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## THE UNITED STATES AND THE CONGO, 1960-1965: CONTAINMENT, MINERALS AND STRATEGIC LOCATION

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THE UNITED STATES AND THE CONGO, 1960-1965:  
CONTAINMENT, MINERALS AND STRATEGIC LOCATION

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THESIS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree in  
the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Kentucky

By

Erik M. Davis

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Paul T. Chamberlin, Professor of History

Lexington, Kentucky

2013

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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

### THE UNITED STATES AND THE CONGO, 1960-1965: CONTAINMENT, MINERALS AND STRATEGIC LOCATION

The Congo Crisis of the early 1960s served as a satellite conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Scholars have argued about U.S. motivations and interests involved in the Congo Crisis. The major division between scholars is between those who contend the United States acted for national security reasons and those scholars who argue the United States desired to establish a neocolonial regime to protect economic interests pertaining to vast Congolese mineral wealth. The argument of this thesis is that the United States policy in the Congo between 1960 and 1965 focused on installing a friendly regime in the Congo in order to protect its national security interests. This argument lends to the introduction of a new term to classify U.S. actions: pseudocolonialism. The previous term, neocolonialism, denotes a negative connotation based on economic greed and does not satisfactorily explain the motivations of the United States. By examining the value to the United States of Congolese uranium and cobalt as well as Congolese geographic location, the singular explanation of economic greed is weakened.

**KEYWORDS:** American Foreign Policy, Cold War Conflicts, Pseudocolonialism, Strategic Minerals, National Security

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April 12, 2013

THE UNITED STATES AND THE CONGO, 1960-1965:  
CONTAINMENT, MINERALS AND STRATEGIC LOCATION

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This work is dedicated to my wife and children. This duty assignment was intended to be a reduction in “optempo” and ended with more time away from them than when I was in command. At least I have this thesis and a Master of Arts to show for the time spent away from them.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## **Chapter One: Congolese Independence and Crisis**

Between 1975 and 1976, the United States Senate convened a special committee to investigate the intelligence operations of the nation.<sup>1</sup> The Senators, led by Frank Church of Idaho, conducted their hearings with the intent of improving understanding of the lengths to which the American intelligence community had gone in their operations against the Soviet Union and communism. The committee, popularly referred to as the “Church Committee” after its chairman, revealed two assassination operations and three coup operations focused on Third World leaders who American administrations deemed threatening to the interests of the United States.

Patrice Lumumba joined Fidel Castro as the only two world leaders whose death the United States actively pursued. What was so important about the Congo and Patrice Lumumba that led the United States to believe internal Congolese affairs affected U.S. interests? Lumumba became the Premier of the Congo upon its independence from Belgium on June 30, 1960. During the independence ceremony, he delivered an unplanned speech that riled the Belgian government and inspired the Congolese people. The speech provoked the suspicions of the Eisenhower administration that Lumumba was a devout nationalist unafraid of western powers and capable of stirring up emotional reaction from the Congolese with eloquent speeches and rhetoric. Within days of independence, the Congolese army mutinied but Lumumba was able to calm the situation and return to a level of normalcy by discussing the army’s complaints with soldiers in

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<sup>1</sup> The Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities of the United States Senate, Ninety-Fourth Congress, First Session. This committee was a result of Senate Resolution 21.

person.<sup>2</sup> Lumumba's ability to convince others to follow his path contributed to American perceptions of his leadership as a threat to U.S. interests. Prominent leaders of the Eisenhower administration had differing opinions of Lumumba's political orientation. Secretary of State Dulles believed Lumumba was a communist, Ambassador to the U.N. Lodge disagreed with Dulles but declared Lumumba as "not crazy" and alluded to his deliberate plans and actions. U.S. Ambassador to the Congo Robinson McIlvaine believed Lumumba was no communist but labeled him an opportunist; this label denoted something worse than communist in the eyes of the Eisenhower administration. The inability to fully understand Lumumba's political orientation added to the Eisenhower administration's concerns for the orientation of the nascent Congo in the polarized Cold War.

Turmoil ensued following the mutiny of the army in the Congo. The United States was drawn into the conflict both directly and through the United Nations and continued to play a role in the country until the crisis subsided well into the 1960s. During this time, the United States was implicated in the death of Patrice Lumumba, complicit at times in the secession of Katanga as well as being directly involved in the encouragement of Mobutu's coups that ultimately installed him as the dictator for nearly thirty years. The Congo Crisis quickly became an intricate and demanding problem for U.S. leaders and policymakers. Khrushchev stirred divisions at the United Nations and used his criticism of U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold's handling of the crisis

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<sup>2</sup> The Congolese Army at the time of independence was still named the Force Publique. White Belgian officers led black soldiers. After independence the commander of the Force Publique was explaining the political situation to his soldiers and wrote on a chalkboard that "Before independence=After Independence." This statement was construed by the soldiers to be the maintenance of their status quo; they soon mutinied and violence broke out against Europeans in the Congo. Lumumba went to the nearest installation and quelled the mutiny by promoting everyone by one pay grade and changing the force's name to the Congolese National Army.

to call for the restructuring of the executive element of the United Nations. For better or worse, the global Cold War battle between the United States and the Soviet Union played out in the Congo.

U.S. actions in the crisis attracted great criticism from multiple factions and other nations. American leaders acted to secure American interests in the Congo during the crisis. But what was the nature of these interests? Did American national security drive the actions of the American government in the Congo Crisis or was it the desire of the United States to establish a neocolonial regime to allow American corporations to exploit Congolese mineral wealth? These questions have structured the historiographical debate on American actions in the Congo Crisis. These questions are important, but a greater understanding of the contemporary situation is necessary in order to seek their answers. This paper will examine these questions and demonstrate how the events of the Congo Crisis allow the addition of a new argument, pseudocolonialism, to this debate.

Pseudocolonialism is the system by which one nation controls another in order to protect or preserve its own national security interests. National security interests within the Congo motivated the U.S. desire to establish a controlling influence in the Congo.

Various interests provided the Congo such importance to the United States will be examined: the continuous crises of containment in Eisenhower's second term; the role strategic minerals played in policy decisions regarding the Congo and Africa south of the Sahara as well as geostrategic implications of the Congo's location on the continent of Africa. Once analyzed, these factors assist placing U.S. actions in the Congo into proper context.

Several factors can be found in the historical documents that suggest the reasons for deep U.S. involvement in the affairs of an unfamiliar section of African territory. First, as a newly formed nation in the Cold War battleground of the Third World, the Congo represented a target for influence to both the United States and the Soviet Union. Both superpowers maneuvered and jockeyed for favorable position within the nation and in the United Nations in order to have one more nation join their side of the Cold War. U.S. leaders were well versed with the concepts in NSC-68 that were represented by the domino theory. The loss of any nation to communism was seen as a strategic victory for the Soviets and the Congo bordered nine newly independent nations that were susceptible to the spread of communism. Secondly, of all the new nations formed in 1960 from former European colonies, the Congo stood out due to its mineral wealth. At the time of independence, the Congo possessed the largest reserve of uranium on Earth; this uranium was found in the copper belt of southern Congo along with inordinate amounts of copper, tin and cobalt.<sup>3</sup> The United States produced most of its copper requirements domestically and imported the majority of its tin from Malaysia and Singapore but it needed foreign cobalt. The United States valued Congolese uranium for its unmatched purity in the 1950s and imported more than 80% of its cobalt from the Congolese copper belt in 1959.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the Congo gained its independence at a time when Cold War tensions had been increased due to major strategic threats to the United States. As both sides planned

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<sup>3</sup> Jonathan E. Helmreich, *United States Relations with Belgium and the Congo, 1940-1960* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998): 16.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Geological Survey, 2012, Copper statistics, in Kelly, T.D., and Matos, G.R., comps., Historical statistics for mineral and material commodities in the United States: U.S. Geological Survey Data Series 140, accessed [February 11, 2013], at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/ds/2005/140/>; John E. Shelton and John B. Umhau, "Tin," (Table 12- U.S. Imports for consumption of tin, by countries), *Bureau of Mines Minerals Yearbook: Metals and Minerals (except Fuels), 1960* vol. I (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1961): 1107; Tom Zoellner, *Uranium: War, Energy, and the Rock that Shaped the World* (New York: Penguin, 2009): 289; Joseph H. Bilbrey and Dorothy T. McDougal, "Cobalt," *Bureau of Mines Minerals Yearbook: Metals and Minerals (except Fuels), 1955*, vol. I (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1960): 366.

for a possible World War III (WWIII), international diplomacy and logistical planning took into consideration many obscure nations and areas that were otherwise deemed unimportant. The Congo lay in the middle of Africa and could provide the United States with transit points to move their air and ground forces through to the battlegrounds of the Middle East.

Through examination of the primary documents surrounding these factors and events, this paper will attempt to discern the contribution of each of these factors in constructing the value of the Congo within U.S. policy. U.S. leaders at the time viewed the world through the lens of the domino theory and NSC-68. The loss of the Congo to communism threatened the United States in its zero sum game of containment. Its loss would also prevent U.S. access to Congolese minerals and infrastructure. Individuals can write memoirs and autobiographies with a mind toward history; they may attempt to skew the future readers' opinions of their actions into a positive light. Communication between leaders and decision makers presents a similar problem to history; there can be language redacted, or verbal communication that is left unrecorded. Additionally, the only communication that can be interpreted is that which has been released or found. Despite these drawbacks, analysis of memoirs and correspondence of U.S. leaders demonstrates their concerns about the spread of communism into the Congo.

To understand the role some minerals played in the formation and execution of American policy during the Congo Crisis, the two Congolese minerals most important to the United States will be examined. Diplomatic cables and agreements as well as domestic statutes indicate the value of uranium to the national security of the United States. Uranium was interwoven into relations between the United States, Belgium and

the Congo at a time when the nuclear arms race was at near-peak tempo; the history of this mineral and these nations is the story of some of the Congo's greatest wealth potential. Likewise, cobalt plays an integral role in American policy toward the Congo. While not as dangerous outright as its radioactive partner, cobalt is almost as strategically valuable to the United States and cannot be discounted in the formation of policy. Study of government records and almanacs provide only quantitative data about these minerals. However, these sources allow for a starting point to determine the value of minerals to U.S. national security; the amounts of uranium and cobalt required by the United States during this period reveal the significance of the Congo as an American source for both minerals.

The intangible elements of influence and quantifiable features of strategic minerals are important, but so too are the fundamentals of location. Where the Congo lay on the Earth during the height of the Cold War helped determine the level of attention it received from both superpowers. Its centrality, both physical and political, to the continent of Africa is unmistakable. Diplomatic exchanges, minutes of policy meetings and communications expose the reasons why Africa in general and the Congo in particular played such an essential role in formulation of defensive planning for WWII.

The following chapters will utilize these primary sources to examine the value of the Congo to U.S. national security. The second Eisenhower administration consisted of a series of international crises that threatened U.S. prestige and position as it attempted to contain the spread of communism in the Cold War. The situation in the Congo at the time of its independence presented a crisis to the United States because the Congo lay at the heart of the continent of Africa. A communist Congo could be the perpetrator of the

African domino theory because it bordered nine other decolonizing nations. Congolese possession of the strategic mineral ores of uranium and cobalt were needed by the United States to defeat the Soviet Union in the nuclear arms and space races. Ultimately if the Cold War turned into a conventional worldwide conflict, the Congo's position on the globe would be crucial to the U.S. ability to project military power into the Middle East and Asia. Where all of these factors intertwine lays U.S. policy toward the Congo. U.S. actions to establish pseudocolonial control in the Congo can be understood in the context of the superpower fight for influence, strategic mineral acquisitions and geostrategic factors. These elements assist in a clearer understanding of U.S. policies and decisions. A nation's strategic security interests are usually central to its foreign policy; if not, the leaders are derelict in their duty as the stewards of their nations.

### **The Congo Crisis and Historiography**

The Congo Crisis is the story of international intrigue at the height of the Cold War. A country in the middle of central Africa became the focal point of diplomatic energy, money and military effort of the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Nations and many other nations during the early 1960s. The years between the end of WWII and the Congo Crisis represent a relatively stable period in the Belgian Congo as well as in relations between the United States and Belgium. The Congo was born an independent nation in 1960 when Belgium relinquished its control of its premier colony. Commonly referred to as the "African Year of Independence," 1960 witnessed the birth of seventeen new African nations as the process of decolonization reached its apogee. The British and French began African decolonization after it was forced upon them as a result of previous violent struggles in their empires. The Belgian government did not

share this experience of violent struggle in the Belgian Congo and therefore was able to ignore calls for independence for a much longer time. Belgian belief that colonial control would last for decades made changes to their system unreal; it was only after popular uprisings in the last years of the 1950s that Belgian resolve was shaken. The Belgian departure was never planned as thoroughly as some other metropolitan powers' departures; the result was an abrupt and unorganized retreat that sowed the seeds of future political conflict.

Many scholars and journalists have explored the events and causes of the Congo Crisis of the early 1960s. The reasons and motivations assigned to the United States by these authors cover a wide expanse. Some offer explanations based on national security interests: the United States acted in the Congo to contain communism from spreading to another Third World country after the disaster of Castro's takeover in Cuba. Others offer more sinister and diabolical reasons: the United States acted to replace Belgium as the Congo's neocolonial master with the intention of profiting from Congolese mineral wealth.

Scholars propose many reasons for why the U.S. involved itself so deeply with the Congo. National security concerns play a central role in the historiography of the topic. Among others, Madeleine Kalb, Lawrence Kaplan and David Dickson have claimed that U.S. actions were based on the need to maintain stability in order to stem Soviet expansion.<sup>5</sup> The necessity of preventing Soviet intervention is also accepted by Stephen R. Weissman, but he contends the United States misperceived the Soviet threat

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<sup>5</sup> Madeleine Kalb, *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa-From Eisenhower to Kennedy* (New York: Macmillan, 1982); Lawrence Kaplan, "The United States, Belgium, and the Congo Crisis of 1960," *The Review of Politics* 29 (Apr 1967): 239-256.; David Dickson, "U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Southern and Central Africa: The Kennedy and Johnson Years," *Political Science Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 301-315.



to the Congo and thus their actions were misplaced and unnecessary.<sup>6</sup> While these views of national security as the motivation behind U.S. actions are generally understanding of the United States; much more critical interpretations exist.

One such interpretation, neocolonialism, is based on economic motivations surrounding copper and minerals; David Gibbs argues that tensions increased between Belgium and the United States because the latter wanted to replace the Belgian mining company of Union Miniere with an American company. Gibbs is joined by work from Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, a Congolese-born political scientist, who agrees the United States was motivated by a quest to institute neocolonialism in the Congo. In his work about the death of Lumumba, Ludo de Witte outlines his case that Belgium was attempting to kill Congolese nationalism in order to establish a neocolonial regime controlled by Brussels. In the literature both the United States and Belgium share blame for neocolonial intentions, but these intentions are always motivated by profits from Congolese mineral wealth.<sup>7</sup> These scholars ignore the profit component of the western capitalist system. If a western government instituted neocolonial control for national security reasons, its corporations would still gain profits from their investments in the industries of the controlled nation. The existence of corporate profits does not automatically define the motivation for western nations' actions.

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen R. Weissman, *American Foreign Policy in the Congo, 1960-1964* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974) and "CIA Covert Action in Zaire and Angola: Patterns and Consequences," *Political Science Quarterly* 94 (Summer 1979): 263-286.

<sup>7</sup> David N. Gibbs, "International Commercial Rivalries and the Zairean Copper Nationalisation of 1967," *Review of African Political Economy* 24 (June 1997): 171-184; David N. Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention: Mines, Money, and U.S. Policy in the Congo Crisis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History* (London: Zed Books, 2002); Ludo de Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, translated by Ann Wright and Renee Fenby (London, Verso, 2001).

Minerals play an integral role in other scholars' views on the topic. While Weissman agrees with aspects of the mineral motivation, he does not include the full spectrum of the Congolese mineral wealth. Thomas Borstelmann briefly explains how uranium was one of the most important Congolese minerals concerning U.S. interests in his book about U.S. motivations in its relations with the racist South African regime during the Cold War.<sup>8</sup> Borstelmann argues that uranium was so essential to the foreign policy of the United States that it drove the United States to acquiesce to South Africa's apartheid policies in order to secure a reliable and stable source of the mineral.

Borstelmann's argument in relation to South Africa explains unattractive U.S. actions that were driven by its national security interests. A similar argument for U.S. actions and motivations in the Congo will be advanced in this paper to expand Borstelmann's argument to Congolese uranium and cobalt. The value of Congolese minerals to U.S. national security will support the expanded argument. Congolese minerals, along with its geostrategic location and the need to contain communism justified U.S. actions taken to establish pseudocolonial control in the Congo.

