. Khrushchev replied that the Soviet Union would send “any assistance that might be necessary for the victory of the Congolese just cause”.¹²⁵ Washington prepared for a worst-case scenario of a Soviet intervention. When the ONUC forces arrived in the Congo by July 18, Lumumba asked the withdrawal of all Belgian troops operating in the Congo as well as from the secessionist province of Katanga. But Belgium rejected Lumumba’s demand. The stalemate between Lumumba and Brussels became a dilemma for U.S. policy-makers who supported the ONUC operation but limited its mandate to avoid any action against Belgium.

¹²³ Sture Linnér, a Swedish, was formerly serving as Resident Representative for UN Technical Assistance in the Congo. Note that most Belgian and other non-Congolese administrators who were running most of the Congolese government functions fled the Congo because of the riots. The UN Civilian Operation under the ONUC mandate was expected to provide UN personnel to fill the gap and train the Congolese civil servants. The Belgian presence in the country remained almost all exclusively military. See Urquhart, *Hammaraskjold*, p. 401.

¹²⁴ By July 18, nearly 3,500 African peacekeeping troops and hundreds of other non-African UN personnel had arrived in the Capital of the Congo Leopoldville. See *Ibid.*, p. 402

¹²⁵ Lefever, *Crisis in the Congo*, p. 14; note that Lumumba was already in contact with the Communist bloc before the Congolese independence. This is one of the many correspondences between the two leaders. See Chapter 2.

At the United Nations, the Soviet Representative, Ambassador Arkady Sobolev, threatened to revoke the entire ONUC operation if the Belgians refused to comply with Lumumba's request. Assisting Moscow's diplomatic move was the forty-eight hours ultimatum that Lumumba presented to Bunche intimating that if Belgium did not remove its troops, he would call on the Soviet Union to intervene.¹²⁶ On July 20, Ambassador Lodge told Thomas Kanza, the newly appointed Congolese Delegate-Minister at the United Nations, that the United States would not accept Lumumba's appeal to the Soviet Union, and that any intervention from Moscow would further aggravate the crisis in the Congo.¹²⁷ The next day, Secretary Herter cabled all U.S. Embassies in Europe and in Africa reiterating that U.S. priorities should focus on the accomplishment of Congo's stability through the ONUC while no action be taken to recognize the Katanga secession.¹²⁸ The American diplomatic move confirmed to Belgian authorities that, for all the support they received from Washington, they could not expect any assistance on the question of Katanga.

On July 22, Hammarskjold convened a meeting of the UN Security Council to discuss the stalemate in the Congo, and to obtain further mandate for intensified ONUC operations. At the meeting, the Representatives of Tunisia and Ceylon introduced a draft Resolution on the Congo with amendments, which the Security Council adopted unanimously as Resolution 145. For the second time, both the United States and the Soviet Union reached a compromise on this issue.

¹²⁶ Urquhart, *Hammarskjold*, p.505

¹²⁷ Kanza was the first Congolese to graduate from University, and he was a close ally of Lumumba. See Kanza, Thomas, *Conflict in the Congo: the Rise and Fall of Lumumba* (London: Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972).

¹²⁸ Circular telegram from the Department of State to certain diplomatic Missions, 21 July 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, vol. 14, pp. 344-345.

The Resolution called Belgium to comply with the previous Resolution 143, which had ruled an immediate Belgian withdrawal from the Congo.¹²⁹ The Resolution authorized Secretary Hammarskjold to “take all necessary action to this effect”, and insisted “all states to refrain from any action which might tend to impede the restoration of law and order and the Congo Government’s exercise of its authority or which might undermine the Congo’s territorial integrity and political independence.”¹³⁰ Thus ostensibly empowered, Secretary Hammarskjold proceeded to apply the rules against Belgium.

On July 24, without invitation from Washington, Lumumba traveled to the United States. The same day, he went to the UN headquarters in New York and met with delegates from African states.¹³¹ When Lumumba arrived in Washington to meet the U.S. president, Eisenhower refused to see him but asked Secretary Herter to welcome Lumumba’s delegation. CIA director Dulles discussed with Secretary Herter about the reasons of Lumumba’s visit to the United States. Dulles noted that Lumumba, during a previous meeting with Soviet representatives in the Congo, had received confirmation that Moscow would not send any troops in the Congo. The CIA director believed that the Soviet Union did not want to get deeply involved in the Congo crisis, and that was the reason why Lumumba changed his attitude toward

¹²⁹ Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, vol. 14, p. 346; Abi-Saab explained that Secretary Hammarskjold increased his powers from the interpretation of these two Resolutions 143 and 145. He explained the legal mandate of the UN Resolutions and put them into the context of UN Charter and Principles. See Abi-Saab, Georges, *The United Nations Operation in the Congo, 1960-1964* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 1-20.

¹³⁰ Editorial Note, *Ibid*, *FRUS*, p. 346; for the full text of the Resolution 145, see Hoskyns, *The Congo since Independence*, p. 485.