The historiography of U.S. involvement in the Congo Crisis of the early 1960s is focused largely on the questions surrounding motivation. This scholarly debate is essentially between two motivations: national security and neocolonialism. The national security school is normally softer in their criticism of the United States while the neocolonialism school tends to be critical and unsympathetic of U.S. action in the Congo Crisis.

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle: The United States and Southern Africa in the Early Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Scholars who believe the United States acted out of concern for their national security usually deliver accounts of U.S. actions that are more sympathetic to the United States than others. These authors are able to view U.S. actions in a softer light because of their consideration of multiple factors in the examination of American motivations. The predominant consideration of these scholars surrounds the American strategy of containment. They review American actions with the knowledge that the United States feared the loss of any nation to the influence of Soviet communism. Containment of communism motivated a variety of U.S. actions within this period and it is definitely present in U.S. actions throughout the Congo Crisis.

National security as a term is difficult to define clearly. It appeared in the U.S. lexicon sometime during WWII and became an established term in national discourse after Truman signed the National Security Act of 1947. However, even in this legislation that introduced mainstream Americans to the term it is not defined. This increases the ambiguity of the term especially when used in scholarly debate. For the purposes of this paper, the term national security will follow that which is set by the U.S. defense establishment. The Joint Chiefs of Staff defined the term “national security interests” in 2010 as:

“...the foundation for the development of valid national objectives that define US goals or purposes. National security interests include preserving US political identity, framework, and institutions; fostering economic well-being; and bolstering international order supporting the vital interests of the United States and its allies”<sup>9</sup>

Even this definition leaves room for maneuver for anyone seeking to use it to support or oppose decisions or actions. Scholars of the national security school

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<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Staff, “*Joint Publication 1-02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*,” 8 November 2010 (As Amended Through 15 November 2012) (Washington D.C.: GPO, 2012): 214.

would defend U.S. actions in the Congo Crisis because they were justified by the threat of Soviet communism.

Containment of communism is possibly too narrow of a view of U.S. involvement in the Congo Crisis. If containment motivated U.S. actions in the Congo Crisis, it was not solely for containment's sake. Granted the U.S. desire was to prevent any nation being won over by the Soviet Union and communism but the Congo possessed elements, in the way of minerals and location, that required stronger actions to be contemplated. Consideration of these elements support the argument that U.S. actions were congruent with national security interests but simply arguing containment for containment's sake results in loss of scholarly ground to the neocolonialist school.

Scholars who support the contention that U.S. actions were motivated by neocolonialist intentions usually dismiss the threat of expanding communism as a tool used by the United States and the West to cover their capitalist objectives to secure economic favor or dominance with regard to Congolese minerals. Economic motivation is the key difference that separates the two schools. It is also the factor that provides such a negative connotation to the term neocolonialism; control exerted over other nations for the purposes of increasing profit margins is difficult to justify.

Definition of neocolonialism is almost as problematic as defining national security. Concerning U.S. actions in the Congo Crisis, the term is associated with an unsympathetic view of the U.S. role. The origination of the term neocolonialism is credited to Ghana's first President, Kwame Nkrumah.

Nkrumah defined the term in his 1965 book, *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, in part by describing its essence. He says the state that is subject to neocolonialism is in theory independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty but in reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.<sup>10</sup> To Nkrumah the most important component of neocolonialism is economic control. He continues in his general description of neocolonialism in the next five pages of his introduction. Some elements of outside control apply to U.S. actions; U.S. support and assistance to Mobutu's rise to power reflects the neocolonial "provision of civil servants in positions where they can dictate policy."<sup>11</sup> Further explanation by Nkrumah details the economic components of neocolonialism; however, most of these components do not fit with U.S. actions during the Congo Crisis.

In the case of U.S. involvement in the Congo Crisis, neither national security nor neocolonialism is a fitting term to describe U.S. actions or intentions. Elements of both terms can be extracted from the documents and primary sources surrounding the Congo Crisis. Throughout this material there is sufficient discussion of the threat of expanding communism and Soviet influence in the Congo. There are also discussions concerning economics and trade. However, there is also ample material to support a combination of the national security and neocolonialism arguments to explain American actions in the Congo Crisis. This combination is the argument made in the current examination: the need to contain communism, control access to strategic minerals and protect lines of

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<sup>10</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1965): ix.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

communication motivated the United States to emplace a pseudocolonial government in the Congo. Pseudocolonialism in the Congo allowed the United States to protect or preserve its national security interests in the Congo.

### **The Congo from Leopold to Mobutu**

Colonialism in the Congo began almost eighty years prior to the Crisis; the Belgian Congo was born into the nascent world of colonized Africa in 1884 as the Congo Free State.<sup>12</sup> At the Berlin Conference of 1884, fourteen European nations negotiated agreements to outline their conduct toward one another as they grabbed land and colonies in Africa. King Leopold II of Belgium gained the land that would become the Congo Free State through a series of negotiations and agreements. An enormous difference for the colony was the method of control; Leopold ruled it as his own property and not as an administrated colony. The Belgian people and government were not interested in empire so Leopold II organized the International African Association. This organization espoused a mission to civilize the Congo; in actuality its goal was to plunder the wealth through cheap, forced labor of the natives.

The Congo would become a major producer of high-value minerals but at the turn of the twentieth century rubber became a booming business and Leopold II seized on the opportunity. In the Congo Free State, Leopold II's administrators ran a brutal system of forced labor to maximize the rubber output of the colony. Through violent domination, the Belgians abused the Congolese native people in order to achieve greater economic success. The brutality progressed to such a level that Leopold II was ultimately forced by

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<sup>12</sup> For general background and understanding of Congolese history and the Congo Crisis, see: Jonathan E. Helmreich, *United States Relations with Belgium and the Congo, 1940-1960* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998); Helen Kitchen, ed., *Footnotes to the Congo Story: An Africa Report Anthology* (New York: Walker and Company, 1967) and Kalb, *Congo Cables*.

the Belgian government to turn over control of the Congo Free State in 1908. This transition marked the creation of the Belgian Congo as an official colony of the Belgian nation, a relationship that lasted until independence in 1960.

Development of the natural resources continued in the Belgian Congo under the control of the Belgian state. During and after World War One (WWI), mineral exploration led to the dominance of the industry in the colony. The Belgian Congo became a leading producer of diamonds, copper and cobalt and to lesser degrees tungsten, radium and other assorted minerals. The Manhattan Project in WWII and the U.S. quest for atomic weaponry during its arms race with the Soviet Union in the early 1950s provided the catalyst for the Belgian Congo to become the world's premier producer of uranium. It held this position until the late 1950s and ended with Congolese independence in 1960.

The end of WWII and the formation of the United Nations marked the beginnings of the final period of Belgian control of the Congo. Within the charter of the United Nations existed the declaration of self-determination for all people. This had been a motive of Woodrow Wilson when he advocated for the League of Nations; however, he was subdued by the European powers at the end of WWI because of their quest for power and economic gain. The United Nations was a reincarnation of the League of Nations and provided smaller nations the opportunity to vie for self-determination and gain support of other nations in a pseudo-binding manner. At the end of WWII, the British, French and Dutch attempted to ignore self-determination in their empires; however, violent conflicts in their colonies eventually forced them to grant independence to the colonies under their control. The Belgians at the time possessed a cash cow with mineral

wealth and had no intentions to lose this advantage. It was in the postwar period that Congolese cobalt began rising in prominence as steel production increased with the beginning of the Cold War. They deferred calls by the United States and other nations to grant the Congolese their independence.

The ascension of a new king in Belgium, King Baudouin, brought a renewed focus of the Belgian government onto the affairs of the Congolese people. Baudouin altered the previous Belgian course of ignoring the Congolese calls for independence. The world was progressing beyond colonialism; Baudouin realized this and satiated the Congolese calls with a plan to grant independence after a thirty year transitional period designed to prepare the Congolese for sovereignty.<sup>13</sup>

A change in parliamentary leadership in Belgium in July 1958 served as a catalyst to reduce the timeframe for independence for the Belgian Congo. Indications of Congolese resentment made the United States aware that the independence movement was proceeding at an increasingly rapid pace.<sup>14</sup> The new Belgian government constructed a program for Congolese autonomy but it was delayed because of political wrangling. The delay hurt the Belgian position and in January 1959 the Congolese tension exploded in two days of rioting. Responding within days, the Belgian king announced that the Belgian government's goal was now to deliberately and orderly grant independence.<sup>15</sup>

At the Brussels Roundtable in January 1960, Belgian authorities met with Congolese leadership to discuss plan for independence. The Belgians offered a four-year timeline that was rejected; after negotiations, independence was slated for June 30, 1960.

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<sup>13</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila*, 269.

<sup>14</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila*, 269.

<sup>15</sup> Helmreich, *United States Relations with Belgium and the Congo*, 211.



The six-month period from Baudouin's announcement of independence to actual independence marked a departure from the Belgian's hopeful plans of deliberate transition. The hastiness of the Belgian withdrawal demonstrated that the king and his subjects were tired of dealing with the Congolese and all the accompanying trouble. Once the native African population was aroused to the idea of independence, the Belgians determined that "control of an area seventy seven times larger than Belgium would be impossible to maintain...the Belgian Government sensibly decided to yield more self-rule."<sup>16</sup> The hastiness of the departure and the weariness of the Belgian people contributed to an irresponsible handover that contributed significantly to the subsequent crisis.

As Congolese political leadership began to take shape over the next few months, the United States met with those they saw as powerful within the various parties and movements that would vie for control of the new country's government. As the new government attempted to define itself, the fractiousness of the indigenous population created an impending political storm causing the Belgians to seal the uranium mine at Shinkolobwe in April 1960. Patrice Lumumba was selected as the nation's first prime minister and issued a scathing address at the independence ceremony on June 30, 1960.

Days after the Congo formally became independent events transpired that spun the nation and the rest of the world into crisis. Commonly referred to as the Congo Crisis, this period consisted of one emergency situation after another for almost three years. Domestically the Congo faced army mutinies, political and tribal maneuvering, secessions and constitutional dilemmas. Internationally, the world's two superpowers,

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<sup>16</sup> Homer Bigart, "The Belgian Congo- A Case History of Nationalism in Africa," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*; Jan. 3, 1960; E4.

the United Nations and the previously liberated African nations played significant roles in Congolese affairs. For the first half of the 1960s, events in the previously obscure center of Africa weighed heavy on the minds of world leaders.

Within days of independence the mineral rich province of Katanga seceded from the Congo under guidance and protection of the Belgian mining company Union Miniere. Unrest continued unabated despite actions taken by the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Nations to restore stability. In September 1960, Lumumba was deposed and arrested; by January 1961 he was dead. A series of governments replaced one another in the Congo until the Congolese Army Chief of Staff, Joseph Mobutu, seized power at the end of 1965 and restored a level of stability to the Congo.

The crisis embroiled the diplomats and leaders of the world's nations on a near-daily basis for more than three years. Tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union increased, the United Nations suffered attacks on its organizational structure by the Communist bloc and the Congolese suffered brutality after brutality for the duration of the period of instability. Upon first glance, this episode in the history of the Cold War seems odd. Why would the Congo play such a critical role in worldwide disputes at the heart of the Cold War struggle between communism and the free world? Why did the world care about Patrice Lumumba, Joseph Kasavubu and Joseph Mobutu? These questions and many others are the focus of this paper. The international backwaters of the Congo were important to the stability of the world during the course of the Cold War because of the state of the late-fifties Cold War, its mineral wealth and its location in the event of WWII. All of these factors will be explored in the following chapters to

demonstrate how the United States was justified in its actions to establish a pseudocolonial regime in the Congo in order to guarantee U.S. national security interests.

## **Chapter Two: Influence as a Strategic Objective**

From the start of the Cold War, the United States was faced with the challenge of containing communism. As new leaders came to power around the world in the early years of the Cold War, the United States attempted to determine with whom they would align. Complicating this determination was the process of decolonization taking place in much of the Third World. Quite often, as colonial powers granted the indigenous population their freedom, nationalist leaders would assume power. If the new nationalist leader espoused strong independence from the Western powers or made any moves that suggested leftward leanings, such as nationalization of industries, the West would label him as a communist and deal with him accordingly. Political unrest led to instability; instability gave the Soviets an opportunity for influence. Containment meant stopping the spread of Soviet influence; therefore, the United States had a vested interest in who led the nations of the Third World. This interest was present in the Congo; U.S. interest in prevention of communism expansion into the Congo justified U.S. pseudocolonial actions there.

From the end of WWII, the United States and its allies watched the Soviet Union support the spread of communism across the world. Eastern Europe was subjected to communism quickly because of its proximity to the Soviet Union that, at a minimum, was eager to secure a buffer zone on its borders to prevent future aggression. Communist attempts to take over the government of Greece served as the impetus for the U.S. formulation of its post-war anti-communism policies.<sup>17</sup> China fell to communism and Korea was under attack soon afterwards. Threats of communist subversion prompted

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<sup>17</sup> "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine," Presidential Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1945-1953, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=2189&st=&st1=>, (accessed December 20, 2012)

U.S. actions during the 1950s against Iran, Guatemala and other nations. Communism and threats of its spread moved from Asia to the western hemisphere during the 1950s and finally presented itself in Africa as European powers began to liquidate their colonial holdings.

As Eisenhower began his second term in office, he was already experienced dealing with international crises as the President. In his first four years in the White House, the Korean War ended, Stalin died, the Chinese communists and nationalists fought over islands that lay between them, Arab Nationalism rose with Egypt and the relationship with two of the nation's strongest allies, France and Great Britain, were strained in the wake of the Suez Crisis of 1956. This level of crisis in the world demonstrates the building tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union as they attempted to maintain security and increase influence while avoiding nuclear war.

Eisenhower's second term was filled with near-constant international crisis for the United States that affected how Eisenhower approached the Congo Crisis. It could be argued that because of his success in WWII, President Eisenhower was one of the most prepared Presidents ever to deal with crisis management and problem solving. However, the number and intensity of problems to resolve increased during the last few years that he occupied the White House. To understand why Eisenhower would take such a strong position in the Congo Crisis in the last months of his presidency, it is necessary to view this effort in the context of the Cold War as it was occurring at the time. Brief discussion of the events of his second term will demonstrate the tempo and intensity with which crises were presented to the American leader. From both domestic and foreign policy issues, the United States was faced with a nearly unending series of crises in the last few

months of Eisenhower's presidency. In each of these instances, Eisenhower had to determine and execute the proper course of action to retain or recover U.S. prestige and influence in the world. Protecting the prestige on the United States was a vital interest in the U.S. quest to influence other nations and prevent the spread of communism.

### **Independence Struggle and Cold War Crisis**

Significant international and domestic crises became the focus of the administration for days and weeks at a time. These acute crises increased Cold War tension and influenced world opinion. But how did this heating of tensions, both foreign and domestic, relate to the newly born Congo in the middle of Africa? In this period of increased crisis and tension in the Cold War, the emerging nation of the Congo was faced with enormous decisions. The status of the Cold War at the time of Congolese independence was such that no nation could pursue its own interests without declaring some alignment in the struggle between the superpowers. The options available to the Congolese government were only three: align with the West, align with the Soviets or join the Non-Aligned Movement. Benefits could be gained by pursuit of any of these avenues but not without contention from the parties not chosen. Additionally, the Congolese choice was seen as having enormous consequences on the balance of power in the world through the institution of the United Nations.

Brief examination of the crises of his second term will assist in understanding the intensity of the international situation faced by President Eisenhower when the Congo Crisis erupted. These international crises will be juxtaposed with events of the independence struggle in the Belgian Congo. The overlay of Congolese events will demonstrate how the United States was unprepared when faced with Congolese

independence and the subsequent conflict of the Congo Crisis. U.S. attention was diverted elsewhere during the late 1950s while Congolese tension was rapidly increasing. By the time the crisis erupted in the Congo in June 1960, near-constant international crises had already strained Eisenhower's willingness to apply patience in resolving Congolese issues. These crises increased Eisenhower's willingness to prevent the spread of communism through installation of a pseudocolonial regime in the Congo.

Joseph Kasavubu was already a leading nationalist figure in the Belgian Congo as the leader of the major political party ABAKO by the start of Eisenhower's second term. The Belgians had granted some political rights to the urban elite of the African population who they termed "evolues."<sup>18</sup> In August 1956, ABAKO rejected a thirty-year plan for independence that had been presented earlier in the year by a Belgian academic. In ABAKO's August denunciation of this plan, Kasavubu had publicly called for immediate independence from the Belgians.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, in the United States, African-Americans were fighting for their own rights in the Civil Rights Movement. Anticolonialist lobbies in the United States, nationalists fighting colonialism in Asia and Africa as well as the Soviets all pointed to the duality of U.S. policies toward decolonization and self-determination. In September 1957, these competing interests converged in Little Rock, Arkansas in the first year of Eisenhower's second term. President Eisenhower was forced to federalize the Arkansas National Guard and send elements of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division to enforce the federal laws mandating desegregation of all public schools. Media coverage struck deep wounds into the U.S. reputation as a moral leader in human rights and equality. The

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<sup>18</sup> Gondola, *The History of Congo*, xxiv.

<sup>19</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila*, 269.

institutionalized racism of the South was broadcast around the world constituting a major propaganda victory for the Soviet Union in its attempts to discredit U.S. intentions toward the Third World. Indonesia joined other nations, such as Libya and Brazil, in questioning the credibility of the United States as the leader of freedom and democracy.<sup>20</sup> Eisenhower was able to regain some American stature but the Little Rock Crisis showed how quickly domestic events could lead to a shift in international opinion during the Cold War.

Just as the United States was beginning to reclaim some esteem with the world its reputation was damaged again with the successful launch of the Sputnik-I satellite into orbit by the Soviet Union in October 1957. The Soviets demonstrated technological superiority over the U.S. by being the first nation to enter outer space successfully with a 184-pound machine that transmitted a simple beeping noise back to the world's surface.<sup>21</sup> As Sputnik-I flew its orbit beeping, the reputation of the United States as the most successful nation in the world suffered and the Soviet Union scored another propaganda coup. The launch of Sputnik gave the Soviets an advantage in the neutral nations and the Third World. The demonstration of Soviet technological superiority over the Americans had an impact on the nations that wanted to be sure they would be on the side of the superpower with the greater likelihood to win in a war or the greater military readiness.<sup>22</sup> After Sputnik-I, the Soviets possessed the advantage in neutralist opinion.

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<sup>20</sup> Azza Salama Layton, "International Pressure and the U.S. Government's Response to Little Rock," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 66, no. 2 The 1957 Little Rock Crisis: A Fiftieth Anniversary Retrospective (Summer 2007): 247.

<sup>21</sup> Deborah Cadbury, *Space Race: The Epic Battle Between America and the Soviet Union for Dominion of Space* (New York: Harper, 2007): 161, 163.

<sup>22</sup> Arthur Krock, "In the Nation: The Effects of the Sputnik Thus Far," *New York Times*, October 10, 1957: 32.



Tensions in the Belgian Congo increased when Kasavubu won Leopoldville's municipal elections in 1957. At his mayoral inauguration in April 1958, he publicly called for immediate recognition of the Congo as an independent nation. This growing agitation by the Congolese to achieve their independence seems to have been accurately reported to Secretary of State Dulles by his assistant after an African tour. But Dulles, despite the calls of Kasavubu and other Congolese nationalists, felt no pressure to push Belgium for the granting of independence until the people were ready.<sup>23</sup>

Soon after the Sputnik crisis subsided, internal political strife in Lebanon began boiling over and influencing U.S. actions in the Middle East in the spring of 1958. For years, the United States used covert monetary aid through the CIA to buy support from Lebanese politicians in order to maintain their pro-U.S. and pro-West orientation. Positioned just north of Israel, Lebanon provided the United States with a crucial Arab ally at a time when Arab Nationalism threatened its interests in the Middle East. Although Eisenhower wished to avoid military intervention because it would threaten U.S. credibility across the world, the loss of Lebanon to the anti-Western factions of the Cold War would be "worse than the loss of China."<sup>24</sup> Fortunately for the West, its intervention in the Middle East at this point resulted in a no loss of the status quo. The seemingly successful conclusion of the Lebanese crisis gave way to the continuation of a crisis in eastern Asia; Chinese Communists and Nationalists began a second round of fighting over islands in the Straits of Taiwan.

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<sup>23</sup> Jonathan E. Helmreich, "U.S. Foreign Policy and the Belgian Congo in the 1950s," *Historian* 58, no.2 (December 1996): 325-326.

<sup>24</sup> "Goodpastor Memorandum of Conversation," 14 July 1958, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1958-1960*, vol. XI: 211-15. From here, *Foreign Relations of the United States* will be cited as *FRUS*.

The decades-old Chinese civil war, fought between the communists and the Nationalists, was calmed during the Korean War. After the war's end conflict between the parties over the straits that separated them took place in 1954 and 1955. More than two years of negotiations and tension finally erupted in the summer of 1958 just as the United States was seeing success in Lebanon. The motivation of the Chinese Communists in renewing the artillery bombardments of the offshore islands is in contention.<sup>25</sup> Eisenhower believed the recent round of artillery barrages was not motivated by the communist desire to regain the territory of the islands of Quemoy and Matsu. He interpreted Soviet and Chinese Communist actions as a way for them to test U.S. resolve and determine what concessions they could gain by rattling sabers.<sup>26</sup> With this view of the events, and citing the Formosa Resolution of 1955, Eisenhower renewed the U.S. position of being willing to defend their allies in the western Pacific against aggression.<sup>27</sup> He also reiterated the need to resume negotiations and resolve the situation

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<sup>25</sup> Motivations for Communist Chinese actions surrounding the islands in the Taiwan Strait are debated. In his speech to the world, on September 11, 1958, concerning the second crisis, Eisenhower declares that Soviet and Chinese communists were not interested in regaining Quemoy; communist actions served to test the resolve of the United States and determine what concessions could be gained by saber rattling. In *We Now Know*, John Lewis Gaddis, details the purpose given by Chou Enlai to Andrei Gromyko for the attack on the offshore islands was to, "prove to the Americans that the People's Republic of China is strong and bold enough and is not afraid of America," 250. Thomas Stolper's explains in *Taiwan, China, and the Offshore Islands* that Mao made statements about China's intent to get the United States to withdraw from the area entirely, 129-130.

<sup>26</sup> Eisenhower, *TV Speech September 11, 1958*. "If the Chinese Communists have decided to risk a war, it is not because Quemoy itself is so valuable to them. They have been getting along without Quemoy ever since they seized the China mainland nine years ago. If they have now decided to risk a war, it can only be because they, and their Soviet allies, have decided to find out whether threatening war is a policy from which they can make big gains."

<sup>27</sup> Stolper, *Taiwan, China and the Offshore Islands*. The "Formosa Resolution" is the common name of the congressional authorization granting the President to "...employ the Armed Forces of the United States as he deems necessary for the specific purpose of securing and protecting Formosa and the Pescadores against armed attack, this authority to include the securing and protection of such related positions and territories of that area now in friendly hands and the taking of such other measures as he judges to be required or appropriate in assuring the defense of Formosa and the Pescadores;" 68.

without an escalation into major conflict.<sup>28</sup> After Eisenhower invoked the Formosa Resolution to demonstrate his ability to defend the Republic of China, Communist China turned its attention back to negotiations.

While Eisenhower's attention was focused on the possible outbreak of WWII in Asia, the Congolese independence struggle was ramping up. In October 1958, Patrice Lumumba and others formed the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC); their political party was the only one that represented multiple ethnicities and focused on the entirety of the Congo. In December 1958, Lumumba traveled to Accra, Ghana as a representative of his party to the All African People's Conference held by Kwame Nkrumah. Upon his return to the Congo, Lumumba held a rally in Leopoldville to announce the results of his trip. Aggravation of the Congolese people led to days of violent protests and eventually to a popular uprising in Leopoldville on January 4, 1959. Days after this violent outburst, the King of Belgium announced his government's intention to grant independence to the Belgian Congo in the near future.<sup>29</sup>

But none of the events in the Belgian Congo received much attention from the U.S. policymakers because trouble was erupting closer to home. In January 1959, the Cuban Revolution led by Fidel Castro succeeded in overthrowing U.S. ally Fulgencio Batista. After years of fighting a guerilla campaign from the wilderness of Cuba, Castro and his 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement became the de facto government of Cuba in January 1959. Increased instability so close to U.S. territory worried policymakers and especially President Eisenhower. By November 1959, official U.S. policy shifted to opposition of

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<sup>28</sup> Eisenhower, *TV Speech September 11, 1958*. "But there is a far better way than resort to force to settle these differences, and there is some hope that such a better way may be followed. That is the way of negotiation." Eisenhower continues in his speech to outline the history and methods of the established diplomatic negotiations between the United States and Communist China concerning the islands.

<sup>29</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila*, 269.

Castro's regime in Cuba.<sup>30</sup> In March 1960, the CIA was given authority to launch operations designed to meet the national objective of overthrowing Castro.<sup>31</sup> Uncertainty concerning Castro's Cold War orientation and the instability of recent revolution so close to the United States and in its traditional Caribbean sphere of influence heightened the tensions in the last years of Eisenhower's presidency.

During the spring of 1960 in the Belgian Congo, nationalists were preparing to realize their dreams. Independence was planned for the summer and elections of an independent Congo government were set for May 1960. Internal political wrangling led to a split parliament with no single party gaining a majority of the seats. Lumumba's faction of MNC, MNC-L, won a plurality of the seats and Kasavubu's ABAKO gained the second most seats. These two leaders negotiated a government in the final days prior to independence that placed Kasavubu as the President and Lumumba as the Prime Minister.

Worry over Caribbean stability gave way to brief optimism toward diplomatic progress in the overall Cold War. In December 1959, the Western allies agreed to a summit meeting between them and the Soviet Union to take place in Paris during mid-May 1960. The summit was preceded in world events by the crisis caused when an American U-2 reconnaissance aircraft was shot down over Soviet territory on the first of May. At the opening of the summit, Khrushchev interrupted Charles de Gaulle's remarks as chairman of the proceedings to lash out at the United States. Khrushchev demanded

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<sup>30</sup> Alan H. Luxenberg, "Did Eisenhower Push Castro into the Arms of the Soviets?" *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs* 30 (Spring 1988): 49.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Senate, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders: An Interim Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1976): 72; Luxenberg, "Did Eisenhower Push Castro?" 54.

apologies for violations of Soviet territory and punishment of all those in the American government responsible for the program. Eisenhower saw this outburst as political theater and dismissed it as such. At the speech's conclusion, Eisenhower rose. He acknowledged the U-2 operations but did not apologize for them and challenged the notion given by the Soviets that the incident could serve to break up negotiations that could possibly reduce the necessity of any espionage.<sup>32</sup> In the end, the summit broke apart when Khrushchev remained away from the proceedings. Hope for peace seemed to be dashed by U.S. espionage and Soviet brashness. This was the state of the Cold War when Patrice Lumumba unexpectedly mounted the stage in Leopoldville on Independence Day to deliver his own list of violations against his people.

The primary concern for U.S. policy toward decolonization was the threat of instability to the world's balance of power and the need to stop the spread of communism. Lumumba's speech signaled the end of the status quo in Africa that exemplified the State Department's description of pre-independence Africa in 1958. A special assistant to the Secretary of State toured the continent in order to report back the situation on the ground in Africa and the impending changes that would affect U.S. interests. He foresaw a "very difficult and probably long period of uncertainty, bad management, retrogression and conflict with a strong chance of violence in some areas." All of these factors contributed to there being "plenty of troubled waters for communist fishing." The report explained that the greatest danger lie in the instability created by he termed "detrribalization." Modernizing populations from a tribal system to new ways of

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<sup>32</sup> Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, 555.

life would cause social, cultural and economic upheaval in populations that were largely illiterate and practically leaping from the Iron Age into the twentieth century.<sup>33</sup>

To the U.S. president, the choice of sponsorship for the Congo was clear. The consequences of one of the most industrialized nations in Africa turning toward the Soviets were enormous in 1960. Eisenhower had navigated the nation through the trials of many crises that picked up intensity and frequency during his last years in office. U.S. credibility in the Third World was damaged by the Little Rock crisis. The United States was perceived to be losing the space race and subsequently the arms race. The truth about the arms race was known to Eisenhower but only through the U2 program that resulted in embarrassment and increased Cold War tensions. Throughout his second term, country after country was threatened by communist aggression or subversion; the closest of these, Cuba, was in the communist camp by the time of the Congo Crisis. With a difficult election for his party and his retirement into peace and quiet only months away, Eisenhower was confronted in the summer of 1960 with another nationalist leader that was suspected of communist sympathies. If Lumumba was not communist, he was at least a thorn in the side of U.S. ally Belgium and more trouble than desired in the last months on the job. Considering all of the events, crises and pressures of the years preceding Congolese independence, it is not incomprehensible that the United States under Eisenhower's leadership would want to do away with Lumumba in the easiest manner possible and install a pseudocolonial regime friendly to the United States.

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<sup>33</sup> "Memorandum from the Secretary of State's Special Assistant (Holmes) to Secretary of State Dulles," February 6, 1958, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. XIV: 2.

### **Chapter Three: The Strategic Minerals of the Congo**

Throughout the historiographical literature there are many reasons and motivations associated by historians to U.S. and Western actions in the Congo. Various approaches to the question of why the United States cared so deeply about the fate of the central African nation result in many different answers. These answers and conclusions boil down to the argument between national security and neocolonialism as motivation for intervention. Strategic minerals and materials are commonly mentioned in one form or another in most of the works related to the capitalist west's quest for neocolonial control in order to ensure access to great wealth and profit. However, most mentions are superficial at best; authors tend to refer to the "great mineral wealth of the Congo" when discussing why the country was so important. Minerals are indeed related to why the United States established pseudocolonial control in the Congo but the relation is based in national security strategy not wealth and profits.

Some authors point to copper as the major source of strategic mineral importance. Copper was the most profitable mineral in the Congo; the amount of money made through copper production assists any scholar arguing that capitalist greed motivated U.S. actions. However, the United States did not get its copper from the Congo and makes this linkage in their arguments weak. U.S. copper predominantly came from domestic sources; U.S. copper production flowed between 43-65% of world production between 1950 and 1965.<sup>34</sup> The importance of other minerals is an area that is left unexplored in the historiography leaving readers with the impression that capitalist greed motivated U.S. actions in the Congo. This impression is inaccurate when U.S. availability,

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<sup>34</sup> U.S. Geological Survey, 2012, Copper statistics, in Kelly, T.D., and Matos, G.R., comps., Historical statistics for mineral and material commodities in the United States: U.S. Geological Survey Data Series 140, accessed [February 11, 2013], at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/ds/2005/140/>.

capability and utilization of lesser-known minerals are analyzed in the context of the late 1950s Cold War.

The Congo, and more specifically Katanga and Kasai Provinces, possesses a large number of the most sought-after minerals in the world. Congolese mineral wealth is measured in a number of historically mined ores: copper, tin, industrial diamonds, columbium, gold, manganese, lead, zinc, uranium and cobalt.<sup>35</sup> As a center of large amounts of necessary and valuable ores, it is easy to determine that the Congo is an important nation to the interests of any industrialized nation.

Minerals play an integral role in national security scholars' views on the topic as well. While Weissman agrees with aspects of the mineral motivation, he does not include the full spectrum of the Congolese mineral wealth. Thomas Borstelmann explains how uranium was one of the most important Congolese minerals concerning U.S. interests in his book about U.S. motivations in its relations with the racist South African regime during the Cold War.<sup>36</sup> Borstelmann argues that uranium was so essential to U.S. foreign policy that it drove the United States to acquiesce to South Africa's apartheid policies in order to secure a reliable and stable source of the mineral. This argument corresponds to U.S. actions in the Congo, but in Borstelmann's book it is focused solely on the role of uranium to U.S. policy in the region. Uranium provided the most significant U.S. security interest in the Congo beginning in WWII but it played a less significant role after the United States secured a domestic source of uranium in the late 1950s. Afterward, the U.S. interest was preventing Soviet access to Congolese uranium. By the time of the

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<sup>35</sup> "No. 75: Report of Western European Ambassadors Conference at Frankfurt," February 7, 1951, *FRUS 1951* vol. IV: 149. "Furthermore, the Belgian Congo was a highly important source of raw materials for the U.S., among them uranium, cobalt and tin."

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle: The United States and Southern Africa in the Early Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).



Congo Crisis, cobalt had replaced uranium as the most important U.S. security interest in the Congo; this is where this paper departs from Borstelmann's treatment of the Congo. The importance of cobalt to U.S. national security will be introduced to support the argument that the United States was willing to construct a pseudocolonial regime in the Congo. Pseudocolonial control of the Congo would prevent communist access to Congolese uranium as well as protect U.S. access to Congolese cobalt.