¹³¹ Hoskyns, *The Congo since Independence*, p. 156

the West before he visited the United States. Dulles concluded that Lumumba's visit to the United States was to persuade U.S. officials that he was not a communist or acting under Soviet influence. He wanted Washington to help his government to put pressure on Belgium to withdraw its troops from Katanga and demanded technical assistance from the United States.¹³² Lumumba's visit made little impression on Eisenhower, who maintained that the Congolese leader was pro-Soviet and would remain so when he returned to the Congo. The U.S. president made no provisions for any unilateral assistance to Lumumba, but promised that all U.S. assistance would be channeled through the United Nations. He also maintained that Washington would continue to support the ONUC mission in the Congo and hoped that the Soviet Union would do the same by avoiding any unilateral action in the Congo. Lumumba was no dupe; he fully understood that Eisenhower would never help him against the Belgians and end the Katanga secession. After touring Canada and a number of African states, Lumumba returned to the Congo full of anger. For him, at this point, there was no difference between the United States and Belgium.¹³³ Meanwhile on July 28, Secretary Hammarskjold arrived in Leopoldville and instructed Bunch to prepare the ONUC forces to enter Katanga to replace the Belgian troops. For the United States, this meant the beginning of a new episode in the Congo crisis.

The Eisenhower administration approved Hammarskjold's plan to send the ONUC Forces into Katanga as a last resort to satisfy the persistent demands of Lumumba and to prevent the Soviets from unilaterally intervening in the Congo. On August 1, the National Security Council

¹³² Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, vol. 14, pp. 353-354.

¹³³ Hoskyns, *The Congo since Independence*, p. 156; On his way back from the United States, Lumumba visited Tunisia, Morocco, Guinea, Ghana, Liberia and Togoland between August 2-8, 1960. See *Ibid.*, p. 165

met in Washington and concurred with the recommendations made the previous day by the Chiefs of Staff to the President Eisenhower, declaring:

“In addition to United Nations actions, effective or otherwise, the United States must be prepared at any time to take appropriate military action as necessary to prevent or defeat Soviet military intervention in the Congo. Multilateral action would be preferable but unilateral action may be necessary. In the present Soviet belligerent mood, the USSR could estimate that the United States would not oppose them. We must be prepared to oppose and defeat them. In order to prevent their making such a rash move, they must be made to understand that we will not tolerate a Soviet military takeover of the Congo.”¹³⁴

Washington agreed to keep that policy and prepared to respond vigorously to any unilateral action by the Soviet Union in the Congo. It is also important to note that Washington was providing nearly half of the financial budget and logistic resources to the ONUC operations in the Congo.¹³⁵ This heavy financial contribution also justified the decisions of the U.S. government to influence the conduct of the United Nations in the Congo. For its part, the Soviet Union contributed mostly by providing food and airlifting UN troops into the Congo under the UN mandate. In fact, Washington had another advantage over the Soviet Union. Most officials working at the UN Secretariat-General and leading the ONUC Mission in the Congo were U.S. nationals or from European NATO allies. This upper hand in the administrative and decision-making personnel at both the United Nations and ONUC levels facilitated the Eisenhower

¹³⁴ Memorandum of Discussion at the 454th Meeting of the National Security Council, 1 August 1960, FRUS, 1958-1960, Africa, vol. 14, pp. 372-376.

¹³⁵ Lefever, *Crisis in the Congo*, p. 15; U.S. financial contribution to the ONUC was mostly voluntary and reached \$168.2 million from July 1960 through June 1964. Ibid.

administration to carry out its objectives in the Congo.¹³⁶ But as long as Lumumba remained the head of the Congolese government, Washington could not attain its objectives in the Congo.

The United States faced another political dilemma. On August 7, the president of Guinea Sekou Toure sent a personal letter to Eisenhower urging him to listen to the “cry of alarm from Africa, humiliated and under attack by its enemies,” to take action in their “determining role in world affairs.”¹³⁷ “In view of the gravity of the situation in the Congo, and the unified, effective support by all the African peoples to our brothers in the Congo”, Sekou Toure wrote, “we consider it our duty...to appeal to you personally, as well as to the Government and Congress of the United States to take vigorous action to obtain immediate...evacuation without delay of all Belgian troops from the Congo and respect for the territorial integrity of that State.”¹³⁸ The Guinean president also warned Hammarskjold that if he failed to replace the Belgians in Katanga, he would withdraw the Guinean battalions of the ONUC and put at Lumumba’s disposal to help his troops fight the Belgians. Although Washington was under similar pressures

¹³⁶ Ralph Bunche, the Head of ONUC Mission, was a former State department official as well as Andrew W. Cordier who was serving as Hammarskjold Executive Assistant at the United Nations. Cordier would later replace Bunch late in August until September 1960. See Lefever, *Crisis in the Congo*, p. 201 for the list of all UN Civilian and Military Representatives who served in the Congo from 1960 to 1964. For the command structure of the Congo operation, see Lefever and Wynfred, *United Nations Peacekeeping in the Congo*, pp. 73-79.

¹³⁷ Message From President Sekou Touré to President Eisenhower, 7 August 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, vol. 14, p. 395.

¹³⁸ Message From President Sekou Touré to President Eisenhower, 7 August 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, vol. 14, Ibid. As a close ally of Moscow and a radical anti-colonialist, Sekou Toure probably sent this emotional letter to Eisenhower, either because of his own anti-colonial experience with France, or acting under Soviet instructions to influence Washington to turn it against Belgium.

from most of the Afro-Asian states at the United Nations, U.S. officials believed that they were acting as proxies for the Soviet Union, and the only objective for Moscow was to take over the Congo whether the ONUC replaced the Belgian troops in Katanga or not. This policy remained unchanged until Hammarskjold convened a new meeting of the Security Council.

On August 8, it became clear for the UN Security Council members that the solution to end the deadlock between Lumumba and the Belgians rested on a possible compromise between the U.S. and the Soviet leaders. Hammarskjold wanted to keep the ONUC forces impartial and help restore law and stability in the Congo, which he believed to be consistent with the previous UN Resolutions. However, Hammarskjold understood that an impasse on the problem of Katanga could threaten the international security and peace, and if both superpowers did not make steps to persuade their respective protégés (Belgium and Lumumba), the United Nations would fail to circumvent a direct confrontation between Washington and Moscow in the Congo. On August 9, fearful of this situation, and despite Brussels' objection, the Eisenhower administration backed Hammarskjold and voted favorably on the UN Resolution 146, which called on Belgium to withdraw "immediately" its troops from Katanga. This was the first time that Washington officially approved a measure that was unsatisfactory to Belgian interests in the Congo, and the first time since the Suez Crisis that Washington took a stance against one of its NATO Allies.¹³⁹ The Resolution 146 stated that although the entry of the UN Force into Katanga was "necessary", UN troops would not "be a party to or in any way intervene in or be used to

¹³⁹ France and Britain supported Belgian policy in Congo alongside Washington since the beginning of the crisis. However, when Washington supported the UN Resolution despite Belgians' dissatisfaction, most people in Europe and in Belgium in particular believed that the United States might be using the UN to take over the Congo itself. See Devlin, Larry. *Chief of Station, Congo: Fighting the Cold War in a Hot Zone* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2007), p.43.

influence the outcome of any internal conflict, constitutional or otherwise.”¹⁴⁰ For Hammarskjold, it was a premature victory, at least at the United Nations’ level, since the Belgians would soon press Tshombe’s government to prevent the UN force to enter in Katanga.

With the new resolution, ONUC troops prepared to move into Katanga by mid-August. To make things worse, Albert Kalonji declared the independence of South Kasai on August 8, 1960 and seceded from Lumumba’s government.¹⁴¹ The secession took the Congolese government by surprise. In fact, Lumumba was preparing to launch a large-scale military attack on Tshombe’s army (backed by Belgium) in Katanga. Regarding the new secession, Lumumba knew that the ONUC force had no mandate, at least for the time being, to help his government militarily or otherwise to intervene in Kasai. Meanwhile, Secretary Hammarskjold urged Bunche to arrange with the Katanga authorities to deploy the UN forces and replace the Belgian troops. When Tshombe attempted to deny the UN troops permission to be deployed in Katanga, Hammarskjold personally escorted a contingent of three hundred Swedish troops under UN flag to deploy them in Katanga on August 12. ONUC Deputy-Commander General Ben Hammou Kettani (Moroccan) and the Brigadier General Rikhye (Indian) led the deployment of the UN

¹⁴⁰ Merriam, *Congo*, pp. 238-39; The Resolution 146 was introduced to the Security Council by Tunisia and Ceylon, and adopted by all UNSC members without objection. France and Italy abstained. See full text of Resolution 146 in Hoskyns, *The Congo since Independence*, pp. 486-86.

¹⁴¹ Albert Kalonji was not only the leader of the Kalonji faction of the MNC party, but he was also the “Malupwe” or King of the Muluba tribe in the South Kasai. See his autobiography (in French) Kalonji-Ditunga-Mulopwe, Albert, *Congo 1960: la Secession du Sud-Kasai, la Verite du Mulopwe* (Paris, Harmattan Edition, 2005).

troops into Katanga.¹⁴² By the following weeks, Belgium agreed to withdraw most of its troops from Katanga and complied with the UN rules. The Eisenhower administration succeeded to persuade Belgium to withdraw its troops from Katanga, but ultimately failed to prevent Lumumba from dragging the Soviet Union into the Congo.

2. Soviet Policies and Objectives through the United Nations

Most scholars of the Cold War concur that the Soviet Union pursued foreign policies similar to those of the United States in the Third World.¹⁴³ Some have even argued that the two superpowers were not only competing to expand their spheres of influence in developing countries, but also wanted to impose their economic domination over their natural resources.¹⁴⁴ Since the beginning of the Congo crisis in July 1960, the Soviet Union initially agreed with the U. S government to peacefully resolve the crisis through the United Nations. Like Washington,

¹⁴² Telegram From the Mission at the United Nations to the Department of State, 10 August 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, vol. 14, pp. 402-405. See also Lefever, *Crisis in the Congo*, p. 40; Note that the Swedish troops were stationed in Elizabethville, the Capital city of Katanga. As required by the Resolution 146, Belgian troops gradually withdrew from Katanga in the next weeks. General Indarjit Rikhye served as the Military Adviser of the ONUC mission in Congo from November 3- 23, 1960.