During the fifteen years following WWII and ending as the Congo Crisis was erupting, the two most significant minerals to U.S. interests were uranium and cobalt because of their roles in the arms races and the space race. When writing about U.S. relations with the Congo and Belgium historians rarely mention uranium's role. Even less than uranium is the nearly non-existent mention of cobalt individually in the expression of U.S. interests in the Congo. Examination of these two minerals and their effects on world events in the fifties gives new perspective to the importance of the Congo to U.S. national security interests.

The role of uranium and cobalt in shaping U.S. foreign policy toward the Congo is the focus of this chapter. Examining this topic will assist in answering: how did uranium and cobalt relate to U.S. foreign policy toward the Congo? Applied to the Congo, U.S. policies were forced to incorporate the country's strategically important resources of uranium and cobalt. The desire to control access to these vital Congolese minerals was a critical issue in shaping U.S. pseudocolonial policy toward the African nation; controlling access was essential to U.S. national security interests.

## Congolese Uranium

Uranium assumed a major significance in U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War. Classified as a minor metal by chemists, its principal uses were in ceramics, luminescent paints, tool steels and chemicals until scientists working at Columbia University prior to WWII discovered that it was fissionable and could be used in their attempts to harness atomic energy.<sup>37</sup> They became concerned that Nazi Germany was close to the same discovery, and hence warned the governments of Belgium and the United States about the potential consequences.<sup>38</sup>

The Belgian government was warned because the Belgian Congo possessed one of the world's three most productive uranium mines at Shinkolobwe in the Katanga Province.<sup>39</sup> In fact, these mines provided the uranium for the atomic bombs that fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>40</sup> The United States had already begun work during the war to secure a steady and reliable source of uranium to feed the requirements for its research and weapons production. In September 1944, after many rounds of negotiations, the Tripartite Agreement, guaranteeing American access to uranium, was signed between the United States, the United Kingdom and the exiled government of Belgium.<sup>41</sup>

The Tripartite Agreement provided the United States its first, secure source of uranium ore. The United States and the United Kingdom negotiated with Belgium and its mining companies for exclusive access to the uranium produced out of the Shinkolobwe mines in the Belgian Congo. The agreement provided for the delivery of 3,440,000

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<sup>37</sup> Society for Science and the Public, "Uranium Sources," *The Science News-Letter*, 48, no. 7 (Aug 18, 1945): 101; A.C. Monahan, "Uranium Needs Increasing," *The Science News-Letter*, 62, no.14 (Oct 4, 1952): 218.

<sup>38</sup> Jonathan E. Helmreich, *Gathering Rare Ores: The Diplomacy of Uranium Acquisition, 1943-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 4-5.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5; J.K. Gustafson, "Uranium Resources," *The Scientific Monthly* 69, no.2 (Aug., 1949): 115.

<sup>40</sup> Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle*, 45.

<sup>41</sup> Helmreich, *Gathering Rare Ores*, 40.

pounds of uranium oxide and the right of first refusal of future uranium oxide for a period of ten years after the delivery of the first 3,440,000 pounds. As part of the agreement, the United States and United Kingdom agreed to provide equipment to restart the mines. The three countries agreed that control of uranium was necessary for the protection of civilization and that the agreement itself should be treated as a military secret.<sup>42</sup> The good intentions of the three nations were only bound officially until approximately the middle of the 1950s.

The basic properties and potential of uranium were known but its full potential for destruction, and energy as well as any other uses were still to be researched. For this reason, the Atomic Energy Act of 1946 mandated control of information regarding such research in order to safeguard it from those who would harness it for destructive purposes.<sup>43</sup> The law also limited regulatory authority over and acquisition rights of fissile materials; the law created the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) in order to control U.S. possession.

The guarantees of the Tripartite Agreement extended for a little more than ten years because exhaustion of the deposit was expected by that time.<sup>44</sup> The AEC, after 1946, began to look for other sources. In April of 1948, the AEC instituted a new program “designed to implement the procurement of ore from both foreign and domestic sources.”<sup>45</sup> This program provided incentives to search for domestic sources of uranium. By guaranteeing prices for ore and a market for the uranium mined in the United States

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<sup>42</sup> “Memorandum of Agreement Between the United States, the United Kingdom, and Belgium Regarding Control of Uranium,” September 6, 1944, *FRUS 1944*, vol. II:1029-1030. The term “Tripartite Agreement” is the term commonly used throughout the literature.

<sup>43</sup> *Atomic Energy Act of 1946*, Public Law 585, 79<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d sess. (August 1, 1946), 1.

<sup>44</sup> Helmreich, *Gathering Rare Ores*, 38.

<sup>45</sup> Herbert H. Lang, “Uranium Mining and the AEC: The Birth Pangs of a New Industry,” *The Business History Review* 36, no.3 (Autumn, 1962): 325-326.

for a period of no less than ten years, the AEC encouraged the building of a United States-centered uranium mining industry.<sup>46</sup> It succeeded in increasing U.S. uranium concentrate production from 110 tons in 1948 to 1,450 tons in 1954.<sup>47</sup> By the end of the 1950s, the domestic programs sponsored by the AEC bore fruit and most of the uranium required by the United States was produced domestically.<sup>48</sup> In fact, the United States became the world's leading producer of uranium in 1960.<sup>49</sup> Thereafter, because maintaining access to Congolese ore for U.S. consumption was less important, the strategic interest in Congolese uranium became its denial to the Soviet Union.

The need to maintain atomic superiority over the Soviet Union had important consequences for U.S. relations with other nations. When looking overseas for new sources, the United States had to look past some transgressions in order to provide the necessary protection from the Soviet Union. Thomas Borstelmann describes the process by which the United States gained dedicated access to uranium ore produced in South Africa. One of his central arguments in *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle* focuses on the U.S. need to strengthen relations with the apartheid regime of South Africa at the same time that the United States was in the early stages of its civil rights revolution. Borstelmann contends that the Truman administration had to hold in check its views of the South African government because it placed a higher priority on access to uranium. In November of 1950, the United States and United Kingdom signed an agreement with the South African government for the production and sale of uranium ore for a period of ten

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<sup>46</sup> Society for Science and the Public, "Uranium Mining, Milling," *The Science News-Letter*, 58, no. 14 (Sep 30, 1950): 220.

<sup>47</sup> Lang, "Uranium Mining and the AEC," 326.

<sup>48</sup> U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, *Major Activities in the Atomic Energy Programs, January-December 1961* (Washington: GPO, 1962).

<sup>49</sup> Lang, "Uranium Mining and the AEC," 332.

years. Once again, the United States and United Kingdom financed the equipping of the mines. In addition, however, the United States supplied military aid to the South African regime.<sup>50</sup> By dealing with an avowed racist regime, providing military aid and funding the mining operation, this commitment exemplifies the lengths that the U.S. government would go to in order to secure access to uranium. Borstelmann's argument is conducive to U.S. actions in the Congo; the United States was willing to go to great lengths, including pseudocolonialism, to protect its strategic mineral interests.

The relationship between the United States and Belgium during the Truman administration was based heavily on uranium procurement. As the colonial master of the Belgian Congo, the government in Brussels secured a satisfactory deal in the Tripartite Agreement of 1944. However, the agreement obscured important tensions; the Belgians were suspicious of U.S. intentions about their colony. The Americans pressured the Belgians to grant the Congo independence in order to avoid instability caused by a restive indigenous population. Despite reliance on U.S. economic and military reconstruction aid, the leaders of Belgium recognized their nation's importance to the United States in the fight against Soviet communism. The Belgians possessed powerful leverage to resist U.S. pressure to grant independence. The arms race that began after the Soviets exploded their first atomic bomb in 1949 garnered the small nation of Belgium an edge over the world's most powerful nation. As the world's leading producer of uranium ore in the early fifties, and all of it guaranteed to the Americans and British, the Belgians realized they could minimize U.S. calls for colonial independence.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle*, 163-164.

<sup>51</sup> Richard G. Hewlett and Jack M. Holl, *Atoms for Peace and War, 1953-1961: Eisenhower and the Atomic Energy Commission* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989): 580. "Appendix 5: Procurement of Uranium Concentrates."

The Belgians resented U.S. pressure because they perceived U.S. demands not as a call for colonial independence but as an attempt to put the United States in a position to exploit Congolese resources and wealth. This suspicion began shortly after the United States began to deal with the Belgians for uranium ore during WWII and continued after the war. Belgian mistrust was so virulent that the U.S. did not place any Central Intelligence Agency personnel in the Belgian Congo until 1951 for fear that Brussels would misinterpret U.S. intentions.<sup>52</sup> Brussels feared the United States would move to push Belgium out of the Congo in order to secure the economic benefits of the territory for themselves under the guise of anticolonialism.

The nascent United Nations provided another point of contention for U.S.-Belgian relations. Formed at the end of WWII, the United Nations had a primary goal of equalizing all nations in a forum to discuss and resolve conflicts peacefully. The Cold War competition between the United States and the Soviet Union reflected actions and blocs within the United Nations. The Soviet Union for years had supported anticolonialism in its quest to oust capitalist governments among developing nations. U.N. pressure on Belgium about its colonies caused Brussels to contemplate withdrawing from the international organization.<sup>53</sup>

The Korean War made the U.S. position even more difficult. The U.S. desperately needed Belgian support in the United Nations for its fight against North Korean and Communist Chinese forces on the Korean peninsula. A Belgian withdrawal from the United Nations concerned the United States because it would weaken the

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<sup>52</sup> Jonathan E. Helmreich, *United States Relations with Belgium and the Congo, 1940-1960* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998): 152-155. The CIA attempted unsuccessfully to add an officer to the consular staff in 1948 and 1949 in order to protect the uranium mine at Shinkolobwe. In 1951, the first CIA officer sent to the Belgian Congo had counter-sabotage of the mine as his primary objective.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

standing of the organization as it fought its war against communist aggression in Korea that symbolized the proving ground for collective security against aggression.<sup>54</sup>

Ultimately successful in retaining Belgian membership in the United Nations, the United States also realized how delicate was the task of balancing between anticolonialism and stability. Forced to side with Europe's colonial powers, the United States saw the power that small nations might exercise. Faced with these realities, the United States declared it might accept a form of association between the Congo and Belgium. U.S. policymakers realized that premature independence would present a danger worse than indigenous people restive under colonialism.<sup>55</sup>

Multiple problems presented difficult challenges to successive U.S. administrations. The need for material for atomic weapons had to be balanced with the need to prevent instability that would allow Soviet influence to gain ground across the world. In WWII, the United States avowed its anticolonialist views and intentions for the post-war world. Unfortunately for their intentions, the Cold War solidified almost as soon as WWII was finished and new problems of the post-war world mixed with the advent of atomic weapons. The most dangerous technology in the history of the world forced the United States to place higher priority on access to uranium than on anticolonialism.

The 1940s and 1950s witnessed the furious U.S. search for a sustainable source of uranium. Staying ahead of the Soviet Union in atomic weaponry and technology required

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<sup>54</sup> Jonathan E. Helmreich, *United States Relations with Belgium and the Congo, 1940-1960* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998): 153; "Memorandum by the Acting Assistant Legal Adviser for Far Eastern Affairs (Snow) to the Planning adviser, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs (Emmerson)" October 19, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. VII: 983. The neutralization of nations was a concern discussed because it would "subtract from the power of the United Nations to enforce its guarantee" of security to all nations and remove the neutralized State "from the roll of the United Nations that stand ready to oppose and punish an aggressor..."

<sup>55</sup> "McGregor to Dept.," 6 August 1954, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. XI, pt. I: 123.

enormous amounts of fissile material. To secure these requirements, the United States made deals with colonial masters and oppressively racist governments. Defense against the Soviet atomic threat was perceived greater than the independence of colonies and nations in Africa. Balancing these factors was necessary until the United States was successful in the development of its domestic uranium production programs. Once domestic production outpaced foreign procurement and Congolese uranium was no longer needed and U.S. policy shifted to denial of access to the Soviets.

Uranium procurement drove the Eisenhower administration to place a higher value on stability of the Congo provided by its colonial master. This support was against long-standing U.S. commitments to anticolonialism and self-determination. Forced to sideline these intentions until the late 1950s, the United States benefited from its push for domestic uranium production. Ultimately, uranium drove the U.S. desire for stability in the Congo. Whether stability was achieved through colonialism or through pseudocolonialism, it fulfilled the U.S. objective of controlling access to uranium.

### **Congolese Cobalt**

As 1960 approached, U.S. domestic production of uranium reduced the value of Congolese ore. The U.S. national security interest concerning Congolese uranium ore now shifted to prevention of communist access to it. U.S. access to Congolese minerals, however, still remained a driving force in U.S. policy toward the nation; U.S. supply of cobalt hinged on access to ores in southern Congo. The same area in the Congo that produced the world's richest known uranium is the origin for the highest quality cobalt known to man. Due to the lack of a domestic source the United States imported 92% of its consumed cobalt in 1959. Because the majority of this cobalt originated in the Congo



the United States retained its focus on keeping the Congo stable.<sup>56</sup> In order to understand cobalt's role as a forcing function of U.S. foreign policy, it is necessary to examine its background and history, its importance to technology as well as its importance to the United States.

Cobalt is an element found in various locations throughout the world. Its predominant use prior to WWI was in the coloration of ceramics and pottery. This usage began as early as the ancient Egyptians and continued through various civilizations such as the Chinese and the Persians.<sup>57</sup> Industrialization brought changes to the utilization of metals as alloys to strengthen steel. It is in this capacity that cobalt witnessed an increase in its demand. In the post WWI period, cobalt was discovered in the Katanga area of the Belgian Congo by Union Miniere de Haut Katanga (UMHK). By 1926, the Belgian Congo was the world's leading producer of cobalt. Congolese ore was mined along its border with then-Northern Rhodesia (present day Zambia) in what is commonly referred to as the Copperbelt. The production of these two nations combined has served at least two-thirds of the world's requirements for as long as cobalt has been in demand. The Copperbelt is known for its vast reserves of high quality minerals and its role as the world's leading producer of copper, tin and cobalt during most of the twentieth century.

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<sup>56</sup> "Statement of Policy by the National Security Council: Security of Strategically Important Industrial Operations in Foreign Countries," October 24, 1953, *FRUS 1952-1954* vol. I: 1036. "In 1951, this (Katangan) source provided about ninety percent of U.S. supply of cobalt and it is estimated that during the first year of an emergency about sixty-five percent of our requirements will come from this source..." U.S. Geological Survey, [2012], Cobalt statistics, in Kelly, T.D., and Matos, G.R., comps., *Historical statistics for mineral and material commodities in the United States: U.S. Geological Survey Data Series 140*, accessed [February 18, 2013], at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/ds/2005/140/>.

<sup>57</sup> Roland S. Young, ed., *Cobalt: Its Chemistry, Metallurgy, and Uses* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Co., 1960): 1-4.

Additionally, Congolese cobalt was valuable because it is produced as a by-product of the copper extraction processes.<sup>58</sup>

Between the end of WWII and Congolese independence cobalt was a major ingredient in industrial production. At the end of WWII, the demand for cobalt in war production tapered off but the advent of the jet age and the space race returned it to a prominent place in demand for minerals. The increase in television and the spread of information affected U.S. requirements for cobalt. Cobalt use and prices fluctuated in the fifteen years after WWII thanks to the Korean War, the start of the jet age and the recession of the late 1950s. Despite fluctuation, cobalt remained on the U.S. critical materials list and the United States purchased millions of tons of cobalt ore to stockpile in preparation for WWII.<sup>59</sup>

The single greatest factor providing cobalt its strategic value is its importance to the steel industry, explicitly in the area of high temperature alloys important to jet and rocket engines. A variety of lesser important civilian uses for cobalt exist: permanent magnets, blue pigmentation in ceramics and glass as well as cutting tools in industrial production. Civilian uses are varied but cobalt's major use is as an alloy; it is this use that provides its strategic importance to the United States.<sup>60</sup> The value placed on cobalt as an alloy is critical to understanding why it played such an important role in U.S. policymaking during the period between WWII and the independence of the Congo in 1960. Wars usually catalyze research and development that result in new technologies

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<sup>58</sup> Raymond Dumett, *Strategic Minerals*, 393; and Katanga Mining Limited, "KOV Open Pit Mine," [www.katangamining.com](http://www.katangamining.com), (accessed October 24, 2012).

<sup>59</sup> Joseph. Bilbrey Jr. and Dorothy T. McDougal, "Cobalt," (Table 9- Free World Production of cobalt by countries), *Bureau of Mines Minerals Yearbook: Metals and Minerals (except Fuels)*, 1960 vol. I (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1961): 388: "Production data for East Germany and U.S.S.R. are not available, and no estimates for these two countries are included in the world total."

<sup>60</sup> U.S. Congress, Congressional Budget Office Special Study, "Cobalt: Policy Options for a Strategic Mineral," (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1982): 1.

presented in the war's aftermath. Cobalt was integral to the expansion of two of these technologies in the 1950s: jet engines and rockets.

By the end of WWII most major powers were researching jet engines and their application in fighter aircraft. The Americans, British and Japanese all tried to be the first to possess jet aircraft during the war but the Germans prevailed in the race to turn jet technology into a military advantage with the introduction of the Messerschmitt Me-262 jet aircraft into the skies of WWII Europe. While this introduction came too late to alter the outcome of the war for the Germans, it signaled the dawn of the jet age in both warfare and civilian uses. Jet development continued in earnest and became an element of the impending arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union after the beginning of the Cold War.

During the opening phase of the Cold War an arms race ensued that included jet aircraft. The primary delivery method for an attack from one of the superpowers to the other was the strategic bomber. A primary role for fighter aircraft at this time was as interceptor. Interceptor aircraft needed development in order to destroy an inbound formation of bombers before they could reach their target on U.S. or Soviet soil. Bombers flew at high altitudes and the atomic weapons they delivered were destructive; the strategy was for fighter-interceptors to get to the bomber formations at a high altitude quickly in order to destroy them at a safe distance from friendly territory. As bomber development progressed, they flew higher and faster; thus, interceptors needed to fly higher and faster.

This competition led to the constant introduction of newer and faster aircraft to counter the newest threat from the opposing side. In the United States, jets were

introduced at a rapid pace to keep up with Soviet development. A large number of U.S. jet aircraft were manufactured in the 1950s, for example: 2,100 F-86s and 315 F-2Hs in 1953, 600 B-47s and 760 F-84s in 1954 as well as 792 F-100s, 516 F-102s and 173 B-52s in 1957.<sup>61</sup> These numbers are just a sample of the total jet aircraft production during the 1950s but account for 9,782 jet engines. It is estimated that each jet engine required about 100 pounds of cobalt; this translates into a requirement of 978,200 pounds of cobalt for just this small sample of aircraft production.<sup>62</sup> Jet production was the centerpiece to defense strategy until the science of rocketry matured to the level requisite to be a reliable system of weapons delivery.

Rockets made their debut in warfare in WWII as a result of the German war machine. The Germans attacked the British during the last stages of the war using V-1 and V-2 rockets. After the war, a number of the scientists who developed these weapons were brought to the United States to conduct research and development for the Americans. Wernher Von Braun, the designer of the V-2 rocket, led five hundred of his fellow scientists to the United States. Von Braun worked for the U.S. Army on the Jupiter Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) program. After the Soviet launch of Sputnik, his work was transferred to the nascent NASA where he led the development program for the Saturn V rocket.<sup>63</sup>

The delivery of atomic warheads via long-range missiles was the next innovation in the U.S. defense strategy; this innovation required advanced rocketry design. After Sputnik the Strategic Air Command, the U.S. Air Force's organization responsible with

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<sup>61</sup> Hartman L. Butler, Jr., "Aerospace Fundamentals and Industry Analysis," *Financial Analysts Journal* 22, no. 1 (Jan-Feb, 1966): 56.

<sup>62</sup> James C. Burrows, *Cobalt: An Industry Analysis* (Lexington, MA: Heath Lexington Books, 1971): 60.

<sup>63</sup> Marshall Space Flight Center Website, "Biography of Wernher Von Braun," NASA, <http://history.msfc.nasa.gov/vonbraun/bio.html>, (accessed October 25, 2012).

the delivery of nuclear weapons to their targets, instituted a program to add ballistic missiles to their arsenal. In 1958, it reorganized its command to include Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) units but these units still did not possess their missiles. Over the course of the next five years, these units were stocked with hundreds of ballistic missiles. Including cruise missiles and decoy missiles, the Strategic Air Command grew from zero missiles in 1958 to 631 in 1963. This arsenal grew until it reached its ceiling in 1969 of 1,065 ballistic ICBMs. These numbers demonstrate the remarkable growth in missile capability that took place within the initial five years following Sputnik as well as throughout the 1960s. The significant growth of Strategic Air Command's missile capability described here does not take into account the U.S. Army or Navy's missile growth, nor does it detail NASA's requirements for rockets and missiles.<sup>64</sup> This expansion of missile capability adds to the value of cobalt to the national security requirements of the United States. It demonstrates why the United States felt the mineral was important enough to extend pseudocolonial control over the Congo. The United States needed to secure access to cobalt in the Congo because the majority of its imports originated there.<sup>65</sup>

The same rockets being designed to deliver warheads to targets across the ocean were to be used to carry astronauts into space. The American Atlas rocket program was established years prior to the Sputnik launch in 1954 but the first successful launch occurred weeks after Sputnik officially started the space race in December 1957. A

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<sup>64</sup> Sheldon A. Goldberg and J.C. Hopkins, *The development of Strategic Air Command, 1946-1986 (the fortieth anniversary history)* Offutt AFB: U.S. Air Force, 1986: 71, 82, 89, 96, 106, 116, 124, and 155.

<sup>65</sup> Joseph. Bilbrey Jr. and Dorothy T. McDougal, "Cobalt," (Table 8- Cobalt imported for consumption in the United States by countries, in thousand pounds), *Bureau of Mines Minerals Yearbook: Metals and Minerals (except Fuels), 1959* vol. I (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1960): 367: In 1958, 8.8 million pounds (60.6%) of the U.S. total 14.5 million pounds of imported cobalt came from the Belgian Congo. In 1959, 11.8 million pounds (59.1%) of the U.S. total 20 million pounds came from the Belgian Congo.

number of other U.S. rocket programs were in full production in the late 1950s: Titan, Juno, Thor and Jupiter. Added to these at the end of 1959 was the Saturn rocket program. A large number of the subsequent space launches in the late 1950s and early 1960s used Atlas and Saturn rockets.

NASA was assigned the responsibility for the crash program to catch up to the Soviet rocketry capabilities after the Americans were defeated in the opening shot of the space race. The German scientists under Von Braun represented the technological knowledge required for a quick U.S. recovery. Cobalt, in large quantities represented another essential ingredient. The United States began development of ballistic missile capability at the end of WWII but it was not a high priority until the Soviets demonstrated possession of the H-Bomb in 1953 and again with the 1957 Sputnik-I launch. Sputnik sparked American anxiety; governmental reorganization within the next year resulted in the formation of NASA as well as the consolidation of rocketry design and manufacturing under the auspices of the Air Force.

The thrust required to launch a rocket into outer space required the production of massive power. When fired, a rocket engine is essentially a contained explosion caused by the ignition of fuels such as liquid hydrogen or liquid oxygen. This ignition causes incredible heat that required metals that could withstand the immense heat. It is these high temperatures that make cobalt vital to the any nation's space program. The U.S. space program was just another episode of competition in the Cold War. The space race provided further justification for the United States to guarantee its access to cobalt and limit Soviet access to cobalt in the Congo through pseudocolonial control there.

The protection and stockpiling of strategic minerals is a process that was adopted by the United States and its allies after WWII. The process was focused on ensuring enough raw materials to feed the resumption of wartime manufacturing of weapons on a WWII scale. The American Stockpiling Program's objective was to acquire sufficient stocks of strategic and critical materials to offset the anticipated deficit between what American industry would have on hand and what would be needed in the event of war. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had submitted five years as the planning factor for the next worldwide conflict; their contemporary experience fighting the Korean War showed them and the committee in charge of managing the Stockpiling Program the importance of cobalt to military production.<sup>66</sup>

The Korean War was a real world example of the necessity of maintaining access to the materials needed to wage war. U.S. policymakers learned from this experience and continued through the rest of the 1950s to work towards secure access to cobalt. The most important source of cobalt to the United States in the 1950s was the Belgian Congo. In 1955, cobalt from the Belgian Congo accounted for 67% of U.S. imports of the metal. Another 21% came from its metropole Belgium but 87% of Belgian cobalt originated in Belgian Congo ore.<sup>67</sup> The year 1955 was the second record year of cobalt consumption in the United States; 33% more cobalt was used by U.S. industry than in 1954. This increase resulted principally from larger use of cobalt metal in high-temperature alloys.<sup>68</sup>

The importance and production of cobalt only continued to increase during the rest of the 1950s as the United States entered into a full-scale space race. In 1959, U.S.

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<sup>66</sup> "NSC 114/2 United States Programs for National Security: No. 5 The Stockpiling Program," October 12, 1951 and "The Stockpiling Program- Status on August 31, 1952," *FRUS 1951*, vol. I: 177.

<sup>67</sup> Charlotte R. Buck and Hubert W. Davis, "Cobalt," *Bureau of Mines Minerals Yearbook: Metals and Minerals (except Fuels), 1955*, vol. I (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1958): 363.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.

industry consumed 9.9 million pounds of cobalt representing the largest quantity since 1953 and 31% more than in 1958. High temperature alloys accounted for 24% of total U.S. consumption that was 10% greater than in 1958.<sup>69</sup> Analysts from the Bureau of Mines reported that the Belgian Congo continued to be the largest supplier of cobalt to the United States by providing 56% of all U.S. imports. This number is increased to 82% of all U.S. imports when Belgian exports that originated in the Belgian Congo are added.

During the 1950s, U.S. industry's thirst for cobalt grew exponentially. This thirst was easily quenched by guaranteed access to cobalt ore in the Belgian Congo due to the stability maintained by the Belgians in the colony. Like uranium, U.S. cobalt requirements forced the United States to acquiesce in its anticolonial approaches to Belgium to grant independence to the Congo. After the United States made negative statements about the Belgian management of their colony to the United Nations, the Belgian public showed their anger. The Belgians argued that Congolese materials were essential to defense of the free world and U.S. comments were incongruous with the intent to build up a strong and free Europe.<sup>70</sup> With levels of consumption in the United States as they were in the 1950s, it is not difficult to understand the leverage Belgium held over their American critics. As with uranium in the Belgian Congo and in South Africa, the United States was willing to overlook colonial misconduct and eventually risk their own pseudocolonial control to maintain access to cobalt reserves.

Just as the United States took necessary steps to guarantee their access to cobalt, they also launched operations to reduce Soviet access to the same materials. In 1953, the

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<sup>69</sup> Joseph H. Bilbrey and Dorothy T. McDougal, "Cobalt," *Bureau of Mines Minerals Yearbook: Metals and Minerals (except Fuels)*, 1955, vol. I (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1960): 365.

<sup>70</sup> "Memorandum by Edward P. Noziglia of the Office of Dependent Area Affairs" January 19, 1953, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. III: 1302.



National Security Council discussed and supported the purchase of cobalt ore from Finland. The Finnish deal not only would add to U.S. stockpiles but also would deny the Soviets another source of cobalt.<sup>71</sup> The trend of denying access to the Soviet Union continued. In 1954 discussions on relaxation of the embargo against communist countries, policymakers recommended that cobalt continue to be embargoed because it was one of the few critical materials that were overwhelmingly produced in the free world.<sup>72</sup> Embargo of cobalt ensured strained access to the minerals by the Soviet Union.

There is a commonality between strategic minerals and materials. Their value lies within their place in the greater strategy of the Cold War. Natural resources have always been a motivation for nations and other entities to go to war. Modern warfare is no different when it comes to this motivation. At the time of independence in the Congo, it possessed some of the richest uranium in the world and provided 75% of the U.S. consumption of cobalt. Although no data concerning Soviet minerals is available, the Soviet Union undoubtedly possessed sources of each of these materials; however, it was of vital national security interest for the United States to protect its access to these materials and deny Soviet access to them.<sup>73</sup> Natural resources played a significant role in U.S. intervention into the Congo Crisis. When placed within the context of the contemporary Cold War situation, the U.S. thirst for these minerals becomes less greedy in appearance. Because of the perils of losing the arms or space races, U.S. actions to

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<sup>71</sup> "Memorandum by the Secretary of State and the Director of Mutual Security (Harriman) to the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (Lay)," January 19, 1953, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. I: 925 and "Progress Report on a Program of Possible Actions to Lessen Finland's Economic Dependence on the Soviet Bloc" June 22, 1953, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. VIII: 766.

<sup>72</sup> "National Intelligence Estimate (NIE-100-3-54): Consequences of a Relaxation of Non-Communist Controls on Trade with the Soviet Bloc," March 23, 1954, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. I: 1121.

<sup>73</sup> Joseph. Bilbrey Jr. and Dorothy T. McDougal, "Cobalt," (Table 9- Free World Production of cobalt by countries), *Bureau of Mines Minerals Yearbook: Metals and Minerals (except Fuels), 1960* vol. I (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1961): 388: "Production data for East Germany and U.S.S.R. are not available, and no estimates for these two countries are included in the world total."

secure access to strategic minerals, even through the establishment of pseudocolonialism in the Congo, can be viewed as a justified national security imperative.

## **Chapter Four: Congolese Geostrategic Value**

When considering the motivations behind U.S. foreign intervention many details become important. As detailed in earlier chapters, the contemporary world situation as well as strategic resources played an integral role in the decision to intervene in another nation's affairs. If the Cold War was fought by either side to prevent the destruction of the world in a nuclear WWII then both superpowers had to plan for a conventional war fought across the world. This is where analysis of the geostrategic importance of the Congo enters into the calculations of importance to U.S. national security interests. The United States executed its policies in regard to Africa with the idea of protecting essential materials, resources and routes. Africa was viewed as a secondary center of gravity in the manner that it provided enormous sources of strategic materials as well as routes of travel to the Middle East and Asia in case of worldwide warfare. All of the countries in Africa possess some level of strategic importance to the United States in 1960 when they are viewed through this context.

### **Congolese Influence on its Neighbors**

In the state of world affairs at the independence of the Congo in June 1960, a number of factors would have provided worry and stress to U.S. decision makers. Tension would have been present due to the soon-to-be declared independence of twelve African nations after the Congo with eight of them in the month of August alone. This presented a situation where, by the end of 1960, five African nations in the proximity of the Congo were newly free states being courted by both superpowers for favor in their nations. A pro-western leader led the Congo-Brazzaville, which became independent in August 1960. The rest of the new nations' loyalties were undeclared: Cameroon, Gabon,

Central African Republic and Sudan. Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania would all follow to independence by 1963.<sup>74</sup> An unfriendly government in Leopoldville could quickly influence the heart of Africa in a negative manner for the United States. An unfriendly government in Leopoldville that was controlled by communists could be exploited by the Soviets to spread their influence into the Congo's neighbors thus creating a Soviet sphere of influence in central Africa. The danger of a Soviet sphere of influence in this region was greater because it lay just south of the North African countries that lined the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and the northern approach to the Suez Canal.

There is little evidence that either side of the Cold War believed the continent of Africa represented the major maneuver battlefield in the next world conflict. Both sides prepared their conventional maneuver forces for a battle in central Europe; the United States exercised to protect against a Soviet invasion through the Fulda Gap. However, Africa possessed certain traits, such as the vast mineral wealth explained in the previous chapter, which ensured it would play a vital role in the planning for operations during a global conventional conflict. In this chapter, the Congo will be examined to determine its values to U.S. national security in terms of its geographic location on the earth. Where the Congo sits on the globe was valuable in geostrategic terms based on the assumed military necessities of the next war. Because the next war was not forecasted to take place on the African continent, U.S. policy toward Africa was focused on its supporting role in case of conflict.

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<sup>74</sup> About.com, "A Chronological List of Independence Dates for Africa," <http://africanhistory.about.com/library/timelines/blIndependenceTime.htm> (accessed December 16, 2012).

The Congo was the largest of the African nations and touched nine other surrounding nations. It was viewed as the litmus for the rest of the continent: if the Congo went communist, the rest of Africa would go communist. Because of its size, the Congo can influence the entire continent; using the Congo as a base of power, the Soviets could gain influence over the surrounding nations and eventually exert pressure on North Africa. Some in the U.S. intelligence community believed the Soviets intended to outflank the Western alliance by gaining control over Africa.<sup>75</sup>

U.S. defense officials still viewed the Soviet use of conventional forces highly unlikely due to the assumption that Eisenhower would retaliate with nuclear weapons. The U.S. intelligence community believed the Soviet government realized that neither side could win in a nuclear exchange and would act to appear to be the more peaceful of the two antagonists in order to split the Western alliance and gain support of world opinion. Despite the superpowers' preparation for nuclear war, U.S. intelligence showed the possibility that Soviet intentions, as early as 1956, were to gain nuclear parity with the United States in order to achieve freedom to launch conventional operations. In a 1956 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), the intelligence community reported that the Soviet policy of "peaceful coexistence" was essentially a propaganda campaign to gain favorable position in other nations.<sup>76</sup> The Soviets were attempting to gain influence over smaller countries by avoiding force; however, the U.S. defense establishment would have still reviewed strategy for a WWII fought by conventional means. In this review they

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<sup>75</sup> Larry Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo: Fighting the Cold War in a Hot Zone* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007): 48.