¹⁴³ Gaddis, John Lewis, *We now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Borstelmann, Thomas, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001); Fursenko, Aleksandr & Naftali, Timothy. *Khrushchev's Cold War: the Inside Story of an American Adversary* (New York: Norton, 2006); Odd Arne Westad. *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. Cambridge University Press, 2007; Shaw, Tony and Denise J. Youngblood, *Cinematic Cold War: the American and Soviet struggle for hearts and minds* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010);

¹⁴⁴ Tanzer, Michael, *The Political Economy of International Oil and the Underdeveloped Countries* (Boston: Beacon, 1969); Gibbs, David N. *The Political Economy of the Third World Intervention: Mines, Money, and the US. Politics in the Congo Crisis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

Moscow also endorsed and approved most of the resolutions submitted by the UN Security Council on the Congo.¹⁴⁵ However, though both of them sought to establish a degree of influence in most of the newly independent states in Africa, it was not certain that Washington and Moscow pursued the same interests in the Congo. Since the deployment of the ONUC troops in the Congo, the Soviet Union had openly supported the government of Lumumba, while Washington not only tolerated Belgian military intervention, but also acknowledged its neocolonial ambitions in the Congo. In addition, despite their different motives, Washington and Moscow both supported Secretary Hammarskjold and the deployment of ONUC troops in Katanga, provided that they would not intervene to end the secession of Katanga. However, given the deterioration of the political situation on the ground, and given the increasing pressure both Washington and Moscow exerted on the ONUC mission, it seemed difficult for Hammarskjold to avoid a confrontation between the two superpowers in the Congo. The day Hammarskjold deployed the Swedish UN troops in Katanga, Lumumba planned to launch a military invasion to take control of the region. To implement this operation, Lumumba knew that the Congolese army needed sufficient military equipment to defeat Tshombe's well-equipped army supported by Belgium. Unhappy with this situation, Lumumba reproached Hammarskjold for not having authorized the ONUC troops to end the secession of Katanga. For this reason, on August 26, Lumumba urged all ONUC troops to leave immediately the Congo, declaring, "We will maintain order with our own troops and police. We do not want to replace the Belgian military occupation with a UN occupation."¹⁴⁶ Lumumba also accused Belgium of

¹⁴⁵ Like Washington, the Soviet Union also adopted the UN Resolutions 143, 145 and 146 on the Congo. See full text of all resolutions in Hoskyns, *The Congo since Independence*, pp. 331-39.

¹⁴⁶ Merriam, *Congo, Background of Conflict*, p. 249

providing combat aircrafts and weapons to Tshombe's army, a charge rejected by Brussels. In Washington, the Eisenhower administration condemned Lumumba's attacks on the ONUC mission and reiterated its support to Hammarskjold's peacekeeping efforts in Katanga. Lumumba's government was not only divided but also weakened by internal tensions between members of rival groups based on tribal and political interests in the country. Supporters of president Kasavubu criticized Lumumba for not being able to resolve the crisis, and made it difficult for him to govern despite his growing popularity among the Congolese population. While his government was facing severe criticism from all sides, the Soviet ambassador in Leopoldville, Mikhail Yakovlev, vowed to consolidate Lumumba's power and promised that the Soviet Union would fully support the Congolese's government. The Soviet complained that Lumumba's authority already weakened and that if Moscow did not intervene to help him, other powers, notably the United States, would seize the opportunity to overthrow him. Consequently, at Lumumba's request, Khrushchev decided to send one hundred military trucks and ten Ilyushin-14 aircraft as well as hundreds of military advisers in the Congo to assist Lumumba.¹⁴⁷ The aircrafts were primarily intended to transport the Congolese troops from the northern province of Stanleyville into the secessionist provinces of South Kasai and Katanga where Lumumba was preparing to launch a vast military campaign on Kalonji's forces and on Tshombe.

In sending the military assistance, Khrushchev hoped to not only strengthen Lumumba's government but also help him conquer the two richest provinces of the Congo (Katanga and Kasai). Despite Washington's and United Nations' warnings, Khrushchev's unilateral assistance

¹⁴⁷ Editorial note, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, vol. 14, pp. 442-443

to Lumumba was in fact a deliberate decision, for it was advantageous for the long-term economic and strategic interests of the Soviet Union in the Congo. In reality, Khrushchev did not only want to save Lumumba but also help his government take control over the vast mining resources of Katanga, which, if he succeeded, would eventually provide to the Soviet Union considerable resources to strengthen its economic and military power. Although the spreading of Communism and the acquisition of strategic positions in Africa remained the primary goals, economic drive was probably the main motive for the Soviet intervention in the Congo. The Soviet Union wanted to prove that Revolution was the wave of the future in Third World countries, and Moscow was the world leader of such Revolutionary Movement (at this point the Soviet Union and China clashed over this competing claim). In general, that would give more credibility at home and abroad for Khrushchev. It is also important to note that during the Second World War, while Belgium was mostly occupied by Hitler's army and the Congo was still a Belgian colony, Brussels provided the necessary uranium to the United States to develop its nuclear programs. With the uranium of Katanga, Washington was able to produce its first atomic bombs, which, after dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, forced Japan to surrender.¹⁴⁸