<sup>76</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "National Intelligence Estimate 11-4-56: Soviet Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action through 1961," August 2, 1956: 49, 51-52.

would determine the perceived enemy courses of action in order to develop a strategy to counter this aggression.

The generally accepted Soviet intention, including by Eisenhower officials, was to cross the border into West Germany and take control of Europe. Using the perceived Soviet intentions for the regions of the world contained in the NIE of 1956, it can be discerned that these same regions would be of importance in a conventional war and the Soviet defense ministry would be planning for this contingency. The NIE explains how the Soviets were using diplomacy and propaganda in their attempt to replace American influence in the Middle East; this influence would be used to secure access to oil.<sup>77</sup> It is safe to assume the oil in the Middle East would be of key strategic value to both superpowers in the event of a conventional world war based on the large numbers of mechanized forces both powers would project.

Access to Middle East oil is precisely why the United States placed such importance on controlling the Mediterranean Sea. The Mediterranean provided access to three continents and the enormous oil resources of the Middle East. It also provided the shortened route to the Middle East via the Suez Canal. If the next world war required Middle Eastern oil the West needed a route to transport troops and armament to the fight; this route would be through the Suez Canal. Control of the Mediterranean Sea and influence in the nations of North Africa were crucial to the defense plans of the United States and the Western alliance.

The importance of the Mediterranean Sea and the Suez Canal to U.S. national security is proven by the placement of defense assets in the region such as

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<sup>77</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "National Intelligence Estimate 11-4-56: Soviet Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action through 1961," August 2, 1956: 55.

communications and radar relay sites, signals collection sites as well as refueling and logistics bases. Morocco represented extreme value to the United States because its territory could control access to the Mediterranean Sea at the Straits of Gibraltar; the United States stationed early warning systems; radar and signal collection assets there to protect the Straits.<sup>78</sup> U.S. airbases in Libya were used until 1971 for deployment of bombing, intelligence and transport capabilities. The Suez Canal's value to U.S. national security is indicated by the protection of its Red Sea approach by U.S. forces stationed in Ethiopia. The United States exploited the friendship of Ethiopia by emplacing communications and signal collection bases there to control the approach to the Red Sea. The Ethiopian territory presented additional benefits because it allowed the United States a staging base for any ground forces needed for the Middle East.<sup>79</sup>

The U.S. position in Africa was solidified in most of eastern and southern Africa. A black African government that remained loyal to the west after WWII governed Ethiopia. The British still managed or influenced Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Botswana; the Belgians were still in control of Rwanda-Burundi and South Africa controlled its territory including the disputed Southwest Africa. Pro-western white governments continued to rule in Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Malawi (in the form of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland) until 1963 and Portugal controlled Angola and Mozambique until the 1970s. Whether governed by European allies or friendly African governments, the United States enjoyed friendly relations along the eastern coast of Africa from Ethiopia to South Africa. With friends in these locations,

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<sup>78</sup> Robert E. Harkavy, *Bases Abroad: The Global Foreign Military Presence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989): 195.

<sup>79</sup> "National Security Council Report (NSC 5615/1): U.S. Policy Toward Ethiopia," November 19, 1956, *FRUS 1955-1957*, vol. XVIII: 335.

the United States retained secure air transit routes across the southern half of Africa as well as secure sea-lanes from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean. These routes represented a strategic necessity in preparation for WWII. But any change in the orientation of African nations after their independence from European control could alter the security of these routes.

The threat of expanding Soviet influence throughout central Africa through use of a pro-Soviet Congolese government was exacerbated by Lumumba's extreme nationalism. History shows his fiery speech insulting America's ally Belgium was just the defense of his new nation and people to their former oppressor. In the context of the summer of 1960, it is easy to see how Lumumba's nationalist intent could be misinterpreted and be considered dangerous to western objectives in the Cold War. The fact that Lumumba's speech and style were well received by populations still under foreign rule in other colonies adds to the danger of Lumumba's influence. Fear within the U.S. intelligence community that the Congo could be used as a base for spreading non-western ideas would be increased by Lumumba's retention of power in the Congo.

### **Congolese Infrastructure**

The Congo's geographic location is somewhat intangible when it comes to assessing it for strategic value. Anyone can look at a map and determine that a country as large as the Congo lying in the middle of a continent can affect its neighbors. More than intangible, unsubstantiated value is necessary to make the Congo play a greater role in national defense strategy. The Congo becomes more important to U.S. planners once African infrastructure is taken into consideration. If the U.S. defense establishment assumed a key front in WWII would be in the Middle East, they would assume the



Soviets would look to contest or block U.S. routes into that theater. Soviet generals and planners would understand the importance of the Mediterranean Sea, the Suez Canal and even the waters surrounding the coasts of South Africa. Initial steps in any Soviet attack would make security of these routes integral to its plan.

The situation in 1960 supported the importance of these water routes. In 1956, the United States demonstrated the value it placed on an open Suez Canal when it disagreed with its staunchest allies and sided with the Soviets and the Egyptians. Eisenhower well understood the importance of a shortcut to Asia and the Middle East. Operations in WWII had been launched to secure Mediterranean Sea access and the Suez Canal as a shortcut to Asia and the Middle East. Although the situation in Egypt seemed stable by 1960, Eisenhower officials knew better than to assume it would always remain that way.

The sea-lanes off the coast of South Africa would drastically increase in importance in the case of any seizure or blocking of the Suez Canal. Thomas Borstelmann argued in *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle* that U.S. acquiescence to South African Apartheid was due to the uranium produced by South Africa.<sup>80</sup> It is agreed that uranium production plays an integral role in assessing strategic value to any nation as discussed concerning Congolese uranium in the previous chapter. Like the Congo, South Africa's mineral wealth is joined by its geographic location in the assessment of its value to U.S. national security. A friendly government in control at the southern tip of Africa is crucial to maintaining an alternate route to Asia and the Middle East in the case of Mediterranean Sea or Suez Canal denial by Soviet forces. The 1956 NIE assumed the

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<sup>80</sup> Thomas Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle: The United States and Southern Africa in the Early Cold War* (New York: Oxford Publishers, 1993).

Soviet Union would use subversive means to gain influence over areas of Africa.<sup>81</sup> The west presumed many in the anti-apartheid struggle to be communists or at least sympathetic to leftist causes. In the case of WWII, it can be assumed the Soviet Union would have incited factions in South Africa in order to create instability; this would be done to limit, reduce or prevent western access to minerals of southern Africa. It would have the additional effect of making the sea-lanes around South Africa unreliable.

With any reduction to access to the Suez Canal and the sea-lanes around South Africa, the United States would need to ensure it had access to routes across Africa to get to Asia and the Middle East. These routes would be needed for troop and equipment transport as well as refueling points for the transfer of combat and logistical aircraft needed for the fight. This is precisely where the Congo would see its importance increased. There are very few railroads on the continent of Africa; many were already in a state of disrepair by the time of the Congo Crisis. The Congolese province of Katanga was at the center of the Congo Crisis. It was the first province to secede from the new nation and retained its own independence for nearly three years. Katanga's mineral wealth in copper, cobalt, uranium, tin and diamonds is the focus of a great deal of the historiography of the Crisis. The literature lacks another important facet of Katanga's importance to the region if the Crisis is analyzed through a geostrategic lens. Katanga's capital, Elisabethville, connects the Atlantic coast of southern Africa to the Indian coast of southern Africa via railroad.

A series of railroads were constructed beginning soon after the Europeans discovered the enormous mineral wealth of inner Africa. The Copperbelt region that

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<sup>81</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "National Intelligence Estimate 11-4-56: Soviet Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action through 1961," August 2, 1956: 55.

covers southern Congo in Katanga and Northern Rhodesia eventually came to house the connection between two major African railways. The Benguela Railway begins in the Angolan port city of Lobito, connects via Elisabethville in Katanga to the Zambian rail lines. These lines link to the Beira Railway which ends in the Mozambican port city of Beira. This series of rail connections in 1960 would allow troops, equipment and supplies to be transported across the African continent from the Angolan port of Lobito to the Mozambican port of Beira. If the Congo remained friendly to the West, this alternate rail route would begin and end through contiguous friendly nations. If the sea-lanes surrounding the southern portion of Africa were too dangerous to transport military forces, the Benguela-Beira rail line could be used to project western military power to the Indian coast of Africa and onward to the Middle East.

The location of the Congo in the center of Africa garnered the nation an increase in value to U.S. strategy. A Congo unfriendly to the United States could threaten most prized geostrategic objective in the region: security of the Suez Canal. The spread of communism to the Congo would also result in the denial of alternate routes across Africa for the United States. Not only was the Congo viewed as the hub for influence in Africa, it also possessed the connection necessary to make southern Africa's railroads into a viable transcontinental land route. The Congo's ability to influence strategic national security objectives of the United States in case of WWII provides justification to U.S. actions to establish pseudocolonial control in the Congo.

## **Chapter Five: U.S. Pseudocolonialism During the Congo Crisis**

The previous chapters have described and detailed the importance of the Congo to U.S. national security interests and how these interests justified U.S. pseudocolonialism in the Congo. The last years of the Eisenhower administration were filled with nearly continuous crises that occupied U.S. leadership. These crises occurred during the period in the late 1950s that witnessed increased tension between the superpowers in the Cold War. The campaign to contain the spread of Soviet communism was the main objective of the United States and actions it took were related to meeting the goals of this objective. The United States saw the Congo as an important newly formed nation in Africa because it was the hub of nine other new nations that possessed conditions that were ripe for the expansion of communism. Strategic minerals were just as important to U.S. interests and the Congo possessed uranium needed for the development and construction of nuclear weapons. The Congo was also the leading U.S. source of the cobalt it required to build and maintain its superiority in nuclear arms as well as the space program. Finally, the Congo provided the United States and its allies alternate routes to the Middle East and Asia should conflict between the West and the Soviet Union erupt into full scale conventional warfare.

It is argued here that the United States acted to establish a pseudocolonial regime in the Congo in order to protect its national security interests concerning containment, strategic minerals and geostrategy. The value of the Congo to U.S. national security has been established. But how did U.S. interests translate into U.S. actions in the context of the Congo Crisis? This question can most directly be answered by focusing on the component of the crisis that highlighted all of the U.S. interests: the Katanga Secession.

Maintaining a stable, anti-communist government in the province, protecting the province's mineral wealth and ensuring access to Katanga's strategic location were goals conducive to the interests of the United States previously explained in this examination.

U.S. orientation toward the governments of the Congo and Katanga during the Congo Crisis are descriptive of the value the United States placed on stability in these areas. Additionally, how the United States interacted with these governments demonstrates the value placed in having reliably anti-communist leaders running the Congo. At this point in the Cold War, the emerging nations of the decolonizing Third World presented a juggernaut of confusion and competing interests to both superpowers. Correspondence between U.S. policymakers indicates their feelings toward the leaders and politicians of the Congo and Katanga. Analysis of this correspondence relates that U.S. policymakers kept in mind the reliability of Congolese politicians as well as their willingness to protect U.S. interests.

The attitudes of U.S. leaders toward Congolese leaders assist understanding the objectives of the United States in the Congo Crisis. However, the United States refrained from playing a direct role in the Crisis. President Eisenhower refused to intervene militarily and instead supported the Congolese leaders' invitation for U.N. intervention. On its face, Eisenhower's actions appear as a benevolent way to prevent the superpowers from escalating this conflict to war if one or both sides intervened. This interpretation of his actions is present in the literature but most authors on the topic disagree. These authors consider, as in this paper, that the United Nations acted as the instrument of U.S. policy in the Congo Crisis. Once this concept is accepted, the actions of the United

Nations, specifically in relation to Katanga, during the Congo Crisis can be explained as the derivative of U.S. objectives in the Congo as the situation changed over time.

The goal of the United States was to protect its national security interests in the Katanga by ensuring a stable and reliably anti-communist government ruled the Congo. The Congolese province of Katanga sat in the south of the nation and bordered Angola on its east, Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) on its south and southeast and lay across Lake Tanganyika from Tanzania. Katangese Provincial President Moise Tshombe controlled the province at the time of independence and was assisted by a large number of white Belgian administrators, advisers and managers of the Belgian mining company Union Miniere. Katanga possessed the majority of Congolese mineral wealth especially its uranium and cobalt reserves.

Mineral wealth was the catalyst that created Katanga's, and thus the Congo's, multi-faceted value to the United States. To improve their ability to extract this mineral wealth, Belgium and Union Miniere built railroads connecting the mineral wealth of Katanga to the ports along both the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. This system of interconnecting railways provided geostrategic military value as a ground line of communication to move troops and material across the continent of Africa in case of war. Of all the areas within the borders of the Congo at the time of the crisis in the early 1960s, Katanga is the only province that provides this level of value to U.S. national security and thus provided the reason for the United States to install a pseudocolonial regime in the Congo.

## **Congolese Leadership**

Through political bargaining and wrangling, the first independent Congolese government took power from the Belgians in a ceremony on June 30, 1960. The Congolese government represented a compromise between the two parties with the most votes during the May 1960 parliamentary elections. Joseph Kasavubu, leader of ABAKO or the Alliance des Bakongo, served as the President of the Congo and Patrice Lumumba, leader of MNC-L or Mouvement National Congolais-Lumumba, served as the Prime Minister. Kasavubu's political power was derived from tribal and cultural affiliation and was primarily based in the Congolese capital of Leopoldville. Lumumba's MNC-L was the largest nationalist party and the only party to cross tribal and cultural divides to call for a Congolese national identity.

At the independence ceremony the King of Belgium, King Baudouin, delivered a somewhat patronizing speech calling for the new Congolese government to take independence slow and look to the Belgians as their guide. President Kasavubu rose to deliver a formal and cordial speech on behalf of the new Congo but Lumumba was determined to confront the King for his patronizing speech and empower the Congolese people to see themselves as peers in the world of nations. Lumumba's unscheduled and unexpected speech detailed abuses of Belgian colonial administration, insults from Belgian colonists and spoke to the King of Belgium as a fellow world leader on the same level as any other nation. Lumumba's speech was well received by his people but not, as could be expected, by the Belgians. The speech also served to instill fear in U.S. policymakers as the first concrete example of Lumumba's unwillingness to follow the Western course and maintain the status quo.

U.S. leadership held a variety of views as to the orientation of Patrice Lumumba. From communist to opportunity seeker, Lumumba was considered a wild card and could not be relied upon to act in the best interests of the United States or the West. The Congo Crisis erupted within days when the Congolese Army, the *Armee Nationale Congolaise* (ANC), mutinied over reactions to unfulfilled expectations of independence. This was followed shortly after by the secession of Katanga and Kasai Provinces. The new Congolese nation was destabilized completely within days of its independence. Lumumba traveled throughout the Congo with Kasavubu to quell the unrest and regain control of the ANC. He was somewhat successful in his objectives because of his charisma and ability to convince people with his eloquence.

Lumumba's eloquence and charisma contributed to U.S. distrust of his intentions. Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles relayed his opinion of Lumumba clearly at a July 21, 1960 National Security Council Meeting. Citing a CIA study of Lumumba, Dulles explained that Lumumba was a communist and "another Castro or worse." He continued by noting financial support from the Soviet Union through Egyptian leader Gamel Nasser who the United States treated as a communist. Additionally, Dulles related strong Leftist and communist trends in Lumumba's history, Lumumba's attendance at a 1959 Communist Youth meeting and promises of financial support from the Belgian Communist Party.<sup>82</sup> All of this contributed to an attitude that Lumumba was a threat to U.S. interests in the Cold War.

Dulles' assessment of Lumumba's orientation was extreme for the administration. Others among the cabinet and State Department did not share his assumption that

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<sup>82</sup> "Memorandum of Discussion at the 452d Meeting of the National Security Council," 21 July 1960, *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. XIV: 338-339.



Lumumba was an unstable communist. U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Henry Cabot Lodge disagreed with the communist label for Lumumba. Lodge had the occasion to meet with Lumumba upon his visit to the United States in July 1960 and spoke to him at length. The report of Lodge's meeting shows that Lodge believed Lumumba was not a communist or crazy and that while he demonstrated regular erratic behavior, Lumumba was intelligent and understood what he wanted and how to get it.<sup>83</sup> If not a communist, Lumumba's eloquence, intelligence and fierce nationalism were still viewed as threatening.

Diplomats working in Leopoldville possibly held a deeper perspective on Lumumba because of their proximity to his governing style and the effects of his decisions in the Congo. CIA Chief of Station Larry Devlin did not believe Lumumba was a communist or Soviet agent but feared that continued Soviet manipulation would cause Lumumba to fall under their control.<sup>84</sup> Robinson McIlvaine was the U.S. Consul General to Leopoldville during the Congolese transition to independence. He viewed Patrice Lumumba in a different manner from other policymakers because he experienced the events on Leopoldville firsthand. His report to Washington on July 26, 1960 relayed that Lumumba was not a communist but an opportunist.<sup>85</sup> Even if this report alleviated any fears in the Eisenhower administration that Lumumba was a communist, it would have instilled a fear of another variety. The Eisenhower administration found relations with neutral nations difficult; many of these leaders took actions that played one

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<sup>83</sup> "Telegram from the Mission at the United Nations to the Department of State, July 26, 1960," *FRUS 1958-1960*, vol. XIV: 359n.

<sup>84</sup> Larry Devlin, *Chief of Station: Fighting the Cold War in a Hot Zone* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2007): 79.

<sup>85</sup> "Telegram from the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State," July 26, 1960, *FRUS 1958-1960* vol. XIV: 356.

superpower on the other in order to gain some advantage for their nation. Being labeled an opportunist in the second term of the Eisenhower administration could've been considered more dangerous than communist because at least the United States knew where it stood with communists.

Whether communist or opportunist, Lumumba was disliked by the United States and U.S. actions and policies reflect this position. The CIA, under Dulles' personal direction, instituted an assassination program to eliminate Lumumba after a National Security Council meeting in late August 1960.<sup>86</sup> While ultimately not directly responsible for Lumumba's later execution, the United States supported Joseph Mobutu and Kasavubu in September 1960 when they worked together to remove Lumumba from power. Mobutu ruled the Congo until February 1961 through an entity he declared the college of commissioners. A series of emplaced prime ministers nominally governed the Congo while the United States, the United Nations and others worked with the Congo to restore a democratically elected government to the Congo.

Katangan government officials with the aid of Belgian intelligence advisers killed Patrice Lumumba on January 17, 1961. His death was reported to the world in February 1961 when the Congolese government announced that Lumumba was shot during an escape attempt. This story was fabricated to cover up the execution of Lumumba and two other Congolese leaders but most Congolese, as well as the rest of the world, suspected foul play. Joseph Kasavubu was implicated in Lumumba's death and Adlai Stevenson, the incoming U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations under President Kennedy, assessed Kasavubu's role as a source of stability and legality to the Congolese government to be

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<sup>86</sup> U.S. Senate, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with respect to Intelligence Activities, *Interim Report: Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1975): 15.

damaged.<sup>87</sup> Instability continued and at least three different appointed prime ministers served the Congo until the election of Cyrille Adoula in August 1961.

Cyrille Adoula was a founding member of Mouvement National Congolais with Patrice Lumumba. This lineage provided him more legitimacy with the Congolese people. The return of an elected leader to the Congo restored a certain amount of stability to the situation in the Congo that pleased the United States and many U.S. diplomats. U.S. leaders were optimistic about Adoula's election. After meeting with Adoula in person, U.S. Ambassador to the Congo Edmund Guillon assured Secretary of State Dean Rusk that Adoula was the man to contain the flames of civil war and bring stability to the Congo. Guillon noted Adoula's strength, calm and goodwill that would have been refreshing after erratic Lumumba and illegitimate Mobutu governments.<sup>88</sup>

Senior leaders in the State Department supported the Ambassador's opinions of Adoula. In correspondence to President Kennedy, Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs George W. Ball declared that Adoula was "friendly to the United States, respects our judgment, and has depended on our support."<sup>89</sup> Adoula's personality, pro-western orientation and governance style convinced most in the United States that he was the Congolese leader to support. However, U.S. leaders were still very weary of the situation. Secretary of State Dean Rusk noted that Adoula's government was "basically pro-western" but worried that the government would fall and be replaced by a "more radical, leftward-looking regime. The biggest danger Rusk considered when writing to

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<sup>87</sup> "Telegram from the Mission to the United Nations to the Department of State," February 22, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. XX: 76.

<sup>88</sup> "Telegram From the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State," September 18, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. XX: 229, 231.

<sup>89</sup> "Memorandum From the Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs (Ball) to President Kennedy," September 23, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. XX: 236.

his ambassador in the United Kingdom was that a leftist government in Congo would allow Soviet penetration and western interests in Katanga itself would be in jeopardy.<sup>90</sup>

Secretary of State Rusk's worries about the retention of Katanga in the western sphere of influence drove policy at this point under Adoula. The U.S. government desired the reintegration of Katanga into the Congo through peaceful negotiations but force was not prohibited as a method as will be examined later. The United States believed Adoula brought enough stability and legitimacy to the Leopoldville government and could serve the interests of the United States concerning Katanga. Until Adoula's election as prime minister, Katanga was governed by Moise Tshombe. Tshombe was the elected Provincial President at the time of independence but was advised and financially supported by Belgian government and mining entities.

The general feeling of U.S. sentiment toward Tshombe was of a negative tone. Tshombe essentially caused the Congo Crisis by seceding from the central government of the Congo and declaring Katangan independence in July 1960. Additionally, it was in Katanga that Lumumba was executed after being delivered there by complicit Leopoldville government leaders. In February 1961, Ambassador Stevenson explicitly named Tshombe as "the most serious problem in current circumstances" in his correspondence with the Secretary of State.<sup>91</sup> This assessment of Tshombe continued with U.S. diplomats under the Adoula government. Undersecretary of State Ball agreed in September 1961 that Tshombe was "the basic problem" and supported the buildup of

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<sup>90</sup> "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in United Kingdom," October 27, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. XX: 257.

<sup>91</sup> "Telegram from the Mission to the United Nations to the Department of State," February 22, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963* vol. XX: 76.

U.N. power to persuade Tshombe to quit secession and rejoin the Congo.<sup>92</sup> Ambassador Guillon spoke with Adoula in September 1961 to assure him of U.S. support for his government and the peaceful reintegration of Katanga. Guillon told Adoula that Congolese unity through negotiations was U.S. policy but it did not mean the United States was “committed to or wanted to save the skin of Mr. Tshombe.”<sup>93</sup>

Tshombe found himself on the bad side of U.S. leadership as long as he continued to lead Katanga as a secessionist state. After the reunification of Katanga into the Congo, Tshombe was not as threatening because Katanga was under the protection of the western-oriented Adoula government. After this phase of the crisis subsided, Tshombe was not the center of attention until his election as prime minister of the Congo. This unusual rise to power of the nation from which he seceded can be linked to the greatest threat faced by the Congo at the time of his tenure.

Lumumba’s home province Orientale in north-central Congo remained a bastion of opposition to the Congolese government for the duration of the Crisis. In the summer of 1964 as Tshombe was being elected to prime minister, rebellion broke out led by leftists, named the Simbas, from Orientale Province. Probably based on his close ties to Belgian mining companies as well as his stalwart earlier secession to protect their interests in Katanga, Tshombe held reliable anti-communist credentials. It was these credentials that made him attractive to the United States.

Tshombe allowed U.S. transport planes to drop Belgian paratroopers into Stanleyville, the capital of Orientale Province, to rescue European hostages taken by

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<sup>92</sup> “Memorandum From the Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs (Ball) to President Kennedy,” September 23, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963* vol. XX: 235.

<sup>93</sup> “Telegram From the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State,” September 18, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963* vol. XX: 230.

Simba rebels. Soon after Tshombe hired British white mercenary Mike Hoare to raise a mercenary army of predominant South Africans to defeat the Simba rebellion. The introduction of white soldiers and mercenaries to fight Congolese threats was not popular in the Congo but was seen as necessary by the United States and its allies to secure their interests and defeat communism. Assistance from Che Guevara and Cuba did not make the Simbas successful against Hoare's CIA-supported mercenary forces and their threat ended in late 1965. Having served his usefulness to the United States and with the threat of communism greatly reduced Tshombe was dismissed by President Kasavubu and fled the Congo under charges of treason.

Soon after Joseph Mobutu overthrew Kasavubu and Tshombe's replacement as prime minister. At this point, Joseph Mobutu was in charge of the Congo for the second time in five years and would remain for another twenty-nine years until the mid 1990s. Despite CIA Congo Chief of Station Larry Devlin's denial of involvement in Mobutu's second coup, Mobutu's leadership and reliability was not necessarily counter to U.S. interests in stability of the Congo. Mobutu had proven to be a reliable ally against communism. Devlin had given U.S. assurance and financial support to Mobutu's plans for his first coup that resulted in the expulsion of all Soviet, Chinese and Czech technicians and advisers from the Congo.<sup>94</sup>

The procession of Congolese prime ministers follows the level of political instability found in the Congo during the Crisis. Within five years, three prime ministers were democratically elected, one was executed, one exiled and the government was

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<sup>94</sup> Larry Devlin, *Chief of Station: Fighting the Cold War in a Hot Zone* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2007): 79-80, 234. Despite being unable to officially extend U.S. support to any coup, Devlin seized the opportunity because it furthered the known CIA objective of removing Lumumba's government. So when asked by Mobutu for U.S. acquiescence to his coup plans, Devlin replied, "I can assure you the United States government will recognize a temporary government composed of civilian technocrats."

overthrown by the military twice. The U.S. interests in protecting Katangan minerals and territory from the influence of expanding communism were furthered by the series of leaders in the Congo.

The United States disliked and distrusted Lumumba and made plans to assassinate him or support his removal. Through the CIA, the United States was able to gain Lumumba's removal from office in addition to the expulsion of communist advisers with Mobutu's first coup. With Lumumba out of power, Katanga was protected with the removal of the most direct threat of communist introduction to the Congo. Under Mobutu's control throughout the rest of 1960 and the first half of 1961, the Congo worked toward a negotiated political settlement to restore a legitimate system of government. During this period the United States did not press Tshombe and Katanga to rejoin the Congo; the lack of a legitimate and reliable leader elected in the Congo meant the United States had to maintain the ability to support Katangan secession in case of the return of a leftist leader.

Cyrille Adoula served the role of a legitimately elected and dependable ally. Most senior U.S. diplomats and leaders viewed Adoula to be a source of strength and calm that could stabilize the situation in the Congo and stop the internal chaos. Despite this confidence in Adoula's leadership, the reality of the Congolese political system did not allow the United States to fully support Katanga reunification with the Congo. Instead the United States bought time for further stabilization of the political situation by calling for a peaceful reintegration completed through negotiations. Once the possibility of stabilization was severely threatened by U.N. failures, the United States began to overtly support U.N. operations designed to expel Belgian mercenaries and advisers from

Katanga and force its reintegration. Tshombe was assessed to be the biggest problem for the Congo after Adoula's election until Katanga ceased its secession. However, Tshombe was used as a steadfast anti-communist ally when the United States needed the threat of leftist rebellion removed. If a leftist government took over the Congo, Katanga would be threatened by the eventual introduction of communist advisers and technicians to the Congo. Once the communist threat was destroyed with the defeat of the Simba rebellion, the United States did not need Tshombe anymore. This is why no serious objections by the United States to Mobutu's second coup occurred; Mobutu had already served consistently as an anti-communist ally of the United States. Additionally, Mobutu had previously received money from the United States and therefore presented the United States with a solid ally that possessed an ability to be pressured to cooperate because of his previous collaboration with the United States. With Mobutu in authoritarian power, the threat of communists gaining access to the minerals and territory of Katanga was all but removed.

### **The United Nations as an Instrument of U.S. Policy**

Determination of U.S. policy in the Congo Crisis through examination of U.S. leaders' views of the leaders of the Congo is a prime example of the Great Man method of historical analysis. With this examination follow some of the weaknesses of Great Man history. By themselves, the views of U.S. policymakers do not constitute proof that the United States acted to protect its national security interests by ensuring protection of Katanga Province from communists. However, when this analysis is combined with the actions of the United Nations and its operations against Katanga, it becomes clear that the



United States used the United Nations to further its interests based on its interpretations of Congolese leaders' trustworthiness.

The United Nations was formed at the end of World War II as the descendent of the League of Nations. Its charter proscribed self-determination and the resolution of international conflict through debate and negotiations. The organization was created with the intention to make conventional warfare obsolete. Fifty-one nations signed the United Nations charter at the outset of the organization; the nature of the organization provides the impression that it is a form of international democracy in which the world's nations participate in equally. By the time of Congolese independence the United Nations was composed of nearly one hundred nations with the beginning of blocs of nations that formed based on common interests.

Soon after the Congo Crisis began, Lumumba and Kasavubu requested U.N. intervention to restore order and stability to the Congo. This was done, partly, to avoid the introduction of the Soviet Union or the United States in a unilateral manner. U.N. support and intervention in the Congo aligned with Eisenhower's desire to minimize the amount of opportunities the Soviet Union would have to damage U.S. credibility with and gain influence in the newly decolonizing nations in Africa. Indeed, U.S. Ambassador to the Congo Claire Timberlake recommended the idea of U.N. intervention to both Kasavubu and Lumumba and viewed this option as a way to "keep bears out of the Congo caviar."<sup>95</sup>

As an international organization with nearly one hundred member nations by 1960, the United Nations was designed to be a body that could ensure collective security.

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<sup>95</sup> "Telegram From the Embassy in Belgium to the Department of State," July 10, 1960, *FRUS 1958-1960* vol. XIV: 286-287.

The U.N. General Assembly allows one vote per nation and the Security Council allows any resolution to be vetoed by one of five permanent members. By its construction, the United Nations should be an independent organization that acts in order to preserve the interests of as many nations as possible. In order to view the U.N. actions in the Congo Crisis as protecting and furthering U.S. interests, the independence of the United Nations must be disproven.

The scholars that argue a neocolonial motivation of U.S. policy on the Congo Crisis see the United Nations as the action arm of U.S. policy. Ludo DeWitte generally portrays the United Nations doing the work of the United States while David N. Gibbs argues that at times U.N. policy in the Congo was exactly the same as the U.S. policy.<sup>96</sup> Even some proponents of national security motivations presume the United Nations represented U.S. interests in the Congo. Stephen Weissman contends that it was satisfactory in mid-1960 to consider the United Nations a vehicle for American policy. He supports this position with analysis of the U.N. Secretariat; Hammarskjöld's closest advisers were American. Additionally, American, British or French diplomats filled 49 out of 102 senior positions in the Secretariat.<sup>97</sup> It is presumed in this paper that the United Nations, while not always completely aligned with U.S. policies and interests, acted against Katanga only when the United States allowed it to do so.

The United Nations entered the Congo as a result of its invitation from Kasavubu and Lumumba as well as a U.N. Resolution authorizing intervention. United Nations Resolution 143 was approved July 14, 1960 and authorized the Secretary General to give

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<sup>96</sup> Ludo de Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, translated by Ann Wright and Renee Fenby (London, Verso, 2001): 27; David N. Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention: Mines, Money, and U.S. Policy in the Congo Crisis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991): 96.

<sup>97</sup> Stephen R. Weissman, *American Foreign Policy in the Congo, 1960-1964* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974): 60n.

whatever military assistance he deemed necessary to the government of the Congo. It also called for the withdrawal of the Belgian troops remaining in the Congo from the pre-independence period and those deployed to the Congo after the mutiny of the Congolese Army. The United States voted for this resolution and viewed it as aligned with its interests of restoring order and stability to the Congo and preventing the unilateral entry of Soviet bloc forces.

The Katanga secession was a grave issue for the government of the Congo. Lumumba was adamant that the United Nations use its military to forcefully reintegrate Katanga into the Congo. Secretary General Hammarskjold refused arguing Resolution 143 did not give him authority to have the U.N. forces (UNFOR) enter Katanga Province. In early August, the Security Council approved Resolution 146, supported by a U.S. vote, which explicitly gave the Secretary General authority to order UNFOR into the province of Katanga. This resolution repeated the calls for the withdrawal of all Belgian troops from the Congo and especially Katanga. Despite this authority, Hammarskjold did not use UNFOR to remove Belgian troops because Resolution 146 also forbade UNFOR from intervening in the internal conflict of the Congo. At this point the United Nations had solidified its intervention into the Congo Crisis but prevented any forceful reintegration of Katanga. Hammarskjold's refusal to intervene in Katanga protected U.S. interests in Katanga from unreliable Lumumba.