For the Soviet Union, the Congolese independence became the perfect opportunity to replace the Belgians and take control of the Congolese resources, and Lumumba gave Moscow the means to do so. Congo did not only represent the main source of raw material supply for the Belgian industry, it was also the only Belgian colony in Africa. Losing that colony would have

¹⁴⁸ Belgian Mining Company, "Union Miniere du Haut Katanga" provided uranium to Washington to develop its first nuclear weapons. See Rhodes, Richard. *The Making of the Atomic Bomb: 25th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012).

meant further demotion for the small nation of Belgium compared to other colonial powers, most notably France, Great Britain, and Portugal, all of which had managed to retain economic and political influence even over the colonies they had already formally lost. The Eisenhower administration, convinced that without at least an economic presence in Africa, the former colonial powers, including Belgium would have lost essential assets for their industry, was determined to counter any expansion of the Soviet Union, particularly in the newly independent states of Africa. Washington viewed the unilateral Soviet move in the Congo as a violation of the mutual policy of neutrality that both superpowers initially pledged to maintain throughout the crisis. In addition, Washington considered the Soviet conduct in violation of the UN resolutions, and of the consequent UN mandate to resolve the Congo crisis. U.S. policy-makers recognized how Lumumba's attempt in keeping his country united served Soviet interests first. But like Lumumba, U.S. officials also knew that without Katanga and Kasai, the Congo could no longer survive economically as a nation, for these two provinces alone provided more than half of all the financial revenues and public expenditure of the Congolese government.¹⁴⁹

3. Washington's Decision to Remove Lumumba

While Soviet military advisers and technicians were operating in the Congo, Washington set a plan to replace the government of Lumumba. In a secret cable to the U.S. embassy in Leopoldville, CIA director Allen Dulles wrote, "in high quarters here [in Washington], it is the clear-cut conclusion that if Lumumba continues to hold high office, the inevitable result will at

¹⁴⁹ Katanga produced more than half of the world Uranium, Copper, Cobalt and other mineral resources to Belgium every year. Some experts believed that Belgium backed the secession of Katanga to keep it under control from the newly independent Congo. The Union Miniere mining company held rights nearly all the resources of Katanga. the Kasai province was the richest diamond-producing region in Congo. See Merriam, *Congo*, p. 11.

best be chaos and at worst pave the way to Communist takeover of the Congo with disastrous consequences for the prestige of the UN and for the interests of the free world generally. Consequently we conclude that his removal must be an urgent and prime objective and that under existing conditions this should be a high priority of our covert action.”¹⁵⁰ While Washington initiated actions to overthrow Lumumba, Hammarskjold appointed Rajeshwar Dayal to represent him in the Congo. At the U.S. embassy in Leopoldville, Timberlake met with Andrew Cordier and discussed on Washington’s plan to overthrow Lumumba. Cordier came to temporarily lead the ONUC mission when Bunche resigned due to Lumumba’s refusal to collaborate with him.¹⁵¹ When he arrived in Congo, Dayal fully understood how Washington-Moscow competition made stability in the Congo unlikely to prevail. In his memoire, Dayal contended that Ambassador Timberlake requested Cordier to use the ONUC troops to apprehend Lumumba, but Cordier refused to comply.¹⁵² In fact, Cordier feared to illegally involve the ONUC troops into the Congolese crisis, but he promised Timberlake to use other means to overthrow the Congolese leader. Cordier discussed with Congolese president Kasavubu and asked him if he was able to remove Lumumba. Kasavubu replied that he could use his constitutional powers as president of the Congo to remove Lumumba from the premiership, provided that Cordier would support him handle the consequences of his decision. Cordier told Kasavubu that he would not use the ONUC troops to help him militarily but promised to back his

¹⁵⁰ Editorial note, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, vol. 14, p. 443.

¹⁵¹ When the ONUC entered Katanga and did not end the secession, Lumumba demanded that all UN troops in the Congo leave the country. For this reason, Lumumba refused to work with Bunch as well as with Hammarskjold.

¹⁵² Dayal, Rajeshwar. *Mission for Hammarskjöld: the Congo Crisis* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 48-67.

decision.¹⁵³ On September 5, Kasavubu made a public Radio announcement, and dismissed Lumumba from office. In his place, Kasavubu appointed Joseph Ileo, the moderate head of the Congolese Senate, to be the new Prime Minister and form a new government.¹⁵⁴ On the same day, Lumumba replied with a similar announcement, dismissed Kasavubu, and refused to resign.¹⁵⁵

When both leaders clung to their positions and claimed the legitimate authority of the Congolese government, Hammarskjold convened a special meeting of the UN General Assembly to decide on the constitutional crisis between Kasavubu and Lumumba. Washington recognized Kasavubu as the sole legitimate leader of the Congo while the Soviet Union recognized Lumumba as head of the Congolese Government. When the UN Security Council adopted a new resolution recognizing the constitutional authority of Kasavubu, the Soviet Union vetoed the resolution and threatened to intervene militarily to help Lumumba.¹⁵⁶ On September 17, Cordier alerted all the ONUC forces and closed all airports in the Congo as well as the Radio in Leopoldville. At the United Nations, Khrushchev accused Hammarskjold of violating the mandate of the UN Resolutions and threatened to abolish the office of the Secretariat-General.