The death of Lumumba in early 1961 altered the entire situation in the Congo. The United States and Belgium were publicly believed responsible for Lumumba's demise. Lumumba was killed on January 17, 1961 with two companions. They were executed by firing squad in the jungle of Katanga Province by Katangan government

officials with the assistance and acknowledgement of Belgian intelligence services. The events of Lumumba's death were not known at the time; Katanga released statements a month later relating that Lumumba and his partners were shot during an escape attempt and their bodies were turned over to local tribes for burial. The obvious cover-up infuriated many across the world. Hammarskjold realized a harsher course needed to be taken to end the secession of Katanga and thus the Congo Crisis.

It was at this time that Kasavubu ended the military rule of Mobutu and installed Joseph Ileo as prime minister. Additionally, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution denouncing Lumumba's death, calling for an independent investigation into the death and authorizing U.N. actions to prevent civil war in the Congo. After six months of little to no action the United Nations launched, with approval of newly elected Adoula, its first operation to forcefully remove Belgians and mercenaries from Katanga. Operation Rumpunch was executed by the U.N. commander in Katanga on August 28, 1961 and lasted throughout the day until arrests of mercenaries and Belgian military officers was halted by the pleas of the Belgian consul in Katanga. The operation was launched without prior U.S. knowledge and did not fit with U.S. objectives of reintegrating Katanga through peaceful means. If the U.N. operation was successful and Tshombe and his government were removed through force, a power vacuum would be opened and the United States feared leftists within Katanga and the Congo would fill it.<sup>98</sup> U.S. interests would be protected only with Tshombe and his anti-communist government left in place of a reintegrated Katanga Province.

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<sup>98</sup> Madeleine G. Kalb, *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa-From Eisenhower to Kennedy* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1982): 290.

The United Nations launched a second operation in early September to expel mercenaries from Katanga and return that province to the central government of the Congo. The United States was still not supportive of this action because it desired a peaceful resolution that would prevent a possible power vacuum in Katanga being filled with communists. U.S. objection to this operation proved justified; Operation Morthor developed into a debacle due to lack of tactical surprise, fierce resistance by Katanga military units and disjointed U.N. leadership. The United States was in a tough position; Katanga was protecting itself against actions the United States believed could lead to a communist takeover. However, the Katanga military was defeating the United Nations, the organization that gave credibility to Western objectives and policies in the Third World. These concerns led to U.S. calls for a ceasefire; some argue this pressure motivated Hammarskjöld to fly to Northern Rhodesia to negotiate a settlement with Tshombe in exile. This trip ended prematurely with the crash of Hammarskjöld's plane and his death.

The situation in the Congo had degraded into armed action between the United Nations and secessionist Katangan forces. The battles between these forces were generally unsuccessful because they countered U.S. policy of negotiating reintegration of a Tshombe-led Katanga. The battles also endangered the goal of retaining a friendly government in Leopoldville. Leftists in the Congolese government were agitating against Adoula; his inability to achieve the reintegration of Katanga was weakening his political position within the Congo because he appeared to be an instrument of Belgian policies. After the U.N. defeat in Operation Morthor and the death of relatively moderate

Hammaraskjold the United States saw increased danger of a communist takeover of the Congo. This led to a harsher approach by the United States toward Katanga.

The failures of the United Nations emboldened Tshombe's resistance to negotiations with Leopoldville. The worsened situation caused by the failed U.N. operations increased the willingness of the United States to pursue a harsher course to reintegrate Katanga. The United States supported Operation UNOKAT as a method to force Tshombe to the negotiating table because it feared Adoula's ouster or turn to non-western assistance to defeat Katanga.<sup>99</sup> The United Nations under its new Secretary General, U Thant, used attacks against U.N. personnel in Katanga as a pretext for the next military operation against Katanga. In December 1961, UNFOR was successful in expelling mercenaries and taking control of Elisabethville. United States interests were achieved on December 21, 1961 when Tshombe met with Adoula and agreed to talks designed to end secession and rejoin the Congo.<sup>100</sup>

Tshombe was known for his duplicitous negotiation style. Repeated promises made to ease tensions and secure his interests were broken at the first opportunity by Tshombe. Operation UNOKAT ended with Tshombe's agreement to negotiations designed to end the secession but Tshombe stalled the productivity of these talks for almost a year. During this time, Tshombe continued to build his military and air power and became increasingly belligerent toward UNFOR. By December 1962, the United Nations was finished with Tshombe's actions and launched Operation Grand Slam after Katangan forces attacked U.N. aviation. Operation Grand Slam was executed with increased force and some U.S. coordination; it resulted in decisive defeat of Katangan

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<sup>99</sup> "SNIE 65-2-61: Possible Developments in Katanga," December 7, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963* vol. XX: 298.

<sup>100</sup> "Telegram From the Department of State to President Kennedy, at West Palm Beach, Florida," December 23, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963* vol. XX: 344.

forces. On January 15, 1963 Tshombe formally renounced secession and the Congo Crisis ended. The United States publicly protested this U.N. action along with its European allies to show appreciation for their support of the United States during the recent Cuban Missile Crisis. Despite this public protest, the United States secured its primary interest of reintegrating Katanga securely into a friendly Congolese government.

The Katangan Secession served as the primary threat to U.S. interests during the Congo Crisis. The objective of U.S. policy from the time of secession shortly after Congolese independence until Tshombe's capitulation in late 1962 was the protection of the minerals and lines of communication that lay inside the province. The United States did not always agree with U.N. actions, such as Operation Rumpunch, but retained the ability to influence the outcome of those actions. Ultimately, the United States was able to use the United Nations as the instrument to achieve its goal of prevention of communist influence over Katanga. The United Nations provided the United States with a multilateral and essentially credible device to achieve its aims.

As shown in this chapter, the United States was actively involved in the Congo Crisis. Once the illusion of complete U.N. independence from the United States is removed, it is clear that the United States was a key player in the Congo Crisis and was the victor in the issue of Katanga. Katanga possessed the ingredients that composed its value to U.S. interests: minerals and geostrategic location. Leadership within the Congo was integral to the level of perceived threat to the province and the United States based its actions and decisions concerning the Katangan Secession on its assessment of these leaders.

U.S. policymakers probably misunderstood Patrice Lumumba. That Lumumba was viewed as a threat to the stability of the Congo as well as the protection of Katanga from communist influence lent to his demise. The United States did not support Lumumba and even launched a plot to assassinate him. A Lumumba government of the Congo prevented Katanga from reunification. Katanga outside of a stable, pro-western Congo increased the threat of communist exploitation of the instability it created. The goal of the United States was protection of Katanga for its national security value. U.S. pseudocolonial actions to remove Lumumba from power can be understood as actions taken to secure its national security interests.

Once removed from power by Mobutu's first coup, Lumumba remained a threat. While alive, the possibility of Lumumba's return to power was great due to his charisma and eloquent speech. His political ability to gain agreement and acquiescence of his opponents with his speech was dangerous to U.S. interests. Lumumba's death removed this threat but the instability caused by the suspicion and cover-up surrounding his death made any U.S. moves to reintegrate Katanga at this point wishful thinking. The United States worked with its partners and the United Nations to return a legitimate government to the Congo and was successful with Cyrille Adoula's election by parliament as prime minister. U.S. leaders liked Adoula and believed him to be a friendly, strong and reliable partner.

Their affinity for Adoula aside, U.S. leaders were hesitant to support U.N. operation to forcefully restore Katanga to the Congo after Adoula's election. The United States pushed for peaceful reintegration of Katanga through negotiations and used this position to argue against both U.N. Operations Rumpunch and Morthor in August and



September of 1961. However, the U.S. hand was forced after the instability created by Hammarskjold's death and the U.N. defeat in Operation Morthor in September 1961. Adoula faced the threat of overthrow due to his inability to achieve Katangan reintegration; his removal would provide a power vacuum for communist forces to fill. Once communists were in power in the Congo, external support from the Soviet bloc would ensure the end of the Katangan Secession and bring that province under communist control. The United States changed its approach in response to this threat and supported U.N. Operation UNOKAT in December 1961 that forced Tshombe to the negotiating table.

The threat of communism to Katanga was not removed by this U.N. victory. Tshombe delayed and distracted the negotiations for almost an entire year while he built up his military power to increase his ability to defend his secession. With the pretext of Katangan aggression against U.N. aircraft the United Nations launched Operation Grand Slam in December 1962. This U.N. victory proved decisive and forced Tshombe to capitulate and end the secession. The end of the secession and the return of Katanga to the Congo under Adoula's government achieved the U.S. goal of protecting Katanga against communist control.

The Congo remained united under Adoula's government and faced internal threats from communist forces based in Orientale Province and elsewhere. The United States required the defeat of this communist insurgency in order to protect Katanga. Once again, the threat of communist takeover of the central Congolese government meant the takeover of Katanga. To destroy this threat the United States supported the election of Moise Tshombe as Congolese prime minister. With proven anti-communist credentials,

Tshombe gave the United States a reliable ally that allowed Belgian, French and U.S. intervention to defeat the communist insurgency.

Tshombe's usefulness to the United States passed with the removal of the communist threat to the Congolese government. The United States received an enormous benefit when Joseph Mobutu launched his second coup in five years and took control of the Congolese government. This time Mobutu did not intend to return control to a civilian government. He took measures to rid the Congo of democratic processes and installed himself as the leader of the Congo; his reign as autocrat lasted until the early 1990s. While Mobutu did not always make the United States happy, he served the rest of the cold war as protector of Katanga against communist influence. The United States supported his regime through loans, gifts and even the informal support of retired CIA Station Chief Larry Devlin's service as an adviser to Mobutu in the 1970s. Mobutu's second coup and long reign symbolize U.S. comfort with pseudocolonialism in the Congo.

The pseudocolonial actions of the United States throughout the Congo Crisis are result of its national security interests. The Congo's main value to the United States was Katanga. Katanga was valuable for its possession of cobalt and railways that allowed movement across Africa. Because Katanga could not survive as an independent nation it needed to be reintegrated. Reintegration only occurred with U.S. support; this support only came when the United States viewed the Congolese government strong enough to protect Katanga from communist influence. Leadership changes in the Congo after the Congo Crisis occurred as needed to defend against communist penetration and expansion into the Congo. U.S. policy in the Congo Crisis focused on the installation of a friendly

government to protect its national security interests; these actions are the definition of pseudocolonialism.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusion**

The global competition between superpowers during the Cold War is classified in varying degrees as a forty-five year battle. It was a battle of competing ideologies; it was a battle of competing economic interests. The Cold War has been viewed as a struggle between the forces of good and evil. The United States and the Soviet Union acted to secure their way of life and security. Skeptics argue a less altruistic motivation existed in the Third World. The Cold War constructed a world order that was bi-polar; this construction began as the pre-WWII colonial order was disintegrating. In the midst of this turmoil the Congo found itself in the middle of the battle fought between superpowers in the opening decades of the Cold War.

Scholars who study the Congo Crisis used the sources available to develop a continuing argument over motivations behind U.S. intervention into the affairs of independent Congo. The United States acted both unilaterally and through the United Nations to gain a friendly and stable Congo without Soviet or communist influence. It is simple to understand a nation acts to secure its interests; pseudocolonialism helped the United States achieve this goal in the Congo.

Those who believe national security drove U.S. policy and those who believe neocolonialism was the catalyst set the historiographical field of the Congo Crisis. The terms used to define U.S. motivations are rarely defined in the literature; this may be due in the large variance between multiple definitions of each term. Public and scholarly discourse alters the definitions over time. The United States views national security interests to include fostering economic well being as well as maintaining the order required to protect the vital interests of the United States and its friends. Neocolonialism

is a policy that has the objective of influencing other nations to achieve national economic interests. By these definition neocolonialism is a method to achieve a viable national security interest: economic well being. However, because neocolonialism is used only to describe selfish greed at the expense of others it does not properly describe U.S. actions in the Congo. A new term, pseudocolonialism, must be introduced to appropriately classify U.S. actions. The United States established a pseudocolonial Congolese regime, one friendly to the United States and unfriendly to the Soviet Union, in order to protect its national security interests. This pseudocolonial regime maintained the stability required to protect Katangan minerals and infrastructure vital to U.S. national security.

Stability of the Congo was in the interest of the United States at the time of the Congo Crisis because of the ongoing Cold War. Without the Cold War, the Congo Crisis would undoubtedly have progressed differently. But the Cold War was raging at the time and the new nations in Africa participated in the conflict in one manner or another. Whether willingly or not, the Congo was subject to the power of the two most influential nations in the world at the time of their independence. U.S. policy was reactive in the Congo because of delinquent focus on Africa. It was only in 1957 that a Bureau of African Affairs was formed at the State Department. Lack of U.S. attention toward Africa led to its inability to forecast crises there. Crises in Africa usually occurred to the surprise of the United States forcing U.S. policy to be reactive. The Congo found itself absorbed in the middle of the Cold War battle over influence, resources and strategy as superpowers reacted to perceived threats.

To maintain national security, the United States needed to be successful in its

publicly stated strategy of containing communism within its current borders. In the fifteen years following WWII, Eastern Europe was controlled by the Soviets and the Chinese Communists controlled the largest national population in the world. Governments across the world took actions that caused U.S. intervention to stop what was believed to be the spread of communism. One of the most significant losses of territory to communist influence was Cuba because of its proximity to the borders of the United States. Castro's takeover of Cuba wounded U.S. prestige across the world. The United States needed to avoid the loss of any more nations especially one as strategically important as the Congo.

Intangible concepts such as prestige and image are hard to explain. A highly industrialized nation's requirements for vast amounts of material to feed its development and production are not as difficult to understand. The United States required large amounts of specific materials and minerals for the health of its economy and, most importantly, its defense. U.S. requirements for listed strategic and critical materials in the case of war represented a national security interest and led to many agreements over time. These materials affected U.S. actions toward the Congo throughout its long relationship; the Congo Crisis presented no alteration to this arrangement. Prior to the Crisis, the United States took the necessary steps to ensure their access to uranium. But once Congolese uranium was no longer pertinent the United States acted to control access to the largest cobalt reserve on the world. The national security of the United States depended on the guaranteeing U.S. access and denying Soviet access to strategic materials.

Containing communism was a policy chosen in order to avoid direct confrontation

with the Soviet Union at the end of WWII. After both superpowers were armed with atomic weaponry, the tension between the two nations solidified into a stalemate. Extension of their influence and preventing the spread of their enemy's influence were objectives of both the United States and the Soviet Union. Because policies like NSC-68, "zero-sum" and the domino theory attached strategic value to every location on earth, the United States had to address crises everywhere in their goal of containing communism. Despite inflated values placed on other nations by the United States, the Congo possessed actual strategic value. While U.S. intervention in the Congo was informed by the policies of inflated value, U.S. national security was related to the minerals and infrastructure that lay within Congolese borders.

If the Congo turned toward the communist world, the balance of power could be negatively affected for the United States and it could see two national security interests endangered. If power became unbalanced the threat of WWII became more relevant. U.S. policymakers needed to prepare for that imbalance by protecting strategically valuable locations and infrastructure. A communist Congo could be the launching point for communism to spread into North Africa that could eventually lead to the loss of U.S. access to the Suez Canal. Additionally, if the sea lines of communication in the Mediterranean Sea and the waters off South Africa were threatened, the United States would require land and air routes across Africa to move troops and equipment to the Middle East. The United States had access to bases in North Africa and Ethiopia for staging troops but U.S. military forces would need railways running through the Congo to move across southern Africa.

Scholars have debated the motivations of foreign power intervention in the Congo

since it began. The major debate between national security interests and neocolonialism separates the authors who analyze the Congo Crisis. The Congo possesses some of the world's highest quality minerals in amounts that outmatch most other nations' reserves. This great mineral wealth provides easy material to support the neocolonial argument that the United States acted only to secure profits. Indeed, there is great profit to be made by securing rights and access to these materials. However, profit is not the only U.S. motivation just because the Congo is unmatched in mineral wealth. Indeed, if profits were the primary objective they were not served by Union Miniere's retention of the mining industries in Katanga at the end of the Crisis.

In the years leading to the Congo Crisis tensions were elevated and peace between the two nuclear-armed superpowers was anything but secure. The Congo Crisis took its place in a string of continuous crises affecting the international balance of power in the early 1960s. Congolese possession of the largest reserves of materials required by any industrialized nation made it almost inevitable that the two largest powers in the world would attempt to gain influence over the Congo. In the superpower struggle to secure advantage over their opponent, the Congo played the role of a nation literally caught in the middle. Its location on the map ensured it would be affected by the conflict between superpowers. The United States was in a better position at the outset of the Congo Crisis because it already possessed access to a friendly Congo; when that situation seemed endangered the United States operated to secure its national security interests by establishing a pseudocolonial regime in the form of Joseph Mobutu's dictatorship that lasted for almost thirty years.



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