¹⁵³ When Ralph Bunche resigned in late August, Secretary Hammarskjold appointed Dayal (Indian diplomat) as the UN Representative to the Congo and Chief of the ONUC Mission. Mr. Dayal would soon become controversial and criticized by Washington due to his refusal to use ONUC forces in its efforts to remove Lumumba.

¹⁵⁴ Kalb, *the Congo Cables*, p. 59; President Kasavubu and Joseph Ileo, the head of the Congolese Senate were growing resentful toward Lumumba, whose attitude they perceived was getting typical of a “dictator” in the forming.

¹⁵⁵ Merriam, *Congo*, p. 253; Dayal, *Mission for Hammarskjold*, pp. 58-67.

¹⁵⁶ Hoskyns, *The Congo since Independence*, pp. 204-216.

Meanwhile in the Congo, given the deteriorating situation and the growing threat of a division within the Congolese army, president Kasavubu dismissed the pro-Lumumba army Commander, General Lundula, and replaced him with Colonel Mobutu to serve as the new commander of the Congolese military. Kasavubu requested Mobutu to maintain stability and prevent Lumumba from taking decisions on behalf of the Congolese government. Mobutu hired Belgian agents as military advisers and promised to end Soviet influence in the Congo. But the Congolese army, unpaid and mostly still loyal to Lumumba, demanded payment of their salary otherwise they threatened to sink the country into violence. Before he left, Cordier had already facilitated Washington's plans by supporting Kasavubu and Mobutu to take control of the army, while the Soviets were desperately trying to restore Lumumba's authority. In a cable to the state department, Ambassador Timberlake urged Washington to provide financial and military support to Mobutu in order to end the Soviet influence in the Congo.¹⁵⁷ On September 27, Mobutu made a military coup and neutralized both Kasavubu and Lumumba until further notice. He placed Lumumba under house arrest while he left Kasavubu formally enabled to exercise his presidential functions. The next day, Mobutu ordered all the 'communist ambassadors' in the Congo, including the Soviet Ambassador, to leave the country within 48 hours and went on to impose a military rule in the country.¹⁵⁸ Mobutu also suspended all Congolese government activities and established a 'College of Congolese University Scholars' to lead the country while he continued to impose his authority throughout the country.

¹⁵⁷ Editorial note, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, Africa, vol. 14, p. 443.

¹⁵⁸ Dayal, *Mission for Hammarskjold*, p. 63.

While Lumumba was kept under house arrest, his government was already on the verge of collapse. Despite the considerable efforts undertaken by the Soviet Union and other African countries such as Ghana and Guinea in the United Nations to release him, Mobutu's troops forced Lumumba to remain locked in his residence under ONUC protection. Having understood that Kasavubu and Mobutu took control of the government, Lumumba decided to secretly flee his residence on November 27, 1960 in an attempt to reach Stanleyville where many of his supporters had set up a rival government to Kasavubu's regime.¹⁵⁹ With the logistical and intelligence support from Belgium and the CIA, Mobutu's troops captured Lumumba and two of his aides on December 1. The next day, Lumumba was transported to Leopoldville airport where he was humiliated in front of the international press by Mobutu's soldiers, who tried to make him swallow "a paper", which many officials believed to be the speech that he read before the Belgian king on Congo's Independence Day.¹⁶⁰ In order to decide on his fate, Mobutu, following Belgian instructions, transferred Lumumba to a military prison before he sent him to Katanga on January 17, 1961. When they landed at the Katanga airport, Lumumba and his two colleagues were tortured by Tshombe's military and executed, according to De Witte, by a firing squad

¹⁵⁹ Dayal, *Mission for Hammarskjold*, p. 133

¹⁶⁰ Kalb, *The Congo Cables*, p. 163. Many believed that the "paper" was in fact a copy of a speech that Lumumba previously read in front of the Belgian King at Congo's Independence day.

under Belgian military supervision.¹⁶¹ With this fateful end, Lumumba not only lost his government and his life, but he also buried with him the hope of a united Congo.

Lumumba's death severely reduced the influence of the Soviet Union in the Congo. It also allowed Washington to increase its ambitions in the Congo in supporting militarily and financially the regime of Mobutu and Kasavubu. With the collaboration of Belgium and the United Nations, the Eisenhower administration managed to reestablish Kasavubu's government, which in turn paved the way for Washington to expand its geostrategic dominance on the Congo. Kasavubu's regime also helped Washington to remove the Soviets who had tried everything they could to extend their ideological and economic influence in this vital part of Central Africa. While the competition between the two superpowers continued to shake the Congo for the next four consecutive years, the Congo would continue to remain the most important Cold War battleground in Africa. Both Moscow and Washington wanted to expand their influence in the Congo, which, because of the Belgian failure to decolonize it, became victim of the ongoing Cold War competition between the two superpowers. In this fierce struggle motivated by global objectives located beyond its traditional sphere of influence, the United States had not only succeeded in overthrowing Lumumba's government but also ended the Soviet ambitions in the Congo. In this effort, the government of Kasavubu and Mobutu, assisted by an ostensibly neutral but in fact U.S.-driven United Nations, played a significant role in providing Washington with the necessary military and diplomatic tools to achieve its objectives in the Congo.

¹⁶¹ De Witte described Lumumba's assassination in a graphically detailed way. See De Witte, *The Assassination of Patrice Lumumba*, pp. 101-124.

Conclusion

Congo was certainly not the only country of the Third World in which the United States and the Soviet Union intervened because of the Cold War. At the end of World War II, most European colonial powers weakened to the point that they could no longer contain the independence movements that emerged in their colonies in Africa. The United States and the Soviet Union not only wanted to extend their influence in those areas, but also wanted to export their political and economic models worldwide. As historian Odd Arne Westad has argued, the Cold War became “global” because both superpowers considered newly decolonized, developing nations as the new battlegrounds for the bipolar world confrontation at every level: strategic, economic, and ideological. Indeed, Westad suggests, these three dimensions of the Cold War had their most striking overlap in Third World areas. Both the United States and the Soviet Union cast their proselytizing fervor over those areas: success in bringing newly developed nations into the global economy would provide for either the United States or the Soviet Union the ultimate evidence of their respective systems’ ability to control modernization and even to accelerate it.¹⁶² To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, proving which “system traveled better” (in the Third World) meant also proving which of the two systems, liberal-capitalism, or a Soviet-managed Marxist approach, held the main key to progress – political and economic -- worldwide. By the late 1950s, while the Cold War had stalemated in Europe, the credibility of both superpowers hinged on that race for hearts and minds as well as resources in the Third World.

In Africa, the process of decolonization, which was encouraged by Washington as much as by Moscow, allowed a considerable number of African colonies to achieve independence

¹⁶² Westad, *The Global Cold War*, pp.110-147.

throughout most of the 1950s and 1960s. However, in that period, the Eisenhower administration was facing many regional challenges in different parts of the world particularly from the Soviet Union, such as in Korea, Cuba, Indochina, and the Middle East. In at least three of these areas – Korea, the Middle East, and, above all, Cuba -- the two superpowers at some point faced, or were about to face the prospect of a nuclear confrontation. A nuclear holocaust became a ghastly possibility not only for the sake of Berlin, but also for the sake of Seoul, or Suez, or Havana. Africa, the last continent to experience broad decolonization, was a latecomer in the strategic Cold War confrontation. In the Congo, Belgium failed to implement a long-term colonial policy that would anticipate the self-determination of the Congolese people, and when the ‘wind of change’ started blowing over the continent, a clash between colonial rulers and a Congolese independence movement became inevitable. Belgium’s surrender was not easy, nor was it complete by the time the Congolese declared their independence on June 30, 1960.

As this thesis has shown, many factors were responsible for the United States’ involvement in the Congo crisis. The Eisenhower administration intervened in the Congo not only to curb the influence of the Soviet Union, but also to contain the growing nationalism of its political leaders, a nationalism that was all the more alarming to Washington because of its connections to the Pan-African movement inspired by Ghana’s leader Kwame Nkrumah. When Lumumba was elected prime minister on the eve of the Congolese independence, most of the country’s political leaders, including President Kasavubu were probably not expecting that the Congo would soon become a Cold War battleground for a U.S.-Soviet confrontation. Lumumba came to power thanks to his nationalism and the considerable support of the Congolese people who were determined to end Belgian colonization. On that matter there was an initial consensus.

But soon it became evident that Lumumba's anti-colonial attitude was heavily influenced by the Pan-Africanism of Nkrumah and other African leaders. Ever since he participated to the all-Africans Conference in Accra in 1958, Lumumba had become not only a challenge for the Belgian colonial administration but also one of the icons of anti-colonialism in Africa. The Eisenhower administration came to view Lumumba's pan-Africanism and anti-colonialism as not only a threat to Belgium's economic interests, but also to the geopolitical balance of the Cold War, which until that point seemed to favor the West. The distinction between Pan-Africanism and pro-Sovietism was blurred in Washington's obsession with the Cold War competition. The Eisenhower administration, which had at times discerned the relevance of Third World nationalism, and its relative autonomy from Soviet influence, became as blinded by the specter of Communism in the Congo as it had been by the same specter in Iran, Guatemala, and, perhaps more justifiably, in Indochina and Cuba. Washington came to perceive Lumumba as a potential tool in Soviet hands; and if the Soviet Union were to take advantage of the Congolese resources, a crucial imbalance not only in Africa, but, in Washington's view, globally as well, could have developed in Moscow's favor. Pan-Africanism, given its attempts to coalesce the continent's sub-Saharan nations, was by itself potentially dangerous for Western interests, much like Gamal Abdel Nasser's pan-Arabism had, in itself, posed a threat to the strategic and economic interests of Europe and the United States. But, even more than Nasser, Lumumba, together with Kwame Nkrumah and Sekou Toure, seemed prone to tie the cause of African independence to Soviet expansionism. Eisenhower's view of nationalism in Africa was therefore even more rigid than his interpretation of Arab nationalism.¹⁶³ In the final analysis, the United States considered both

¹⁶³ On Eisenhower's approach to Pan-Arabism, see Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina

Pan-Africanism and anti-colonialism as hostile political instruments that Lumumba could use against not only Belgium but also the West in general.

Lumumba certainly wanted to liberate the Congo from Belgian colonization, but his close relationships with Nkrumah, Toure, and Moscow sparked doubts, and ultimately alarmed U.S. officials that the whole continent of Africa might soon be lost to the Cold War enemy. Confirming these fears were Lumumba's actions, some, like his decision to establish a relationship with the Belgian Communist Party, done rather inadvertently, others, like his appeals to Moscow, done out of desperation more than conviction. In the end, Washington felt the imperative to intervene on Belgium's side to suppress the potential domino that could be caused by either pan-Africanism or Soviet influence, or, more likely, a combination of both. Eisenhower's domino fears were first expressed in reference to Vietnam and Indochina, but had an even more consistent translation into action in Central Africa.

Modernization was also one of the most important factors used by the United States as a weapon to curb Soviet influence in the Congo. When the Congo acquired independence, its government lacked the necessary administrative and technical personnel, as well as sufficient infrastructure that would help accomplish its socio-economic and institutional development. Most of the government institutions were operated by Belgian and foreign administrators and technicians. When the crisis broke out, all qualified personnel who were necessary for the country's administrative functioning fled, returning to Europe. But the Eisenhower administration found out, long before Congo's independence, that the Soviet Union was providing financial and other assistance to Lumumba. If Washington did not intervene soon to

Press, 2006).

counter that influence, the country, U.S. officials believed, was almost certainly going to fall under Communism. The United States adhered to the newly emerging academic theories of modernization, which held that rural or pre-industrial countries, during their fastest developing stage, could become vulnerable to radicalism and Marxism, unless democratic alternatives were promptly offered to them. Conversely, Soviet leaders believed that Lumumba invited their influence not only out of desperation, but also because only Moscow's assistance could give him the tools for genuine independence from colonialism, whether in a traditional kind or in the guise of neo-colonialism. As Latham and Westad have argued,¹⁶⁴ the Eisenhower administration used modernization as a foreign policy instrument to prevent the influence of the Soviet Union in the Congo as well as in many other regions of the world. Since the end of World War II, Washington had fought the spread of Communism worldwide, but it was only in the 1950s that the Cold War became a global obsession for both superpowers. The United States in particular went "global" in the aftermath of the Korean War, for it took the North Korean attack and China's involvement in that war as signs that Communism would keep trying to fill all the possible geostrategic vacuums left by the West. By the late 1950s, Africa and the Congo in particular were such vacuums. Washington's decision to facilitate the overthrow of Lumumba's government was not an easy one, and at times, Washington tried to uphold international cooperation through the United Nations; but, with the UN Assembly increasingly under influence of the emerging nations of the Third World (many of whom had joined the Bandung group), the United States found that

¹⁶⁴ Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, pp. 1-30; Westad, *The Global Cold War*, pp.110-157

venue less and less malleable.¹⁶⁵ The situation at the United Nations made the danger of a pro-communist domino effect in Africa seemed even more real.

The Eisenhower administration, known for its Eurocentrism, also had its Western allies in mind. In this case, intervention in the Congo crisis was also a way to give reassurance to Belgium, and, to some extent, to assist its internal stability. Belgium, which, without a colonial empire, would be reduced to a minor entity within Europe, was one of the most obdurate colonial powers. In this imperial “endgame”, Brussels had no intention of seeing an end at all. Besides status, Belgium was also trying to retain economic resources. It had enormous financial investments in Katanga and South Kasai; its default option therefore, after Congo had achieved its formal independence under the radical Lumumba, was to support the separatist movements within those two rich provinces. When Lumumba asked the Soviet Union to intervene militarily to fight the Belgian troops, as well as Tshombe’s and Kalonji’s secessionist armies, Washington feared that Belgian control over those areas would be ended not by peaceful resolution but by Soviet military intervention. Under this scenario, even a rigid colonial power as Belgium seemed a far better asset to Washington than the imponderable outcomes of full self-determination for the Congo. Belgium could even constitute the West’s forefront against Soviet influence in Central Africa.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ On the Bandung Group’s influence over the UN, see esp. H. W. Brands, *The Specter of Neutralism: the United States and the Emergence of the Third World-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

¹⁶⁶ It is important to note, however, that Washington, having learned its lesson from France’s failures in Indochina, never fully endorsed an ancillary role, not to mention a pivotal one, in fighting Soviet influence in the Third World for any former colonial power, let alone little Belgium. Even Great Britain, always enjoying a special relationship with the United States, had

For all these reasons, the United States was not yet ready to fully replace Belgian control over the Congo. It was during the next stage of the Congolese crisis¹⁶⁷ that the Kennedy administration, more uncertain about its European partners, and also more committed to the “canon” of modernization theories, took full charge of the situation in Central Africa, further assisting Joseph Mobutu, who promised to be a pliable dictator, but never concealed his brutality, much as he had not concealed it in the final days of Patrice Lumumba.

to take a backseat in what increasingly became a duel between Moscow and Washington in the newly decolonized areas of the world.

¹⁶⁷ The Congo crisis had different stages and sequences, but most scholars preferred to write on its entirety covering all the period from June 1960 to the late 1965. This study however covers only the first stage, which started with Congo’s independence to Lumumba’s death.

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